

Day 10

“Decima pata” (tenth legs)

Good solidarity work by the Chileans and the Gringos in Edinburgh

In 1978, four years after my arrival in Glasgow, I moved to Edinburgh. At that point, I had already been given the right to remain in Britain. In Edinburgh, I found a well-organised group of Chileans doing an excellent job with the local Chile Solidarity Campaign, organised in several groups:

- The Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee. The secretary for a while was Rebeca Kopel and, before her, Diane Dixon and Chris McKinnon. Kate Clark, was for a while its acting Chairman.
- The Chile Action Group at Edinburgh University, whose secretary for a while was Sylvia Crick.
- The Edinburgh Academics for Chile, whose chairman was Professor Peter Vandome* from Edinburgh University.
- The Edinburgh Chile Committee for Human Rights, which had as its Honorary President the Very Rev. Lord Macleod of Fuinary.

“Comité Chileno de Solidaridad” in Edinburgh

Chileans also had their own committee and it was called: “El Comité Chileno de Solidaridad” and it was very active. I immediately began to support it. This was something that I was doing anyway because this Chilean committee, like others in other part of Scotland, used to invite me on a regular basis, as a singer-performer, to take part in their cultural and political activities to promote awareness in Scotland about the Chilean situation and to raise some money for specific projects in Chile:

Pinochet’s economics policies created a great deal of unemployment and extreme poverty in our country. During the 1970s and 1980s the more important kind of self-help group, in the more deprived areas of Chile (“poblaciones” and shanty towns), were the so called “*los comedores populares*” (popular kitchen). They were opened by the Church and assisted by the women from “*las poblaciones*”: “*las pobladoras*”. This “*comedores populares*” served very much to feed those people in need among them the children.

The Chileans in Stirling, along with the local Solidarity Campaign in this city, for more than three years helped to maintain a practical programme of help for the mining town of Calama in the far north of Chile. In fact, the Stirling Solidarity Committee declared Stirling, a twin town with Calama.

*Peter Vandome, Professor of Econometrics, headed Economics 1983-86. Vandome had been a senior research officer at Oxford University’s Institute of Economics and Statistics, associated there with Laurence Klein’s econometric model of the UK economy, before coming to Edinburgh as a senior lecturer in 1966 and being promoted to a personal chair the following year. He became disillusioned with econometrics and, partly because of being asked to lecture on Capital and Growth theories, turned to Marxism, teaching courses on that subject until his eventual retirement in 1995.

Democracy among Chileans in Scotland

Chileans made sure in those days that all their Committees in Scotland were fully representative of all the Chilean refugees. The one in Edinburgh was not an exception. This was because many Chileans in those days recognised themselves as being members of Chilean political parties in exile and because there were also people without any party political affiliation. I was one of those people. Those with party political affiliation had their own political agendas or directives to follow from inside Chile. People like me had just to follow the directives of the Comité Chileno de Solidaridad and take part in its meetings.

These Chilean committees worked to resolve social problems of integration inside our community and to provide support for the Solidarity work carried out by the local people.

Chileans in Scotland put a lot of emphasis on culture as a tool to attract attention towards our cause. I was one of a very restricted number of people who played some guitar and made good use of this ability: as well as helping to promote political activities dealing with our country we promoted many cultural activities involving dance, music, poetry, handicrafts as well as helping to promote, concerts for Chilean artists visiting Edinburgh. I and many other Chileans were involved in organising cultural events for the Teatro Popular Chileno, Teatro chileno de Mimos, Grupo Raíz, Inti Illimani, Isabel and Angel Parra, Santiago del Nuevo Extremo, Karaxú etc.

It is important to notice that some of the folk bands above were among the first Latin American professional musicians to which Scottish audiences were exposed to.

Chileans in Edinburgh as in other part of Scotland, were used to have meetings to confront, in an organised way, issues related to them in Scotland and the solidarity with Chile.

The Chileans in Edinburgh, from the year 1974 until about the first half of the 1990s, presented themselves as being an extremely organised group working hard on two main fronts: integration and solidarity and it was needed:

From the Scotsman, Wednesday, February 18th, 1976 we learn some of the difficulties facing the Chileans and the solidarity groups helping them:

NO COUNCIL HOUSES FOR CHILEANS

Edinburgh District Council Committee decided by 10 -7 yesterday not to set aside up to 12 council houses for Chilean refugees. One opponent of the proposal said there were 14,000 people on the house waiting-list. Labour members succeeded in having the matter referred to the full district council.

Organising ourselves in Edinburgh to promote properly our cause

From their meeting to restructure their organisation on the 21st of August, 1976, we learned that the **Comité Chileno de Solidaridad** had an executive headed by Franklin Roach, aided by Luis Aranguiz as vice-president. Franklin and Luiz were easygoing people who managed to achieve important things despite their political differences: one was a Communist and the other from the MIR*. Both had been involved in education in Chile. For this particular meeting Vicky and Marcela acted as joint secretary.

The following were some of the major resolutions taken on that meeting of the 21st of August: (This is my free translation from the Spanish. It will be followed by my own comments about the document)

- 1- It is decided that The Comité Chileno de Solidaridad will send a letter to the Comité Británico de Solidaridad with Chile "to inform them of our new structure and its executive"
- 2- The function of our committee will be to collaborate with the Solidarity Campaign to keep it alive and to maintain unity among us Chileans with the aim of achieving an effective work.
- 3- that the communication with the British committees will have to be on the basis of dual respect and if the British committees were to stop the solidarity work or pretend to use us for the benefit of any particular political party or personal benefit, our committee will take the necessary steps considered convenient.
- 4- Formation of a group to deal with Human Rights issues.
- 5- Formation of a reception committee to assist the new refugees arriving in Edinburgh.

In relation to the 2nd point;

In this respect the Comité Chileno de Solidaridad was very efficient. There is sufficient correspondence available to suggest that Chileans kept busy supporting, with their work, the many activities organised by the many solidarity groups: the Chile Solidarity Campaign in London, The Scottish Chile Defence Committee (Glasgow), The Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee, The Chile Action Group from Edinburgh University, the Edinburgh Academics for Chile, "La Central Unica de Trabajadores" de Chile (Chileans' Trades Union), The Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile in London, The Chile Committee for Human Rights etc.

Many Trade Unions and Amnesty International were also very much involved in the situation in Chile, producing excellent reports and bulletins, intended for the general public and people involved in the Solidarity Campaigns.

These organisations were also involved in adopting Chilean prisoners. According to Ailsa Henderson, the West Coast area Co-ordinator of Christian Aid, her organisation, too, was involved in projects in Chile.

* "Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria": a small left-wing party acting outside Allende's Popular Unity in the 70s.

Chileans' support work was done in several ways:

There were always requests from British organisations to provide Chilean speakers to inform their members about the latest political and social development in our country. Three main criteria for this task: to find the best person in our community. That is, to be conversant with the political situation in Chile, have a good command of English and good communicational skills. If not good interpreters had to found among the British involved in the solidarity work with Chile. In Glasgow there were such people. In Edinburgh there were Chileans with good command of English. Alicia Nicolas and her husband were both teachers of English and members of the Communist Party of Chile in exile.

Chileans used to organise political/social and cultural events with the intention of: socialising with the local people involved with Chile. Their aims was to raise awareness and money for the day-to-day running of the committee and to satisfy fund requests from British and Chilean organisations, operating in London, such as Human Rights organisations and "La CUT" ("Central Única de Trabajadores", The Trades Union Congress of Chile).

In doing this, Chileans were very good at keeping all types of correspondence showing: money they had contributed, letters of thanks and receipts for anyone to inspect.

Chileans were always very grateful for the support received in Britain and in Scotland: (My free translation)

"Comite chileno de Solidaridad"
9/4 Craigmillar Castle Terrace, Edinburgh
6th October 1976

Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee,
62 Thistle Streets
Edinburgh

Dear friends,

The "Comite Chileno de Solidaridad" is very pleased to write in order to thank you for all your work related to the Solidarity towards the Chilean people.

With reference to this, we want to point out the great significance of the recent resolution passed by Edinburgh and District Trades Council, in which is re-affirmed the support for the general policy of the National Solidarity Campaign.

They think, as we do, that this solidarity work can have concrete effects on the situation in Chile.

On the other hand, we want to pay homage to the leader of the Chilean left, Orlando Letelier, who was vilely assassinated by D.I.N.A. agents directed by Pinochet "the traitor and fascist", such as Letelier described him, just a few days before he was murdered.

We also denounce the sinister methods of the D.I.N.A, inside our country, where almost three thousand of people have disappeared in recent months.

With regard to these events, we would suggest to you, if you could intensify in your future task the campaign in favour of the disappeared people. We think, that in the solidarity work of the day, we must demand a very clear answer from the fascist Junta about the real situation of all those Chilean disappeared.

Thanks in advance for everything you could do regarding this campaign,
Your sincerely,
Franklin Roach (President)
Luis Aranguiz (Vice-President)

In relation to the 3rd point:

The British Committee here had to be understood as The Scottish Chile Defence Committee. The perception of many Chileans in Glasgow was that the SCHDC was a rigid organisation “controlled” by some members of a specific Scottish political party, namely the Scottish Communist Party. This provoked uneasiness and some heated controversies among other members of the Solidarity Campaign and the Chileans in Glasgow.

The Chileans in Edinburgh created the resolution for their committee, however, did not responded to this number 3 resolutions mainly because, in many respect, the Scottish Chile Defence Committee seemed to be doing their job well and because it was difficult for the Chileans to criticise a Scottish organisation doing solidarity work with Chile.

Chileans in Edinburgh did, however, feel some sort of disquiet in their dealings with the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Campaign and it seemed that this was revealed by the letter/report sent to the Chilean in Edinburgh by the ECHSC on the 1st of September, 1977 and signed by its Chairman Mr Fred Lawson and its secretary John Holford.

In this informative* letter/report, we learned about the position of the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee in relation to the uneasiness felt by the refugees:

Dear Friends,

“...Our committee understands and sympathises with the natural desire of the Chileans here to do all they can in the task of bringing down the Junta. We recognise that there may be certain feelings of frustration at seeing themselves as helpers rather than doers, in the enormous job of solidarity, the brunt of which of necessity has to be born by the organisation of solidarity set up by the British people.

We were unanimous in recognizing the value of the Chileans’ contribution to solidarity work in the past*. The exhibition material, the floats you have prepared for May Day and the Miners’ Gala, the Chilean meals, the participation of Chilean dancers and singers at our events, the concert you prepared, the preparation of the Neruda poetry recital, the Chileans who have spoken about Chile at numerous meetings - all this we feel has been an outstanding contribution to the overall work of solidarity, and indispensable factor in the successes our committee has had in its work.

But our committee feels strongly that our organisation of public work, such as pickets, leafleting, marches, etc must be for us to undertake, as we have done in the past and will continue to do.

We were unanimous in feeling that it would be wrong for the Chileans to organise public actions of the kind we have mentioned, since it would not only endanger their own security as foreigners in this country, but would also jeopardise the possibility of more Chileans being accepted into this country**.

* It showed the type of activities that the Chileans refugees in Edinburgh used to do.

** Good points in my view.

An action of this kind, undertaken by Chileans so far have in the community, since it would lend itself to being utilised by right-wing sectors of the press and other media, who are never slow to find excuses to whip up feeling against minority sections of the community.

We feel that there are many other ways in which the Chileans can contribute to solidarity work, and in this connection, we hope that you will come and help us with our Film Week, when we shall be selling tickets each afternoon from 3.p.m. before the films begin. We should appreciate your presence and contribution to any discussion which may arise after the films."

Although there was harmony among the political parties in exile it does not mean that they did not have political differences and heated discussions about the solidarity campaign in Scotland. Communist's Party members saw, for example, that the members of the MIR were taking initiatives inside the solidarity campaign and they were unhappy about it:

"si no nos acercamos nosotros a estos organismos serán otros, como ya ha ocurrido los que impulsaran a través de ellos sus posiciones confusionistas (por ejemplo el MIR).

"If we do not approach these organisations first, it will be others, as it has already occurred, who will advance their own confusionist positions (for example, the MIR)"

Chilean Communists asked for the replacement of some members of the Solidarity Campaign in order:

"to attract to the campaign a greater number of people... but we have to talk about it with the members of the Solidarity Committee and with our brothers from the CP (Scottish Communist Party)".

The Chilean Communists argued that no Chilean party should try to dominate the campaign*. The official position among all the Chileans parties in exile was to campaign in support of the solidarity campaign and any action carried out by the Chileans needed to have the consensus of the "Comité de chilenos". In this respect the Communists said that:

"In case of difficulties, it will be necessary to find a political consensus within the confines of the Chilean political parties...we have to talk separately with those countrymen who are not willing to participate in activities related to the committee".

I regret to say that the position of the Chilean Communists in relation to cultural activities carried out by the "grupo folklórico" in Edinburgh did not find in me a favourable response, especially when they said that any activity carried out by the "grupo folklórico":

"must perform under the directive given by the "Comité de chilenos". In order to perform they must receive authorization".

In this respect, I always wanted to be free to perform where I wanted and although I never received any summons by any party, I and others felt that some "compañeros comunistas" tried hard to boycott the group Manuel Rodriguez that I organised in Edinburgh in the 1970s – and that was sad.

* Some Chileans thought that it was both; the Chilean and the Scottish communist parties the ones that wanted to dominate the Campaign for Chile in Scotland. I was one of those who believed that it was the case.

In relation to the 4th point:

Pinochet's Chile was, among other things, about human rights abuses and on this account the Chile Committee for Human Rights in London was loaded with things to do. To achieve their goal, they had their own social/political agenda to respond to the challenge.

Chileans tried to help in many ways: At a meeting of the 27th of August it was agreed that Chileans would have to donate, monthly, 1% of their wages or student grant or £1 (for those on Social Security) to Human Rights. Money would be collected on the first week of each month, beginning in September, 1976.

On the 27th of June, Javier and Angelica gave an account to the Chileans about their experiences in Chileans prisons. Javier and Angelica were two people that had been married in prison and had come to Edinburgh thanks to the solidarity work in Britain.

We know that in the meeting of June, 1977, Angelica gave an account of her experiences in prison. It was not recorded what she said. What I remember of them is that they were a lovely couple and very committed to the cause of freedom in Chile. Both of them were at my party in Glasgow when I married.

Throughout the years, the people working at the Chile Committee for Human Rights in London had to organise all types of events: exhibitions, films, selling of cards and Chilean handcrafts.

In addition, they had to write innumerable reports and newsletters for many people and institutions.

In 1975, the CHCHR, for example, began an adoption campaign. Although, the CHCHR, a registered charity, received economic aid from many fundraising events organised by them or by Chileans, the money received was never enough.

From a CHCHR report of February 15th, 1978, we learned that CHCHR received donations from other sources such as Christian Aid, War on Want, Oxfam, Third World First Education Trust, Hilden Trust, Methodist Church, and World Dev. Action Fund.

In relation to the 5th point:

Chileans were also resolved to help the Join Working Group (JWG) and the many refugees waiting, in a hotel in London*, to be accommodated elsewhere in Britain.

From their meeting on the 4th of February, 1978 we learned that Chileans were a bit impatient with London:

"L. Gabriel proposed to send a letter to Gordon asking him what is the existing bureaucratic problem concerning the possibility of bringing more people from London".

* Many Chileans, including myself, when they arrived in Britain were accommodated in a hotel.

Chileans also asked the Edinburgh Solidarity Campaign to get a social worker to create conditions to bring more Chileans to Edinburgh from London. They wrote to the Join Working Group and the following hand-written correspondence was received by the Chilean from the JWG in London.

Join Working Group for Refugees from Chile in Britain

Reception Centre, 32 Pembridge Square, London, W2

16 March 1978

Luis Aranguiz,
Vicepresidente
Comité Chileno de Solidaridad-Edimburgo

Estimado Luís,

Firstly, I should apologise for having taken so long in answering your letter. Somewhat as usual, the pace of work here is quite a lot at the moment and it has taken me too long to get to the point of writing to you.

I would like to apologise for the fact that things have started to look "un poquito burocratico"; unfortunately things have got to a stage where a vicious circle has formed and we seem to be going round "un poco locos" trying to resettle the "compañeros" but at the same time not having enough time to do the work properly. For example, the fact that we have roughly a total of 100 people in the hotel (including children) creates a lot of "immediate" work that shows us down in relation to keeping up efficient contact with local committees and organisations.

Our work and liaison with youelves slows down, we lose or slow down the possibilities of resettlements in Scotland therefore more build-up of "compañeros" in the hotel, hence more problems are generated, and the "vicious circle" starts again. This situation we try to avoid but we are not always successful. However, let us press on to the very good news that you have offered* us and let us attack the problem "de frente".

We are very interested in the offer of the possibilities of three families for your area. What we would like you to tell us is what size of families you think you could take up to your area. As I have said above we have roughly 100 refugees in the hotel, most of these people have concrete offers of accommodation in the UK., but we do have several families that we do not have definitive offers for.

We have a mixture of people: "solteros" (single people, my own note) and families of 6 to 7 members. Our greatest difficulty is always the "familias grandes"(big families) as accommodation for large families is always scarce.

At the moment we have the possibility of sending up a family of 3 (padre, madre, hija**) or a family of 4 (dos hijas***). However, we do not want to proceed any further without firstly seeing what size families would be possible for your committee.

I am going to write to Sue Rigby of the Edinburgh C.S.C so as to liaise with the E.C.S.C. from here as well.

When you next write to us I wonder if you could let have a telephone number which we could contact you at.

Well I hope that I have not written to you too late and once again I apologise for the delay.

Yours fraternally,
Peter A. Gil
Social worker
JWG reception Centre.

* It shows the good work of the Chileans trying hard to do their bit to help the Chileans and the JWG

** Father, mother and a daughter

*** two daughters

The Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee

If the Chileans, as a community of exiles in Edinburgh, were organised to help the Solidarity work with our country, so was The Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee by the year 1976. They kept us informed about the state of their finances. The following is a written financial report covering January 1st to November 25th of 1976.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>
£ 161.47	1- Balance brought for (in bank)	
76.00	2- Affiliations	£ 5.00
24.35	3- Publications	133.23
	4- Conferences	44.00
156.98	5- Cultural/political events	
	6- Postage and Stationary	40.59
7.50	7- Donations	143.58
65..00	8- Loan paid back by D. Dixon for Social on 16.12.75	
83.50	9- Loan to Chile Relief Fund	83.90
	10- Room hire	1.50
	11- Balance at end	123.00
		(In bank 46.70
		(In cash 76.30)
<u>£ 574.80</u>		<u>£ 574.80</u>
<u>OUTSTANDING CREDITS</u>		
SEPTEMBER		
29	f) Postage and Stationary	£ 7.00
	i) Affiliations	5.00
	TOTAL	<u>£12.00</u>
<u>OUTSTANDING DEBITS</u>		
OCTOBER		
21	e) Trade Council Room Hire	£ 6.00
30	b) Publications	£ 63.00
NOVEMBER		
2	b) Publications	£ 5.95
18	d) Cultural/Political Events	£ 20.81
	TOTAL	£ <u>95.76</u>
<u>OUTSTANDING DEFICIT</u>		£ 83.76
<u>FINAL BALANCE</u>		<u>£ 39.24</u>

From the same 1976 January- to November's report we read:

Executive motion to be put to the Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee on the 2nd November 1976.

That this A.G.M. of the E.C.H.S.C. meeting on December 2nd 1976 at the Edinburgh and District Council send the following message to the Junta in Chile and to the Chilean Embassy in London, with a copy to be sent to the Secretary – General of the United Nations, Mr Kurt Waldheim :

We members and supporters of The Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee protest at the continued use by the Chilean Junta and secret police, D.I.N.A., making DISAPPEARANCES as a weapon of terror against opponents of the military regime and all democrats in Chile.

We know that since the coup d'état in September 11th 1973, more than 2000 people have simply 'disappeared' and that of those arrested in the past year, increasing numbers are never heard of again. We know that the fate met by some of them, as for instance school teacher Marta Ugarte, whose battered and tortured body was found on a beach near Valparaiso some time after her arrest by the D.I.N.A. and subsequence disappearance.

We reject as cynical lies the recent claims of General Pinochet that there are only a few political prisoners left now in Chile.

What about all the thousand tried by military tribunals and sentenced, either to death or to long years in prisons and concentration camps? ARE THEY NO LONGER POLITICAL PRISONERS?

What about the thousands banished to far-off places in Chile, who are subjects to military or police control up to three times a day? What about all those under house arrest? And what about the 2000 disappeared prisoners?

WE DEMAND THAT THE JUNTA ACCOUNT FOR THESE DISAPPEARED PRISONERS THAT THEY REVEAL THEIR WHEREABOUTS AND SHOW THEM TO THE WORLD. WE DEMAND RESPECT FOR THEIR LIVES AND THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SAFETY.

More Chileans began to arrive.

The following is a hand written note from P. to Franklin.

13th of June 1978

Dear Franklin,

Today someone from the J.W.G. phoned to say that 3 Chileans (a couple and a single man) will be arriving in Edinburgh this Thursday (5th of June) I phoned Angelica and Javier and they will take the single man. I then phoned Tomas Pinto who said that he would take the couple. London J.W.G. will phone tomorrow to confirm their arrival and time of train etc. Angelica said she would go to Waverly station to meet them, and Thomas said he would ask someone to do the same. Their names are Nelson Salas and Ramiro and Zunilda Aróstica, all of them are young in their 20's.

I will drop you another note tomorrow after I hear from London in case any arrangement are changed...

I will inform London. They seem anxious.

Ciao Compagno – Keep in touch. P.

* Zunilda, a friend of mine, is today a recognised geologist graduated at Oxford and the only woman to work as an engineer at the construction of the Channel tunnel. Ramiro also become a professional, working very well in England.

In a Chilean Committee for Human Rights report from April, 1978 we learned that some prisoners had been freed as result of an amnesty but they were expected to travel out of Chile. From the report we can see that these Chileans had visas for most European countries, plus Canada and Australia. Several had as their destination the UK and among them we find Nelson Salas.

We, as a focus of interests for would be sociologists

In 1977, two people from the department of Sociology of the University of Edinburgh wrote a long letter to the Chileans to ask them for their permission to talk to us. This was discussed by the Chileans in a meeting on the 6th of March, 1977.

This is an extract of the letter sent by the would-be sociologists to the Chileans in Edinburgh:

Sociology Department
University of Edinburgh
18 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh, 1/3/77

Dear Sir,

We would like to ask for your permission to hold a series of talks with those members of the Chilean Community in Edinburgh, (perhaps in Glasgow and Falkirk) who would be willing to participate.

The purpose of our talks would be to gather information on the social aspect or experiences of political exile...the information which we will have gathered during this time will be presented and used as our fieldwork project for the summer term of our Junior Honours year in Sociology and will go towards our final mark at the end of our degree in 1978...we would like to say, however, that Rosemary Johnson and ourselves think that it would be worthwhile to publish at least some aspect of the study, if only to make more widely known the problems which you as refugees and political exiles face.

Yours,

Teresa M. Nelson
Avril Smilie

These sociology students sent the Chileans a very long questionnaire entitled:

Political Refugees – Chilean.

The survey consisted of long list of 103 questions. Some of these questions were personal in nature. This exhaustive survey was carried out as it is suggested in a letter written at the end of December 1977 to the president of the “Comité chileno”:

Dear Franklin,

We would like to extend, through you as president of the solidarity committee, an invitation to all Chileans in Edinburgh to come to a typical “Scottish Night” party on the 12th of November.

This is a way of thank you to all these who helped us with our project and also in appreciation of the hospitality we received everywhere we went...

Yours sincerely,

Teresa M. Nelson
Avril Smilie

Chileans were always kept informed about the situation in Chile and about English courses.

In the Comité chileno people were always kept well informed, by a designated member, about the current political and economic situation in Chile and about the current activities and campaigns carried out by The Chile Solidarity Campaign. At a meeting of the 10th of October, 1976, people were informed of English courses at Stevenson College*, at the International Women's Centre and at the Lothian Regional Council. Gabriel provided information about the assassination of former Chilean Ambassador to Washington Orlando Letelier**. Sergio suggested organising a campaign for the disappeared people.

We were a good subject for possible articles in local newspapers.

Dear Franklin,

I have been talking to Peter Vandome and Kate Clarke about the possibility of my writing (hopefully for the Scotsman although that would have to be confirmed) on Chilean women in Scotland & Chile. At least that seemed to be the most likely subject but it is still a very tentative suggestion.

I would therefore ask you to get in touch with me so that I could meet you and hopefully one or two of the women to discuss further what form the article might take, and to set up a series of interviews with relevant people. You may remember that I did a short radio piece on Chilean refugees last year...

Brest wishes,
Sue Innes***.

Helping humanitarian organisations in Chile from Scotland was never an easy option.

Rising unemployment and poverty was also a characteristic in Pinochet's Chile, Chileans in Scotland organised events for specific aid projects inside Chile. On the 31st of October, for example, they agreed to take part in a jumble sale on the 20th of Nov., 1976 in Nicholson Street for the purpose of raising money for the "Children's Popular Kitchens"(comedores infantiles).

Many events of this nature were organised throughout the years. By 1979, one of these projects runs by Chileans in Edinburgh, focused on the **Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos**. (The Association of Relatives of the Disappeared people).

The Association of Relatives of the Disappeared tried hard to help, with some money, those families where the main source of income was declared missing. Money was also needed by the association to cover the many expenses that people incurred during the search of their missing relatives.

* Many Chileans studied English here as a result of the work by "The Academic for Chile".

** This was a horrible act of terrorism carried out by members of Pinochet's secret police. It caused an international uproar. Letelier was killed by a car bomb explosion on September 21 1976, in Sheridan Circle, along with his US assistant, Ronni Moffitt; her husband Michael Moffitt was injured but survived. Several people were prosecuted and convicted for the murder. Among them were Michael Townley, a DINA U.S. expatriate who had once worked for the CIA.

*** Sue, a writer and feminist, unfortunately passed away this year, 2005. She was the long standing companion of John Clifford now one of Scotland's leading playwrights.

To help the “Agrupación Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos”, however, from Scotland was not an easy task. Any type of help coming into Chile from abroad could compromise people and organisations in Chile producing, as an effect, a sense of insecurity and irritation even among some members of the mighty Chilean Catholic Church.

In 1979 Chileans in Edinburgh contacted the archbishopric of Santiago, the Vicaria Pastoral Obrera, in the hope that this Catholic organisation could contact the Association of the Relatives of the Disappeared People with the sole intention of informing them that the Chileans in Edinburgh wanted to help them with some money to cover some of their needs.

On the 28 of February, 1979, Monsignor Alfonso Baeza Donoso wrote back from Santiago a rather temperamental letter in Spanish to the Chileans in Edinburgh and addressed to:

Mr Chris Holmes,
¼ Chessels Court
Canogate
Edinburgh
Scotland

Estimado Señor,

Al regreso de vacaciones me encontré con una carta suya a la organización de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos. La abrí, porque el sobre venía a nuestro nombre.

Debo confesarle que el procedimiento usado por Uds. me pareció muy extraño e inconveniente.

No tengo contactos con dicha organización. Por lo tanto no he comunicado nada a ellos. Espero que el Sr. González lo haya hecho.

En cuanto a la forma empleada por Uds. Debo informarles que nosotros no aceptamos ser intermediarios de ayudas a personas u organizaciones que no dependan directamente de la Iglesia Católica. Sería largo explicarle los motivos. En todo caso, me parece muy poco conveniente el usar este procedimiento sin consultar antes.

Apreciamos la inmensa sensibilidad y solidaridad de muchas personas e instituciones del extranjero, como es el caso de Uds., pero también considero importante que conozcan nuestros criterios respecto a este tipo de ayudas.

Cordialmente,

Mons. Alfonso Baeza Donoso
Vicario Episcopal
Arzobispado de Santiago
Vicaria de Pastoral Obrera

(My free translation)

Dear Sir,

“On my return from holiday I found your letter intended for The Association of Relatives of the Disappears people. I opened it because the envelope was addressed in our name (Arzobispado de Santiago, Vicaria Pastoral Obrera). I must confess that the procedure you used seemed to me very strange and inconvenient.

I have no contacts with the said organisation. Therefore, I have not got in touch with them. I hope that Sr Gonzales has done so.

In relation to the method employed by you, I must inform you that we do not accept to be intermediaries for aid to people or organizations which do not depend directly on the Catholic Church. To explain to

you the reasons would be a very long story. In any case, it appears to me that it is not very convenient to adopt this procedure without prior consultation.

We appreciate the immense sensibility and solidarity of so many people and institutions from abroad as is your case. But I also consider it important that you know our criteria in respect of this type of assistance.

Yours truly,

Mons. Alfonso Baeza Donoso

Vicario Episcopal

Archbishopric of Santiago, Vicaria Pastoral Obrera.

In any case the Chileans in Edinburgh seemed to have persisted in sending some money to the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared. They did this by issuing a cheque for £50.00 in the name of the Vicaria Pastoral Obrera sent, not to their address, but to the “Fundacion de Ayuda Social de las iglesias Cristianas” in Santiago. This Catholic religious organization received the cheque, as is mentioned in a letter of thanks to the Chileans in Edinburgh dated the 19th of March, 1979 and signed by Mr Claudio Gonzalez, the Fundacion’s executive secretary.

Señorita

(* Error it should have said Señor)

Chris Holmes

¼ Chessels Court

Canongate

Edinburgh, Scotland

*Estimada *Señorita*:

(* Error. It should have said estimado Señor)

Acusamos recibo de su atenta fechada el 5 de Febrero pasado, como también del cheque por £50.00

Hacemos presente, que como el cheque venía a nombre de la Vicaría Pastoral Obrera, hemos hecho entrega de éste a dicho organismo quien se encargará de hacérselo llegar a la Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos. Reciban de nuestra parte como también de la Agrupación, los agradecimientos más sinceros.

Cordialmente,

Claudio Gonzalez U.

Secreatrio Ejecutivo

In his letter, Mr Gonzalez indicated, with sincere thanks, that the cheque for £50.00 has been delivered to the V.P.O. “*who will deliver it to The Association of the Relatives of the Disappeared*”.

On the 24th of April 1979 Mr Gonzalez on behalf of F.A.S.I.C. wrote a very nice letter to the Chileans in Edinburgh to thank them for the money intended for The Association of Relatives of the Disappeared. However, Mr Gonzalez said that the executive of The Association of the Relatives of the Disappeared had suggested to him that any money intended for them should be send to the Vicaria de La Solidaridad, indicating the desired destination of the donation. This prestigious Catholic Church-run organization dedicated to defending human rights under the dictatorship, was created in January of 1976:

*Mrs.
Chris Holmes
¼ Chessels Court
Canongate
Edinburgh, Scotland

(* Error it should have said Mr)

*Estimada Mrs. Holmes,

(* Error it should have said estimado Mr Holmes)

Comunicamos a Uds. que hemos hecho entrega a la Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos, del cheque que Uds. le enviaran.

Habiendo conversado con la Comisión Cordinadora de esta Agrupación, nos pidieron que junto con transmitirles a Uds. el agradecimiento por esta ayuda, les solicitáramos que estos envíos sean dirigidos a la Vicaría de la Solidaridad, indicando la finalidad de la donación.

Para nosotros no es inconveniente el poder ser útiles en estas gestiones, pero es más práctico que ellas sean realizadas en forma mas directa, para no dar pasos innecesarios.

Aprovechamos la ocasión para hacerles llegar nuestros más sinceros agradecimientos por la solidaridad demostrada por Uds. para este grupo de personas y quedamos a su disposición en posibles futuras gestiones.

Fraternalmente
Claudio González U.
Secreatrio Ejecutivo

c. c. A.F.D.D.