

Day twelve

“Duodécima pata” (twelfth leg)

The Labour government was in power from 4th of March 1974 until the 4th of May of 1979. The Government, some labour parliamentarians, and many labour supporters played a good role in condemning the dictatorship at all level.

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH
14 November 1977*

*Councillor Chris McKinnon
City of Edinburgh District Council
City Chambers
High Street
Edinburgh*

*Dear Councillor Mackinnon,
Thank you for the letter of the 27th of October to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, signed by you and your fellow members of the Edinburgh District Council Labour Group, concerning our position on Chile at the current session of the UN General Assembly. Dr Owen has asked me to reply on his behalf.*

The Government regard the question of the disappeared prisoners as probably the most serious aspect of human rights abuses in Chile at present. We remain determined to continued working for a genuine and lasting restoration of human rights there, using every legitimate and effective means at our disposal to persuade the military regime to abandon their repressive policies. I can assure you that this determination is fully reflected in the instructions sent to the delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York.

*Yours sincerely,
David Stephen
Political Adviser*

There were some liberal MPs who took also an interest in Chile;

*The RT. Hon. David Steel, M.P.
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
12 December 1977*

*Mrs K. Clark
Vice-Chairman
Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee*

*Dear Mrs Clark,
David Steel has asked me to thank you for your letter of the 28th of November.
We have now passed this to the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe MP., our spokesman on Foreign Affairs, for his information.*

*Your Sincerely,
Andrew Gifford
Personal Assistant.*

*From John Mackintosh MP (labour)
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
13 December 1977*

*K. Clark
Vice-Chairman
Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee*

*Dear Mrs Clark,
Thank you for your letter and in general I am opposed to the Junta in Chile, as you know. I will certainly take any opportunity I can of letting David Owen know my views in this matter.
Yours sincerely
John P Mackintosh*

*From Gavin Strang MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
2nd January, 1978*

*Dear Mrs. Clark,
I enclose the reply that Gavin Strang has received from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to his letter on your behalf about the latest events in Chile.
Yours sincerely,
P.m ...*

Private Secretary.

Notice that it is the same letter sent by Mr Luard to Mr Cook on the 20th of December.

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH
20th December 1977*

*Dear Gavin,
Thank you for your letter of the 8th of December to David Owen enclosing one from the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee about the latest event in Chile.
We entirely agree with the Committee that the action against trade Union leaders and relatives of the disappeared prisoners is a clear indication of the continuing repressive nature of the military regime.
You may care to pass on to the Committee the enclosed copy of the statement on human rights in Chile which David made a few days ago. This leaves in no doubt about the importance we attach to the issue of the missing prisoners in particular; and it also refers to our efforts at the United Nations and elsewhere to ensure that strong international pressure on the junta is sustained.
The UN resolution David mentioned – which we helped to draft and cosponsored – was adopted in the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority on the 7th December. It remains our firm policy to work for a genuine and lasting restoration of human rights in Chile. I am returning the enclosure to your letter.*

*G Strang Esq. MP
House of Commons
London SW 1*

*Rt. Hon. Ronald King Murray, Q.C., MP for Leith
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
21st of December, 1977*

Thank you for your letter of the 8th of December enclosing one from the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee about the latest events in Chile.

I entirely agree with the Committee that action taken against trade union leaders and relatives of the disappeared prisoners is a clear indication of the continuing repressive nature of the military regime.

You may care to pass on to the Committee the enclosed copy of the statement on human rights in Chile which I made a few days ago. This leaves in no doubt about the importance we attach to the issue of the missing prisoners. As Mrs Clark says the regime has totally failed to give a satisfactory answer to the international community on this issue.

We played a leading part in drafting and proposing the UN resolution which I mentioned in my statement- which was adopted in the General Assembly by overwhelming majority on 7 December.

It remains our firm policy to work for a genuine and lasting restoration of human rights in Chile. We shall ensure that strong international; pressure on the Junta is sustained in order to achieve that goal.

(David Owen)

Rt. Hon. Ronald King Murray, Q.C., M (Labour)

*From Robin F. Cook MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
30th December 1977*

*K. Clark
Vice-Chairman
Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee*

*Dear Mrs K. Clark,
I have now received a reply from Evan Luard at the Foreign Office concerning my letter to David Owen on your behalf, and I enclose a copy of the reply with this note.
I am also enclosing a copy of a statement made by the Foreign Secretary on this issue, and of a UN resolution which the Government sponsored.*

I do hope that these communications reassure you as to the Government's attitudes to the Chilean Junta.

*Yours sincerely,
C. Fuller
(Dictated by Mr Cook
but signed in his absence)*

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH
20th December 1977

Dear Robin,

Thank you for your letter of the 8th of December to David Owen enclosing one from the Edinburgh Chile Solidarity Committee about the latest event in Chile.

We entirely agree with the Committee that the action against trade Union leaders and relatives of the disappeared prisoners is a clear indication of the continuing repressive nature of the military regime.

You may care to pass on to the Committee the enclosed copy of the statement on human right in Chile which David made a few days ago. This leaves in no doubt about the importance we attach to the issue of the missing prisoners in particular; and it also refers to our efforts at the United Nations and elsewhere to ensure that strong international pressure on the junta is sustained.

The UN resolution David mentioned – which we helped to draft and cosponsored – was adopted in the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority on the 7th December. It remains our firm policy to work for a genuine and lasting restoration of human rights in Chile.

I am returning the enclosure to your letter.

Evan Luard
R F Cook Esq. MP
House of Commons
London S W 1

This is the copy which Mr Luard referred above:

One of the worst aspects of human rights abuses in Chile has been the “disappearances”- illegal and undisclosed arrests whose victims are never seen again. There are various estimates of the number of cases of people who have been “disappeared” in this way, but there are certainly hundreds of them. One of these concerns an Anglo-Chilean, William Beausire, who disappeared in November 1974.

We have witnesses who have testified to seeing him subsequently in Chilean detention centres but, although we have pressed this case with the Chilean authorities at the highest level, we have got nowhere with it.

The present session of the UN General Assembly is now looking at human rights abuses in Chile. We strongly deplore the continuing refusal by the Chilean Government to admit responsibility or account for any of these missing persons.

Our Ambassador to the UN has therefore been instructed to play his part in ensuring that the attitudes of the Chilean Junta receive the strong condemnation it deserves. We propose to co-sponsor a tough resolution to this effect. I addressed the council of Europe in Strasbourg on Thursday and all on all member states to support the UN resolution and to stand firm on Chile.

Some people are starting to waver and want to compromise with the Chilean Government. If so, I hope that they have taken note of its insensitive and distressing action the other day in expelling from Chile three women relatives of the disappeared prisoners on their return from the United Nations, where they had gone to plead their case. It is clear that there can be no prospect of normal relations between Chile and the UK so long as this kind of behaviour continues.

According to Amnesty International William Beausire, referred in the above letter, a UK-Chilean dual national, was a victim of Operation Condor.

He was abducted in Buenos Aires Ezeiza airport by members of the Argentine security forces in November 1974, as he was on his way to France. He was returned to Chile and held in various secret detention centres where he was tortured.

William Beausire is one of the over 1,000 victims of "disappearance" in Chile. Since his "disappearance", his relatives have been trying to clarify his fate and to achieve justice both in Chile and abroad.

He was detained and tortured on La Esmeralda, the Navy ship which regularly visits British ports. A few years ago La Esmeralda was in Scotland (Port of Leith).

Margaret Thatcher's Tory Government (4 of May, 1979 – 28 of November, 1990)

When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 repression in Chile was, in all its vicious aspects, in full swing. This state of affairs continued all the way through the 1980s. Pinochet in Margaret Thatcher had a powerful friend: The British Prime Minister put unscrupulously to the side any human rights abuses committed by her protégé in Chile - She began to ignore all matters related to freedom and democracy in our country.

The Tory Government quickly began to act in detriment of the People of Chile, the Chile Solidarity Campaign in Britain, the Chilean refugees in Britain, the Latin American refugees, the British miners, and the whole of the British working classes. At this point the struggle facing those against the dictatorship began to be difficult! The Thatcher Government, however, was not a deterrent to begin to put pressure on the Tory Government in matter concerning the Pinochet fascist dictatorship.

From the records of the Stirling and District Chile Solidarity Committee we have the following letter directed to Martin O'Neill MP:

Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
22 Jan 1980

Dear Mr O'Neill,

Thank you for your letter to Willie Whitelaw of the 6th December with which you enclosed this one from Mr H. McClung, secretary of the Stirling and District Chile Solidarity Committee expressing concern at the Home Secretary's statement of 29th October last year about the closing of the special programme for Latin American refugees.

We have, of course, been one of the leading countries in accepting refugees from Latin America. Since the fall of the Allende Government in Chile in 1973 almost 3000 such refugees arrived here, a figure bettered by very few of the countries participating in the exercise. The number of outstanding applications which fall to be decided under the terms of the special Latin American Refugees programme was 125 at the 31st October, 1979 and these will be finalised as soon as possible under the former guidelines.

It is clear that a special refugee programme is only justified if a special need exists. Such a need arose in the case of Latin America in 1973 and the Government responded accordingly.

The special nature of the problem of Latin American refugees has diminished and with it the justification for the maintenance of a Latin American refugees Programme. Indeed, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicated to his executives at their meeting in Geneva in October 1979 that he considered that a refugee programme for Latin American was no longer necessary.

The criteria which will be applied to future applications for refugees status from Latin Americans will now be the same as those applied to applications from any other individual refugees.

The home Secretary, having carefully considered various representations he has received including those of your constituencies, does not think that it would be appropriate to reconsider the decision to close the Latin American Refugees programme. However, I would like to assure Mr. McLung and the other members of the Committee that refugee matter in Latin America will be kept under careful review.

Timothy Raison (Home Office minister)

In contrast to what the Tory Home Minister said in the above letter, The United Nations produced through to 70s and 80s very negative reports about the situation of Human Rights and fundamental freedom in Chile. Amnesty International also produced negative reports about Human Rights in Chile.

The UN General Assembly (38th session, Third Committee agenda 12) of the 6 of December of 1983 produced the resolution L.63 for approval. It consisted of 14 points dealing with the situation of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms in Chile. It has to be approved or disapproved by the assembly plenary on the 16th of December 1983. The 9th of December of 1983, The United Kingdom representative provided the UN an explanation about the UK's intention to abstain on draft resolution L.63 during the vote on the 16th of December of 1983.

“At his critical stage, it seemed to my delegation particularly important that the general assembly should adopt a balanced resolution which reflected all the complex elements involved. At an early stage, we made clear to many of the co-sponsors of L.63 our interest in supporting such a text”

Abstention means approval for the Pinochet regimen, although the UK representative makes clear that:

“We fully subscribe to much of what is contained in document L.63. On many issues, it reflects our concern at the situation in Chile”.

In practice the Tory Government did not show real preoccupation for the situation of those being persecuted to death by the Pinochet regime.

The resolution was approved by a recorded vote of 89 in favour to 17 against, with 38 abstentions: Countries against were The United States, Israel, and Brazil. Among the countries that abstained were Britain and Japan.

For Pinochet, it was a victory: Neither the United Kingdom nor the United States condemned his regime at the UN. This was very important for the Pinochet's regime.

The European Parliament

Throughout the 1980s, The European Parliament produced also very negative reports about the human rights situation in Chile

The Tory Party ignored everything what was taken place in Chile and went further: it began to implement in Britain economic policies* associated with the Chilean dictatorship.

Diplomatic relation with Chile

The decision of the Tory Government to re-open diplomatic relation with Chile was received badly by the Chilean Solidarity movement with Chile in Britain and, of course, in Scotland.

The Stirling and Solidarity Committee in the name of its chairperson, Rowand Sheret, and also Hugh Mclung make sure in January of 1980 that Harry Ewing MP, Dennis Canavan MP and Martin O'Neill MP (worked hard with the solidarity with Chile) could write to Lord Carrington about the decision taken by his government.

Tory Government policy: the closing of the special programme for Latin-American Refugees

Also The Solidarity Committee in Stirling asked these MPs to ask Willie Whitelaw (6 Dec 1980) about the closing down of the special programme for Latin-American Refugees bound to affect the Chilean refugees that, according to Timothy Raison, 3000 were already been granted refugees status in Britain.

“It is clear that a special refugee programme is only justified if a special need exist. Such a need arose in the case of Latin-America in 1973 and the government responded accordingly. The special nature of the problem with Latin America refugees has diminished and with it the justification for the maintenance e of a Latin American Refugee programme” ...

* See Andy Beckett: “Pinochet in Piccadilly”, Britain and Chile's secret history, Faber and Faber, 2003

How true it was that during the period of 1980s human Rights issues were improving in Chile.

There are many evidences to suggest that it was not the case. During the 1980's, arrests, physical violence shooting and deaths became common during the national protests which emerged and gained strength during the period*.

It was thank to these demonstration that in the 80s Chilean had the opportunity to get rid of the dictatorship so dear to the Tory Party in Britain. Britain did very good business with Pinochet by selling them a variety of weaponry.

The Stirling Chile Solidarity Committee wrote on the 11th of March 1984 to Sir Geoffrey Howe about arms sales to Chile.

On the 24 of March 1984 Baroness Young replied to The SCHSC saying:

"We maintain normal relations, including trade and defence links, with Chile. But our policy continued to be to refuse an export licence for any item which, in our judgement, is likely to be used for internal repression"

In April 1984 Dennis Canavan MP and others attended a demonstration outside the Chilean Embassy in London and handed in a petition of behalf of the Stirling Chile Solidarity and the Chile Committee for Human Rights. He also wrote to the Chilean ambassador about matters concerning the welfare of three Chileans. Francisco Orrego V. The Chilean ambassador to Britain soon wrote back to Dennis Canavan in English the following letter on the 4th of May 1984:

Embajada de Chile

Dear Mr Canavan,

Further to your letter of the 3rd April last concerning Señores Morales, Barcelli, Lopez and Moreira, I am pleased to acquaint you with the following information received from Santiago.

Señores Morales and Lopez are on trial for entering the country clandestinely, for being in possession of forged identity cards and for issuing subversive pamphlets.

Senores Moreira and Borcelli are on trail for providing weapons subsequently used in criminal acts and for taking part in subversive activities.

These cases are being dealt with by the Judiciary in strict compliance with the procedures and legislation in force in Chile. Therefore, the accused enjoy the same rights as any Chilean citizen faced with similar trial and are free to seek assistance from their respective lawyers whenever required. The laws concerned with these cases were passed by previous Chilean Governments.

I do hope that this will help to clarify matters.

Sincerely yours,

Francisco Orrego V. (Ambassador)

* See on this website: MEMORIES > "See video Documentary about Carmen Quintana". This is a video I made in Edinburgh in 1989 about Carmen Quintana, a young student burned by soldiers in a demonstration in Santiago in 1986. Over 60 percent of Carmen's body was burned. She survived the ordeal.

Of course, Professor Francisco Orrego Vicuña*, tried its best to provide Mr Canavan a civilised answer to his queries. We all know, however, that “the government” he represented in Britain, during this period, was far from being civilised: “the government” was a bloody dictatorship showing very little regard for human suffering, human rights, the law and the truth.

We all know by now, the poor role played by the Judiciary**during this bloody and sad period in the history of Chile.

The Chile Solidarity Campaign was a political learning ground in Britain for the left and the left of the Labour Party.

The CH.S.C. was, in a way, a fertile ground for many of today’s activists and politicians with links to the left and the left of the Labour Party. Scotland was not an exception. Perhaps one of the most famous of these people involved in some way or another with the Solidarity Movement with Chile was the current Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Gordon Brown MP - 1983

(British Prime Minister - 2009)

It is said that Gordon. Brown was an active member of the student solidarity committee with Chile at the Edinburgh University. It is said that the student Campaign with Chile at the University was based in the office given to Brown as rector. How active was he in the Solidarity movement with Chile is something that I do not know. I do not think that he came into contact with Chileans refugee in Edinburgh. (Perhaps I am mistaken here). Gordon, being an intellectual, was perhaps involved in writing articles about Chile in student’s magazine.

If he was involved with Chile at the university then I was not surprised to find him in an activity for Chile in which I was involved in Glasgow in 1983.

Gordon Brown*** was invited to open an exhibition/readings/music programme at the Star Social Club in Glasgow to mark the ten years anniversary of resistance against the Pinochet’s regime

The programme for that event was as follow:

At 8pm	Chairman Remark (G.Greig?)
At 8.05pm.	Dr Gordon Brown (M.P.)
At 8.25 approx.	Carlos Arredondo (four songs)
At 8.40 approx.	David McDowell (reading of Pablo Neruda poems)
At. 8.55 approx.	Arthur Johnstone

* He has an impressive curriculum, among many things he is a Ph.D. (International Law), London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London. Was a member of the editorial board of the right-wing newspaper El Mercurio (1979-1983) . El Mercurio, a pro Pinochet newspaper, played a mayor role in bringing down the elected government of Salvador Allende in 1973.

** see on this webpage > [Links](#) > “The Judge and the General” , see and hear what Chilean Judge Juan Guzman had to say about it.

*** See my webpage>[MEMORIES](#) > Click here to see the “Memory solidarity gallery”

The SSC was not far from a lovely red building by the river Clyde used then by the STUC. Non-communist Chileans exiles in Glasgow called jokingly this building: The Kremlin! As to make the association that many communists were members of the STUC and supporters of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign.

We have seen already that many Labour MPs were in some way or another involved with Chilean refugees and the solidarity work with Chile and Latin America:

Norman and Janey Buchan, Maria Fife, Robin Cook, Madame Judith Hart, George Galloway, Dennis Canavan, Harry Ewing, Martin O'Neill, Gordon, Ron Brown and others were some of the MPs interested in our cause.

Some of them also were interested in the solidarity work with Nicaragua and El Salvador. On several occasions I played music for the Miners' Gala and political meetings which among the guest speakers were Tony Benn and Michael Foot.

I have a good personal experience dealing with Robin Cook and the case of a Salvadorian living in Edinburgh and his family of two. I had to organise a meeting to meet Mr Cook, at his place, with the Salvadorian and over the phone Mr Cook asked me, in a rather posh English accent, "*Can you please come to my surgery*". I thought at the time that, instead of talking to an MP, I was talking to a surgeon. Mr Cook taught me the other meaning of the word "surgery". He was very nice with us and provided the Salvadorian s and his family some valuable assistance.

Norman Buchan MP.

At times MPs were involved directly with us.

Norman, a wonderful man, was involved not only in politics, as a Labour Member of Parliament, but also very much involved in the traditional music of Scotland.

Norman and his wife Janey (MEP), a former member of the European Parliament, were both involved in the Chile Solidarity Campaign. Jan and others in Glasgow in the 70s organized a concert with the well known Chilean folk band Quilapayun.

More than once I asked them to help me to deal with the Home office. In one of this occasion, I had to go to Chile to visit my old mother in Chile in poor health, as she had been badly affected by the strong earthquake which struck Santiago and other areas of central Chile at the beginning of March, 1985.

As a political exile, Pinochet in power, and my mother in need of help from me I had much apprehension to go to Chile with my family. Some of this anxiety was with my status of residence in Britain and the very delicate political situation in Chile.

It was a very hard decision to take as I was planning to go with my wife and my six months old baby son. I was the only person in a position to help my mother as she did not have any relatives alive. I had nor brothers or sisters.

The first problem to resolve here in Britain was about my residence status as I intended to come back to Britain.

I wrote to Norman explaining my situation and he kindly wrote to the conservative Scottish politician and Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw about my situation. Timothy Raison, a home office minister, wrote back on the 21st of January to Norman on Mr Whitelaw's behalf about my case.

Mr Raison wrote to Norman to tell me that, from the point of view of the British government, they were going to allow me to return to Britain because in 1978 I had been granted indefinite leave to remain in Britain. This meant that my status as a Chilean refugee in Britain was not going to affect me as long as I did not stay away from Britain for more than two years.

This was a relief for me. However, before our departure for Chile, I decided to write to Norman a letter which took the form of a statement. I was afraid of exposing my family and myself to any nasty surprises:

*Edinburgh
31st of March 1985*

*Norman Buchan MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA*

Dear Norman,

On the 5th of April 1985 I, my Italian Wife, and our six months old British son are leaving for Chile to see my old step- mother. The reason of our visit is solely to try and solve a few problems related with the earthquake that shook Chile a few weeks ago. My mother is not very well and she is a victim of that catastrophe.

At the moment, "hit squads" closely associated with the present government of Chile, are operating in my country (see Guardian 30th of March 1985). Due to this fact I wish to declare to you that it is a very traumatic experience for me to go back to Chile under these circumstances. I am ideologically opposed to the policies of the present government of Chile, as are thousands more in Chile itself. There, at the moment, this ideological difference can cost your life.

I came to live in Scotland, where I studied, worked and married and I have been involved in the diffusion of our cultural heritage. I declare to you that I am not a criminal or a terrorist and that in both, Chile and Britain, I have never been involved in any illegal activity or had any trouble with the police. I also declare that it is my firm intention not to get involved in any political activity during my stay in Chile. I intend to come back on the 20th of May.

If anything should happen to me or to any member of my family during our visit to Chile, I would ask you to contact the present Consul of Chile in London and ask the present government, of which you are a representative, to investigate fully all the circumstances and ensure that all measures are taken to assist my family and myself. We go there in good faith to encounter a bit of Chilean history.

*Your friend
Carlos Arredondo*

Norman also decided to write a personal letter, to H.M. Ambassador in Santiago Mr John Hickman. Mr Buchan told me, on my arrival to Santiago, to take his letter by hand to Mr Hickman

From Norman Buchan M.P.
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

31st of March 1985

Your Excellency,

This letter is to introduce Carlos Arredondo who is visiting Santiago with his wife-an Italian citizen-and child.

It is his first return to Chile since leaving there after the fall of the previous Allende regime. He is returning to see his mother who is now 80 years old and is now suffering from increasing ill health.

I have known Carlos ever since his arrival here as a young man. I regard him very highly indeed. I would ask you to give him any assistance that might be needed should he feel he must turn to you for assistance during his short stay in Santiago.

I am also, of course, having a word with Sir Geoffrey Howe to let him know about Carlos' visit.

PS (written by hand) I should add that the child is British.

*Yours sincerely
Norman Buchan.*

I never went to the British Embassy in Santiago. There was no need.

Time ago, Janey told me that Norman had learned about the coup while he was at a Glasgow hospital where he was recuperating after a heart operation. Norman, said Janey, after learning about the fall of Salvador Allende in 1973 he began to cry in his bed.

Refugees were never an isolated group thanks to the good work of the Chilean Solidarity Committee in Britain and the Joint Working Group. (J.W.G.)

The honorary presidents of the Chilean Solidarity Committee in Stirling were The Labour MPs: Dennis Canavan, Harry Ewing and Martin O'Neill. These three Labour MPs were formidable in providing a united voice, against Pinochet's Chile, at Westminster on behalf of the very active Stirling Chile Solidarity Committee.

I remember from this era that Chileans used to receive, and on a regular basis, well presented information from London, produced by the Chilean Joint Working Group. They always kept in touch with us and informed us about: the social, the economic and political situation in Chile, the relationship between them and us and the Government's policies affecting people like them, us and our country. I highly regarded the J.W.G. because they showed themselves to be a serious organisation working extraordinarily hard on our behalf. I have a good collection of J.W.G. documents and information about them. Thanks to the work of the J.W.G. I never felt during my time of exile that we were a group of abandoned people left struggling to our own devices.

On the 15th of November of 1978 Dennis Canavan on behalf of the Stirling Solidarity Committee (Stirling & District Chile Solidarity Committee) wrote to Merlyn Rees at the Home Office about fears of cutting back funds for the JWG and other related matters. The Under-Secretary of the State at the Home Office wrote back to Dennis the following letter:

Home Office
4th January, 1979

Thank you for your letter of the 15th November to Merlyn Rees enclosing a copy of one from the Secretary of the Stirling & District Chile Solidarity Committee about grant to the joint Working Group for Chilean Refugees.

May I first correct a misconception which seems to have arisen over the amount of the grant. As you may be aware it has been agreed that the VSU should make a grant of £137,500 for the work of the Joint Working Group during the financial year 1st April 1978 to 31st March 1979. In addition a special (and non-repeatable) grant of £ 11,000 for 1978/79 only is to be made by the Ministry of Overseas Development to help meet the cost of refugees' travel to and from English classes. Whilst I accept that the total grant is less than the amount requested by the Joint working group it nonetheless represents a sizeable increase over the grant of £119,000 for 1977/78 and not a cut as you were informed.

You will also be aware from the press that we are making funds available to assist voluntary organizations in dealing with the sudden influx of about 350 Vietnamese who were recently rescued on the high seas by a British registered vessel. I mention this only to underline the fact that, while we wish to do all in our power to help these unfortunately people, the potential call on government funds could be very great, and we must limit our help to dealing with immediate and special problems particularly during the early days after they have come to this country. The level of grant for the Joint Working Group for Chileans (as for voluntary organisations) is calculated on this basis.

While the voluntary organisations may wish to do more than this, as far as the government is concerned, it is right for refugees (as for other disadvantaged group) to rely on the normal statutory services thereafter.

In response to a request from the Joint Working Group a meeting was recently held with officials from Voluntary Services Unit and various points raised at the meeting are being followed up.

Your Sincerely

Shirley

(Dr Shirley Summerskill)

We also were very much in touch with other organisations dealing with our country: e.g., the Chile Committee for Human Rights and for them I made documentary film called "Carmen" with Video in Pilton*.

People from the Scottish National Party also took part in solidarity work. I played music at some of their meetings in Ratho many years ago and in their offices in Edinburgh.

I remember once I was invited to play music for a political meeting organised by the Liberal Party, where I met Jeremy Thorpe, the then leader of the party.

*See this web page: > Memories > Video Documentary about Carmen Quintana > Please click here to view Carmen's Gallery > Carmen Video