

# ARGENTINA

## COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA

c/o CARILA, 29 Islington Park St., London N1 9QB 01 359 2270

Jeff Evans  
1 Granville Rd  
London NE4 4EJ.

January 20th 1982.

Dear Jeff Evans,

Thank you very much for your letter and the information about the statisticians' conference in Buenos Aires. We were very glad to know that British statisticians felt strongly that they didn't want to show any support for the dictatorship in power in Argentina, and made their protest by not attending the statisticians' conference.

I was in Buenos Aires during the week of the conference, and wouldn't even have known that it was taking place, had it not been for the arrival in the office of the organisation of relatives of the detained and disappeared prisoners, of a delegation of French statisticians. I thought that you might be interested to hear what they told us of the conference.

Many French statisticians felt the same way as your colleagues: they had no wish for their presence in Argentina to be used as fuel for the dictatorship's propaganda machine. They therefore decided to use the forum to put forward a motion condemning the Argentine regime's violation of human rights, and calling on the dictatorship to give full information on the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared people, especially a number of French citizens. The motion also authorised the conference to seek a meeting with a representative of the government to discuss the question of the disappeared. The motion was approved by the conference (that was why all mention of this very important international conference suddenly dropped out of the press and media altogether). Unfortunately, as you might have suspected, the authorities would not arrange a meeting, and the conference agreed to send a letter of protest.

I also wanted to tell you about the meeting between the relatives of the detained and disappeared prisoners and the French delegation. The relatives were, of course, very moved by the protest of the French statisticians. Often they have had a poor hearing from scientists, who would like to see themselves as being outside human concerns, like the concern over human rights. Yet many many Argentine scientists have been victims of this military dictatorship. The relatives gave the French statisticians a dossier on repression of scientists by the military dictatorship. The relatives are trying to form subcommissions which take up the situation of categories of disappeared persons. They already have a sub-commission working on behalf of the disappeared journalists and writers, and are now creating a subcommission on behalf of the disappeared scientists. They are very interested in making contact with scientists abroad, who can take up their protests from overseas.

The relatives of the disappeared scientists expressed very forcefully their conviction that many of their relatives are still alive. Many feel that not even a regime as brutal as the one that rules Argentina today could have let so much talent go to waste, killing off hundreds of scientists and intellectuals. Some argue that the government has kept some of the scientists, intellectuals and technicians alive, in order to make them work for the regime. This might apply, for example, in the case of nuclear physicists.

Theories like this, unfortunately proliferate in Argentina today, and it is difficult to assess what truth there is in them. The reality is that there are so many disappeared people that it is impossible for someone with any sensibility to accept that all <sup>could</sup> have been murdered so coolly and quietly. For the relatives, it is still less acceptable, and the torture of uncertainty continues.

I think it is of the greatest possible importance to support the relatives of the disappeared people in Argentina in their search for their sons, husbands, wives, children... I wonder what response you have found among British scientists to your mention of Argentina and the problem of human rights. Do you think that there is any chance of developing some kind of coordination of work in the UK on behalf of detained and disappeared scientists? I know that a number of doctors have spoken out on the subject, especially around the time that Estella Falicoff, the wife of a disappeared doctor, arrived in this country.

We would be very interested to hear what you think of this idea, and in general, how you think that scientists in general, or perhaps specific groups of scientists, could best give their support to the relatives searching for their missing.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Paula Orr

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P.S. If you know of any scientists who are interested in getting in touch with the relatives, or if you want to get a copy of the dossier given to the French statisticians, you can write to the Familiares (relatives) at :  
1785, 5<sup>o</sup> piso 'J'  
Capital Federal 1042  
Buenos Aires  
Argentina.