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Chapter 2

Bending the Rules

An Ambassador's Quest to Save Lives

Pascale Bonnefoy

This chapter centers on the pivotal role played by members of the diplomatic corps in the aftermath of the 1973 coup in Chile that ushered in 17 years of military dictatorship, focusing on the Swedish Ambassador to Chile at the time, Harald Edelstam. Drawing from interviews with former refugees, diplomatic personnel and other witnesses, and government records, this chapter documents Edelstam's efforts to provide refuge to the politically persecuted and highlights the way in which Edelstam and the Swedish embassy secured the safety and exit of victims from a country under severe military repression.

Three months into General Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile, the Ambassador of Sweden in Santiago, Harald Edelstam, had fully exasperated the military junta. In late November 1973, the pro-government newspaper *La Segunda* headlined: "Another incident by the Red Pimpernel. How Long Must We Tolerate Ambassador Edelstam?"¹ Three days later, the paper's front page proclaimed: "Out of Dignity, the Swede Must Go."²

The junta that had overthrown Socialist President Salvador Allende declared Edelstam *persona non grata* on December 4, 1973. Ambassador Edelstam had to go. By then, he had bent the rules and official protocol to provide refuge to hundreds of people, pushed other members of the diplomatic corps to open their embassies to asylum-seekers, and negotiated the release of political prisoners with Chilean military officials. As massive, indiscriminate human rights violations were being committed, Edelstam worked closely with other diplomats and humanitarian organizations, while demanding that the new military rulers respect his diplomatic privileges and immunities, which he put to the use of protecting the persecuted.

During the 17-year Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990), the government of Sweden admitted nearly 30,000 Chilean refugees into its territory. Today, the Chilean community in Sweden has swelled to approximately 45,000, and they

continue to pay tribute to Edelstam, who first opened the embassy doors the day of the coup on September 11, 1973.

When Edelstam arrived in Stockholm after his expulsion from Chile, he was greeted as a hero by Chilean and Latin American refugees, but with a cold shoulder from the Swedish Foreign Ministry. His persistent failure to consult or seek authorization for his sometimes unconventional methods had upset his more conservative superiors in government. However, he knew he was fully backed by Prime Minister Olaf Palme. These diplomatic travails were nothing new to the ambassador.

THE MAKING OF A “BLACK PIMPERNEL”

Edelstam was a law graduate, a career diplomat and a descendent of Swedish nobles. His first diplomatic posts in the 1930s and 1940s were hot spots where he did not hesitate to take the side of the victims: first in fascist Italy (1939–1940), then Nazi Germany (1941–1942) and later in occupied Norway (1942–1944). In Oslo, far from being a passive, neutral observer, he contributed to the resistance movement. Edelstam offered refuge to Jews and resistance fighters in his own residence, smuggled them out of the country, set up a clandestine printing press for resistance newspapers and wrote newsletters “that became an important counterweight to the German-controlled Nazi propaganda in Norway.”³

It was in Norway that Edelstam earned the nickname the “Black Pimpernel,” the anger of local authorities and the unease of his superiors. “When Harald returned from Norway, his relationship with the Foreign Ministry had deteriorated and he was assigned a task that seemed more like a punishment for not having followed diplomatic norms: he was placed in a basement and had to carry out menial administrative chores,” explains Henrik Janbell, a former Swedish volunteer in Chile imprisoned during the Pinochet dictatorship and now Vice President of the Harald Edelstam Foundation in Stockholm.⁴

Decades later, in Chile, the military regime and its propagandists accused Edelstam of being a radical and pejoratively called him the “Red Pimpernel,” alluding to his humanitarian past. In Chile, “Edelstam seemed to relive his years in Oslo, when he tricked the Nazi occupiers. He would joke with us and say that the Germans were much more difficult [than the Chileans],” remarked Pepe Viñoles, a Uruguayan refugee under Swedish protection in Santiago in 1973.⁵

Edelstam climbed the diplomatic ranks in missions in Holland (1949–1952), Poland (1952–1953, 1956–1958), Austria (1959–1962), Turkey (1962–1966), Indonesia (1966–1969)—where he was deeply disturbed by the overthrow of President Sukarno in 1967 and the anticommunist persecution that followed,



Photo 2.1 Ambassador Harald Edelstam in Guatemala, 1971. *Credit:* Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

and Guatemala, concurrent to El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica (1969–1972). In Guatemala, Edelstam again faced problems with government officials for denouncing human rights abuses against indigenous communities and befriending guerrilla leaders.⁶

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB

Edelstam was appointed Ambassador to Chile in 1972, two years after President Allende took office as the first avowed Marxist in Latin America to be democratically elected on a platform of revolutionary change. It was no secret that the Swedish Social Democratic government was sympathetic to Allende, as was Edelstam himself: “Sweden welcomed with satisfaction and joy the results of the Chilean presidential election in 1970,” wrote Edelstam in a 1983 book published in Mexico. “The goals of Allende and the Popular Unity [government coalition] fully coincide with those the Swedish nation has set for itself. They wanted to attain, in a short period of time, what Sweden had achieved in 150 years of peace.”⁷

Almost immediately after Allende’s victory, the Swedish Parliament granted Chile a generous loan.⁸ It had already approved funds through the

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) before the presidential election and sent aid to Chile after the 1971 earthquake. In 1972, Chile was included as a program within Sweden's cooperation system and over 20 volunteers from the organization *Utbildning för Biståndsverksamhet* (Education for Cooperation and Development, UBV) arrived in Chile to contribute their professional skills and learn about Allende's peaceful revolution. In late August 1973, less than a month before the military coup d'état, both Sweden and Chile signed a Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agreement.⁹ The two countries also struck military deals, contributing to Edelstam's good rapport with Chile's military brass, which would soon prove to be helpful.

Edelstam landed in Santiago in October 1972. "Mr. Edelstam's appointment in Chile could be a very significant, positive step in our mutual relations. . . . We may also assume that Ambassador Edelstam must already be sympathetic to Chile and the social process underway in our country," observed Chilean diplomats in Stockholm.¹⁰

Edelstam arrived at the height of a deepening political and economic crisis and shortly before a major transportation and business strike rattled the country. Against the backdrop of a United States blockade that was already strangulating the Chilean economy,¹¹ the month-long strike by truckers, the powerful industrial and business association CPC, professional guilds and port workers, among others, paralyzed the country and set the stage for a military coup almost a year later. Chile was increasingly polarized, political opponents had turned into vicious enemies and the civilian and military conspiracy to overthrow the government, backed by the Nixon Administration,¹² was only a matter of time.

FAIT ACCOMPLI: EDELSTAM AND THE CUBANS

"The Allende government had become relevant to Swedish politics and the coup put the entire Foreign Ministry on alert," recalls Peter Landelius, then Secretary to Swedish Foreign Minister Krister Wickman. "The Ministry's Department for Foreign Aid was particularly outraged, while the Political Department saw new clouds on the horizon."¹³

The day of the coup, President Allende was dead, the presidential palace in ruins and Congress closed indefinitely. A military junta took power, inaugurating 17 years of dictatorship and widespread human rights violations. All civil and political rights were suspended, the press censored and a curfew imposed. Military bulletins began announcing the names of the "most wanted" former government officials and political, social and labor leaders, and hundreds of Allende supporters went into hiding. In the days and weeks that followed, thousands would be arrested; almost no one was spared from

some sort of mistreatment, torture or abuse. Soon, tortured bodies began to appear on the streets, rivers and canals. Bullet-riddled corpses piled up in the morgue.¹⁴ “I was shocked by the military’s treason and the brutality and cruelty it unleashed on a defenseless people,” wrote Edelstam a decade later.¹⁵

The Ambassador began irritating the new military rulers almost immediately. The day of the coup, the Cuban embassy in Santiago was under military siege, and the Cubans put up armed resistance. The next day, the junta announced that it was breaking diplomatic ties with Cuba. The military agreed to end the attack on the diplomatic compound and allow the over 120 Cuban embassy staff, family members and others in the mission that day to leave the country.

That evening, as the Cubans prepared to leave, a tense meeting was taking place inside their embassy. Cuban Ambassador Mario García, a handful of other ambassadors, among them Edelstam, and Chilean military officers were discussing the status of the Cuban diplomatic mission. Who would be left in charge of protecting Cuban nationals and interests after they left? Sweden would, Edelstam suddenly announced.

“Edelstam said he would defend with his own life the inviolability of the embassy, as well as Max Marambio¹⁶ and anyone else seeking asylum. . . . If we had left the embassy without that protection and presence, anyone who could have tried to take refuge there would have been arrested and eventually murdered. Ambassador Edelstam was an example of generosity and courage,” said Luis Fernández Oña, a Cuban political officer present at the embassy that day, and husband to one of Allende’s daughters.¹⁷

The Cubans left that night; the caravan of vehicles to the airport was escorted by several ambassadors, including Edelstam. The next day, the Swedish flag was raised on the Cuban embassy grounds and at dozens of offices and residences that had been used by the Cuban diplomatic mission.

Edelstam’s spontaneous decision to assume responsibility for Cuban interests in Chile ultimately saved hundreds of lives: not only did Sweden protect Cuban nationals in Chile and secure their exit from the country, but the Cuban embassy would also serve as Sweden’s main safe haven for refugees, since the building was much larger than the Swedish installations. The Swedes also took charge of a considerable fleet of vehicles that the Cubans left behind, along with their drivers; they would soon be put to use for transporting asylum-seekers.

The day after the coup, Edelstam informed his Foreign Ministry that he already had seven or eight refugees in the Swedish embassy. The following day, he presented his superiors with a *fait accompli* that was practically impossible to revert: Sweden was in charge of the Cuban diplomatic mission.

Edelstam did not request authorization from the Foreign Ministry for these decisions. However, “the defense of Cuban interests was accepted, since it is



Photo 2.2 Ambassador Harald Edelstam meets with Cuban President Fidel Castro in Havana after his expulsion from Chile, January 1974. *Credit:* Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

part of Sweden's longstanding tradition to assist when other countries break diplomatic relations," points out Landelius. "It was obvious for everyone that there was no time to ask. Nobody told Edelstam not to do what he did, or to undo what he had done."

OPENING EMBASSY DOORS

The Ambassador knew he had to act fast. He immediately went about helping the Swedes and Cubans obtain the safe conduct passes from the military authorities that would allow them to leave the country. This included those who had been arrested in the capital and other cities.

Many of the volunteers from Sweden's Education for Cooperation and Development organization (UBV) were working in government agencies at the time of the coup; some would suffer the consequences. UBV volunteer Henrik Janbell, who was working at the Forestry Institute, and Swedish academic Claes Croner were being held in the National Stadium, which was being used as a massive detention and torture center, while Kristian Lund and Maj-Lis Ohlsson were arrested in the southern city of Valdivia. Another Swede, Bobi Sourander, correspondent for the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, would be arrested on October 11 and remained a prisoner

at the National Stadium for 12 days; he was released after several visits by Edelstam to the stadium. Other Swedish volunteers, such as Svante Grände, became involved in local leftist organizations and later engrossed the lists of the disappeared.¹⁸

At the same time, Edelstam opened the doors of both Swedish and Cuban diplomatic grounds for Chileans, including high-ranking Allende government officials, political and labor leaders, and scores of Latin Americans, particularly the most politically sensitive. Many Latin Americans had fled from military regimes in their home countries and sought asylum in Chile during the Allende government. Some were living in Chile with refugee status, but others were clandestine. Some Uruguayans had even escaped from political prison in their own country and were living in Chile under false names.¹⁹ At the time of the coup, there were an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 Latin American refugees living in Chile.²⁰

Hundreds of foreigners were imprisoned, particularly in the National Stadium.²¹ Edelstam sought their release under his custody, visiting the detention camp, negotiating with military authorities and coordinating with international humanitarian organizations. Those who were able to avoid arrest desperately tried to leave the country; many rushed to diplomatic asylum. According to a 1974 Amnesty International report, by mid-December 1973, more than 4,000 Chileans had sought asylum in foreign embassies; all but about 500 had been granted safe conduct passes to leave the country by then.²²

TWO HUNDRED POLITICAL REFUGEES

On September 28, 1973, Swedish Foreign Minister Wickman informed the military junta that his country was willing to receive 200 foreign political refugees and assume responsibility for their travel arrangements, “based on Sweden’s traditional policy of neutrality and humanitarianism.” That day, Edelstam informed the Chilean Foreign Ministry of his country’s offer and requested authorization to select the 200 future refugees himself.²³

Over the following week, the ambassador selected dozens of people to be admitted as refugees in Sweden and requested the safe conduct passes that would allow them to leave the embassy grounds and travel abroad safely under diplomatic protection. Many of them were Latin Americans detained in the National Stadium and often members of radical leftist organizations who were in imminent danger or would not be accepted in other embassies.

On October 3, Edelstam requested safe conduct passes for 23 Bolivians—almost half of them still imprisoned in the National Stadium, who would compose “the first group of the quota” of 200 refugees. The next day, he requested an additional 59 passes for Latin Americans in the stadium.²⁴ The

safe conduct passes were not approved for another month. Around the same time, the Swedish government raised the number to 500, and a month later to 600; by January 1974, the Swedish government had offered political asylum to 700 people.²⁵

REQUESTING BACK-UP

Given the magnitude and urgency of the events, Edelstam requested more funds and personnel from the Swedish Foreign Ministry and specifically asked for diplomat Ulf Hjertonsen, who had recently served at the embassy in Santiago (1967–1970) and was back in Sweden. Coincidentally, Edelstam's younger brother, Axel, headed the ministry's Political Department in charge of Latin American affairs.

Diplomat Ingemar Lindahl was flown in from the Swedish embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Hjertonsen from Stockholm to temporarily assist the embassy in Santiago. By the time Hjertonsen arrived on September 20, there were about 40 refugees of different ages and nationalities in the Swedish embassy, and about 300 in the Cuban embassy, he said.²⁶ "All of this implied a huge logistical task," said Hjertonsen. "We spent hours talking about how to solve problems regarding food for the refugees, beds and places to sleep, how to obtain medical assistance for the ill. Edelstam was phenomenal in all of this, distributing tasks to everyone. The staff assumed them very responsibly."²⁷

Other non-diplomats offered their help independently. Three Swedish women residing in Santiago began assisting the embassy: the wife of Swedish consul Peter Ahlgren, Eva Ahlgren, Sonja Martinsson and Lilian Indseth would play crucial roles alongside Edelstam in the protection of refugees. Swedish journalist Bengt Oldenburg also volunteered assistance. At the time, he was working in Buenos Aires, Argentina and had met Edelstam on previous trips to Chile. They saw each other in Santiago shortly after the coup and Edelstam asked him to help. Oldenburg moved temporarily to Santiago.

"Edelstam had me live in a home that had been previously used by a Cuban diplomatic official. My duties included receiving refugees, distributing them to the different offices and homes and making sure they were safe. I also assisted in relations with the media and with other diplomats," said Oldenburg.²⁸

One of the UBV volunteers, Rolf Bengtsson, an electronic engineer working at the University of Chile's Faculty of Science, offered to help the embassy with the myriad of tasks involved. Edelstam put him in charge of the Cuban consulate building. Within days, it was full of refugees—first other Latin Americans and later Chileans. At its peak, the consulate would provide

shelter to about 50 asylees: “I lived on the grounds permanently. I was responsible for distributing food and there were people in charge of cleaning and cooking. I even taught some basic Swedish to prepare them for their trip to Sweden,” said Bengtsson.²⁹

Swedish actress Birgitta Frisk was studying at the Catholic University’s Art School in Santiago at the time and offered to help the embassy. For months she was put in charge of a group of Uruguayan refugees in one of the Cuban buildings and had to help one of them give birth to twins. “I had to adapt my desk to receive them,” she said.³⁰

They were all granted diplomatic status to facilitate their work. On October 17, Ambassador Edelstam informed the Chilean Foreign Ministry that he would also assume the position of Consul “in order to take care of the interests and protection of citizens in detention or in danger of being so.”³¹ Wilkens, Lindahl and Oldenburg were appointed Adjunct Consuls for the same purpose.

SWEDISH “TERRITORY”

During the first few months after the coup, Edelstam “worked without pause,” says Martin Wilkens, First Secretary of the Embassy at the time. “He negotiated the freedom of political prisoners from the National Stadium; clandestinely transported people who were being persecuted in the trunk of his car; and deliberately defamed the military regime with undiplomatic statements to the international press.”³²

Marcela Ballara, a Chilean leftist who had sought refuge at the Swedish embassy a few days after the coup, recalls that it was common for embassy officials to hang towels from the balconies of the embassy as a signal that the coast was clear during the short lapse of time when the police guards in the perimeter changed shifts. They would then open the gates to asylum-seekers. “When we saw the towels we got out of the car and rushed to the gate, but some armed civilians appeared out of nowhere and came upon us. Fortunately, Edelstam was driving up. He opened the door of his car and pushed us inside. The Ambassador stood next to the car, put his arm on top of it and told them that his car was Swedish territory and they couldn’t violate it,” she said.³³

The issue of diplomatic immunity for embassy vehicles was a permanent source of friction with the military. Ambassador Edelstam, backed by his Indian colleague, demanded the police and military respect the diplomatic immunity that also extended to their means of transportation, according to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations ratified by Chile.³⁴

In early November, the junta distributed a note to the diplomatic corps, the military and the police, asserting its right to search diplomatic vehicles,

claiming that according to its interpretation of international treaties, they did not enjoy immunity.³⁵ But Edelstam paid no attention. He used diplomatic cars to pick up asylum-seekers from their hideouts and sneak them into the embassy, either disguised or hidden in the trunk. Or he drove out during curfew hours to the homes of his asylees to pick up things for them or speak with their families. On several occasions, he went there with the refugees themselves.

Boris Benado had entered the Swedish embassy on September 15 to sign the book of condolences for the death of Swedish King Gustav VI Adolf, or at least that was the excuse. Then and there, he requested and was granted political asylum. Days later, Edelstam took him along to pick up his brother, who was in hiding. Another day, they again drove out together to pick up the wives of the two brothers and their small children. They would all be sheltered in the Cuban embassy under Swedish protection.³⁶

Anatailde Paula de Crêspo, a Brazilian resident of Santiago, was arrested by the police and taken to the National Stadium on September 20. Her husband, also Brazilian, and their two children, born in Cuba, were able to seek refuge in the Cuban embassy under Swedish protection. “Edelstam went to the stadium several times to ask about me but the military said they knew nothing. He never stopped insisting until I was finally released. He gave me life,” she says.³⁷ A few days later, Edelstam took her to her apartment to pick up some clothes. “He was driving and I was next to him trying to appear normal. He told me that if the military stopped the car, he would tell them that I was his wife and didn’t speak Spanish,” she recalls.

Edelstam made a point of frequently visiting the asylees in the different buildings to check on how they were and ask about their needs. He would often spend the night with them, right on the floor, especially in the often-besieged Cuban mission. “He always spoke to us with affection and sincerity; he was concerned about our health and state of mind. Edelstam would take time to lift our spirits and ask us things. I also think he was very brave, because he had to put up with the insults of the military outside every time he arrived,” said Hebert Corbo, a Uruguayan released under Swedish protection from the National Stadium in October.³⁸

BENDING THE TRUTH

It was the only way Edelstam figured he could take 4-year-old Marina Teitelboim, daughter of Communist senator Volodia Teitelboim, out of the country. Her parents were in Moscow on an official mission when Allende was overthrown and the child needed to be reunited with them. Two days after the coup, Marina was taken to the Swedish embassy, but Edelstam later

transferred her to the Cuban mission, “because there were more children to play with there.”³⁹

The girl could not be taken out of the country under her real name: “So Edelstam made up a false name for me. . . . He made me half-Swedish, half-Bolivian.⁴⁰ Expert hairdressers made me rounded braids and I was dressed up like a typical girl from La Paz. . . . Ambassador Edelstam trained me in case the police at the airport asked me anything so that I would never mention my father’s real name,” she recalled.⁴¹ Marina was questioned at the airport but practically did not utter a word. “Then two young women from SAS airlines came to get me and Edelstam accompanied me up to the plane, left me seated and said goodbye,” she said. She did not speak again for an entire month.

Four years later, when Marina was eight, she received a letter from Edelstam, who was then Ambassador in Algeria. Edelstam ended his letter saying: “The plane took off with you and in a way I was happy but also sad, because you had been very brave and a good companion and I would miss you. I hope we will meet again someday, hopefully in a free and happy Chile.”⁴²

A SENSE OF HISTORY

The Swedish embassy also rescued crucial archival material. During the Allende government, film director Patricio Guzmán had been working on a documentary, recording the revolutionary process as it unfolded. However, sensing a coup was imminent after a brief military uprising in late June 1973, Guzmán and his producer Federico Elton took the over 200 tins of film footage and hid them in a trunk at a relative’s home. Around seven tins were left at Guzmán’s own house.⁴³

After the coup, Guzmán was arrested and sent to the National Stadium. The tins, meanwhile, needed to be smuggled out of the country, and Edelstam agreed to ship the negatives abroad. The Ambassador asked Lilian Indseth to coordinate with Elton to discreetly deliver the tins to the embassy. “Lilian would arrive in a diplomatic car and I would get in with the tins wrapped in newspapers. I handed her 10 to 15 tins at a time. We took a lot of precautions,” said Elton. This lasted several weeks.

In November, Edelstam put the tins in 27 diplomatic pouches and personally oversaw their loading on a ship called Río de Janeiro, in the port of Valparaíso, said Elton. When the tins arrived in Stockholm a month and a half later, Guzmán—who had been released from prison by then, Elton and Edelstam, already expelled from Chile, were waiting at the dock. “Edelstam had realized the historical importance of this material. He told us that he had kept the negatives next to his bed the whole time,” says Elton.⁴⁴

The three-part documentary, entitled “The Battle of Chile,” was produced by the Cuban Film Institute ICAIC in 1975 and won six major film awards in Europe and Latin America.⁴⁵ The cameraman who filmed Allende’s revolution, Jorge Müller, was arrested by Pinochet’s secret intelligence agency DINA in November 1974 and remains disappeared.

MILITARY HARASSMENT

The embassy grounds—particularly the Cuban buildings—were under constant military and police surveillance and often suffered attacks. The mildest harassment included cutting off water, telephone and electricity services. Some Cuban offices were also vandalized. On September 14, armed civilians broke into the Cuban commercial bureau and stole a typewriter, office supplies and furniture. Weeks later, on October 8, 20 members of the military broke into a Cuban apartment under Swedish protection. It was the third time the military raided the same office, Edelstam complained to the Chilean Foreign Ministry.⁴⁶

It was common for the military to intimidate embassy staff as they entered the grounds. On more than one occasion, the military tried to enter the Cuban embassy by force, once rolling into its grounds with a tank. Edelstam personally stopped it from advancing, recalls Marcela Ballara, a refugee there. “Harald stood in front of the tank and told the officer: If you want to come in, you’ll have to run me over,” she said.

Refugees often heard shots fired from the outside directed at the embassy building. The most serious incident occurred in December 1973, when Edelstam was already back in Sweden. A shot fired toward the embassy injured Rolando Calderón, a former government official and refugee there, in the head. Sweden sent a doctor to treat him but the government refused to authorize his intervention and had Calderón operated in the Military Hospital. Calderón survived and eventually returned to Swedish protection.

Not even Swedish citizens were exempt. On November 6, Margareta Sourander, wife of Swedish journalist Bobi Sourander, was arrested with two Chilean drivers of the Cuban embassy as they tried to enter the grounds. Military patrols were letting only people with Swedish diplomatic passports enter the Cuban embassy, and none of them had one. Two Embassy officials were impeded by the police from leaving their homes to consult about what had happened, and their phones were cut. They were later barred from visiting the detainees and the government refused to provide reasons for the arrest.

This situation outraged Edelstam as well as Prime Minister Palme, who informed the Swedish Parliament of the events, and reflected: “The bottom line is this: Allende’s victory in the 1970 elections gave the poor hope of a

better society and greater human dignity. These hopes were quashed with violence. . . . The overthrow of a government elected by the people in Chile has raised the question of whether, in general, it is possible to carry out profound changes in a poor and unfair society without having privileged groups resorting to violence.”⁴⁷

Edelstam did what he often did when colliding with the military: he called the international press. The more media coverage it got, he believed, the more protection. Edelstam’s statements to foreign journalists about these arrests angered Chilean officials, who accused him of seeking publicity. They also claimed that asylees in the Cuban embassy had fired on military patrols in the exterior. “Edelstam has apparently been extremely outspoken with members of foreign press corps in his condemnation of new Chilean government,” wrote the United States Deputy Chief of Mission in Chile at the time, Herbert Thompson, in a confidential telegram to the State Department. “He has, according to some Chileans, purposefully fostered and revelled in his ‘Scarlet Pimpernel’ image. Over past weeks Edelstam has engaged in a number of altercations with Government of Chile officials, including one in which he reportedly pushed aside military guards at Cuban Embassy who wanted to inspect documents of passengers he was bringing into compound,” he informed.⁴⁸

FORCING OTHERS TO ACT

Other European embassies in Santiago also opened their doors to asylum-seekers, among them France, Finland, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Switzerland. Latin American nations such as Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia and Panama did the same, but many others were under military rule themselves and were therefore not an option. Most Eastern European nations broke diplomatic ties with Chile after the coup and therefore had no representation in Santiago, although they did welcome and assist hundreds of Chilean exiles in their countries. The United States, which supported the Chilean junta, refused to provide refuge or shelter in its Embassy in Santiago to anyone, not even to their own imperiled citizens.⁴⁹

The Swedish ambassador harshly criticized other diplomats or international organizations he did not believe were doing enough in light of the ongoing human rights violations. “Early on, Edelstam led diplomatic efforts to force the junta to respect the right of asylum and for greater interaction with the embassies of non-Latin American countries,” recalls Lindahl.⁵⁰ Weeks into the dictatorship, the Norwegian embassy had not admitted any refugees. “Edelstam believed that this was due to the personal position of the ambassador [August Fleischer], whom he considered to be reactionary and

pro-Junta,” said Rolf Bengtsson. “We spoke about this and came up with a plan to try to get people inside their embassy and force it to act.”

The plan was somewhat extravagant and not free of risk for the asylum-seekers themselves. Edelstam and Bengtsson would mount two parallel operations. The ambassador took two Chilean refugees in his car and dropped them off a short distance from the Norwegian embassy. There were no guards or police in the perimeter, because the Norwegian embassy had no need for it. While Edelstam waited in his car, the Chileans rang at the gate and requested asylum. However, they were turned down and had to return to Edelstam’s car.

Meanwhile, Bengtsson drove a Bolivian couple near the Norwegian embassy, and their strategy was to enter the grounds by climbing over a wall. They were able to enter and request asylum, but the Norwegian Ambassador called the police and a patrol arrived to arrest them. “But we had arranged for two Swedish journalists—Jan Sandquist and Bobi Sourander⁵¹—to stand by and register the scene,” recalls Bengtsson. “Before the Bolivian couple was taken out of the embassy by the police, these reporters confronted the diplomats, saying that what they were doing was wrong. The Bolivians ended up staying in the embassy, but the next day the front pages of Swedish and Norwegian papers carried the story of how the Norwegian ambassador was handing over refugees to the police.”

The Norwegian government subsequently sent diplomat Frode Nilsen to Chile as a “special Asylum Envoy,” and opened the embassy doors; by mid-November, the Norwegian embassy had a dozen refugees.⁵² “This action totally changed the Norwegian embassy’s policy on political asylum. Edelstam and I were very happy,” said Bengtsson.

REFUGEE NETWORK

Ambassador Edelstam’s efforts were not isolated. As he and other diplomats took in asylum-seekers and negotiated safe conduct passes, many Chileans, individually or through political, social or church organizations, were setting in motion a modern day underground railroad, providing temporary safe houses and logistical support and securing contacts to get people under diplomatic protection or out of the country. International agencies and religious organizations set up refugee centers, assisted families of the persecuted, and convinced the new regime to respect the rights of refugees.

For the first time in its history, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) opened refugee centers in the same country undergoing conflict. The Swiss Ernest Schlatter headed the Chile mission. In 1973–1974, the UNHCR Santiago resettled about 2,600 foreign refugees, helped those

opting for repatriation to return to their countries of origin, and assisted the ones who chose to remain in Chile.⁵³

In early October 1973, the junta authorized the creation of the National Committee to Assist Refugees (CONAR, in Spanish), a Chilean ecumenical group presided by the German Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz.⁵⁴ CONAR worked in coordination with the UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)⁵⁵ to assist foreigners and Chileans, including those still in detention. CONAR was authorized to operate through February 1974, and during that period helped 4,442 people leave the country,⁵⁶ with funds from the UNHCR and the World Council of Churches.

SECURING SAFE CONDUCT PASSES

Getting the junta to respect the bounds of diplomatic immunity and the rights of refugees was one thing, but obtaining safe conduct passes to take them out of the country was an entirely different matter, especially for people the military regime considered “extremists,” “terrorists” or even “common criminals.” Despite the vast network of people and organizations mobilized to provide a safe exit from Chile, there was a fundamental problem. Sweden, as the rest of Europe, was not part of the 1954 Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, ratified by about half of Latin American countries.⁵⁷ This did not mean that they could not offer diplomatic asylum, but that the host country—Chile, in this case—had no obligation to respect it, and much less authorize the safe conduct passes that would allow refugees to leave the embassy grounds and the country under diplomatic protection. These passes were issued by the Foreign Ministry’s Office of Protocol.

As of early October, the regime had repeatedly refused to grant a pass to the prominent Communist labor leader Luis Figueroa, claiming he was a “common criminal seeking to evade justice.”⁵⁸ A few days later, Edelstam moved Figueroa to his personal residence. Axel Edelstam, the ambassador’s brother in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, intervened in the matter. He met with Víctor Rioseco, Chile’s Chargé d’Affaires in Stockholm, and told him that if his government refused to grant Figueroa a safe conduct pass, Sweden would allow him to stay in the diplomatic mission as long as necessary. But, he warned, if that were to happen, it would seriously damage Chile’s international image, because Sweden and other European nations would call for a general protest that would lead to massive demonstrations against the Chilean junta.⁵⁹ Figueroa was finally authorized to leave with diplomatic protection in 1974.

Edelstam used a variety of tactics to obtain “courtesy safe conducts.” Requests through regular diplomatic channels were often accompanied by direct conversations or negotiations with the Foreign Ministry’s Office of Protocol, a “slow and difficult process,” according to Bengtsson. Thanks to the contacts he had made during his prior post in Chile, Ulf Hjertonsson was able to arrange a meeting with the director of the Carabineros police force, Gen. César Mendoza, whom Edelstam considered to be more flexible than the other members of the military junta. “The meeting wasn’t the most pleasant I’ve had in my diplomatic career, but we did obtain about 40 safe conducts,” said Hjertonsson.⁶⁰

Edelstam also sought the collaboration of Latin American embassies that could invoke the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum to request the safe conduct passes. The Venezuelan and Mexican embassies, among others, would ask for passes for refugees who were actually under the protection of the Swedes. “We were good friends [with Edelstam] and agreed to help us mutually,” said former Mexican ambassador Gonzalo Martínez. “I offered to do what we ended up doing: he would take his ‘asylees’ to the doors of the Mexican embassy, where I would receive them. We would send them to Mexico, and there he would make sure they were transferred to Sweden.”⁶¹

Another means of exit was through tourism agencies, which at the time were allowed to do the paperwork to obtain passports for travelers. “We requested passports for the refugees through these agencies, which weren’t aware of who they really were. To our surprise, we got about 50 Chilean passports. This worked especially in cases of people who were from other cities and their background information wasn’t in Santiago. I accompanied them to the government office to pick up the passports, because they had to do it personally, and then to the airport. We would usually send them as tourists, without need of a safeconduct, to Buenos Aires, where they would make contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,” explained Bengtsson.

Edelstam even exploited General Pinochet’s diplomatic blunders. On October 29, General Pinochet sent the Swedish embassy a greeting card for King Gustav VI Adolf’s birthday; however, the king had died over a month earlier. “This was a diplomatic gaffe we were able to use for a long time. During the most complex discussions over safeconducts and other problems, we would shake our heads very seriously, suggesting to government officials that we could send the junta president’s unfortunate greeting card to the monarchy,” said Lindahl.⁶²

One day, Hjertonsson suggested to Edelstam that they invite officials from the Office of Protocol to dinner at the Swedish residence “as a way to thank them for their favors.” After dinner, the hosts and guests from the Foreign Ministry sat down in the living room when the doorbell rang. In came a disguised Miria Contreras, known as “Payita,” Allende’s secretary and confidant,

for whom the military was searching intensely. They had even offered a reward for her capture. "We were very frightened because it was a very complicated situation. Harald, very calm, stood up, excused himself and accompanied her upstairs. When he returned downstairs, he offered the Head of Protocol a good Cuban cigar. We had a lot of cigars thanks to the Cuban embassy," he recalls.⁶³ Edelstam hid Contreras in the third floor of the Cuban embassy. No one was allowed there and not even the other refugees knew of her presence in the embassy. The military junta would not find out for another two months.

PERSONA NON GRATA

Ambassador Edelstam was facing resistance from his superiors at the Swedish Foreign Ministry. Some officials felt that the Chilean left was using him and that his behavior was reckless. "Edelstam was never a star in the eyes of his colleagues, and at times he was seen as a nuisance. Chile was the most eminent example of the latter," said Peter Landelius. The Ambassador was especially shunned by the ministry's Director of Political Affairs, Count Wilhelm Wachtmeister, a conservative, old-school diplomat who never concealed his dislike of the ambassador and his methods. "I knew Edelstam was receiving telegrams with instructions from the Foreign Ministry, but he largely ignored them. He believed the fascist military had committed serious crimes, violated the constitution and destroyed democracy and that upset him profoundly. He said the situation in Chile was extremely dangerous and exceptional and that required taking actions and positions that were also exceptional," said Bengtsson.

However, Edelstam knew he was fully backed by Prime Minister Palme, as well as by much of Swedish public opinion. "Harald was always supported by Olof Palme, whom he had known for years," wrote Edelstam's son Erik many years later. "Lisbet Palme [the Prime Minister's wife] told me how Harald would call their home at night. Olof Palme would sit in the kitchen and they would discuss over the phone what to do and how to save more lives. That's why Harald felt absolutely confident and could receive the angry criticism from Wilhem Wachtmeister without much concern. But he had no support from the Swedish Foreign Ministry. His brother Axel was the only one there who supported him. Everyone else wanted him to return to Sweden."⁶⁴

In Chile, Edelstam was object of a bitter political and media campaign to discredit him and portray him as a pawn of the left. Chilean newspapers loyal to the new military rulers published a number of articles decrying his actions, with insinuations that Chileans would boycott the Scandinavian airline SAS, or accusations that other European diplomats were facing criticism in their home countries for not adopting similar positions. Already in mid-October of 1973,

the Foreign Ministry's Director of Protocol Tobías Barros had to deny rumors that Chile would declare Edelstam *persona non grata*, which essentially meant that he would be expelled from the country. These rumors, wrote the pro-junta newspaper *La Tercera*, "were based on certain attitudes that the diplomat has maintained since the military pronouncement last September 11."⁶⁵

The regime was particularly infuriated by the release under Swedish protection of 54 Uruguayans detained at the National Stadium on October 16. Although the paperwork and logistics of the massive release of foreign prisoners to the Swedish embassy had been in preparation for weeks, with the coordination and acquiescence of Chilean military officials, the Uruguayan embassy and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, three prisoners had slipped through the cracks.⁶⁶ The three, which included Hebert Corbo, were considered "extremists" who were to be prosecuted by a military court, and not released to the Swedish embassy.

During a meeting with the ambassadors of Peru and France to discuss the issue of safe conduct passes, Chile's Foreign Minister Ismael Huerta reportedly called Edelstam a "provocateur." According to a "Latin American colleague" of United States Deputy Chief of Mission in Chile, Herbert Thompson, "Huerta was particularly upset by Edelstam's performance at the National Stadium, where he apparently bluffed military authorities into turning over to him a number of Uruguayan prisoners without having previously received appropriate authorization and safeconducts from the Ministry of Foreign Relations."⁶⁷

In early November, in a telegram to Washington, Thompson described rising tensions between Edelstam and the Chilean junta. A source within the Chilean Foreign Ministry, he said, had mentioned that the junta wanted to declare Edelstam *persona non grata*, but that "given Chile's international image problem this may not be advisable." Thompson then remarked:

Foreign Ministry professionals' view that Chile should try to avoid expelling Edelstam may not be taken to heart by GOC. There is group of military officers pressuring junta for permission to get into Cuban Embassy primarily to look at arms cache and communications hardware they believe to be there. While it would appear GOC is not about to attack building as Edelstam's press statements would indicate, possibility for further incidents—perhaps even involving gunfire—are very real. GOC spokesman's Nov 7 statement may have been simple warning to Edelstam or may be justificatory prelude to his expulsion. (One report from untested source indicates junta has already decided to expel Edelstam.)⁶⁸

One particular episode in late November marked the last straw for the military regime. In a scene fit for a movie, Edelstam, embassy officials, French

Ambassador Pierre de Menthon, and a UNHCR representative sustained a literal tug-of-war with the military and police in the hallways of a health clinic over a stretcher with a Uruguayan refugee under Swedish protection, Mirtha Fernández. She had been rushed to the clinic for an emergency medical procedure the day before. An army captain in charge of the patrol pointed a gun at Edelstam and the police eventually took over the stretcher with Fernández and arrested her. In the struggle, Edelstam was pushed and fell to the floor.⁶⁹

The incident sparked the immediate protest of the Swedish government, with an equally vehement response from Chile. The Chilean Foreign Ministry presented “its most formal protest for the repeated behavior of the head of that Diplomatic Mission, which in no way corresponds with diplomatic practices and does not contribute to strengthening the cordial relations that have always existed between Chile and Sweden.”⁷⁰ The regime claimed that Edelstam had not requested appropriate authorization to transfer Fernández to the clinic.

The junta complained about Edelstam to the Swedish government through its Ambassador in Brussels, Carlos Valenzuela, who traveled to Stockholm to meet with Foreign Minister Sven Andersson.⁷¹ According to a telex describing that meeting, Andersson said that regarding the question of refugees, Edelstam had the complete support of his government, but admitted that his behavior “seems to have strayed” from “usual diplomatic practices.” Valenzuela then told Andersson that Chile had allowed several countries to take in refugees, even though they were not signatories to the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, but that only Sweden was a “problem,” “due to the unfriendly behavior of the Ambassador, and so it was up to the government of Sweden to take the appropriate measures.”⁷²

In a follow up cable the next day, the Chilean embassy in Stockholm informed Santiago that the issue of granting safe conduct passes for refugees was being hampered by Edelstam’s conduct and the Swedish government had to do something about it. “The Minister [Andersson] told me, literally: ‘I perfectly understand what you are saying,’” reported Valenzuela.⁷³ Valenzuela commented that during a private meeting with political officer Knut Thyberg,⁷⁴ the latter remarked that “there were ambassadors who acted like politicians” and that their ambassadors in Hanoi and Santiago “had created serious problems for the government.” Thyberg told him that Foreign Minister Andersson “shared that concern.”⁷⁵

Count Wachtmeister was sent to Santiago on December 2 to resolve the matter, and met with Foreign Minister Huerta. With Wachtmeister still in Santiago, on December 4 the Chilean government declared Edelstam *persona non grata*. Asked by reporters about the reasons behind the decision, the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Carvallo, was brief: “In these cases we have no comment.”⁷⁶

After receiving notice of this from the Office of Protocol, Edelstam sent a note back to Chile's Foreign Ministry to request safe conduct passes for Miria Contreras, her daughter, son in law and their small son. For the first time, the junta would have evidence of where "Payita" had been hiding.

The same day Edelstam was declared *persona non grata*, the Chilean government issued a circular to all resident diplomatic missions of countries that were not signatory to the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum stating that since public order was now "completely assured," there was no longer any reason for the presence of "guests" in these missions. No more "courtesy" safe conduct passes for "guests" would be issued after December 11, said the circular, and asylees would have to use regular exit procedures to leave the country. This circular, said the U.S. embassy in Santiago in a telegram to the State Department, "reflects hardening Government of Chile attitude toward the role of European missions in asylee problem."⁷⁷

Edelstam returned to Stockholm less than a week later. With him traveled 20 political refugees from the Swedish embassy, most of them Latin American.⁷⁸ In 2007, Wachtmeister wrote in retrospect:

Our ambassador in Santiago, Harald Edelstam, assumed a very militant attitude towards the Pinochet government. . . . He acted as a sort of miniature Wallenberg. Any dialogue with the Chilean government, given the circumstances, was made difficult, and the work of the embassy was impossible given the number of refugees there. . . . Edelstam was not very receptive to the instructions of the Foreign Ministry. He was driven by his own humanitarian passion and a fervent animosity, supported by radical circles in Stockholm. . . . Chile's decision to expel Edelstam relieved the Swedish government from the need to send him home. An untenable situation received a convenient solution and Chile ended up being the villain in this drama.⁷⁹

Carl-Johan Groth was called in from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to assume as Chargé d'Affaires in Santiago on December 10. He followed Edelstam's general policies on refugees, but acted discreetly to avoid angering local authorities. It was he who had to negotiate safe conduct passes for the most controversial of embassy "guests," among them Miria Contreras, Luis Figueroa and Max Marambio. Most refugees in the Swedish and Cuban diplomatic missions were able to leave the country by mid-1974.

REMEMBERING EDELSTAM

Back in Europe, Edelstam received a warm welcome from the grateful Chilean and other Latin American refugees he had helped save and participated actively in the Chilean solidarity movement. "He did this as a private

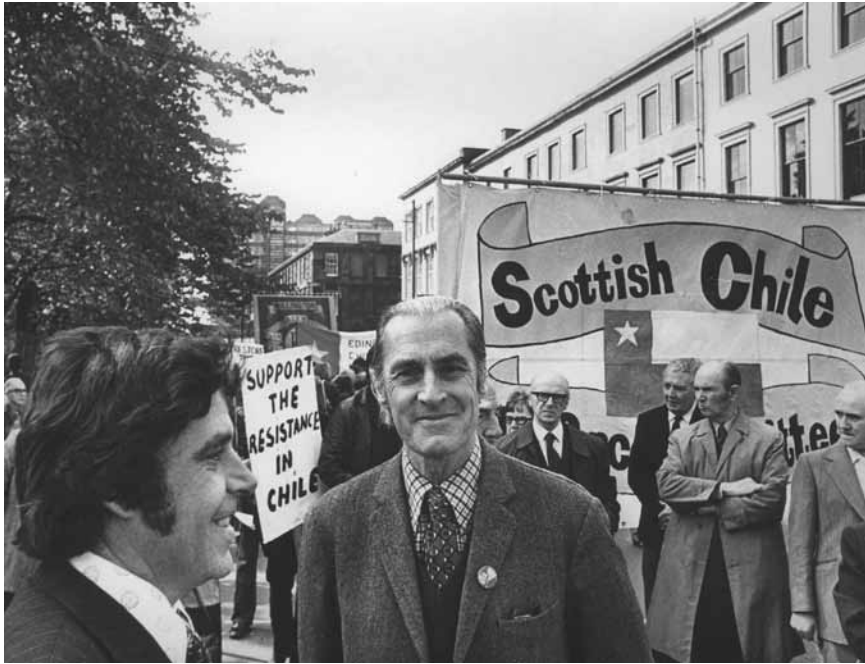


Photo 2.3 Ambassador Harald Edelstam at a demonstration in solidarity with Chile in Glasgow, Scotland, 1974. *Credit:* Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

person, not as a representative of Sweden, but it must have irritated his colleagues, and possibly also the Swedish Government,” said Landelius.

In Stockholm, Edelstam faced harsh criticism from his colleagues, particularly Wachtmeister “because he had not obeyed the ministry’s instructions and for having saved the lives of communists and revolutionaries,” said Henrik Janbell. But he was also shunned by members of his own family and childhood friends, “who saw him as a class traitor,” said Janbell. Over a year later, Edelstam was appointed ambassador to Algeria, his last post before retiring in 1980.

Harald Edelstam died of cancer on April 16, 1989 at the age of 76 and was buried in the cemetery of Ekerö, a municipality outside Stockholm. “He died a rather lonely man, as many of his friends and colleagues turned their backs to him after his civil disobedience as the Swedish Ambassador in Chile. My grandfather is better known and more appreciated in Sweden today than when he returned from Chile in 1973, and he has received some redress. However, he is still more regarded as a hero internationally than in Sweden,” said Caroline Edelstam, the former ambassador’s granddaughter.⁸⁰

Despite being the subject of several books and a fictional movie⁸¹ based on his experience in Chile, Edelstam’s humanitarian work as a rescuer is not well

known in Sweden. His life and diplomatic efforts are kept alive primarily by a few family members and the Swedish and Latin Americans he rescued from persecution in Chile.

In Uruguay, former refugees named a park avenue in his honor in 2005, while in Chile, the San Miguel municipal library in the capital carries his name. Chilean human rights activists founded the Harald Edelstam Corporation, which, among other activities, has organized commemorations, and in April 2015 unveiled a “Human Rights Sculpture” in a small plaza in the Municipality of Providencia in Santiago, with a plaque honoring Edelstam’s defense of human rights.

In Sweden, a group of Chilean exiles founded the Edelstam Association in 2008. A year later, the Association created the Edelstam Foundation, presided by Caroline Edelstam. Since 2012, the Foundation awards the Edelstam Prize to a nominee “who has acted in Ambassador Harald Edelstam’s spirit” and shown “outstanding capabilities in analysing and handling complex situations and in finding ways, even unconventional and creative ones, to defend Human Rights.”⁸²

In May 2016, during a visit to the Swedish Parliament, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet donated a sculpture of Edelstam in appreciation for his humanitarian actions in Chile after the military coup. “There are notable people whose deeds and values persist through time and are kept alive in the memory of societies. Harald Edelstam is one of those people. He saved many Latin American and Swedish lives in Chile during military dictatorship, risking his own personal safety. That’s why he remains in our hearts,” she stated.⁸³

The first civilian president after Chile’s dictatorship, Patricio Aylwin (1990–1994), posthumously awarded Edelstam the Bernardo O’Higgins Order in recognition of his humanitarian assistance after the coup.⁸⁴ Caroline Edelstam received it on behalf of her grandfather. “He received the order as an evidence of his extraordinary deeds in the defense of human rights,” she said. “My grandfather’s spirit is with me every day—the sentiment that the stronger ones must help the weaker ones. We must believe in humanity and its willingness to change. We need to find inspiration in order to be courageous and we need the stronger persons to show us the way. My grandfather was such a man, an inspirer, even if he was just an ordinary grandfather to me.”

NOTES

1. “Otro incidente protagoniza el Pimpinela Rojo,” *La Segunda*, November 26, 1973, p. 1.
2. “Por dignidad, el sueco debe irse,” *La Segunda*, November 29, 1973, p. 1.
3. The Edelstam Foundation, “HE Background,” www.edelstam.org/background.

4. Email interview with Henrik Janbell, Stockholm, October 4, 2014.
5. Pepe Viñoles, "Harald en los días de Chile," *Rodelu*, April 19, 2002, www.rodelu.net/perfiles/perfil10.htm.
6. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe militar y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El caso de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), 28.
7. Harald Edelstam, "Allende en mis recuerdos," in *Allende visto por sus contemporáneos* (Casa de Chile, Mexico, 1983), 69.
8. *Ibid.*
9. This agreement was never implemented, because Sweden broke off all cooperation with Chile after the military coup a few weeks later. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe militar y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El caso de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), 25–26.
10. "Confidential memo N° 2094 from the Embassy of Chile in Stockholm to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," *Historical General Archive*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago, June 15, 1972.
11. Paul E. Sigmund, "El bloqueo invisible y la caída de Allende," *Revista Estudios Internacionales* 7, no. 26 (1974), Institute of International Studies, University of Chile, Santiago.
12. Church Report, "Covert Action in Chile 1963–1973," United States Department of State, Washington, D.C., December 18, 1975, <http://foia.state.gov/Reports/ChurchReport.asp>; and Peter Kornbluh, "The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability," The New Press: New York, 2003.
13. Email interview with Peter Landelius, Santiago, April 11, 2014.
14. Official reports established that over 3,100 people were killed or disappeared and about 38,000 suffered political prison and torture during the dictatorship. Over half of those abuses occurred in the first few months.
15. Harald Edelstam, "Allende en mis recuerdos," in *Allende visto por sus contemporáneos* (Casa de Chile, Mexico, 1983), 74.
16. The only person who remained in the embassy after the Cubans left was the Chilean Max Marambio, of the left-wing MIR movement, a former member of Allende's personal guard and a Cuban Special Troops officer himself. Marambio would end up organizing the living arrangements for the hundreds of asylees who eventually took refuge there until he was finally authorized by the military junta to leave the country ten months later.
17. Hernán Soto, "El yerno cubano de Salvador Allende," *Punto Final* N° 647, Santiago, September 7, 2007. Retrieved 18 April 2014 from: www.puntofinal.cl/647/yerno.htm.
18. Svante Grände became a member of the Chilean leftist political-military organization MIR. After the coup he entered Argentina clandestinely, participating in a guerrilla movement in Tucumán organized by the Argentinian organization PRT-ERP. He was killed there in 1975. To date, his remains have not been found.
19. Over 100 political prisoners of the Uruguayan Tupamaro guerrilla movement escaped from the high-security prison Punta Carretas in September 1971. Among

them was Uruguay's recent president, José Mujica (2010–2015), who was recaptured a month later. For a testimonial account of Uruguayan refugees and prisoners in Chile, see: Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro and Graciela Jorge Pansera, "Chile roto: Uruguayos en Chile 11/9/73," Ediciones TAE, Montevideo, 1993.

20. Amnesty International, "Chile: An Amnesty International Report," *Amnesty International Publications* (London, September 1974, 64).

21. According to an incomplete list of prisoners published in 2000 by Pinochet's former intelligence chief Manuel Contreras, over 620 foreigners were held in the National Stadium alone. The largest groups came from Bolivia (147), Uruguay (89), Brazil (88) and Argentina (63). See Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda, "La Verdad Histórica, el Ejército Guerrillero," *Ediciones Encina* 29 (Santiago, 2000): 238–55.

22. Amnesty International, "Chile: An Amnesty International Report," *Amnesty International Publications* (London, September 1974, 67).

23. "Diplomatic Note °136 from the Embassy of Sweden to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile. (Santiago, September 28, 1973).

24. "Memorandums N °152 and 215 from the Embassy of Sweden to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile. (Santiago, October 3–4, 1973).

25. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe militar y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El caso de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), citing Magnus Mörner, "Foundation and Uncertain Developments: 1951–1976," in Jaime Beharç and Mats Lundahl, *Half a Century Retrospect. Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institute of Latin American Studies in Stockholm*. (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003, 7–45).

26. Anna-Karin Gauding, "Collar de Voces. Testimonios sobre Harald Edelstam, un diplomático comprometido," Embassy of Sweden and Chile-Sweden Institute of Culture (Santiago, February 2014, 20).

27. *Ibid.*

28. Email interview with Bengt Oldenburg, Barcelona, April 30, 2003.

29. Interview with Rolf Bengtsson, Santiago, March 31, 2014.

30. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 30).

31. Memorandum of Swedish embassy in Santiago to Chilean Foreign Ministry, Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago, October 17, 1973.

32. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 25).

33. Interview with Marcela Ballara, Santiago, February 27, 2014.

34. Article 22 (3) of the Convention states: "The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution."

35. "Confusa situación de Embajador sueco," *La Segunda*, November 7, 1973, 1.

36. Interview with Boris Benado, Santiago, February 28, 2014.

37. Email interview with Anatailde Paula de Crêspo, Recife, April 13, 2014.

38. Email interview with Hebert Corbo, Stockholm, March 17, 2014.

39. Letter from Harald Edelstam to Marina Teitelboim, February 22, 1978. Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.

40. She used the name Marina Nordenflycht Farías. Nordenflycht was the last name of her mother's first husband and stepbrother.

41. Testimony of Marina Teitelboim delivered in Oslo, Norway in November 2013 during a conference to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of Harald Edelstam. Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.

42. Letter from Harald Edelstam to Marina Teitelboim.

43. Patricio Guzmán, interviewed for the television program "Chile in flames. The art of censorship," directed by Carmen Luz Parot. Broadcast in Chilevisión, October 28, 2015.

44. Telephone interview with Federico Elton, Santiago, February 28, 2014.

45. The documentary may be downloaded from Patricio Guzmán's webpage: www.patricioguzman.com/index.php?page=films_dett&fid=1.

46. Memorandum of Swedish embassy in Santiago to Chilean Foreign Ministry, October 9, 1973, Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago.

47. Statements of Prime Minister Olof Palme to the Swedish Parliament, November 7, 1973, translated and transmitted by the Chilean embassy in Stockholm to Chile's Foreign Ministry. Aerogram RIE N° 69, November 21, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

48. Telegram N° 5482 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, "Swedish-Chilean Relations at Flash Point," November 8, 1973. United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. <http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx>.

49. This was the case of Marc Cooper, a former translator for the Allende government who sought help from the U.S. embassy and was turned down, despite the fact that the military had raided his home and stolen his passport. U.S. citizens Joyce Horman and Terry Simon also faced a similar situation when they requested protection after Joyce's husband, Charles Horman, was arrested by the military. Charles Horman was subsequently killed. See Marc Cooper, "Pinochet and Me," New York: Verso, 2001, and Thomas Hauser, "The Execution of Charles Horman," New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

50. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 23).

51. Sourander was released from prison in the National Stadium on October 23.

52. A similar situation was occurring in the Austrian embassy. Ambassador Adolf Hobel had shown scant disposition to admit refugees. He was replaced by Paul Sleifer during the last week of October. By mid-November, Austria had admitted 61 refugees into the country, 20 of whom had received asylum in its embassy in Santiago. "Austria Retira Embajador," *La Segunda*, November 15, 1973.

53. Refugees Magazine, "Chile: When we're no longer needed," 104 UNHCR, Geneva, June 1996. www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3b5695774&query=Chile%201973.

54. Bishop Frenz was one of the founders of the Committee for Peace, which preceded the Vicariate of Solidarity, Chile's most important church-based human rights organization. He was expelled from Chile in 1975.

55. Today the International Organization for Migration.
56. National Committee to Assist Refugees, "Report September 1973-February 1974," Santiago, June 1974, 1.
57. The Convention was ratified by Peru, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, among other nations. Chile signed it in 1954 but never ratified it. Nevertheless, Chile generally accepted and respected the customary practice of diplomatic asylum, as did much of the region.
58. Telex N° 44 from the Office of Protocol of the Chilean Foreign Ministry to the Embassy of Sweden in Santiago, October 16, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.
59. Confidential memorandum N° 567/211 from the Chilean embassy in Stockholm to the Chilean Foreign Ministry, 10 October 1973, Stockholm, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.
60. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 20).
61. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 40).
62. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 23).
63. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 21).
64. Erik Edelstam, "Pappa räddade liv – blev mobbad på UD," *Expressen*, September 11, 2007. <http://www.expressen.se/debatt/pappa-raddade-liv--blev-mobbad-pa-ud/>.
65. *La Tercera*, October 17, 1973, Santiago, 3. "Military pronouncement," is how regime supporters called the coup d'état.
66. Pascale Bonnefoy, "Terrorismo de Estadio. Prisioneros de guerra en un campo de deportes," (Editorial CESOC-América, 2005, Santiago, 167–173).
67. Cable N° 5583, "Fonmin criticizes Swedish Ambassador," November 14, 1973, United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. <http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx>.
68. Telegram N° 5482 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, November 8, 1973.
69. Bonnefoy, 174–75. Mirtha Fernández was incarcerated by the military and expelled to Sweden ten days later.
70. Diplomatic note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile to the Embassy of Sweden, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago, November 27, 1973.
71. Foreign Minister Kirsten Wickman had resigned on October 30 and Andersson, then Minister of Defense, had replaced him.
72. Telex N° 89 from the Embassy of Chile in Stockholm to the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 26, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.
73. Telex N° 69 from Ambassador Carlos Valenzuela to the Chilean Foreign Ministry, November 27, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.
74. Knut Thyberg was head of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry's Bilateral Unit, working under Axel Edelstam.
75. Ibid.
76. "Declaran persona no grata al sueco," *La Segunda*, December 4, 1973, 24.

77. Cable N° 5986 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to the State Department, "GOC to bar safe-conducts for diplomatic 'guests,'" December 6, 1973, United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. <http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx>.

78. A five minute video interview with Edelstam during that flight is available (in Swedish) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I02hoG7H-M>.

79. Wilhelm Wachtmeister, "I question Edelstam's opinion," *Expressen*, Stockholm, September 15, 2007. www.expressen.se/debatt/jag-ifragasatter-edelstams-omdome/.

80. Email interview with Caroline Edelstam, October 25, 2014.

81. "The Black Pimpernel" (2007), directed by Åsa Faringer and Ulf Hultberg.

82. The Edelstam Foundation, "Guidelines for Nominations to the Edelstam Prize." <http://www.edelstamprize.org/>. The 2014 prize consisted of US\$ 25,000 and a small art piece and was granted to the Guatemalan of Mayan origin, Benjamin Manuel Jerónimo. In 2012, the Prize was awarded to Iranian political prisoner Bahareh Hedayat.

83. The Edelstam Foundation, "Presidenta de Chile hace entrega de estatua de héroe diplomático Harald Edelstam al Parlamento sueco," Press Release, *MyNewsDesk* (May 11, 2016).

84. The Bernardo O'Higgins Order is awarded to foreign citizens who have made important contributions to the country in different areas, including humanitarian cooperation.

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APPENDICES

AMBASSADE ROYALE DE SUÈDE

Argelia, 22 de febrero, 1978.

Querida Marina,

Hace ya cuatro años y medio desde que llegaste a la residencia de la Embajada Sueca en Santiago y mas tarde te trasladé a la Cancillería Cubana que estaba bajo nuestra custodia. Te llevé ahí porque había muchos niños como tu con quienes podías jugar. Tu hermano también estuvo ahí.

Nos hicimos muy buenos amigos y tu parecías contenta jugando con los niños dando la impresión que ignorabas que la Cancillería estaba rodeada de soldados armados con metralletas que apuntaban a la Embajada. Durante las comidas cantabamos tus bellas canciones chilenas y una vez por semana bailabamos todos para mantener la moral en alto.

Y así llegó el día en que tu partida se hizo posible. Tenías un documento de identificación sueco como Marina Nordenflyght pero tu no querías partir y trataste de esconderte. Yo mismo te llevé al aeropuerto y la policía nos siguió. Le mostré tu salvo conducto a la policía del aeropuerto y tu tarjeta de identidad pero ellos sospechaban algo, y te preguntaron tu nombre y quiénes eran tus padres. Tu respondiste siempre con tu vocecita: "soy Marina y mis padres están en Suecia." No pudieron sacarte ni una palabra mas. Incluso siguieron interrogándote una vez dentro del avión de la SAS que te conducía a Suecia.

El avión partió contigo y, en cierto modo, me sentí contento pero triste al mismo tiempo porque habías sido una valiente y buena compañera y te eché de menos.

Esperemos poder encontrarnos otra vez y que sea en un Chile libre y feliz.

Con cariño

Harald Edelstam

(Letterhead) Royal Embassy of Sweden

Argelia, 22 February 1978

Dear Marina,

It's been four and a half years since you arrived at the residence of the Swedish Embassy in Santiago and I later took you to the Cuban mission under our custody. I took you there because there were many other children like you with whom you could play. Your brother was also there.

We became good friends and you seemed to be happy playing the children, giving me the impression that you were oblivious to the fact that the mission was surrounded by soldiers armed with machine guns pointing at the Embassy. During dinner we used to sing your beautiful Chilean songs and once a week we all danced to keep up our morale.

And then the day came when your departure was made possible. You had a Swedish identification card as Marina Nordenflycht, but you didn't want to leave and tried to hide. I myself took you to the airport and the police followed us. I showed your safeconduct pass to the police at the airport and your identity card but they suspected something, and asked you what your name was and who your parents were. You answered with your little voice: "I'm Marina and my parents are in Sweden." They were unable to get anything more out of you. They even continued questioning you aboard the SAS plane that would take you to Sweden.

The plane left with you, and in a certain way, I felt happy but also sad, because you had been a brave and good companion and I missed you.

I hope we can meet again in a free and happy Chile.

With affection,
Harald Edelstam

Source: Translation provided by Pascale Bonnefoy.

Appendix 1 "Letter to Marina Teitelboim." Four years after helping four-year-old Marina Teitelboim leave Chile to reunite with her parents in Moscow, Harald Edelstam wrote her a letter. Credit: Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.

3
DESPECHADO 14,25 hrs

DIRECCION GENERAL.

A
EMBACHILE ESTOCOLMO
TELEX DG Nº58.

3 DICIEMBRE DE 1973.-

SECRETO ,CIRCULACION RESTRINGIDA

RUEGO A US SOLICITAR URGENTE AUDIENCIA MINISTRO RREE, Y EXPRESARLE OFICIAL Y VERBALMENTE QUE EL SR HARALD EDELSTAM HA DEJADO DE SER PERSONA GRATA COMO EMBAJADOR DE SUECIA ANTE EL GOBIERNO DE CHILE, SIN FUNDAMENTAR ESTA DECISION.
EN CASO SE LE SOLICITE NOTA ESCRITA QUEDA US AUTORIZADO HACERLO EN LOS MISMOS TERMINOS.
SIRVASE US AVISARME DE INMEDIATO CUMPLIMIENTO PRESENTES INSTRUCCIONES, FIN HACER PUBLICA DECISION GOBIERNO QUE MANTIENE HASTA AHORA EN ABSOLUTA RESERVA.

ISMAEL HUERTA DIAZ
VICEALMIRANTE
MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES

[Signature]
V282

“Persona non-grata”

To: Embassy of Chile in Stockholm

Telex DG N°58

3 December 1973

SECRET. Restricted distribution.

Please request an urgent meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to officially and verbally inform him that Mr. Harald Edelstam has ceased to be a persona grata as Ambassador of Sweden before the Government of Chile, without providing reasons.

If a written notice is required, you are authorized to provide one in these same terms.

Please notify me immediately upon compliance of these instructions so as to make public this government decision, which as of now is being kept strictly confidential.

Ismael Huerta Díaz
Vice Admiral
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Source: Translation provided by Pascale Bonnefoy.

Appendix 2 “Persona Non Grata.” Secret telex sent by Chile’s Foreign Minister, Vice Admiral Ismael Huerta, to the Chilean embassy in Stockholm requesting an urgent meeting with the Swedish Foreign Minister to inform him that Edelstam was considered a persona non grata for the Chilean government.