

# Don't be fooled by Argentine cup image

By RAYMOND SMITH

THE Cork-born priest, who was imprisoned in the Argentine in 1976 but later released, is now working with a Committee for Human Rights, trying to focus world-wide attention on the situation in the country that will play host to the World Cup in June.

Father Patrick Rice from Fermoy has been travelling for the past three months but is soon expected to go to Venezuela and resume missionary work there. He was arrested by the Argentinian authorities in October, 1976 on suspicion of passing out leftist guerrilla leaflets but his release followed intensive diplomatic activity by the Department of Foreign Affairs and admirable efforts by the Irish Embassy in Buenos Aires.

The full-time executive head of the Committee for Human Rights in Argentina, Richard Whitecross (who was himself held for a time in Argentina when working for the Oxford University Press there) was in Dublin during the past week and had talks with officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

He was seeking to ascertain the attitude towards political refugees from the Argentine. Already there had been talks with officials of the British Foreign Office on the same subject.

Britain allowed in over 2,000 refugees from Chile but is understood to be adopting a more careful approach to the question of refugees from Argentina, as that country is so much larger and Britain is involved in a dispute with Argentina over the Falkland Islands (claimed by Argentina).

For Ireland, Argentina is not remote or obscure but a country with which we have enjoyed excellent relations and the historical links are very close also. Irish rugby teams have played there and in the past week a League of Ireland soccer team provided the opposition for the Argentinians in a World-Cup warm-up.

The Committee for Human Rights, which claims that there are no less than 7,000 held in detention in the Argentine, did not call for a boycott of the '78 World Cup. It realised that it would be unrealistic and would alienate many who might otherwise support its general aims.

But Richard Whitecross points out that the eyes of millions around the globe will be on Argentina during the World Cup. He claims that the Argentinian authorities have spent millions and millions of pounds to stage the World Cup in order to give the world a more favourable impression of the country.

"We do not want the soccer writers or commentators or the thousands who will go there to watch the games to fall into the trap of thinking everything in the garden is rosy," he said.

"We want them to realise the truth behind the facade."



★ Richard Whitecross . . . "truth behind facade."