

ARGENTINA

Projects involving research into historical sources, investigations of cases arising from this research, services to families of disappeared persons, the creation of a “blood bank,” and academic activities.

Since it was founded in 1984, EAAF’s work in Argentina has focused on investigating cases of persons who were disappeared during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983). In 1998, as in previous years, EAAF concentrated much of its energy on working with a variety of sources of documentation, such previously inaccessible, which contain a great deal of information about the disappearances. EAAF has also been creating new data bases that allow us to store and analyze this information.

Information from these sources enabled us to resolve 18 cases of disappeared persons during 1998.

In 1998 EAAF initiated a new project: a blood bank that will facilitate future attempts to reach identifications through genetic analyses.

EAAF also continued to carry out academic, scientific, and public education activities throughout the year.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: ORAL SOURCES

During 1998 EAAF continued its on-going efforts to collect oral testimonies about disappeared persons and the circumstances in which they were disappeared or killed. We conducted interviews with a number of sources, including relatives of the presumed victims, former prisoners, and former political activists targeted by the state during the dictatorship.

Relatives

Although relatives of presumed victims now often come to us requesting information, we always interview them while they are in our

offices. In 1998 we interviewed 179 persons. Of these, 17 were mothers or fathers of victims, 75 were children of victims, 56 were siblings, and 7 were friends or more distant relatives. These distinctions can be significant because different sorts of relatives often provide different sorts of information. Parents and spouses usually know more information about a victim’s physical condition than children and friends, for example, while spouses and friends may know valuable information about the victim’s political activities or other aspects of his or her history.

EAAF members spend considerable time on each interview, and spent additional time following up on each case.

Former Prisoners

Many persons who were held captive in the Clandestine Detention Centers (*Centros Clandestinos de Detención*, or CCDs) and were subsequently freed know valuable information about the fates of disappeared persons. In the interviews with these persons, we try to determine who was held in the CCDs, and how the CCDs functioned.

The majority of the “liberated” prisoners have already testified before different human rights organizations. In each interview that we conduct, however, we try to expand the testimony and cross-check the data they provide us with information from other sources. For example, many of them do not remember – or never knew – the real names of other prisoners, but they do remember their nicknames or physical features.

In 1998, we interviewed 22 former prisoners/disappeared persons.

Former Political Activists

EAAF has also conducted a number of interviews with activists from revolutionary organizations that were active during the 1970s. These activists provide valuable information about the membership of the disappeared in these organizations, as well as the structure and clandestine relationships between members of these groups. Such information allows us to link disappeared persons with specific CCDs. We know, for example, that CCDs generally operated within a designated territory, and often targeted specific organizations during a particular period of time. Accordingly, it is sometimes possible to learn which CCD a disappeared person was taken to from information such as the place or date of his or her kidnapping. For that reason, it is important to determine where and in which section or cell of an organization the disappeared person was active. In many of the cases, the parents and other relatives of the victims were unaware of this information, or had not provided it during previous testimonies out of fear.

In 1998, we conducted thorough interviews with 11 political activists, from whom we have been able to reconstruct to a substantial extent the clandestine structure of the Montoneros, the PRT-ERP, the OCPO, etc.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: WRITTEN SOURCES

During the last military government, the bodies of disappeared persons were taken to one of three destinations: they were thrown from military aircraft into rivers, lakes, and the Argentine Sea; they were cremated; or they were buried as "NN" ("no name," or "John Doe") in public cemeteries across the country. In the latter cases, government agencies, including the police and the National Registration Office, often created a number of bureaucratic records concerning the bodies of victims buried as NNs. After disappeared persons were kidnapped by state security forces, they were typically taken to a clandestine detention center, tortured, and,

often, killed. When the intention was to dispose of bodies by burying them, the security forces often deposited the bodies in public places, and placed an anonymous call to the local police precinct announcing that the bodies had been "found." At that point, the police and other bureaucrats frequently followed the procedures they would undertake in any routine case involving an unidentified corpse. These procedures included writing a description of the find, taking photographs, fingerprinting the corpse, conducting an autopsy or external examination of the body, writing death certificate, making an entry in the local civil register, issuing a certificate of burial, and making an entry in the cemetery records. Through these procedures, the bureaucracy created a number of documents containing important information about the disappeared persons.

Accordingly, during the past few years EAAF has focused increasing amounts of time and energy on gathering information from documents of this type that are available to the public. In addition, we have attempted to gain access to police files not normally accessible, with considerable success.

The Buenos Aires Provincial Police Archives

In 1997 EAAF gained access through a court decision to the so-called "Cadavers' File" microfilms archived in the microfilm section of the Computer Records Division (División de Informatica) of the Province of Buenos Aires Police (PPBA). These microfilms contain the fingerprints of bodies whose files were transferred to the "Prior Record" ("Antecedentes") section of the PPBA for identification. If the deceased had no prior record, they could not be identified and remained listed as NNs ("no names," or "John Does"). In 1997, two EAAF members gained limited access to examine the files on microfilm, but were not able to copy them.

In early 1998 EAAF gained further access to PPBA as a result of an "intervention" into the provincial police department mandated by the

Governor of Buenos Aires province, Dr. Eduardo Duhalde. Lawyer Luis Lugones, appointed to head the intervention, used a provincial law to order hundreds of active officers to retire and began an unprecedented reform of the PPBA. The Intervention lasted until April 12, 1998, when a law dissolved the Buenos Aires Police and created the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Province of Buenos Aires. Dr. Leon Arslanián, a former member of the National Court of Criminal and Correctional Appeals for the Federal Capital was appointed to head the new ministry. Dr. Arslanián had been a judge in the 1985 trial of the military junta, and later served as Minister of Justice during Carlos Menem's first term as president.

In February 1998, EAAF gained greater access to PPBA documents by signing a contract with the intervening authorities that allowed it to conduct a thorough investigation of the provincial police records, and on July 1, 1998, two EAAF members began the investigation. We conducted a survey of the Police Photography Section's archive of negatives and selected 450 negatives, the majority of which corresponded to photos of cadavers that had been taken at the request of Police Sanitation of La Plata, at the time the autopsy was conducted. The EAAF members photocopies these microfilms and entered information from them into a new Access database. We also copied the microfilms that constituted the "Cadavers File" in the PPBA's Division of Fingerprinting, which contained complementary information. A total of 889 microfilms were photocopied and classified.

The microfilms revealed that the police had identified some of the disappeared victims whose bodies had been "found" in public places, but had never contacted the families. The families thus had no certainty about the fates of their relatives, and did not know the location of the remains.

EAAF used the information from the microfilms to develop hypotheses about the identities of a number of other victims. We attempted to match historical data described in the police files with information about NNs contained in the National Registration Office

records. We also cross-referenced the fingerprints of unidentified persons from the "Cadavers File" microfilms with those of disappeared persons obtained by EAAF from the National Registration Office. (In Argentina every citizen needs requires two sorts of identification, one issued by the police and one by the National Registration Office. Both types of ID require fingerprints, which remain on file with the police and the National Registration Office. Through the Sub-Secretariat of Human Rights EAAF has gained permission to request copies of these fingerprints for the purposes of making identifications, and over the past few years we have requested copies of the prints of a number of disappeared persons.) The characteristics of each set of fingerprints are coded according to a standard procedure that enables rapid initial comparison between the fingerprints of the disappeared persons and the fingerprints at the police archives. When we identify probable matches between sets of fingerprints we requested that experts from the Division of Fingerprints of the Technical-Scientific Police conduct a more rigorous comparison.

Through these procedures, during 1998 we identified 18 persons whom the CONADEP testimonies listed as "disappeared." We have decided not to make public the list of persons identified until the families are duly notified. Accordingly, the "Cases from Police Archive Research" section below describes only those cases in which the families have been informed and have given their consent for the information to be published.

In some cases we were able to locate the cemetery where these persons were buried, but in most cases we are still working to connect the information about the appearance of the body with the place of burial.

The reports on the identifications were presented to the National Criminal and Correctional Appeals Court of the Federal Capital, in the context of Case File L.6, "Case File of the Acts Related to the Destiny of Persons Disappeared During the Period between 1976 and 1983."

The Federal Police (PF) Archives

In 1998, the National Criminal and Correctional Appeals Court appointed EAAF members as experts in investigations concerning the case file L.6, entitled "Case File of the Acts Related to the Fate of Persons Disappeared During the Period between 1976 and 1983." This case established that all Argentinean citizens have the right to request a judge to undertake an investigation into the fate of a disappeared relative. It is in the context of such investigations that the above-mentioned National Court was able to gain access to the Federal Police archives.

We decided to begin examining the Book of Entries of Cadavers of the Police Photography Division. We examined the photos of cadavers and attached information about date, place, name of victim, the number of the police file, etc., which corresponded to deaths that had occurred during the period between 1975 and 1980 for further analysis.¹ Then, we selected and entered approximately one thousand microfilmed police records into an Access database.

Again, we found that while about 90% of the records corresponded to unidentified people, the Federal Police had identified about 10% of the victims. Typically, the police had not notified the families, and the victims were still known, and listed in CONADEP and other official records, as disappeared.

In 1999, the EAAF began to analyze the Book of Files of Cadavers of the Fingerprint Division, and we plan to consult the information from the Division of Police Records. As we gather the information, we will cross-reference it with other information in our database. This will allow us to construct hypotheses about identities of the NNs, and to cross-reference the fingerprints in the same way we have done with the cases from the provincial police archives.

The Registry of Deaths

All deaths that occur in the Province of Buenos Aires are supposed to be registered in the Provincial Registry of Persons, a provincial

government office that is responsible for recording and archiving the birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage licenses of all residents in the province. Even bodies that were "found" or "appeared" on the street during the dictatorship, most of which were those of disappeared persons, were generally registered with this office. As a consequence, the office probably contains a record for almost all the persons who were executed extra-judicially, except those whose bodies were cremated or dumped in the ocean.

Death certificates include information about place, date, and hour of death; sex; age; stature; cause of death; and clothing and other personal belongings worn at time of death.

EAAF began the task of recovering these death certificates and a number of other bureaucratic documents about the "NNs," such as cemetery records, in 1988. In 1996, however, we began to undertake this work in a more systematic fashion. Access to these certificates was achieved thanks to an agreement signed with the national Sub-Secretariat for Human Rights that year.

In 1996 two members of the EAAF began to enter into a database information from the death certificates of young "NNs" (unidentified persons) and identified young persons who had died violent deaths.² We included the latter category because we had discovered that in some cases the person had been identified by the authorities, although the families had not been notified; most of these cases are probably non-political homicides, but we decided to include them for later verification in the EAAF's list of disappearances. The death certificates were taken from the 1976, 1977, and 1978 registration books from the counties in the province of Buenos Aires that surround the Buenos Aires city limits.³ In total, we entered 3319 death certificates from 25 of these counties. Thus, by 1998 we had covered almost all the counties in greater Buenos Aires area.⁴ However, the books in the provincial office from several other counties were in such bad condition that it will be necessary to travel to the county offices to consult the original records. This work still

needs to be completed.

The information from the death certificates was entered into EAAF's database, and is often cross-checked with other data. During 1999 we plan to conduct a number of statistical analyses of this data.

In 1998, we also began to compile the death certificates in the National Registration Office for "NNs" found within the City of Buenos Aires.

CONADEP

During its nine months of operation in 1984 the CONADEP (Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición Forzada de Personas), a special commission created by ex-president Alfonsín to inquire into human rights violations committed by the former military regime, produced the largest archive concerning disappearances in Argentina.⁵ This archive is the most significant "post factum" attempt by the Argentinean state to collect information concerning disappearances. It consists primarily of depositions told by survivors and relatives of the more than 10,000 victims of forced disappearances. In 1984 CONADEP presented a public report summarizing its findings to the Alfonsín government; the report was published later under the title "Never Again." The Under Secretariat of Human Rights has continued to receive testimonies that were not given earlier.

EAAF consults this archive systematically to obtain additional information about particular cases. We intend to gather information from all files of persons who were disappeared in the Capital and the Greater Buenos Aires, as this is the area where many of the persons disappeared, and most of the requests for information come from persons living in this area.

One member of the EAAF consults the CONADEP archives twice a week. As of this writing we have copied or photocopied information from 2077 case files.

EAAF'S DATABASE

In 1988 EAAF began to create a database, using the list of cases presented to the

CONADEP as its initial data. Over the past ten years EAAF has expanded this database substantially. The new information comes from a wide range of sources: investigations of cases, interviews, news articles about findings of bodies and confrontations from newspapers of the period, and cemetery records. Most of our information concerns disappearances that occurred in the city and province Buenos Aires.

We have organized the information into several different sub-databases, according to the way we make use of it.

1) All cases are entered into a main database. The entry for each case includes all available information about the person who was disappeared, killed, or freed as described by friends or family members or by the person him or herself. The entry also describes the person's relationships with other persons, and indicates whether they were seen at a clandestine detention center (CCD). Physical data about the person provided by relatives – including both general information (age, height, hair color, etc.) and specific information (osteological and dental) – is entered into a parallel database.

2) The second database contains information from cemeteries located through the capital and greater Buenos Aires, and contains information about the place and date of death, the name of the victim, who brought the body for burial, and the date and precise site of the burial.

3) The third database contains archaeological data gathered during our excavation of the 134th sector of the Avellaneda Cemetery, where we exhumed 335 skeletons. Each of the skeletons was coded, and a physical description of each skeleton, together with pre- peri- and post-mortem characteristics determined through laboratory analyses, was entered into the database.

In 1998, the incorporation of new information from the sources we had already consulted as well as the new ones required us to make a number of changes to the general database.

Accordingly, we took the following steps:

* We created an additional database, in which we entered information from all the death certificates corresponding to the “NNs” recovered from the Provincial Registry of Persons.⁶

* We added an extra screen in the main database in which we entered the codified fingerprints of the disappeared persons. The characteristics of each set of fingerprints are coded, and it is possible to conduct searches that attempt to match these codes with those of other fingerprints on file in various police archives. This database, as explained above, will yield full results once we have all the available information from the various sources. (See the sections above for more detailed information.)

* We entered the data from the Police archives in an Access database, together with the codes for the fingerprints taken at the time from the bodies that were found. Although we can already conduct comparisons of data, we are studying how this information can be incorporated directly into the main database.

* We also have several Access databases that contain other kinds of information which we still do not have a way of cross-referencing, but which we need to keep. Such information includes the DNA sequences from skeletal remains of presumed disappeared persons and from blood samples from relatives of disappeared persons (see DNA). The sequencing tests are conducted by specialized genetic laboratories, but EAAF uses the test results to generate hypotheses about victims’ identities.

INVESTIGATIONS RESULTING FROM RESEARCH IN THE POLICE ARCHIVES

As discussed above, during 1998 we were able to identify 18 persons who were identified in the CONADEP testimonies as “disappeared.” We have decided not to make public the list of identified persons until the families are duly

notified. For that reason, this section describes only the cases in which the families have been informed and have given their consent.

The Corti, Rave and Hurst Case

Early in the morning of August 4th 1976, state security forces,⁷ acting on information from an informant, raided a house in Villa Adelina, a neighborhood in the greater Buenos Aires area. Three members of the Montonero guerrilla movement who lived in the house, two men and a woman, were killed.

The three victims were buried in the Municipal Cemetery of San Isidro as unidentified persons (NNs). The deaths were documented in the death certificates numbered 1372, 1373 and 1374 of the Civil Registry of San Isidro.

The incident was described in several newspapers the following day, among them La Opinion, which described it as “[a confrontation between] joint forces and subversives in Villa Adelina [that] resulted in the deaths of two men and one women.”

The sole survivor was a three-month-old baby, who was taken by the troops. He was first placed in a children’s home, and was taken from there to an unknown location a few days later. The child is still listed as disappeared, despite the investigations initiated by the maternal grandparents and subsequently by the Association of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo. However, the investigation revealed the child was probably Horacia Pietragalla, son of Liliana Corti. Subsequent testimony from other former Montonero guerrillas suggested that the persons killed in the house were Corti (26 years old) and the two persons who lived with her, Carlos Marcelo Rave (25 years old) and Eduardo Luis Hurst (21 years old).

The 1984 Investigation

In 1984, irregularities observed in the Municipal Cemetery of San Isidro prompted the opening of a judicial investigation. This investigation resulted in the exhumation of three “N.N.” individuals, corresponding to the three

death certificates from the aforementioned 1976 shoot out in Villa Adelina – in other words, bodies that in principle belonged to Corti, Rave and Hurst. The bodies were then transferred to the Forensic Expert's Office in La Plata. However, the exhumation was conducted in a non-scientific manner, and the remains were damaged and possibly confused. These problems, together with the absence of sufficiently relevant pre-mortem data, prevented investigators from making identifications.

The 1998 Investigation

In 1998, during our research into police archives, EAAF members discovered that the provincial police had identified two of the victims in the case of Villa Adelina – Corti and Rave – soon after they were killed. Similarly, the Federal Police had identified all three bodies, as belonging to Corti, Rave and Hurst. Neither police forces, however, had informed the families of these identifications.

In 1998, EAAF's discoveries led to the opening of a new case in Federal Court No. 2 of San Martín. At the request of the court, EAAF members were appointed Forensic Experts in the case.

EAAF members traveled to La Plata to investigate the remains. Unfortunately, the three skeletons recovered in 1984, together with several dozens of others exhumed that year, had not been adequately preserved. In addition to the problems created during the exhumation procedures, some of the remains appeared to have subsequently gone missing, the bags they were kept in were broken, and the labels had been lost. We were able to reconstruct the contents of two of the bags, but the findings were so confused and deteriorated that we could only make limited interpretations of the remains.

Analysis of the remains revealed that one of the skeletons could not belong to one of the victims in the case, because it belonged to a man approximately 50 years of age. The identities of the other two skeletons were still in question, however. Photographs taken at the time of the exhumation revealed that the skeletons in the bags were those that had originally been

exhumed. Accordingly, we concluded that the error had been committed during the exhumation. Since the three burial spots were next to each other, two of the victims of the incident may have been exhumed with a third body unrelated to the case. If this hypothesis is true, it suggests that one of the victims from the case was left in the original burial spot.⁸ The chaotic state of the corresponding inhumation records prevented us from learning anything about the origins of the erroneously exhumed skeleton.

The other two skeletons, one male and one female, corresponded to the general ages of Corti, Rave and Hurst.

We have recommended to the intervening Court that it authorize genetic testing to corroborate the identifications established through the documents.

The Maria Leonor Pappaterra Case

Twenty-eight year old Maria Leonor Pappaterra, also known by the alias "Renée," disappeared on the morning of March 1st 1977. She was on her way to a meeting in the western part of the greater Buenos Aires area, where she was an active member of the local Montoneros organization. Fellow activists told EAAF that she probably died in a confrontation with armed forces while trying to get to the meeting. Her husband, José Mende, had disappeared in November of 1976, and she had been living with a couple of fellow activists and her five-year-old son. When she disappeared, the couple took the child to his maternal grandmother's house in the city of Cordoba, where he currently lives.

The incident may have been the one described during the next few days in several papers. On March 3rd, 1977 La Opinión ran a story that stated:

The local Military Command announced yesterday that in the town of Ramos Mejía, Maria Ines CUNQUEROS (a) "Renee", press and propaganda secretary of the Montonero OPM, was killed... The Communique of Zone 1 expressed the following: "The Command of Zone 1 informs that as a result of the offensive operation against subversion, on

March 1st 1977, in the locality of Ramos Mejia, a patrol of joint forces surprised the subversive delinquent Maria Irene CUNQUEROS (a "Renee", Press and Propaganda Secretary of the Montoneros OPM. When she was given the order of detention for her identification, she responded with gunshots and hand grenades, initiating a confrontation that culminated in the death of the subversive delinquent. From the place where the events took place, the command found a 9 mm pistol, several spent cartridges, and a small bag of cyanide that the woman had among her clothing. Of the intervening forces, one officer was lightly wounded and one combat vehicle was damaged.

The place and date given in the story coincided with the place where Pappaterra's fellow activists believed she had been killed, and the nickname given in the paper, "Renee," was one Pappaterra had used. Although the name of the victim given in the army's press release was not Pappaterra, on at least one other occasion the armed forces had used the name from a victim's false document in a press communiqué.⁹

Taking into account the date and location of the shoot-out, EAAF searched for the death certificate at the registration office for the area where the shoot-out took place, and found a certificate for an "NN" that matched the information about the case. The certificate stated that an unidentified female subject had died on March 1st, 1977, at 10:15 AM in Escalada and Gaona (four blocks from the Ramos Mejia train station). The document gave a brief physical description - "25 years old, 1.65 m., 52 kg., white skin, blonde hair, light eyes, medium-sized mouth, straight nose" - and described the clothes she was wearing at the time of her death - "black skirt and checkered blouse." This information matches Pappaterra's physical characteristics and the clothes witnesses describe her wearing on the morning she disappeared.

EAAF communicated this information to the family. The family then petitioned the Federal Court of Buenos Aires to conduct an investigation into the case, and requested that EAAF be appointed as expert witnesses in the investigation. The Court ruled that the EAAF could conduct the archaeological recovery of the remains contained in the burial plot number 496

in the "O" sector of the Cemetery of the Villegas, where the remains of an unidentified woman had been buried.

EAAF conducted the exhumation of plot 496 in December 1998, and completed the archaeological report in February 1999. The report concludes that some determinations made during laboratory analysis, including sex, age, height, cause of death, correspond with physical information obtained about Ms. Pappaterra. In the absence of significant pre-mortem data for comparison, however, this evidence is not sufficient to establish a positive identification. Accordingly, the report recommended that genetic tests be carried out in order to try and establish the victim's identity with more certainty. The parents have given their approval for this step, and we are currently waiting for the Courts or the Under Secretariat for Human Rights to provide the necessary funds for the tests.

The Romulo Carlos Giuffra case

Romulo Carlos Giuffra, a 24 year-old architecture student at the University of Buenos Aires, was an activist in the Montoneros in the western area of greater Buenos Aires. He was married to Sonia Severini and the couple had one daughter.

On February 22, 1977 he did not return home. His wife managed to find out that he had been kidnapped after he had left his job and was waiting for a bus in González Catán, in the province of Buenos Aires. She never heard anything from him again.

In March 1998, when EAAF began to analyze the information obtained from the Microfilm archives of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, we learned that the police had identified a number of victims of repression but had not communicated the information to the victims' families. One of these cases was that of Rómulo Carlos Giuffra, who appeared under Cadaver Record Number 48.555. The record had been transferred to the Chief of the Provincial Police in February 1977 by the sub-precinct of González Catán.

EAAF members cross-referenced this information with our database, and were able to corroborate the testimony of the disappearance in the CONADEP, case number 3933. Using our database of death certificates from the Provincial Registry of Persons, we found that the case corresponded with Act 101 of the Book IB of the Civil Registry of La Matanza. The Registry entry records the death of a 25-year-old male NN on at 3:20 p.m. February 25, 1977 on Route 21 and Colonel Monasterio street in the neighborhood of González Catán. It attributes cause of death to "multiple gunshot wounds."

With the information from the death certificate, we discovered that Giuffra had been buried as NN in burial plot 870 of the "O" sector of the Cemetery General Villegas. Unfortunately, despite a judge's order that, as the sector of the cemetery was under investigation, it could not be disturbed (issued in the case "Cavallo del Valle and other claims"), the remains had been transferred to the common ossuary. Accordingly, it is practically impossible to recover the remains or return them to the family.

Finally, through the aforementioned "Cavallo del Valle and other claims" case, we discovered that the XV Regional Unit of La Matanza reported that the respective case file had been transferred to a military court (Consejo de Guerra Estable 1/1)

In April 1998 we contacted Rómulo Giuffra's wife, Sonia Severini, and sister, Lidia Giuffra, and told them of the information we had found. They presented a petition to the Federal Court, as part of case L.6 entitled "Case File of the Acts Related to the Destiny of Persons Disappeared during the Period Between 1976 and 1983," requesting legal verification of EAAF's findings and the rectification of the death certificate at the Provincial Registry of Persons from "NN" to Rómulo Giuffra.

The Jorge Fortunato Camilión Case

On September 13, 1977 the newspaper La Unión ran the following story:

MORON, Bs. As. - The Command of Zone 1

announced today that yesterday, at a house in Morón, officers from that unit killed Jorge Fortunato Camilion, (a) "Jorge," a leader of the OCPO organization. At the end of the confrontation, officers found a child, Camilion's son, inside the house. The child was unhurt.

On March 10, 1998, Cristina Cárdenas, wife of Jorge Fortunato Camilión, came to the EAAF office. She explained to us that although she knew through the news article about the existence of an official communiqué announcing the death of her husband, she had been unable to find out where he was buried. Cárdenas was interested in finding the remains and establishing their identity.

Through the court case "Cavallo del Valle, Luisa N and other claims," EAAF members learned that the death had been documented in death certificate no. 1964 at the Morón Registration Office. The document stated that Jorge Fortunato Camilión had been killed by "multiple gunshot wounds," at 6:30 on September 9, 1977 in a house located at 3380 Gluck Street in Villa Tesei. We also learned through this court case that the remains had been buried in plot 49 of the Z sector (bis) of the Municipal Cemetery of Moron.

Cristina Cárdenas went to the cemetery to verify the information. The director showed her the burial license, which was accompanied by a note dated September 9 1977 from the Sub-Commissioner of Villa Scholnik of Morón and signed by a Main Official. The note requested the burial, which had been carried out in plot 49.

After the corresponding judicial presentation on November 18, 1998, the four EAAF members who had been appointed forensic experts in the case went with the Cárdenas family to the Morón Cemetery to conduct the exhumation. We exhumed a metal box containing skeletal remains. An external examination of the bone and dental characteristics revealed that the remains belonged to an individual over 60 years old. As Jorge Fortunato Camilión had been 33 years old at the time of his disappearance, EAAF concluded that the box did not contain his remains. Underneath the metal box, we found other bone remains. Examination revealed that

these also corresponded to an older individual.

EAAF concluded that the remains of Jorge Fortunato Camilión were not located in plot 49. We have requested permission from the judge to examine the administrative records of the cemetery in order to continue searching for the remains.

The Fátima Case

On August 21st local newspapers reported the following story:

Early yesterday morning, the residents of the locality of Fátima, in Pilar [in Buenos Aires Province] heard within the radius of 3 km. a very violent explosion. Shortly afterwards, the workers at a brick factory discovered the dismembered bodies of about thirty people, near the train tracks. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Ministry of the Interior issued a communiqué saying that the number of dead was 30. According to witnesses, the bodies — which were practically unrecognizable — corresponded mostly to young people killed by gunshot, many of whom had their hands tied behind their backs. According to the residents, early in the morning gunshots were heard. The shooting apparently lasted 20 minutes and immediately afterwards the explosion was heard. Other sources at the place stated that on Thursday afternoon they had observed the presence of two blue trucks with license plates from the Capital, which circulated the area several times. Police sources say that at least 23 of those killed were men; another five bodies were women's, and the rest were still to be determined. Another source said that the bodies of the women totaled 12, according to unconfirmed sources the authors of the massacre had left a sign saying that the 30 dead were 'extremists.'

According to the official medical records, 30 bodies – 10 female and 20 male – were found at the site. Two of them had been partially dismembered by the explosion. All had gunshot wounds to their heads. The chief of the Pilar police precinct fingerprinted all the victims, and made two copies of the prints. The death certificates, signed by a provincial police doctor and dated August 21st, 1976 stated “cardio-respiratory arrest, gunshot wound to the head” as cause of death.

The bodies were transferred in military trucks

to the local cemetery and buried in individual plots as NN.

The same day, a case was opened to investigate the facts and identify the bodies. It was filed in the Federal Court, Mercedes Branch, Province of Buenos Aires, and entitled “Fátima about infraction article 80, paragraph 2 of the Penal code, in 30 instances united in real concourse (art.55 CP)”.

The fact that the discovery of the bodies, the external study of the remains, and the burials took place in one single day, August 21, 1976 makes the case suspicious, as these procedures are usually carried out over a longer period of time.

In November 1982, the court case was reopened. The judge in the case requested the fingerprint files for all the 30 bodies found in Fátima.

This investigation led to the identification of three of the bodies: those of Ines Nocetti (Cadaver NN number 14), Alberto Comas (cadaver NN number 18), and Ramón Lorenzo Vélez (cadaver NN number 28). Two other skeletons were subsequently identified. All five had previously been officially listed as disappeared.

EAAF's investigation

In the first months of 1986, at the request of families of persons thought to have been killed in the Fátima incident, EAAF members were appointed as forensic experts to conduct the exhumations and the analysis of the bone remains in the cemetery of Paz Derqui Pilar. During the exhumations, which lasted from June to September 1986, we exhumed 25 individual sepultures. We conducted laboratory analyses of the skeletal remains in the Judicial Morgue of the Capital.

At the time it was believed that these 30 people had been taken from the CCD located at the Federal Police headquarters. Some guards at the facility testified to CONADEP that they had loaded a truck with 30 illegal prisoners the night before. They said they had also heard the following day that the victims found in the Fatima neighborhood were the ones taken from

the CCD. The guards said the killing had been conducted in revenge for the killing of police officers by guerrilla forces.

Given the theory about the nature of the case described above, EAAF decided to contact relatives of disappeared persons who had been seen at the police CCD at the time of the killings. We interviewed them and gathered historical and pre-mortem data.

In 1987, on the basis of the pre-mortem information provided by the families we were able to identify one of the skeletons as that of Marta Alicia Spagnoli de Vera, who had been kidnapped in the Capital on August 3rd, 1976. She had been seen by at least three persons, who were later freed, in the CCD Police Headquarters building, dependent on the Federal Police Headquarters. We were unable to identify the rest of the skeletons, due mainly to insufficient pre-mortem information. It needs to be point out that DNA techniques were not yet available at the time. Thus, the remains were returned to the judge at the cemetery under his custody.

1998: Reopening the Investigation

On October 17, 1997, the President of the National Court of Criminal Appeals Federal Corrections, Dr. Martin Irurzun, stated that

By virtue of the resolution dictated by the Court on this date, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team is called upon to present itself at the President Derqui Municipal Cemetery, Pilar, Province of Buenos Aires, and proceed to gather all the information regarding the location of the bone remains of the victims of the "multiple homicide occurred in Fatima", the bodies of whom were found on August 20 1976. At the same time, they will conduct the re-examination of the remains, with the purpose of identifying them. For that purpose, they will conduct all procedures, exams, studies, etc. that they deem necessary, and inform the court about the results of the assigned task".

On March 6 1998, the remains were transferred from the Derqui, Pilar Cemetery to EAAF's offices for the study.

EAAF members extracted two teeth from each of the 25 skeletons. We also took blood samples from relatives of the presumed victims.

These teeth and blood samples were sent to Lic. Ana Topf at the University of Durham. Lic. Topf will extract genetic material from the samples, and compare the sequencing of the mitochondrial DNA in an attempt to establish identifications. (For more information, see "Blood bank," below.)

INVESTIGATIONS INTO OTHER CASES

The Balmaceda Case

On July 22 1996, bone remains were scattered on a slope near the Route 40 highway, on the outskirts of the city of San Juan. The remains presented evidence of burning and were found with remains of woman's clothing. Authorities began an investigation, hypothesizing that the remains might be those of Maria Rosa de los Angeles Pacheco de Balmaceda, a psychologist who had disappeared on June 2, 1996 from city of San Juan. Ms. Balmaceda's car had been found, burned, shortly after her disappearance.

The fragmentary nature of the sample and its state of preservation made it extremely difficult to confirm or disprove that the remains belonged to Mrs. Balmaceda.

EAAF's investigation

In mid-1996, the family contacted the EAAF and requested that we conduct an analysis of the remains. EAAF contacted the judicial authorities in the Province of San Juan and requested that we be accepted as forensic experts from outside the province. We were accepted only at the end of 1998.

After the judicial authorities granted authorization, the remains were handed over to the EAAF and to the Durand Hospital in the city of Buenos Aires. EAAF conducted anthropology analyses of the remains, while researchers at the Durand hospital conducted genetic tests.

Both the anthropological analyses and the genetic tests were inconclusive, due mainly to the deteriorated state of the remains. Accordingly, at present it does not appear possible to determine if the remains correspond Ms. Balmaceda.

SERVICES TO FAMILIES OF VICTIMS

Because EAAF's database is one of the largest and most comprehensive sources of information about disappeared persons, it has become a key resource for the families of the victims of the repression. At first, the relatives came to us intending to provide data that might help identify their loved ones.¹⁰ Now, however, our information is so extensive that we can sometimes provide many families with information about what happened to the victims after they were kidnapped, especially concerning the cases that occurred in the province of Buenos Aires. Accordingly, we now receive in our office not only relatives who want to recover the remains of their loved ones, but also relatives who, for a number of reasons, want information about what happened to the victims after they were kidnapped.

We are always very frank with these relatives about the limited possibilities for obtaining identifications, which are the exception rather than the rule. Establishing a correlation between a body buried as an "NN" and the identity of a disappeared person, in other words, requires information that is very difficult to obtain. Moreover, some CCDs like the Mechanical School of the Navy, or ESMA, disposed of the bodies of prisoners by throwing them into the ocean, making the recovery of the remains impossible unless the remains subsequently washed up on the coast. Accordingly, we try not to generate false expectations.

The relatives are not only interested in identifications, however. While parents and spouses are often concerned to find the bodies, children are frequently more interested in knowing "who their parents were" - that is, knowing what their parents thought and what their political activities were, or meeting someone who knew them or was in prison with them. For these persons EAAF's data is often a source of important information. Moreover, for most relatives it is a relief to know with certainty that the disappeared persons died, rather than having no certainty about their fates.

In 1998 we interviewed 179 persons. Of these,

17 were mothers or fathers of victims, 75 were children of victims, 56 were siblings, and 7 were friends or more distant relatives.

GENETIC TESTING

The Blood Bank

In 1998 EAAF began to collect three blood samples from each relative of presumed disappeared persons who visited our office. We are creating a Blood Bank from these samples, which we will use to help with identifications in cases we work on. Although we do not currently have funding for this project, in 1998 we took blood samples from 56 relatives of presumed victims.

The blood samples will be used to conduct genetic identification tests. Genetic researches can extract mitochondrial DNA from these samples and compare them with mitochondrial DNA extracted from samples from unidentified humans remains. Comparisons between the DNA sequences from the two samples can establish with a scientific level of confidence whether or not the persons from whom the samples were taken are related.

In reference to the genetic project, in March 1997 biologist Lic. Ana Topf began a post-doctorate in Genetics at the University of Durham, UK. As part of her activities, she began to process samples of bone remains corresponding to cases being investigated by the EAAF in Argentina, so as to recover genetic material and perfect her technique. The samples correspond to the Fatima case, described above. In December 1998, Lic. Topf informed the EAAF that she had obtained the genetic sequence of all the blood samples and she had begun to analyze the sequence of the bone samples. She expects to begin the comparisons in mid-1999.

The Contract with Durand Hospital

During 1998, through the National Criminal and Correctional Court of Appeals of the Federal Capital, EAAF established an agreement the genetic service of the Durand Hospital in the city

of Buenos Aires. According to the terms of this agreement, the department of genetics will conduct genetic analyses of a number of skeletons that EAAF recovered from the Avellaneda cemetery between 1988 and 1992. Through these tests we hope to identify skeletal remains that we assume are those of disappeared persons, but which have not been identified so far due to the absence of sufficient physical data about the disappeared persons.

We expect to begin to send samples to the hospital's lab at the beginning of 1999.

Durand Hospital is experienced in conducting these genetic tests. In 1986 it established a genetic testing program in collaboration with the Grandmothers of the

and Thanatology of the School of Medicine of the University of Buenos Aires. The course, sponsored by the medical school, was entitled "Introduction to Forensic Anthropology," and covered the areas of anthropology, archaeology, dentistry, radiology, and entomology. It was led by EAAF members and Dr. Luis Bosio, a professor in the department; several invited guests, including Dr. Vincent J.M. Di Maio, a North American forensic pathologist and one of the world's leading experts in gunshot wounds, also made presentations. Twenty professionals attended the seminar.

Given the success of the course, the seminar will be repeated in the second semester of 1999.

Conferences

On September 10th 1998 EAAF gave a presentation on Forensic Anthropology in the main conference hall of the School of Medical Sciences of the National University of Rosario.

On the morning of the same day EAAF gave a presentation in the Institute of Forensic and Security Sciences in the School of Law and Social Sciences of the Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina, Rosario.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Book of Entries contained the following items: the number of the film roll containing the relevant photograms, the number of the police record (correlated), name of the victim, number of case file. This enabled us to locate rapidly the information we needed from the police records. Since a police record has, on average, four pages, each one of which is a photogram, without the Book of Entries we would have had to review some eighty thousand photograms.

2. The work was done on a Notebook, incorporating a database in Works and later Access.

3. The counties include Tres de Febrero, Escobar, General Sarmiento, San Isidro, San Fernando, San Martin, Tigre, Vicente Lopez, Avellaneda, Lomas de Zamora, Quilmes,



Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Plaza de Mayo to identify the abducted children of disappeared persons.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Seminars

During the second semester of 1998, we gave a weekly theoretical and practical seminar for graduates in the Department of Legal Medicine

1998 ANNUAL REPORT

Almirante Brown, Berazategui, Berisso, Ensenada, Florencio Varela, Lanus, La Plata, Esteban Echeverria, General Rodriguez, La Matanza, Lujan, Merlo, Moreno and Marcos Paz.

4. An area inhabited by some 9,000,000 people.
5. The archive is located in the offices of the Sub-Secretariat for Human and Social Rights, which is a part of the Ministry of the Interior.
6. This information was entered at first into a Works database, then modified into Access, and then later transferred into Fox so that it would be compatible with the list.
7. The troops belonged to the Superintendent's Forces for Federal Security (SSF), under the command of the Federal Capital Sub-Zone of Zone 1 (First Army Unit)
8. Unfortunately, there is no possibility of recovering the remains at this point. According to our inquiries at the San Isidro Cemetery, the sector that was assigned for the bodies of unidentified persons was re-used during the 1980s as a site for a crematorium. The remains that were still there when the crematorium was built were deposited into an ossuary.
9. In the case of Pablo Bernardo Szir, kidnaped on October 30 1976 in Ramos Mejia, the press report of the Zone 1 Command mentions him not with his real nickname ("Gordo Luis") but rather with the name that appeared in his fake document, "Patricio Rivero".
10. Both "physical data" of the person when they were alive (sex, age, height, dental records, etc.) as well as "historical data" (where and when they were kidnaped, whether they were activists, etc.).