

ARGENTINA

Projects involving research into government archives, investigations of cases arising from this research, services to families of "disappeared" persons, the creation of a "blood bank," and academic activities.

INTRODUCTION

During 1999, EAAF's activities in Argentina centered on the following areas:

research in official archives;
forensic investigation of cases of persons who "disappeared" during the last military dictatorship;
participation in cases of human rights violations during democracy; and
academic activities.

PUBLIC AND CONFIDENTIAL ARCHIVES COVERING THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT (1976-1983)

During the last military government, the bodies of 'disappeared' persons were in many cases thrown from military airplanes into rivers, lakes, and the Argentine Sea, or 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 (Registro Nacional de las Personas), often created a number of bureaucratic records concerning the bodies of victims buried as NNs. After a disappeared person was kidnapped by state security forces, he or she was typically taken to a clandestine detention center, tortured, and often killed. While the final 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 a death certificate, making an entry in the local civil registry, 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'

During the past few years EAAF has focused a great deal of time and energy on gathering information from documents of this type that are available to the public, such as cemetery records, death certificates, etc. Additionally, in 1998, EAAF gained access to police archives not normally accessible, such as the ones described below. This access allowed us to identify 18 persons in 1998 by matching the information contained in both public and confidential archives. (For more information about these archives, and EAAF's work in them, please see EAAF's 1998 annual report). In 1999, it helped us to identify ten more persons who 'disappeared' during the last military government.

THE BUENOS AIRES PROVINCIAL POLICE ARCHIVES

Access to the official documentation related to the state's functioning during the military dictatorship of 1976-1983 has afforded us a much clearer and more complete picture of the repression in Argentina during this time, described in detail in EAAF's 1998 annual report. This access also allowed us to confirm the deaths of a number of 'disappeared' persons whose families had never

known what ultimately happened to them. In the field of forensic sciences, when a cadaver or skeleton is 'identified', the term refers to the process by which the doctor or forensic anthropologist analyzes the remains and compares the information with pre-mortem data of the person who is being searched for. Pre-mortem data refers to physical information of the person when she/he was alive such as fingerprints, dental records, genetic information, etc. In order to reach this stage, however, a number of previous investigative tasks must be undertaken. In

Argentina, every citizen needs two types of identification papers, 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 purpose of making identifications, and over the past few years we have requested copies of the prints of a number of 'disappeared' persons.



In 1985 the main individuals responsible for the crimes committed during the military government were tried and found guilty. Some year later, a series of laws and presidential pardons limited the legal processes and freed those who were serving their time. Relatives of the victims and human rights organizations continue to call for justice.

photo courtesy of Eduardo Longoni

In cases in which investigators wish to identify a 'disappeared' person using data from official archives, they compare the fingerprints taken from a cadaver shortly after the discovery of the body (for example on May 5, 1976) with previous fingerprints of a particular person (for example Juan Pérez). This second set of fingerprints is found in the National Registry Office. This step could be called the 'first phase of identification' and takes place at the level of documents, without analysis of the remains. Once this level of certainty has been established, the process of searching for the burial place begins, in order to exhume, identify, and return those remains to the relatives.

EAAF's archival work in 1999 focused on two areas: I. Analysis of information in the 'Intelligence Reports' that forms part of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police (PPBA) Archive; and II. Comparison of fingerprints from the so-called 'cadavers' file' microfilms, archived in the microfilm section of the Computer Records Division of the PPBA, taken from unidentified cadavers who died from violent causes between 1976-1983, with fingerprints from the National Registration Office.

On November 24, 1999, then-Minister of Justice and Security of Buenos Aires Province Dr. Carlos Soria announced in a press conference that the archives had been discovered and that 124 'disappeared' persons had been identified. This information had a great impact in Argentina, and EAAF became the point of consultation for hundreds of families of 'disappeared' persons that thought their loved ones could be among the 124. EAAF responded to Dr. Soria's announcement in a press release criticizing the manner in which the information was released, which was motivated more by political interests than by humanitarian considerations. The 124 identifications included both persons previously identified during the dictatorship or after, whose relatives were informed, and those identified through information in the archives, whose families had not yet been contacted.

I.
ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION FOUND IN THE
'INTELLIGENCE REPORTS' FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE
PROVINCIAL POLICE OF BUENOS AIRES

EAAF's first task with the police archives did not directly relate to the identification of specific persons, but to the collection of information about the modus operandi of repressive activities under the dictatorship.

In the archives of the Provincial Police, information is stored in a variety of formats, from photocopies of newspaper announcements written by human rights organizations, to official requests from other intelligence units. The only criterion by which documents were sent here was that they had something to do with 'intelligence' activities. Once they arrived, they were assigned to categories: Union, University, Drugs, Subversive Delinquency (DS), and so on. Each document was then numbered according to its date of inclusion in the appropriate category. Finally, the names of all the persons to whom the documents referred were included in a typed index.

The data contained in the archive show the subordinate and hybrid character of the Provincial Police's authority and activities at that time. First,



At the Archives from the Provincial Police of Buenos Aires, folders with 'intelligence' activity reports were kept until 1997 under categories such as Subversive Delinquency (DS).
photo by Página 12

the institutional activities of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police during the dictatorship were completely subordinate to the military hierarchy. This does not mean that police officers were not actively involved in intelligence activities, but that since they did not do so officially, their activities did not generate documents that would be housed in this particular archive. For instance, an officer in the Buenos Aires Provincial Police was active in clandestine repressive groups while still drawing a salary from the police force. However, his reports were directed not to the police but to the military authorities in charge of such operations, such as the Commander of Subzone 11 and Intelligence Force 101 (whose area of operations was Zone 1, where the officer was active).

Another example has to do with places rather than people. Military operatives often placed detainees in one of the several known clandestine detention centers located within the jurisdiction of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, including those known as Pozos de Banfield, Pozo de Quilmes, Investigation Brigades of San Justo and Lanús, and the Fifth and Eighth Precincts of La Plata, Subprecinct of Villa Insuperable. However, the intelligence reports of these operatives and information extracted from detainees are almost certainly housed in military archives for this type of information (i.e., intelligence archives of military zones and battalions), and not in police archives. For this reason, there is no information in the police archive on cases in which officers of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Force clearly played a central role.

The central intelligence agencies only delegated certain types of tasks to the Buenos Aires Provincial Police. These clearly show its subordination to the military: stakeouts of the houses of people detained for political or 'subversive' activities, or of those held officially in prison (Detenidos a disposición del Poder Ejecutivo Nacional, PEN); reconnaissance of eventual targets living within the police jurisdictions, etc.

The archive is hybrid because the types of tasks assigned to the Provincial Police Force made it a hybrid agency, half bureaucratic and half clandestine. For this reason, the archive contains a

number of highly secret documents, as one would expect in an intelligence archive. At times, the archive received reports from other organizations more active in repressive intelligence activities, about "the struggle against subversion," invariably stamped 'NOT FOR CIRCULATION' and 'STRICTLY SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.' Without a doubt this is the most important part of the archive, but unfortunately there are only a small number of documents within it.

However, in spite of the clear value of these documents in providing historical context, and the importance of the fact that they are now more publicly accessible, they do not lead directly to the identification of 'disappeared' persons. These intelligence documents reveal the structure of successive kidnappings, establish patterns of movement of secret detainees among places, and help to form hypotheses about the detention process. But they will never tell us whether a certain "John Doe" file corresponds to a particular person. The specific circumstances under which a person, in fact, his or her body emerges from the clandestine circuit and starts the bureaucratic circuit described above (fingerprints, death certificate, cemetery record, etc.) are not significant in an intelligence archive. The connection between a body without a name and a name without a body can be reconstructed through following a chain of data from multiple origins.

One of the most important contributions that this intelligence archive has made to EAAF's project is the possibility of mapping the movements of militants by means of documents. Thanks to our access to this archive, this part of our database has acquired a complexity that would have taken years to attain via interviews with former militants. This information helps in locating and eventually identifying remains of militants who 'disappeared'.

In addition, the experience of working in a complete archive will be very useful for anticipating the organization of other archives, even those with very different contents.

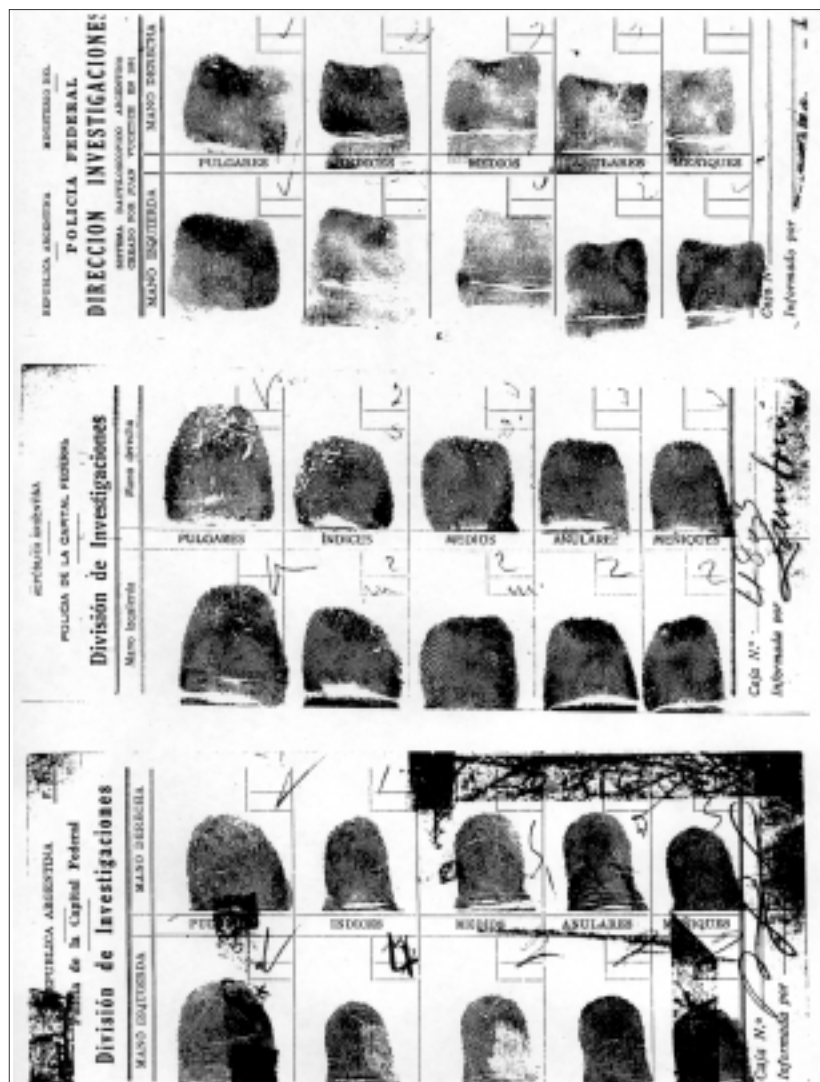
II.

COMPARISON OF FINGERPRINTS FROM UNIDENTIFIED
CADAVERS WHO DIED OF VIOLENT CAUSES BETWEEN
1976-1983 AND FINGERPRINTS FOUND IN THE
NATIONAL REGISTRY OFFICE

In 1999, EAAF continued to work on two tasks related to the analysis and comparison of fingerprints. As was explained in the 1998 annual report, sources used were fingerprints of "John Does" found in the Microfilm Section 'Cadavers File', and the Cadaver registration book in the Antecedents Section of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Archive. Once hypotheses were formulated as to the possible identity of the cadavers, EAAF compared those sets of fingerprints with the ones in the National Registry Office (all Argentine citizens are fingerprinted for two mandatory National Identity Cards). Fingerprint experts from the Ministry of Justice and Security of Buenos Aires Province and from the Argentine Naval Prefecture collaborated with EAAF in this project.

This stage of the work has suffered many delays, because the National Registry Office is very slow in sending fingerprints for comparison. The total number of required fingerprints did not arrive until the beginning of 2000. Nevertheless, through this method, it was possible to identify ten 'disappeared' people in 1999. As usual, once this first stage of identification is reached, EAAF sends the information to the Federal Appellate Chamber of Criminal and Correctional Cases of the Federal Capital, so that they can communicate with the relatives of the victim and begin the process of finding the cemetery where the remains may still be buried.

In our first analysis of the police archives - the Federal Police Archive as well as the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Archive - EAAF discovered some documents containing the names of 81 people who appear in EAAF's database as having 'disappeared' or died during the military dictatorship. In some of these cases, the relatives of the victims already knew the circumstances surrounding their relatives' death, and the archival data served to confirm and augment the information they already had. Other cases



EAAF continued to compare John Doe fingerprints obtained from the Cadaver Registration Book in the Antecedentes Section of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Archive with the ones provided by the National Registry Office. Although considerable delays, this method made it possible to identify ten 'disappeared' people in 1999.
photo by EAAF

correspond to persons already identified by EAAF through the analysis of skeletal remains, such as the case of Leticia Mabel Akselman. Still others are listed as 'disappeared' in EAAF's database. EAAF is attempting to contact the families of those who fall into this latter category; in 1999 we contacted 18 families. At the same time, we are trying to correlate this information with John Doe burials in cemeteries in the Federal Capital and in Buenos Aires province. Of the 18 individuals identified through archival work, we have found the remains of nine in different cemeteries. Regrettably, some of these had already been exhumed from their individual tombs by cemetery personnel and sent to the general ossuary of the cemetery. By municipal decree, this is done after five years if grave duties are unpaid, most typically in cases of indigents and "John Does".

RELATIVES WHO CONSULTED EAAF'S DATABASE IN 1999

As a result of these investigations, 199 relatives of 'disappeared' persons contacted EAAF during 1999 to find and give information about their loved ones. Of these, 67 (33.66 percent) were the children of 'disappeared' persons; 26 (13.06 percent) were parents of victims; 41 (20.6 percent) were siblings; and 65 (32.66 percent) were spouses, friends, and so on.

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 story that can help us to discover what ultimately happened to them. EAAF members spent considerable time on each interview and additional time following up on each case.

THE CASE OF ELENA ARCE SAHORES, NORA LIVIA FORMIGA, AND MARGARITA DELGADO

On November 22, 1977, troops from Regiment 7 of the La Plata Infantry entered Nora Livia Formiga's house at #157, 54th Street in La Plata, kidnapping Nora and two of her companions, Elena Arce Sahores and Teresa Caldarini. Nora and Elena were militants in the military-political group known as the "Montoneros," in the Health Sector. Nora was a nurse and Elena a university student. On the following day a military group began to remove furniture and other personal effects of the 'disappeared' women.

Seven days later, on November 27 at 5:00 at the intersection of 25 de Mayo and Venezuela Streets in Ensenada, a locality near La Plata also in Buenos Aires Province, the security forces began an operation against the Montoneros. In the ensuing shootout, Horacio Bau died, along with (according to Horacio's relatives) another male of whom nothing else is known. Death certificate #333 for the year 1977 in the Provincial Registry of Ensenada, which coincides with the date and place of death, reports the death of an unknown male, approximately 23 years old, caused by "external hemorrhage from a bullet wound." The death certificate further reports that the body was dressed in blue pants, light blue shirt, and brown moccasins. The body is probably that of Horacio Bau, as there is no other report for this incident in the Provincial Registry.

In the same operation, Margarita Delgado, companion of Horacio Bau, was captured, along with their daughters Liliana (d.o.b. 7/26/76) and Marina (d.o.b. 8/13/77) who were taken to an orphanage and legally adopted by another family. Margarita entered the cycle of clandestine repression.

Teresa Caldarini was freed in December 1977 thanks to the intervention of the Italian Consulate. The arrival of Nora, Elena, and Margarita at Police Precinct VIII of La Plata is recorded in the precinct's registry for January 11, 1978 for placement in Operative Sector 113. They are

recorded as having been freed from the precinct on January 20, 1978. None of the three were actually freed, however, and they continued to be 'disappeared'. Their entrance into Precinct VIII has been confirmed by several detainees who were with them in the precinct and who were subsequently freed. These witnesses include Patricia Roli and Patricia Pérez Catan who said that Nora and Elena came from the La Cacha Clandestine Detention Center (CDC) in the old Provincial Radio building inside the complex of the Olmos Jail. Nora and Elena told Patricia Pérez Catan that her brother Enrique was still detained in this CDC. Patricia Roli reports that it was known that neither Nora or Elena would be freed, even though Precinct VIII normally functioned as a place where the cases of secretly detained persons were legalized prior to them being freed or passing to legal detention under the jurisdiction of the National Executive Branch.

EAAF'S WORK

In order to discover what happened to Nora, Elena, and Margarita, EAAF consulted the death certificates in the Provincial Registry of Persons at La Plata: death certificates #369, #370, and #371 recorded the deaths of three unknown females of approximately 25, 27, and 29 years of age, occurring on January 21, 1978 at 1:00 AM (the night they had supposedly been freed from the VIII Precinct) on Route 6 and 215th Street in La Plata. In all three cases, the cause of death determined by the medical examiner was "destruction of brain matter by bullet wound."

After finding these death certificates, EAAF began to verify the existence of graves in the local cemetery that might correspond to these three unknown females. It was found that they had been buried in the following tombs: Sector 53, Row G, Tomb 23; Sector 53, Row C, Tomb 26; and Sector 54, Row H, Tomb 13. The remains had not yet been transferred to the ossuary and were still in the tombs. The relatives of these three people were informed and they presented the cases to the Federal Appellate Court in La Plata, which gave EAAF the responsibility of exhumation and

analysis of the remains.

Archaeological work was carried out on October 4, 1999, and three human skeletons were recovered with associated evidence. In two of the tombs (Sector 53, Row C, Tomb 23; and Sector 54, Row H, Tomb 13) we found bullets directly associated with the skeletons. The remains were taken to the Medical Examiner's Office in La Plata for analysis.

The three recovered skeletons were labeled as G23, C26, and H13 (referring to the row and number of the tomb where each was found). The anthropological analysis of the skeletons revealed that:

1. G23 corresponds to a skeleton of female sex, between 20 and 26 years old at the time of death, with Caucasian characteristics, and a stature of 171 centimeters, plus or minus 6.5cm.
2. C26 corresponds to a skeleton of female sex, between 24 and 32 years old at the time of death, with Caucasian characteristics, and a stature of 162 centimeters, plus or minus 6.5cm.
3. H13 corresponds to a skeleton of female sex, between 25 and 30 years old at the time of death, with Caucasian characteristics and a stature of 150 centimeters, plus or minus 6.5cm.

The cause of death was determined by analysis of trauma in the skeletal remains. The bullet wounds found in all three skeletons were sufficient to have caused the death of the individuals.

Skeleton G23 shows multiple gunshot wounds to the skull and right upper arm;
Skeleton C26 shows multiple gunshot wounds to the skull and right ribs;
Skeleton H13 shows at least one gunshot wound to the skull.

Pre-mortem data supplied by the victims' relatives were insufficient for identification using anthropological methods. For this reason, the Federal Appellate Court of La Plata assigned the task of genetic analysis to the Durand Hospital Laboratory, located in Buenos Aires under the direction of Dr. Ana María Di Lonardo.

On December 16, 1999, EAAF took bone samples from the three skeletons and delivered them to this

laboratory. We are now waiting for the results of the comparison between the DNA from these samples and that obtained from blood samples of the possible relatives, in order to verify the hypothesis of identification of these three female skeletons. Until these results are in, the Appellate Court has named EAAF the official custodian of the skeletal remains.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF FOUR
'DISAPPEARED' PERSONS IN THE
PROVINCE OF SANTA FE

LUIS A. VUISTAZ, ROLANDO E. OVIEDO, NORMA
MUERZET, AND SILVIA HAYDÉE WOLLERT

During 1999, EAAF carried out a series of investigations in the city of Santa Fe, capital of Santa Fe Province. These investigations culminated in excavations in the municipal cemetery and the identification of skeletal remains corresponding to four 'disappeared' persons whose whereabouts had been unknown since 1976 and 1977. Their names are: Luis A. Vuistaz, Rolando E. Oviedo, Norma Muerzet, and Silvia Haydée Wollert.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASES

On January 3, 1977, Nora Muerzet was killed in a shootout with Santa Fe city police. Nora was a militant in the political-military organization known as the Montoneros. On March 24, on the eve of a visit from the then-President General Jorge Rafael Videla to the city, another confrontation occurred in the Guadalupe neighborhood, in which Norma Muerzet (Nora's twin sister), and Silvia Haydée Wollert were killed, both of whom were also members of the Montoneros. Unlike in the case of Nora Muerzet, the authorities refused to deliver the bodies of Norma and Silvia to their relatives and they remained for five years in unmarked tombs in the Santa Fe Cemetery. In 1981, the bodies were exhumed, but were not identified because the remains had skeletonized and visual recognition was no longer possible, and the family did not have access to a forensic expert that could identify the remains.

The skeletons then were placed in nylon bags and deposited in the niche containing Nora Muerzet's coffin, in the same cemetery.

In September 1976, two similar episodes occurred in Santa Fe. On September 6, a military confrontation occurred at 2526 Martín Zapata Street. Luis Alberto Vuistaz, 27 years old, from the province of Salta, known as "Black Martin" was killed. He was a known leader in the Montoneros. His companion Vilma Gómez was injured in the



Vilma Gómez holds a picture of her companion, Luis Alberto Vuita. On September 1999, his remains were reburied in a tomb marked with his name in his native city, Salta.

photo by Daniel Yako

conflict. She was later secretly detained by the authorities, where she was tortured and remained for a number of years as a political prisoner.

On September 8 of the same year, a number of persons were kidnapped by security forces from

5052 Aristóbulo del Valle and detained. At the time, witnesses heard shots fired in the kitchen of the house, where Rolando Evaristo Oviedo, a Montoneros militant and native of Zárate, was located. The authorities in charge of the operation stated that Oviedo had committed suicide. Photographs in the case file show the body of a man with a weapon close to his right hand, which, nevertheless, is inside his pants pocket. The autopsy of the police medical examiner indicated death by trauma to the brain, with an entrance wound in the right parietal bone. One of the persons detained in this operation was Marta Berra, Oviedo's companion, who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. She was later tortured and detained for a number of years in prison.

in the 5th Quadrant of the Santa Fe Cemetery, as John Does (NN). Since so many years have passed, the relatives of the victims did not know whether the remains are still buried there or whether they have been transferred to the ossuary. For this reason, and to identify any possible remains, the relatives asked for EAAF's participation in the case.

EAAF's WORK

In 1999, the relatives of Oviedo and Vuistaz requested the intervention of EAAF to the Federal Court number 1, from the province of Santa Fe (files no. 464/98 and 447/99), in charge of the investigation. In order to find the remains of



Inmates participating in the excavatioin at Santa Fé cemetery.

photo by Página 12

Thanks to the investigations of the journalist Juan Carlos Tiziani and of Beatriz Pfeiffer and Alicia Baschetti, who were in captivity with the widows of Oviedo and Vuistaz, it was finally determined that these two were buried on September 21, 1976

Oviedo and Vuistaz, EAAF carried out exhumations in the Santa Fe Cemetery between August 23-25, 1999 and September 13-15, 1999. Darío M. Olmo, a member of EAAF, directed the project, with the collaboration of two volunteers,

the anthropologist Sofía Egaña and anthropology student Miguel Nieva.

Between the events of the 1970s and the present, a series of cadastral modifications were carried out in Quadrant 5 of the Santa Fe Cemetery. These changes have made it difficult to determine which tomb contains the remains in question, because the numbering system - including the names of rows and columns in the quadrant - has been altered, and there is no official documentation of the relation between the old and new systems. For this reason, in the course of investigations, EAAF had to exhume the remains of 78 persons from fourteen tombs.

The excavations in August resulted in the discovery of fifty-two skeletons, corresponding to older individuals of both sexes, buried in primary and secondary graves. In addition, as a result of confusing information in the cemetery registry, a pantheon containing thirteen skeletons was examined in the same cemetery. None of these skeletons had features compatible with the data pertaining to Oviedo and Vuistaz.

In September, proceeding on the basis of new hypotheses related to the old and new cadastral systems in the cemetery, EAAF resumed excavation. This work affected the tombs of persons buried in the beginning of 1999. Thanks to the relatives, EAAF was able to obtain funds from the government of Santa Fe Province to move these new tombs from the ground to niches. EAAF commenced excavation after the Firemen's Corps of the Santa Fe Police had moved the newer remains. In the first days of the excavation, twenty-four (24) skeletons were exhumed with characteristics similar to those discovered in August; they were of older persons with no signs of violent peri-mortem trauma. However, on the morning of September 15, EAAF discovered an articulated skeleton with lesions compatible with cranial pre-mortem trauma. Less than an hour later another skeleton with similar characteristics was found adjacent to the first. The final two skeletons exhumed presented evidence of trauma consistent with the medical examiners' reports on the bodies of Vuistaz and Oviedo.

Once the exhumation was completed, EAAF moved to the phase of laboratory analysis. Thanks to the pre-mortem information supplied by the victims' relatives, it was possible to establish a correspondence between the skeleton labeled M11 and Luis Alberto Vuistaz, and between the skeleton labeled M12 and Rolando Evaristo Oviedo. Both skeletons presented evidence of the cause of death as resulting from cranial trauma caused by firearm projectiles. In the case of Oviedo's remains, the entrance wound is located on the left side of the frontal bone and the exit wound on the right parietal bone. This evidence contradicts the official report and is not consistent with the explanation of suicide as the cause of death. Because of this evidence, judicial investigations into the true cause of death of Evaristo Oviedo are still continuing. Each skeleton was reburied in a tomb marked with his name in the cemeteries of their native cities: Vuistaz in Salta and Oviedo in Zárate.

In the course of the excavations in August 1999, the judicial authorities in charge asked EAAF to work on the cases of Norma Muerzet and Silvia Haydée Wollert as well. The judge asked that new samples be taken of the remains of these two victims, in order to identify them by means of DNA analysis (which had not been available when their remains were examined in 1981). Taking into account the fact that Nora and Norma were twins, the judge authorized us to analyze the three skeletons in the tomb where Nora had originally been buried, on the assumption that analysis would reveal two very similar and one different skeleton. The judicial authorities and the other parties agreed to this plan, and the nylon bags and coffin were removed from the tomb and taken to the cemetery morgue, which served as a forensic laboratory. Comparison of the remains revealed affinity between two of the skeletons, whose morphological traits and several anthropological measurements were almost identical. The third skeleton presented slight differences in age and stature from those of the other two, as well as evidence of a hereditary pathology, spina bifida, in the first sacral vertebra. X-rays of Silvia Wollert's sister, Vilma Wollert, were solicited; these revealed the same pathology in the same skeletal area. Tests for measurable features on the bones and dental

morphology produced similar results and EAAF reached a positive identification of the remains of those who in life were Norma Muerzet and Silvia Wollert. Several days later, the remains were buried in the localities where their relatives live, in San Jerónimo del Sauce, Santa Fe and Paraná, Entre Ríos respectively.

THE FATIMA CASE:
THE IDENTIFICATION OF
SUSANA PEDRINI DE BRONZEL

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

On August 21st , 1976, local newspapers reported the following story:

"Early yesterday morning, residents of the locality of Fatima, in Pilar [in Buenos Aires Province] heard a violent explosion within a radius of 3km. Shortly afterward, 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 listing the number of deaths as thirty (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. Residents of the area reported that gunshots had been heard early in the morning of the explosion. 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 circling the area several times. Police sources say that at least 23 of those killed were men, another five bodies belonged to women, and the rest were still to be determined. Another source reported twelve female bodies. According to unconfirmed sources the authors of the massacre left a sign saying that the thirty persons killed were 'extremists'." (La Opinión newspaper, Aug. 21, 1976)

According to the official medical record, 30 bodies - 10 females and 20 males - were found at the site. Two of them had been partially dismembered by

the explosion. The bodies were fingerprinted by the local police and the medical examiner conducted a summary external examination. Death certificates were issued for all the bodies and they were taken in military trucks to the local cemetery where they were buried in individual plots as John Does (NN). A case was opened at the Federal Court, Mercedes branch, but no further investigation was performed and the case was



Susana Pedrini de Bronzel. She 'disappeared' on July 26, 1976.

photo by Página 12

eventually closed. In 1982, the case was re-opened and five bodies were identified. All five had previously been officially listed as 'disappeared'.

EAAF had worked on this case in 1987, at the request of Relatives of 'disappeared' Persons and Political Prisoners, a local Human Rights group, exhuming and analyzing the remaining 25 individuals. At that time, we also conducted a thorough historical investigation and interviewed

survivors from the clandestine detention center (CDC) that functioned during the dictatorship at the Federal Police headquarters in Buenos Aires. According to survivors of that CDC and former guards, the night of August 20th, 1976, 30 people were taken away in trucks by the police; these were probably the ones killed in Fatima. EAAF reconstructed a list of possible victims and interviewed dozens of their relatives. However, DNA analysis from bone samples was still not available in 1987 and the pre-mortem information about the possible victims was insufficient or did not match the skeletons' data. For these reasons, only one person was identified at that time.

On October 17, 1997, the president of the National Court of Criminal Appeals Federal Corrections, Dr. Martin Irurzun, stated that EAAF should re-examine the remains, in the hopes of identifying them using DNA techniques. In March 1998, EAAF extracted two molars of each of the remaining 25 skeletons - including the one already identified, for control purposes - together with blood samples of possible relatives of the victims. These dental and blood samples were sent to Licenciada Ana Toft, an Argentinian biologist in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Durham, England. Topf is one of the scientists who conducts DNA analysis for EAAF, by extracting genetic material from the samples and comparing the DNA sequences in an attempt to identify them.



Ana Toft, Argentinian biologist at the University of Durham, UK.

photo by Revista 22



On August 27, 1999 relatives of Susana Pedrini de Bronzel participated in a reburial ceremony in La Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

photo by EAAF

Among the forty blood samples sent to Durham, which were taken from the presumed relatives of victims, are those of Aurora Morea and Noemi Elisa Pedrini, the mother and sister of Susana Pedrini de Bronzel, who was kidnapped in Buenos Aires on July 26, 1976, along with her husband, José Daniel Bronzel and her mother-in-law Cecilia Podolsky de Bronzel. Susana was 29 years old at the time of her disappearance. Both she and her husband were architects and professors at the University of Buenos Aires. The testimony of witnesses in the CDC that functioned in the Federal Police Headquarters established that both Susana and her husband were seen in that center and were "transferred" (trasladados) in mid-1976; in the jargon of the repressive forces, this generally

meant that prisoners were taken out of the CDC and executed in some other location.

The DNA information extracted from the blood samples, compared to the DNA extracted from the dental samples sent to Durham - specifically the sample from skeleton D16 - permitted a positive identification of the skeleton as that of Susana Pedrini de Bronzel. This information was passed on to the Federal Criminal and Correctional Court of Appeals of the Federal Capital (Buenos Aires). In August 1999, the court authorized the release of the remains to the victim's relatives. Susana Pedrini de Bronzel's remains were reburied in La Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires on August 27, 1999, 23 years after her disappearance.

In February, 2000 (as we were writing this report), the DNA laboratory at the University of Durham informed EAAF of three new positive identifications on the Fatima case. We will report on these cases once the families of these individuals have been informed.

DISAPPEARANCES DURING THE DEMOCRATIC PERIOD

THE BALMACEDA CASE

María Rosa Pacheco de Balmaceda, a psychologist by profession, 'disappeared' on June 2, 1996 in the Province of San Juan. She was last seen as she was leaving the hospital where her mother was residing. The police arrested María Rosa's husband and brother-in-law as suspects in the planning and execution of her murder. María Rosa's relatives and a local Human Rights group, the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights (APDH), assert that from the beginning the investigation of this crime has been plagued by irregularities. The San Juan community has mobilized silent marches, asking that the Congress create a special commission to follow this case and that they present the case to the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) of the Organization of American States (OAS).

In EAAF's 1998 annual report, it was noted that 50 days after María Rosa's disappearance, on July 22, 1996, burned and scattered skeletal remains were found by the side of the road 40 kilometers from San Juan City. According to the studies carried out in San Juan Province by local medical examiners, it was determined that these remains could pertain to María Rosa, but in the face of irregularities in the investigation and the possibility that the police might be implicated in the crime, the family did not trust the results of this local forensic examination.

The relatives of the accused parties contacted EAAF to ask them to carry out the investigation and analysis of the remains at EAAF's offices in Buenos Aires. This analysis led to the conclusion that the sample under study was insufficient and in too deteriorated a state to make a positive identification possible.

During July 1999, Patricia Bernardi, a member of EAAF, who was named as an expert witness on the family's behalf, traveled to San Juan Province to give testimony related to the analysis of the case, as part of a public trial concerning the disappearance of María Rosa de los Angeles de Balmaceda. Once this was done, the court determined that neither the identification of the remains nor the guilt of the accused could be proved, and Mr. Balmaceda and his brother-in-law were freed.

THE GUARDATI CASE

On May 24, 1992, according to witnesses, Paulo Cristián Guardati, 25 years old, was detained by uniformed police while he was walking in General San Martín Park in the city of Mendoza, capital of Mendoza Province. When his relatives demanded Mr. Guardati's return, the police denied knowledge of his whereabouts.

Over the course of the following years, innumerable investigations and judicial proceedings have attempted to locate Mr. Guardati or his body, as well as to find those responsible for the deed. The case has turned into an emblematic example of abuses committed by the Mendoza Provincial Police during the last decade, resulting

in the discovery of other similar cases that have occurred in the province that the public had not been aware of. As with other cases of disappearance or homicide committed by the security forces under democratic governments, this case was presented by Mr. Guardati's relatives to the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) of the Organization of American States (OAS) once the national judicial channels were exhausted.

Finally, in Decree 53/96, on January 24, 1996, the Argentine government recognized its responsibility in the Guardati case, and committed itself to paying economic damages to the families and to continue the investigation.

In this context, in April 1999, two members of EAAF, at the request of the Guardati family, were named as expert witnesses in the case by the 5th Circuit Court of Mendoza Province in order to carry out a series of investigations in the City of Mendoza Municipal Cemetery. The object of these investigations was to verify the testimony of one witness that Guardati's remains may have been buried in a sector of this cemetery.

Due to the size of this sector (125.40 square meters) and the fact that most of the tombs were engraved with names and dates of the deceased, EAAF examined the cemetery records regarding burials in this sector before beginning excavation. In the sector identified by the witness, there were 41 tombs, including 26 individual and 15 common tombs. A total of 68 individuals were buried in the sector.

EAAF also photographed and surveyed the area in question and identified discrepancies between the cemetery records and the terrain as observed. From this analysis, it was determined that two tombs presented characteristics that could be relevant to the investigation. These tombs were excavated, but the remains in question were not found. Faced with these results, and bearing in mind that Guardati's remains could still be buried in this cemetery, EAAF recommended further preliminary analysis in order to identify a more limited area in the cemetery for investigation.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

During the second half of 1999, EAAF again offered the course "Introduction to Forensic Anthropology" in the Department of Legal Medicine of the University of Buenos Aires. As in previous years, the course was co-taught by Lic. Darío Olmo of EAAF, and Dr. Luis Bosio, member of the Forensic Medicine Corps of the Federal Capital, along with invited speakers. Fifteen students took the course.

EAAF gave a presentation in Corrientes Province as part of the "First Annual Conference on General and Forensic Anthropology" in the province of Corrientes. This conference was organized by the Committee of Anthropological Investigations of the Criminology Department of the National University of Corrientes.

EAAF also gave two presentations in the city of La Plata as part of the Conference on Applied Criminology organized by the Institute of Juridical Studies of the Supreme Court of Buenos Aires Province.