

ARGENTINA

In 2002, EAAF continued to work on cases of political disappearance from Argentina's last military government, identifying thirteen Argentines and eight Uruguayans who disappeared in Argentina. EAAF has also made significant advances in exhumations being carried out in Avellaneda, Bahía Blanca and Córdoba, as well as work towards identifying remains deposited at the Legal Medical Institute in Buenos Aires. In addition to our attendance at several conferences related to this work, EAAF members continue to improve existing methodologies in forensic anthropology and to offer courses at the University of Buenos Aires.

RECOVERY AND ANALYSIS OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS:

Since 1984, EAAF has been investigating political disappearances in Argentina. In the last few years, information on both the role of the security forces and on bureaucratic processes related to the repression has become increasingly accessible. In 1997, EAAF negotiated access to crucial documents stored by the Federal government and the government of the province of Buenos Aires. Since that time, EAAF has made steady advances in the retrieval of these documents — most importantly the recovery of an extensive collection of fingerprints — that have allowed us to resolve difficult cases of disappearance.

Background

During the last military government, most of the bodies of disappeared persons were disposed of in one of two ways: they were thrown from military aircrafts into rivers and the Argentine Sea; or they were buried as “N.N.” (“Ningún Nombre,” or “John/Jane Doe”) in public cemeteries across the country. Bodies that met the latter fate often first “appeared” again on the streets before their eventual burial. EAAF is dedicated to investigating these cases and has access to documentation on the bodies generated by state agencies before they were buried.

Contrary to what was long believed state officials often documented cases of state-sponsored disappearance just as they did in almost every other case of “John/Jane Doe” that they processed. After a person was kidnapped, taken to a clandestine detention center, tortured, and in most cases killed, bodies were often deposited in public spaces. At this point, a series of bureaucratic-administrative procedures were followed, and an account of certain of these steps appeared in official records. When a cadaver or group of cadavers was discovered, the police, with or without a judicial official, carried out almost all the procedures made in normal cases. These included writing a description of the find, taking photographs, fingerprinting the corpse, conducting an autopsy or external examination of the body, writing death certificates, making an entry at the local civil register, and issuing a certificate of burial, among other steps. In other words, the same state committing the crime was bureaucratically obliged or indifferent to the trail that it was creating.

Dr. Clyde Snow, a US forensic anthropologist who trained and helped found EAAF, first studied such indirect sources of information on the disappeared. Snow published an investigation of cemetery records in the Province of Buenos Aires;¹ EAAF has expanded on Dr. Snow's work in this field. Though in the past, EAAF has collected death certificates and cemetery records of



Buenos Aires, 1985, Junta Trials of the three military juntas that ruled Argentina between 1976 and 1984.

particular locations during investigations of specific cases, we now conduct a systematic regional survey of bureaucratically generated information. The very existence of the files suggested a strategy for approaching offices of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Interior to ask for information about the discovery of cadavers in public places between 1976 and 1980, when most of the disappearances occurred.ⁱⁱ During the past years, EAAF has also concentrated most of its investigative effort in the city of Buenos Aires and the Province of Buenos Aires where, according to CONADEP (National Commission on Disappeared People) records, until now the most complete archive, approximately 70% of the abductions of disappeared people occurred. Three EAAF members worked primarily in investigations in

Argentina during 2002: Carlos Somigliana, Dario Olmo, and Daniel Bustamante.

In addition to this ongoing work, during 2002 EAAF commenced with another major project in the city of Córdoba, Province of Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina. For a detailed report, please see “The Córdoba Project” in this section.

1. THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS:

Two kinds of data in particular are most useful in making an identification: historical documentation, such as



Avellaneda Cemetery, Province of Buenos Aires, 1984. Relatives of the victims of the repression, such as Laura Bonaparte (right) a member of Madres de Plaza de Mayo, observe the results of the first unscientific exhumations. *Photo courtesy of Roberto Pera.*

records from courts and other official offices, court records and newspapers accounts, and testimonies and antemortem data including physical characteristics, blood samples from relatives of victims, odontological information and fingerprinting. Comparing these two types of data is critical to discovering the identities of the disappeared.

1.1 MAIN ARCHIVES

The Provincial Register of Persons: Death and Burial Certificates

In 1997, with the object of gaining access to the aforementioned data, EAAF negotiated permission to enter the Buenos Aires Provincial Register of Persons, located in the city of La Plata, where death certificates for those who died in Buenos Aires Province are concentrated. The choice of this registry was not random: as mentioned above, Buenos Aires was one of the provinces most affected by the repression, particularly between 1976 and 1978.

Two EAAF members began work there in April 1997, entering data into a laptop from death certificates referring to the discovery of bodies in the thirty-eight jurisdictions comprising “Greater Buenos Aires,” where there was a high rate of abduction. EAAF members prioritized as “highly probably corresponding to ‘disappeared’ persons” those certificates marked “N.N.” and which indicated violent or suspicious cause of death and/or death at a young age. The data was incorporated into the EAAF database to further the project of matching disappearances with discoveries of bodies.

In these archives, burial certificates are frequently found together with death certificates, thus indicating the cemetery where a body was buried. Over the years, EAAF has also collected a large number of cemetery records regarding “John/Jane Doe” bodies recorded on cemetery registries at most important cemeteries in the Federal Capital as well as in the Buenos Aires Province.

We have continued this work in 2003.



Cemetery Registry from Avellaneda Cemetery, Province of Buenos Aires, showing young “NN”s who died in the first months after the military coup. Photo by EAAF.

Buenos Aires Provincial Police and Federal Police

A similar task was undertaken with the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, at the time under the Provincial Ministry of Security and Justice. This usually hermetic police office was approached in two ways: 1) judicially, and b) institutionally, through an accord with the “Intervention” officials in the Buenos Aires Police Force.ⁱⁱⁱ EAAF also established protocols of cooperation with the Ministry of Security and Justice of the Province of Buenos Aires, at the time under the charge of Dr. León Arslanian, one of the Federal Court judges who sentenced ex-commanders of the last military government in 1985.

Crucial archives within the Buenos Aires Police Province lie in the Microfilm Section “Cadavers File” and the Cadaver Registration Book in the *Antecedentes* section (police records on individuals arrested previously) of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Archive. Police opened files on the deaths of people who died unattended or who died in violent or suspicious ways. As a result, the bodies of disappeared people were usually fingerprinted, and their prints are often still available in the “N.N.” files of the police archives.

Similarly, the Federal Police also kept fingerprints of people who died in violent or suspicious manners and/or were found dead in the streets during the years in which disappearances by the state were most concentrated, predominantly 1975 to



EAAF members Turner, Fondebrider and Bernardi, examining remains exhumed from Avellaneda Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Stephen Ferry.

1980. EAAF also has access to these files through the Federal Court of the Federal Capital. After microfilming the fingerprint records, both the Federal and the Buenos Aires Province Police agencies destroyed the original paper with the fingerprints from the years under investigation. Here we provide a description of how EAAF uses these archives to find the remains of disappeared people.

Analyzing Fingerprints

Although many steps are involved in making a positive identification, fingerprint comparison continues to be our most important resource for identifying disappeared people. Argentina is in a unique position for two reasons; first, a large number of disappeared people were fingerprinted before being buried as “John/Jane Doe,” and these records were microfilmed and kept by the Police; second, all Argentines provide their fingerprints to state agencies at least twice in their lives to obtain the two mandatory national identity cards. This fact makes possible the comparison of fingerprints of cadavers more than twenty years old with those taken and kept at state agencies when people who later disappeared processed their national cards.

In 2002, EAAF continued work on two tasks related to the analysis and comparison of fingerprints. Fingerprints from the above-mentioned “John/Jane Doe” files found in the Microfilm Section ‘Cadavers File’ and the Cadaver registration

book in the *Antecedentes* Section of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police served as primary sources. By comparing information such as dates of abduction, general physical information, fates of “transfers” — often a euphemism for extrajudicial execution — of disappeared people from illegal detention centers, information from interviews with former militants, and from judicial, police, and military files titled “appearance of bodies” and “shootout between security forces and subversive elements,” among other sources of data, we formulate a hypothetical link between an “N.N.” individual fingerprinted at the Police archive and a disappeared person.

Once the hypothesis is made, EAAF tests the link by comparing fingerprints from the Police Archive to fingerprints stored at the National Registry Office, which holds records of the fingerprints taken for all Argentine citizens for one of the two National Identity Cards. When the National Registry’s copies of fingerprints are in bad condition, EAAF goes to the archive of the Federal Police, which also fingerprints all citizens and residents for an additional mandatory identity card and to obtain a passport. This process is conducted through the Federal Appellate Chamber of Criminal and Correctional Cases of the Federal Capital (from now on, “Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital”), who acts as a go-between for EAAF and the different state agencies from whom we are requesting fingerprints. During 2001, EAAF received 6,053 fingerprint files for the approximately 9,092 disappeared taken when they processed their identification cards. During 2002, due to the severe economic crisis, state agencies had serious problems acquiring paper and toner. Thus, the National Registry of Persons agreed to allow one EAAF member to digitally photograph in their office dossiers and fingerprints corresponding to disappeared people. This system of obtaining the prints was much quicker and more efficient. By the end of 2002, EAAF increased the number of fingerprints in our records corresponding to disappeared people to 6,792.

Once we have a pair of fingerprints that may match, EAAF conducts an initial comparison. If this preliminary step is positive then the sets are sent to fingerprint experts from the Ministry of Justice and Security of Buenos Aires Province and/or from the Argentine Naval Prefecture, both of who are collaborating with EAAF on this project.



Examples of historical documentation EAAF uses in making identifications. *Left*, press clipping from the now-defunct newspaper *La Opinión* announcing the discovery of thirty bodies in Pilar, province of Buenos Aires, in 1976. *Right*: A typical "N.N." death certificate, probably corresponding to a disappeared person based on the cause of death (gunshot wound to the head), age (23) and date (November 16, 1976, at the height of the repression). *Both photos from EAAF archives.*

The process of identification proceeds from the original fingerprint match. After the first stage of identification is reached, EAAF sends the information to the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital so that they can officially authorize the identification, communicate with the relatives of the victims and begin the process of finding the cemetery where the remains may still be buried. Regrettably, in some cases, the remains had already been exhumed from their individual tombs by cemetery personnel and sent to the general ossuary of the cemetery. There we can no longer recover them because thousands of bones are mixed together. By municipal decree, this is done after five or ten years if grave charges are unpaid as is typical in cases of indigents and “John/Jane Doe.”

Improvement of Fingerprint Quality

Police fingerprints are often defective, making a comparison between them and the sets of fingerprints on identity cards at the National Registry office difficult. To address this problem, in the late 1990s EAAF signed a Cooperative Agreement with the School of Physical Sciences of the National University of Mar del Plata, Argentina. In this context, mathematician Emilce Moller has worked on improving recovered images of fingerprints found in police archives. Moller’s work has made possible the connection between barely legible fingerprints and the fingerprints of the documents that correspond to the identity of the alleged

victims.^{iv} Moller has continued to improve fingerprints for EAAF during the year 2002. Her help was crucial, for example, in the identification of Leonor Herrera de Mangini and Guillermo Ferraro (see below).

Fingerprints Comparison and the relationship with families of victims

When we work with fingerprints, we are able to complete a large part of the process of identification without having contact with the family of a disappeared person. We can obtain the fingerprints without disturbing family members and conduct the comparison work without raising hopes for results that may be negative or inconclusive after months or years of waiting.

There are many different reactions to the tragedy of having a loved one disappeared. While we cannot cover this enormous issue here, many commonalities are observed. Not knowing if their relative is dead or alive produces an enormous amount of pain and anguish even if many years have passed. Any new piece of information can often lead to a strong expectation of finally discovering the truth about what happened to their loved ones. Over the years, we have learned to be available when relatives of a disappeared person need information but to only contact families when we have very precise information to share or to ask them.

(Sometimes, even a phone call from EAAF can heighten expectations in a way that we don't necessarily intend or cannot fulfill.) Even in cases where we have made a positive identification, EAAF members try to investigate what member of a given family may be best as an initial contact and to communicate the news to the rest of the family.

As explained above, this investigative process involves many different steps even before narrowing the sets of fingerprints to be compared, and can sometimes take months or even years and not necessarily conclude successfully. On the other hand, once a fingerprint match is positive, EAAF immediately communicates the results to families. Once this is done, the remaining steps are the legal identification of the disappeared person and an investigation to see if the remains of that person are still buried where the records indicate. As addressed above, a person can be identified by fingerprints but his or her remains may no longer be retrievable.

Other Documents:

EAAF also continues to work in other archives of the Federal Police and the Buenos Aires Provincial Police. Here, EAAF has discovered documents mentioning the names of persons listed as "disappeared" in our databases. In some cases, these documents confirm information about the circumstances of death that EAAF and families of victims already possessed. We try to correlate all this information with "John/Jane Doe" burials in cemeteries in the Federal Capital and in Buenos Aires Province, not always with success.

Judicial and military files are scarce in comparison to the number of disappearances. Yet, as is shown in the identification section cases of this report, they sometimes provide us with crucial information leading to identifications of bodies presumed to correspond to disappeared people.

Over the course of 2002, EAAF examined the Federal Court Archive No. 2 in the judicial department of San Martin, province of Buenos Aires. Here, we had access to the documents generated by this court between 1975-1979, when the vast majority of forced disappearances took place. Because it is a federal court, it heard many cases related to

the political conflict that occurred previous to the military coup (1976) as well as those that happened under state terrorism. Following an examination of the daily records of the court, we selected a number of cases to follow up on and recorded the most significant data on 277 of them in a Microsoft Access database. This represents an important addition to EAAF's general database on disappeared people, adding information to hundreds of cases.

1.2 TESTIMONIAL SOURCES:

Interviews with families: families are often excellent sources for information regarding the actual abduction of their loved ones, information on physical characteristics, ante-mortem and genetic data. The normal EAAF procedure is to interview a family member for this information and any other data that may pertain to the case. In particular, it is crucial to know if the person was related to or a member of political, union or guerrilla organizations. This additional information frequently provides clues about why this individual may have been targeted for disappearance, where he/she was taken and what group was responsible.

Research on the clandestine detention centers (CDCs): Following interviews that help us to establish the political interests and involvements of a disappeared person, we then try to establish what clandestine detention center they may have been brought to and what might have happened to them while they were there. The difficulty of this work is evident: what happened at a secret detention center is by nature, opaque, and information on what occurred inside of them is difficult to obtain. However, despite the bureaucratic measures instated to enforce secrecy and fear, including the absence of communication between detainees, information is possible to come by primarily from those who were released.

In addition to individual interviews with people who were imprisoned in these centers, we are now conducting sessions with groups of survivors of particular CDCs, trying to establish which disappeared persons might have been in specific clandestine detention centers, adding to our understanding of how security forces operated. In cases where more information is available (for example in the case of two

CDCs located in Buenos Aires city — the Athletic Club and the Navy Mechanic’s School, ESMA) we are working with two standards or norms. We know that both of these detention centers assigned a code to each person who was detained there (one letter and two numbers in the case of the Athletic Club, one number and three figures at ESMA) and we have tried to reconstruct the sequence of numbers and letters. In a few cases in the past months, we have offered our records on a particular detention center to survivors so that they might examine them and remember details outside the setting of an interview. This method has been encouraging in two ways: it not only permits the augmentation of records on a particular detention center in a fluid way via e-mail, but it also seems to be edifying for the survivors who can work outside the tension of a formal interview setting, linking their memories and existing data to arrive at new knowledge.

2. EAAF CASE INVESTIGATIONS:

2.1. IDENTIFICATIONS 2002

During 2002, EAAF was able to identify thirteen Argentine citizens disappeared during the “Dirty War.” Most of these identifications were possible as a consequence

of having access to the police archives described above. Especially in Buenos Aires Province, these archives contain records on large numbers of bodies buried as *N.N.s* or “John/Jane Does.” Additional identifications of Uruguayan citizens disappeared in Argentina are described in the Uruguay chapter of this report.

Arnaldo Buffa, Hilda Vergara, Jorge Elischer, and Rubén Maggio.

Arnaldo Haroldo Buffa, an Argentine citizen, disappeared from Paso de los Libres, Corrientes Province, in the northeast of Argentina, in July 1976, under unknown circumstances. He had been employed by an electrical cooperative in Luján, Buenos Aires Province, close to Buenos Aires. In both of these cities, his family made inquiries, but authorities denied any knowledge of his having been arrested.

On November 7, 1976, the Ministry of the Interior sent Buffa’s mother-in-law a notice stating that both Buffa and his wife, Hilda Zulma Vergara, had died in a confrontation in José León Suárez, Province of Buenos Aires, on either the 27th or the 29th of July of that year. Buffa was 43 years old and his wife Hilda, 37 years old at the time. The letter gives no indication of where they were buried.



Arnaldo Haroldo Buffa, Hilda Vergara de Buffa, and Jorge Elischer, EAAF Archives, photos provided by families.

According to information stored on microfilm in the “cadavers” files of the Buenos Aires Province Police, Arnaldo Buffa corresponds to *Prontuario Cadaveres* #47.561, titled “Military Confrontation, José León Suárez, Buenos Aires Province, July 31, 1976.” The Federal Police received four sets of fingerprints on July 31, 1976, taken during the investigation of the presumed armed confrontation in José León Suárez. They were able to identify three of the four individuals by comparison with prints taken by state agencies at the time they issued national identity cards to them. The three identified persons were Arnaldo Haroldo Buffa, “NN” or “John Doe #2;” his wife Hilda Zulma Vergara, “NN #4;” and Jorge Leonardo Elischer, “NN#1.” The fourth body lacked any corresponding file with the Federal Police.

When Arnaldo’s family presented a *habeas corpus*, the Federal Police responded by letting them know that he had died near the end of July in José León Suárez. In this kind of case, a military file should also exist, since confrontations with the military were tracked by the Military Courts (*Juzgado de Instrucción Militar*). Still, the families would not have been able to find it, since these files were not easily available.

The requests for identification from the police correspond to death certificates #929, 930, 931 and 932 in the San Martín Civil Registry, all of them filed as unidentified. These four death certificates correspond to three men and a woman who died on July 31, 1976, at around three in the morning, at the corner of Las Flores and Sarratea in José León Suárez. The four were buried as *N.N.s* in the Municipal Cemetery of San Martín.

When EAAF began to work on the case, our first task was to determine what the four people might have had in common that could help identify the fourth person, whose fingerprints we already had from the Police file. The fact that three of the four victims were from Luján provided a crucial clue. After narrowing the field of possibilities by type of fingerprint pattern, possible dates and plausible place of residence, we formed a hypothesis about his identity, which was confirmed through fingerprint comparison: the fourth person was Rubén Raúl Maggio, a 22 year old man kidnapped on June 24, 1976. Maggio had registered for military service on March 19th that year, and

was presumably arrested while on leave. He, too, was killed on July 31st in the staged confrontation at José León Suárez.

After confirming that the remains were still in their original graves, EAAF contacted the families. The information they provided completed the scenario. Hilda and her husband had been activists in the Socialist Workers’ Party. In the first half of 1976, the couple — who had been trying to leave the country — decided to abandon Luján for Paso de los Libres, Corrientes Province, near the border with Uruguay. There, they stayed with their friend, Omar Pascarelli, and his wife. Within a short period after they left Luján, ten people were kidnapped there. Maggio was among the first, on June the 24th. Elischer, a proctor at the Alvear School in Luján, was kidnapped on July 8. Toward the end of the same month, Buffa and Vergara were kidnapped together with Pascarelli in Paso de los Libres. All remained disappeared.

Hilda’s father, who worked on the Buenos Aires police force, went to Corrientes. Although the garrison chief denied the events, some lower level officials confirmed that his daughter was alive, but said they couldn’t ask for any more information because it would endanger her life. He returned to Buenos Aires and requested a statement about his daughter from the Ministry of the Interior, which responded with a note stating that Hilda and her husband had been killed in a confrontation with the Buenos Aires Police.

EAAF carried out exhumations on September 19, 2001. The recovery of remains was partially successful: three of the four gravesites were consistent with what was recorded in the cemetery’s books. Unfortunately, the grave that was supposed to contain Maggio’s remains, despite what appeared in the registry, had already been reused and there was no possibility of retrieval.

The National Police Laboratory of the Uruguayan Interior Ministry provided genetic testing for this case. Although the evidence is very strong that two of the graves contained the remains of Hilda Vergara and Jorge Elischer, the Federal Chamber of Buenos Aires^v expedited a statement of identification for Arnaldo Harold Buffa in advance of the others, for two reasons: first, it was the first case in which the genetic test was indisputable. Second,

Buffa's brother was terminally ill. He died a few months after the rectification.

Oswaldo César Abbagnato

Oswaldo César Abbagnato was 24 years old when he disappeared from Villa Constitución, Santa Fé Province, on October 11, 1976. He was the third victim of a staged armed confrontation in Villa Constitución, near Pavón, on November 17, 1976. The two other men killed were Alfredo Mancuso, whose remains were identified three days after the incident, and returned to his family, and Uriel Rieznik, who was identified in 1999 by fingerprint



residents about the presence of suspicious elements on motorcycles.' The officers were able to locate them, but as they gave the arrest order, the extremists opened fire. Once this aggression was repelled, the subversives had been abated" [sic: killed]. According to the press release, the extremists "proved to be members of the organization illegal since 1975" (i.e., the Montoneros).

Abbagnato was identified by the Police at the time using his fingerprints, but buried as an NN in the Cemetery of Villa Constitución. His family was never informed about his whereabouts. Unfortunately, cemetery records indicate that his remains were subsequently transferred to a general ossuary. Nevertheless, his identification was accepted by



Oswaldo Cesar Abbagnato (left), and Guillermo Antonio Ferraro, EAAF Archives, photos provided by families.

comparison. His family was informed at the time. Unfortunately, the record from the cemetery indicates that Rieznik's remains were exhumed and taken to a general ossuary within the cemetery where they are no longer retrievable.

News of the event were released in the daily paper *La Opinión* on November 20th: "Santa Fé: The Commando of the Second Army Corps reported that last Wednesday at 7:00 pm, while conducting a joint patrol in the neighborhood of Villa Constitución, 'they were alerted by

the court. Formalization of Abbagnato's official identification was delayed because a tribunal mistakenly posted the rectification to Alfredo Mancuso's file.

Guillermo Antonio Ferraro

Guillermo Antonio Ferraro, an Argentine citizen, was 25 years old when he was abducted the 29th of April 1976. His friends called him "*Facón*". At the time of his abduction, he had completed his mandatory military service as a conscript

with the Federal Police, and was employed in a plumbing workshop at the corner of Olaya and Díaz Vélez in the Federal Capital. On the morning of April 29, he went to work. From there he departed for the home of his wife's sister, a few blocks away, to try on a suit of clothes, as the sister-in-law was to be married a few days later. He never arrived at her house, so it is assumed that he was abducted on the way. Afterward, security personnel broke into and ransacked his house.

In 1985, during the Junta trials, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces sent the Federal Court of the Federal Capital some fifty files on supposed confrontations that occurred under the military government. EAAF accessed these files through its work with the Federal Court. Among the files issued by the Special Stable War Council 1/1, we found one related to an alleged confrontation on May 21, 1976, at the intersection of Mario Bravo and Pilcomayo de Avellaneda, Buenos Aires Province. As a result of this event, four people — three men and one woman — were killed. The four were presumed to be members of the armed group *Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo* based on pamphlets that the military dossier claims were found in the car where they were killed.

Four death certificates in the Civil Registry of Avellaneda, numbers 1557 through 1560, attest to the events. The registry book at the Avellaneda Cemetery indicates that they were all buried in Sector 134, where many unidentified remains were buried during that period, mainly in common graves. EAAF has exhumed Sector 134 in its entirety, recovering a minimum of 336 skeletons, of which approximately 53% probably correspond to disappeared persons. (Please see the section on the Avellaneda Cemetery in this report).

In contrast to the majority of disappeared persons identified via comparison with fingerprints from the Provincial Police archives, the prints attached to the military files of these four victims were of poor quality and could not be used immediately. Therefore, in 2000 we sent the prints to Professor Emilce Möller, of the Engineering School at the National University of Mar del Plata, who has developed a program that enhances the quality of fingerprints.

Once the prints were improved, the Buenos Aires Provincial Police did a comparison that determined that the woman

killed on May 21, 1976 was Leonor Inés Herrera de Mangini.^{vi} We already knew that Herrera had been kidnapped on March 29 that year at a farm in La Reja, Buenos Aires Province, and was seen in captivity in at least two different clandestine detention centers, El Pozo de Quilmes and El Vesubio. Leonor's remains are probably among the 45 female skeletons, found in Sector 134, from which tooth and blood samples have been sent to Canada for DNA analysis. The study is being done by Dr. Michelle Harvey, at The Centre for Applied Genomics, Hospital of the Sick Children, in Toronto. Leonor's family is aware of these developments, and is involved in a group of relatives of people buried in Avellaneda. They are currently waiting for the final results of the DNA tests, which should be complete by mid 2004.

Guillermo Antonio Ferraro was a victim of the same episode, and his body was the one labeled *N.N.* #4 in the military file. After contacting his sister, we learned more about his history. He had not been abducted under the same circumstances as Leonor Herrera. We have not been able to identify the other two individuals, and still do not know whether they had any prior relationship with Herrera or Ferraro.

As in Herrera's case, we are waiting for the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital to make an official resolution regarding Ferraro's identification. As soon as the genetic testing is completed, the remains can be returned to the family.

Alejandro Masriera

Alejandro Daniel Masriera, an Argentine citizen, was 25 years old when he was kidnapped on July 10, 1976, in the Municipality of Castelar, Buenos Aires Province.

Masriera had been working for the State Gas Company. On August 7, 1976, at two in the morning, his body appeared together with that of Irma Noemí Tardivo, at the intersection of Route 27 and Arroyo de la Ñata, in Tigre, Buenos Aires Province. Tardivo had disappeared two days before in Moreno, Buenos Aires Province, probably in connection with the series of arrests in Luján, described above in the case of Buffa, *et al.* Both were buried as *N.N.* in the Municipal Cemetery of Benavidez. Their remains were transferred to a

common ossuary in 1982. For this reason, it was not possible to recover the remains for the respective families. However, their identifications were confirmed via dactyloscopic comparison of fingerprints by EAAF from the *Antecedentes* section of the Buenos Aires Province Police Archives.

Nelson Agorio

Nelson Agorio was 24 years old when he disappeared on March 29, 1976. Nelson had been present at a meeting that took place at a farm called “La Pastoril” near La Reja, Buenos Aires Province, on March 29th, 1976 (Leonor Herrera had also been at that meeting — see the case of Guillermo Ferraro, above). He left with two other people. The three were assassinated in Marcos Paz, about 15km away. EAAF was able to determine this through the records of the Photography Division of the Federal Police, which state that on March 30th of that year they received the fingerprints of three persons. Of these, only one had a police record — meaning he had been previously detained and fingerprinted — an individual later identified as Juan Santiago Mangini (“N.N. #2”). Once EAAF received the files from the National Registry of Persons — which issued national identity cards, and stored the fingerprints of nearly all Argentine citizens — we were able to compare the prints of NN #3 with those of Nelson Agorio, who had a similar profile. EAAF did a preliminary comparison of fingerprints, to narrow the field of possibilities, and a fingerprint expert performed a deeper dactyloscopic comparison. Thus, we were able to confirm his identity.

There is no simple explanation for what happened to the remains. Following the trail of standard bureaucratic procedures, we checked the inhumation records of the Marcos Paz Municipal Cemetery, but found no reference to any burial during that particular period. Historical precedent also led us to consider the possibility that the bodies of the three victims were taken back to La Reja, and perhaps buried with the others who died there. On that same day, seven people — two women and five men — were buried in the Moreno Municipal Cemetery.

From the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital, we obtained a material from a file (“Case of Ibañez w/o Charges”),

opened in December 1983 by the then recently elected mayor of Moreno. Affidavits contained in the file stated that on December 27, 1983, there was an unscientific exhumation of seven bodies from La Pastoril, La Reja, as well as of seven other unidentified bodies buried two weeks later. Fourteen bags containing the unidentified remains were sent for study to the Medical-Legal Institute (*Asesoría Pericial*) of the Supreme Court of Buenos Aires Province. After very cursory study, they were placed in storage at the Institute as *N.N.s*.

Under the terms of EAAF’s agreement with that Medical-Legal Institute, we learned that among the boxes and bags stored as part of the Ibañez case, there are eight skeletons. We have notified Nelson Agorio’s family about the dactyloscopic identification and of the possibility that his remains could be among the others from Moreno. The family is currently awaiting a resolution from the Federal Court and the results of genetic tests, which will show whether Nelson’s remains, and those of his two companions, were buried at the Moreno Cemetery, and whether, consequently, they could be among those still stored at the *Asesoría Pericial*.

Norberto Matesdolfo

Norberto Matesdolfo was kidnapped in Beccar on May 12, 1976. At the time, he was 26 years old, and a worker at the Del Carlo foundry.

According to a press release issued by Military Zone #4, in Buenos Aires Province, and published in local newspapers, there was an attack on Esteban de Luca Arsenal Battalion in Boulogne, Buenos Aires Province, late on July 1, 1976. As a result of the event, twelve people died, three women and nine men. Five others who had participated in the effort (three women and two men) were killed a few kilometers away, in Bancalari, according to the press release. The casualties of the first event were documented in the Civil Registry of San Isidro, a nearby municipality, under Death Certificates 1131 through 1142. Those of the second episode were recorded in the Civil Registry of San Fernando municipality, close to San Isidro, under Death Certificates 574 through 578. Subsequently, the first twelve were buried in the San Isidro Cemetery, while the other five were buried in San Fernando’s.



Nelson Agorio (left), Norberto Matesdolfo, and Marta Yantorno, EAAF Archives, photos provided by families.

According to the certificates, only one of the seventeen bodies was identified at the time of the events — that of Raimundo R. Moro. Moro had been abducted a month earlier, together with Ana María González. González, using her friendship with the daughter of Federal Police Chief General Cardozo, managed to be released. On June 18, 1976, she planted a bomb under Cardozo's bed. Cardozo died as a result. This set off a series of reprisal killings, which likely included the executions of these seventeen persons.^{vii}

For unknown reasons, the Police Photography Division microfilmed only seven of the twelve sets of prints taken by local police from the twelve people killed in the first episode. It may be that the other five were illegible, and for that reason were not filed in the Police archives, but forwarded to a military judge. A military case was probably opened, but we do not have access to this documentation. With respect to the later event, the prints of all five individuals were registered in the Police Archives, including those of Moro.

These prints have allowed us to identify three of the victims of the first event. Of these, only the family of Norberto Matesdolfo has been notified.

With respect to retrieval of his remains, we are trying to find out whether the remains of the twelve people killed at the Arsenal de Luca Battalion were exhumed from the San

Isidro Cemetery as part of an investigation of irregularities at that cemetery (Case of Camere w/o Charges). If not, it may be that when a crematorium was built, the burials in an entire sector were displaced, and perhaps transferred to a common ossuary. In the former case, the remains would have been sent to the Medical-Legal Institute (*Asesoría Pericial*) of La Plata, and we will have to find out whether they are in good enough condition to be analyzed in the laboratory. (Please see the section in this chapter about EAAF's work with the Medical-Legal Institute of La Plata on unidentified remains recovered unscientifically during the early part of the post-military period.)

Marta Yantorno and Carlos Gushiken

Marta Noemí Yantorno de Zurita, a schoolteacher in Mar del Plata, was 28 when she disappeared. Carlos Horacio Gushiken was 22, a worker at the Rigolleau glassworks when he disappeared in April 1978.

In mid-July 1978, in Mar del Plata, there were two episodes of extrajudicial executions, which were undoubtedly related. At 11:30 PM the night of the 13th, in the Barranca de Los Lobos neighborhood, three people were executed (death certificates #102, #103, and #104). On the 15th, at 1:20 AM, a similar event occurred at Chapadmalal Beach, and

three more people died. During an investigation in 1984-85, four of the six victims were identified: María Cristina Garofoli, Ana María Tortti, Liliana Carmen Pereyra, and Gerardo A. Barone. A man killed in the first episode and a woman killed in the second remained unidentified. The woman was exhumed in 1985, and her remains were transferred to the Medical-Legal Institute of La Plata. The man's remains are still in the original location — Sector B, sepulture 3992 of the Parque Cemetery — at present.

Thanks to fingerprint comparisons, we were able to identify the woman as Marta Noemí Yantorno de Zurita, and the man killed on July 13 as Carlos Gushiken. Both had been buried as *N.N.s* — two unidentified people extrajudicially executed in Mar del Plata. The open question in Yantorno's case is whether the box containing her unidentified remains, which was sent to the Asesoría in 1985, is among those still in storage there. The task will not be simple, since many of the boxes have lost their original labels. EAAF is in touch with Marta Noemí's children.

In Gushiken's case, the exhumation order issued by the Federal Chamber of the Province of Buenos Aires was delayed. The Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital ordered the exhumation of his remains. Meanwhile, another court from Mar del Plata, in the course of a "Truth Trial," had placed a "no disturbance" order on that grave to protect it.^{viii} The local tribunal could not lift the "no disturbance" order, since the order had already been appealed at a higher level, the Penal Appeals Court (*de Casación*) in Mar del Plata. This last court, after appealing to the Supreme Court, decided that the "Truth Trial" should continue under the auspices of the Federal Chamber of Mar del Plata. In short, the local tribunal that issued the "non disturbance" order are unable to rescind it, while the higher tribunals claim to lack the jurisdiction to appeal to higher courts. EAAF is in contact with the family of Mr. Gushiken, and is trying to unravel the problem by making presentations at each of the tribunals.

Carlos Héctor German

Carlos Héctor German, a long-time activist in the Revolutionary Workers' Party, was kidnapped on

November 6, 1976. He was identified based on fingerprints from a fake document that ended up in the Buenos Aires Police Archive. The historical investigation into his life and death suggested that he had been using the name Julio Fernando Paz, and that he might have been killed in San Nicolás, where he had gone to check on the fate of a group of his companions. (Cases of Santillán, Lanzillotto, Ballester, Perez, and Pierro). He was in fact killed on November 13, 1976, in Conesa, near San Nicolás, as is registered on death certificate #29 of the Municipal Civil Registry. Although the records of the local cemetery mention the transfer of his remains to a common ossuary, the documentation is not complete enough to be certain. For this reason, we continue to work to clarify their fate. Legally, the case is pending at the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital. EAAF is in contact with his family.

Hugo Francisco Colautti

Hugo Francisco Colautti was 31 years old when he was abducted on December 24th, 1975, a few months before the military coup.

After the armed group *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP) attempted to take over the Arsenal Battalion at Monte Chingolo, Buenos Aires Province, a reprisal operation began immediately. On December 25, at 2:00 A.M., in the nearby town of Transradio, Colautti was killed.

Although EAAF identified him using fingerprints from the Necropapilloscopy Laboratory of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, the fate of his body has not been determined with certainty. In the burials book at the cemetery of Monte Grande — the municipality in which he was killed — there is a record of his body's arrival, but the body is listed as having been transferred to the Avellaneda Cemetery a week later. In Avellaneda, there is no record of the burial, which suggests that he could have been buried there informally. In this case, his remains are buried either in Sector 134, or in a separate area, together with the other victims of the attempted arsenal takeover. The case is pending official resolution at the Federal Chamber of the Federal Capital.

2.2 BAHÍA BLANCA

The Federal Chamber of Appeals in the city of Bahía Blanca, province of Buenos Aires, requested EAAF's professional advice in case N° 11 "Presentation of the *A.P.D.H*^{ix} of Neuquén-Bahía Blanca and others in Case No. 11/86 to know the destiny of the disappeared". In this capacity, on August 12, 2002, three members of EAAF — Carlos Somigliana, Anahí Ginarte and Patricia Bernardi — traveled to Bahía Blanca as expert witnesses named by the Court to carry out the work of archaeological recovery of the contents of two graves corresponding to John/Jane Doe cadavers in the municipal cemetery of this city. EAAF started with the hypothesis that one of the disappeared could be Carlos Oliva, a Montonero militant, one of the two main

guerrilla groups, who was 24 years old at the time he was abducted from his house in the city of Mar del Plata on August 5, 1976, together with his wife, Laura Susana Martinelli. Both were taken to the a clandestine detention center in Mar del Plata until the beginning of September 1976, when they were transferred by plane to Puerto Belgrano and transported to the Bahía Blanca Navy base. Days later, Susana's family received a call telling them to come and search for the baby daughter of the two, who was 5 months old at the time. Months later, in the newspaper, the family learned that "In Bahía Blanca, in the early morning hours on December 31, 1976, military forces engaged in battle after being attacked from a vehicle close to Villa Rosario in the city of Bahía Blanca. Three Montoneros were killed in the exchange of fire, one of them Susana Martinelli, whose body has been



The car where Susana Martinelli and two male NN's died in the city of Bahia Blanca. Photo taken from contents of Judicial File Case #1041. Photo by EAAF.

identified; [officials] are trying to identify the remaining ones. Carlos Alberto Oliva and another delinquent fled the scene, while an Army officer and his subordinate are wounded but not seriously according to military officials. Armaments and ammunition were found.” Laura Susana Martinelli was identified at the time via fingerprints. The other two people, severely burned, were not identified. These two were buried in graves No.110 and 146 of the same sector and division; based on the cemetery records, the remains at 110, however, were transferred to the general ossuary on April 24, 1995.

In December 2001, Mariana Oliva contacted EAAF with the purpose of exhuming the remains of a male individual in order to verify whether they were the remains of Carlos Oliva, her father. One of the graves designated by the court for investigation was No. 146. Its location was included in the cemetery registry book. Scarce data from the judicial file corresponding to the shoot out mentioned above indicated that an individual — the file and the cemetery record did not indicate if it was female or male; there was also no information about lesions — had been buried there and the remains were in a severe stage of calcination, that is, severely burned. Photographs included in the files showed this. From an archaeological point of view, the type of interment that we found in Grave No. 146 seemed to either a diachronic secondary or disturbed primary common grave. It was a common



Top: Cemetery Registry, Bahía Blanca 1976-78
Bottom: Cover of Judiciary File (#1041):
Name, Martinelli, Laura Susana - 2 NN Masculinos
S/Homicidio, Bahía Blanca, Photos by EAAF.

grave because it contained the remains of more than one individual — a minimum number of four skulls were intermixed with a series of other disarticulated bones. This evidence — bones that were not in anatomical position and mixed — suggests disturbance after primary burial or that this was a secondary burial for these remains; that is to say, the remains were originally buried somewhere else and later transported to this burial site. In this case, some of the bones were also deposited in various levels of the ground with layers of soil in between them that most likely indicated temporal differences in the time of burial, consistent with a diachronic grave. The discovery of this type of burial in Grave No. 146 ran contrary to what was indicated in the records of the cemetery. But what ultimately led us to believe that the body buried in 1976 was no longer in Grave

No.146 was that among the large quantity of bones found there, none were severely burned. Sadly enough for the daughter of Oliva, it was not possible to establish what happened to this particular body. It’s possible that the body was taken to the general ossuary without documenting the move and later, the grave was used for other burials.

Something similar happened in the case of a grave where we expected to find the remains of Fernando Jara, the other disappeared person that the judiciary wanted us to try to locate.



Left: Delimiting the area to be exhumed at Bahía Blanca cemetery. Photo by EAAF.



Right: EAAF members Somigliana, Bernardi and Ginarte analyzing records and judicial files pertaining to the Bahía Blanca case at the Federal Chamber of Appeals of Bahía Blanca. Photo by EAAF.

The events of the Bahía Blanca investigations were significant for various reasons. Among them, we demonstrated that the paradox terrorist state-bureaucratic state is not confined to geographic limits to the city of Buenos Aires and its nearby cities, but is a characteristic of the system and therefore found throughout the country, with regional characteristics that we will describe, for example, in the Córdoba case. A second aspect this case shows is that identification unfortunately doesn't necessarily imply restitution of the body.

As we mentioned, the following information was gathered by the Federal Chamber of Bahía Blanca during the proceedings of the ongoing 'truth trials' being conducted there (see EAAF's Right to Truth section.) Moreover, particularly in relation to the cases Carlos Alberto Oliva and Fernando Jara, the archaeological investigation demonstrates that neither of them was found in the places where their bodies were originally buried.

However, in the latter case, in the judicial file on the body that may have been Jara, we found a set of fingerprints taken at the time when the body was found and buried. Upon comparing those prints with Jara's, the match was positive. Therefore, we were able to identify him although we were unable to recover his remains.

2.3. Recovery Agreement with the Medical Legal Institute (Asesoría Pericial) of La Plata

This section requires a brief explanation. Beginning in 1984 and 1985, and to some extent in the years since, individual judges began to order exhumations in cemeteries under their jurisdiction known to contain the remains of disappeared persons. These exhumations were attended by relatives of the disappeared desperate to find out what had happened to their loved ones and hoping to recover their remains. But these procedures were problematic in several ways. First, official medical doctors in charge of the work had little experience in the exhumation and analysis of skeletal remains; in their daily professional experience they generally worked only with cadavers. Thus, exhumations were carried out by cemetery workers in a completely unscientific manner. In particular, when bulldozers were used, the bones were broken, lost, mixed up, or left inside the graves. As a result, the evidence necessary not only to identify the remains themselves, but also to support legal cases against those responsible for these crimes, was destroyed. In addition, some forensic doctors had themselves been complicit, either by omission or commission, with the crimes of the previous regime. In Argentina, as in most Latin American countries, the forensic experts are part of the police and/or the judicial systems. Therefore, during non-democratic

periods their independence is severely limited. (In part, this motivated the arrival of U.S. forensic experts in Argentina and eventually, led to the formation of EAAF. See introduction section of this report).

The majority of these exhumations took place in the Province of Buenos Aires, and for this reason the majority of the remains were sent to the Medical Legal Institute of the La Plata Department of Justice. In most cases, their laboratory analysis was poor and provided very little evidence in terms of identification and cause and manner of death. The recovery and storage conditions complicated things further as more than one individual was stored inside each bag. General interest in these types of cases waned, the majority of judges and officials forensic experts did not work further on them, and the skeletons remained in storage. Requests for information were inadequately answered with the result that it was generally felt that remains deposited at the Institute were impossible to access. In the late 1980s, EAAF briefly had access to and examined some of these remains finding, unfortunately, that with time labels on many of the bags and boxes containing skeletons were lost, making it even more difficult to access these remains.

At the same time, EAAF began to realize that the remains of certain disappeared we were trying to identify were probably stored in the *Asesoría Pericial*, and it became increasingly urgent to access these. After two meetings with Medical Legal Institute officials, we developed a plan: the Institute would prepare a detailed inventory of the remains deposited there with available data related to their origin and present it to the Federal Chamber of Buenos Aires, petitioning that these remains be made available to us. To date we have been authorized to remove ninety-one bags and boxes of bones and deposit them in the Department of Legal Medicine and Tanatology (Faculty of Medicine, University Of Buenos Aires.) The motivations for moving them there are twofold: our incapacity to store more skeletons in

our EAAF offices overflowing facilities, and the existence of an agreement with the department that ensures both security and access to these remains.

In the short term, we have prepared a spreadsheet that helps us to understand which judicial case each set of remains was associated with in order to later access the records for that case and establish the circumstances under which the remains were recovered. We have already received some of these legal records (in the cases of the cemeteries of Lomas de Zamora, Monte Grande, Avellaneda, San Isidro and Vicente Lopez) and continue to work on identifying these remains.



EAAF members and collaborators working at the Medical Examiners office of the city of La Plata. The remains correspond to exhumations conducted at the beginning of democracy without archaeological techniques, resulting in the mixing of individuals. Photo by EAAF.

2.4. The Avellaneda Case:

In 1986, EAAF began a long-term investigation into a large cemetery in suburban Buenos Aires where many disappeared persons were buried during Argentina's "Dirty War." Between 1976 and 1983, at least 336 bodies were deposited in Sector 134 of the Avellaneda cemetery, most of them recorded as *N.N.s* — *Ningún Nombres*, or "John/Jane Does" — or without any record at all, mainly in large common graves.^x Indigent elderly people whose identities were known were also buried in this sector. Avellaneda is a large, densely populated municipality in Buenos Aires Province, just south of the Federal Capital.

During the first two years of the military government (1976-1978), Argentine security forces used a part of this cemetery, called Sector 134, as a dumping ground for bodies of people who had been abducted by security forces, often tortured, and finally, killed. In contrast to previous years, local officials made few attempts to identify the bodies. Cemetery personnel dug the graves and sometimes they or the police, operating from a very primitive morgue inside of Sector 134, placed the bodies into the graves. Occasionally, these burials were recorded in cemetery records.

Sector 134 is a rectangular area (12 meters by 24 meters, 300 square meters) located at the back of the cemetery, squeezed between the main graveyard and a city street. A two-meter-high brick wall separating Sector 134 from the rest of the cemetery was built after the military coup; it had a small gate providing access to the rest of the cemetery. On the east, it was bounded by a building that served as a morgue and storage place for cadavers.

A gate in the street-side wall was wide enough to allow vehicles to enter. The solid metal gates and high walls concealed it from the eyes of curious passers-by. During the first three years of the dictatorship, when thousands of people disappeared, neighbors across the street observed military trucks and police vehicles entering Sector 134 through the street-side gate, day and night.

Sector 134 seemed to have been abandoned after 1982, and it was gradually overgrown with weeds. Although people

suspected it concealed the remains of disappeared people, Sector 134, like similar places in Argentina, could not be investigated until after 1983, when democracy returned.

Preliminary Investigation:

The forensic work in Sector 134 went beyond the usual routine of exhuming the remains, trying to identify them and establish their cause and manner of death. The Avellaneda Cemetery presented us with an opportunity to study the bureaucratic machinery of the repression through the layers of evidence it generated. As explained at the beginning of the Argentina section, despite all the secrecy surrounding the abduction, illegal detention, torturing and killing of people, once the bodies were disposed of in public places, a whole chain of bureaucratic steps followed as usual. Thus, many official documents were generated, such as records of autopsies, fingerprints, death certificates, cemetery records, burial certificates, etc., all of which are vital to EAAF investigations.

During preliminary historical research, which always precedes and often continues during the archaeological phase, EAAF examined the Avellaneda cemetery records, and surrounding registry offices for death and burial certificates. These records showed that despite all the secrecy surrounding the repression, at least 220 people were recorded as buried in Sector 134 during the military government. Each of them had a death certificate. Of these, 160 were unidentified young people killed by gunshot wound and brought there by police or military personnel. The majority of all of the bodies were buried between 1976 and 1977 — 96 individuals and 110 individuals, respectively — during the peak of the repression, decreasing sharply from 1978 — only 6 individuals were buried that year — until 1982.

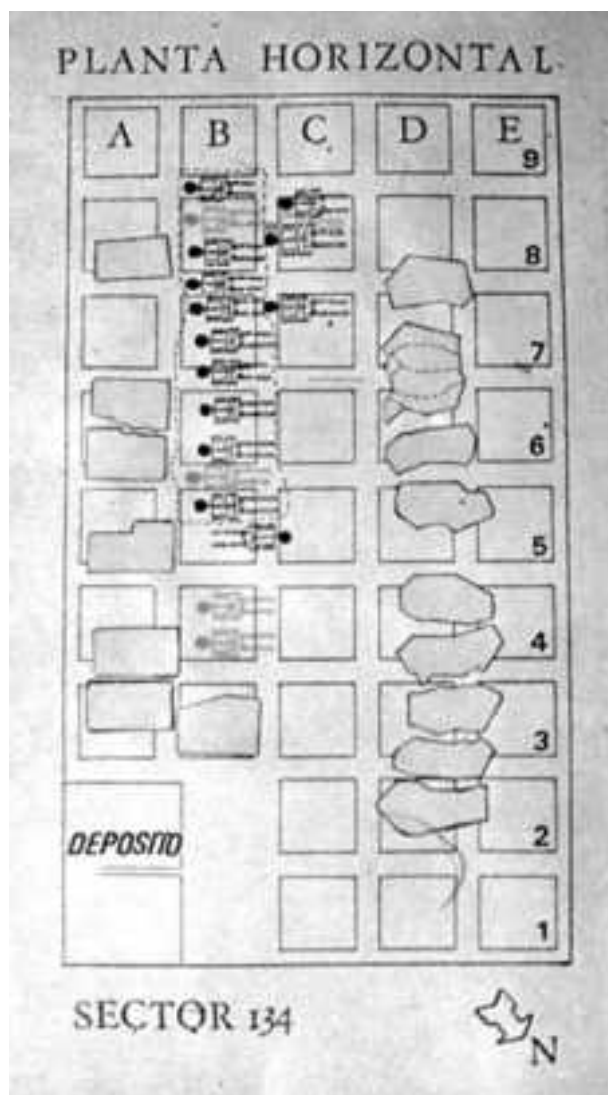
Based on that study and on our own historical research, EAAF approached Sector 134 with a series of hypotheses about what we would find there. Snow and Bihurriet^{xi} conducted a statistical study in 1984, based on cemetery and registry office records covering large sectors of the regions most affected by the repression, including

“normal” and Military government years. The study showed a clear change in the biological and traumatic profile of the population of “N.N.s” during the military government. Usually, in “normal” years, this population was generally represented by older individuals, mostly men, who had died from ‘natural’ causes such as neglect and old age, or sometimes exposure, malnutrition, and frequently, alcohol abuse. The bodies of these individuals were usually brought to the cemetery by hospices and hospitals, firefighters, and police. “Depending largely on the size of the population it serves, a municipal cemetery can expect a fairly constant annual number of N.N. burials. This number may show transitory peaks related to mass disasters and longer-term upward or down-ward

trends related to population growth or economic factors influencing poverty rates and homelessness but, usually, it remains fairly stable for a given cemetery.”^{xii} The N.N. population from the military government period was very different. First, there was a statistically significant increase in the number of N.N.s per year in a number of cemeteries in crucial areas most hit by the repression, such as the cemeteries surrounding the city of Buenos Aires. Second, in these cemeteries the biological profiles of the N.N.s had changed. The majority were young people — between 20 to 35 years old — and women were approximately 30% of the N.N.s, showing an important increase compared to the

traditional N.N. population. The cause of death for most of these young individuals was violent, mostly due to gun shot wounds. They were often brought to the cemetery by military or police personnel. These features are consistent with those of the disappeared population.

Information collected by the CONADEP (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) in 1984 revealed that 80% of reported disappearances were registered in 1976 and 1977; that 30% of the almost 10,000 disappeared persons were women; and that 70% of the victims were between 21 and 35 years of age at the time of death.



Graphic showing individual and mass graves found at sector 134, Avellaneda Cemetery. Graphic by P. Bernardi/EAAF.

The strong correlation with the population described in Snow and Bihurriet’s study — in terms of age, sex, cause of death — lent weight to the claim that Sector 134 was the final burial site for many disappeared persons.

In this case, the sheer quantity of relevant information, and the way that it was fragmented among many sources meant that we devoted several months to the preliminary work before beginning exhumations. Even so, because we never ceased to receive and compile relevant facts, the “preliminary” phase remains ongoing.

At this point, it was clear that a large percentage of the remains buried in Sector 134 very likely corresponded to disappeared people.



The wall separating Sector 134 from the rest of the cemetery was constructed after the military coup in 1976. Most remains exhumed in this sector had been buried naked. *Photo by M. Doretti/EAAF.*

However, the individual identification of the remains was largely a much more complicated problem. In Argentina the repression system was complex. Prisoners could pass through several of the more than 350 illegal detention centers (CDCs) identified throughout the country by the CONADEP in 1984. The possible combinations and permutations of this process are enormous, making the task of tracing the journey of a given *desaparecido*, from his or her place of abduction to his or her grave, a formidable problem. Fortunately, however, there were patterns among the security forces, even though each force and paramilitary group had their own modalities that could also vary over the years of the dictatorship, and from region to region. Part of EAAF's work in Argentina is to reconstruct this *modus operandi* through documents and interviews with survivors.

Other sources that EAAF also collected and examined included judicial, police, and military files, the reports of relatives, and the testimonies of survivors of clandestine detention centers, that, based on the available information, could have used Sector 134 as a place to dispose the bodies of their prisoners.

We began by reading materials from a judicial case related to irregularities in the way burials had been handled in Sector 134. Next, we tracked all reports of armed confrontations or appearances of unidentified bodies in the newspaper *La Opinión* between 1975 and 1979. In this way, we tried to establish connections among alleged shootouts between security forces and guerrilla groups, discoveries of bodies, and burials at Sector 134 of the Avellaneda Cemetery.

We also read materials from Federal and Military cases that could be related to Avellaneda. In these, we found files containing valuable information about the discovery of unidentified bodies that will later be buried in Sector 134. These files have dates of findings and general physical information about the victims useful for correlating with information on “transfers,” the euphemism used by security forces to indicate the moment the prisoners were taken from their last CDC to be killed. Unfortunately, the dates on which these individuals were last seen alive is only approximate, and we have no information about the

dates of death. Some of the files also contained autopsy reports made by police physicians soon after the bodies were discovered, as well as fingerprints, and in some cases, photographs of the bodies.

A key source of information was the “Deaths” archive of the Provincial Registry of Persons. There, we found information from all death certificates for unidentified cadavers and people killed by violent or suspicious means in Buenos Aires Province between 1976 and 1978. Among these were additional death certificates linked to burials in Avellaneda, as well as certificates linked to all of the Province's other periurban southern municipalities close to Avellaneda (Lanús, Quilmes, Lomas de Zamora, Almirante Brown, Florencio Varela, Berazategui, La Plata, Ensenada, and Berisso). As part of this work, we gathered all the available death certificates — 252 in total — for people buried in Sector 134 from the Avellaneda Cemetery.

Finally, we have incorporated survivors' reports and other information about people seen in nearby CDCs. EAAF also collected information about the members of union, political, student and guerrilla groups who were primary targets during those years. When the kidnappers made “sweeps” targeting a particular group, their members were likely to wind up in the same CDCs, and eventually, the same burial site.

Based on this previous investigation, EAAF started to collect antemortem or physical information provided by families, dentists and doctors for disappeared people who could potentially have been buried in Sector 134. This allows us to build dossiers on alleged victims. Crucial preliminary information on individuals includes time of death, sex, height, dental information, and reports of old injuries, etc., which are sometimes the key to a positive identification. Also, genealogical information and blood samples are often collected from relatives of victims for eventual DNA analysis. Collecting all this information may require several interviews with family members over a period of months or years. With patience and sensitivity, bonds of trust and understanding are built with the families, making it a little easier for them to reconstruct pieces from a painful past.

To the extent possible, we also try to reconstruct the final days of people who were killed, so that we can form hypotheses about their fates and about where their remains are located. Also, we try to provide this information to families of the victims, who often want to know every piece of available information about their loved ones.

As expert witnesses in one of the judicial cases opened to investigate the Avellaneda cemetery, in 2000 EAAF was made legal custodian of the remains from Avellaneda.

Archaeology:

EAAF began exhumations in Avellaneda in 1998 and ended in 1992, once the entire area of 432 mt² was excavated. Although the data from the Judicial Case and the other written sources was full of gaps, it did indicate that some nineteen common graves, or *vaqueras*,^{xiii} were dug in Sector 134 between April 1976 and September 1978. This information was consistent with the results of the exhumations, which revealed nineteen common graves, plus eighteen individual graves. This led us to believe that the cemetery registry, although incomplete, was more or less reliable with respect to the number of graves.

According to these same registries, in 1976 eleven common graves were opened. Of these, only two were subsequently reopened and re-used. Although each grave was used during a more or less distinct time period, there is no chronological succession among the different graves.

Based on the cemetery records, the most plausible story seemed to be that bodies were transferred from morgue to grave, usually in groups, then covered over with earth not reaching the surface so that another layer of bodies might be deposited there after a period of a week, several months or a year. This resulted in a stratigraphy or levels, in which the skeletal remains were separated by layers of compacted earth. As exhumations proceeded, we observed precisely that pattern. We found two basic types of grave: “synchronic” and “diachronic.” Synchronic graves are those in which the bodies seem to have been deposited during the same temporal event, since there are no



EAAF members Fondebrider and Bernardi working at a mass grave, Sector 134, Avellaneda. Photo by M. Doretti/EAAF.

observable elements separating the bodies. Diachronic graves are those in which bodies seem to have been deposited at different times based, in this case, on the earth layers separating layers of bodies.

The results of reuse and layering can be illustrated by imagining a vertical cross-section of the quadrant designated D6/7. Viewing the section from the side, we can see that there were two episodes of burial. The first skeleton found in that quadrant was buried at a depth of 26cm. After removing it, we found a cap of earth 75cm deep, and then a second group of skeletons. Unfortunately, since they are very recent, the two layers cannot be dated by the same means used to date ancient burials, like the carbon-14 method. Such methods are also not useful when trying to establish short-term differences in time, as probably one layer was a week, a month or a few years older than the other. Still, we

can establish relative sequences, — the lower level is older than the one closer to the surface — and work toward hypotheses about time elapsed between burial episodes.

The number of skeletons per grave ranged from one to twenty-eight. Only 30% of the individuals showed remnants of clothing. Personal effects were very rare. Wedding rings were found among the hand bones of two individuals and metal crosses associated with two others. Three coins, one dated 1958 and the other two 1976, were recovered. Ballistic evidence consisted of more than 300 bullet fragments; no cartridge cases were found.

Laboratory Work

The laboratory phase began in the middle of 1991, and concentrated on the anthropometrical study of the 336 skeletons exhumed from Sector 134. At the beginning, we set up a makeshift lab in Avellaneda Cemetery’s old morgue. Later, in April 2000, the court authorized us to move the skeletons to our own laboratory at EAAF’s offices.

The first step of the study consisted of selective x-raying, which concentrated on bones exhibiting any suspicious lesions. Next, we cleaned and labeled the skeletons. Finally, we reconstructed and glued together fractured pieces.

After these basic preparations, we could begin to make the essential observations and measurements for each individual. To the extent possible, we tried to determine the sex, approximate age, laterality (“handedness”), likely cause of death, and probable population group of each individual. We made careful records of all pathologies and

wounds observable in the skeletal remains. Finally, we codified basic information about each individual’s dentition, and took photographs of both the upper and lower teeth. All of this was incorporated into the individual’s dossier and stored in a searchable database.

EAAF’s database consists of seven screens, each corresponding to one of the estimations or determinations carried out in the laboratory.^{xiv} This format makes it easy to consult, to conduct searches, and to generate statistics about populations by feature. For example, one could quickly determine the number of female skeletons between the ages 18 to 22, or the number of male skeletons with statures greater than or equal to 180cm.

Following laboratory analysis, we try to move toward identifications of the remains, although positive identification has remained elusive for most of the individuals buried in Sector 134, as we explain below.

Sex and Age Distributions

Table I shows distribution by sex of all the skeletons recovered from Sector 134 and the distribution by sex of bodies buried there according to the cemetery’s registry. Skeletons in the “undetermined” category in this table are those belonging to prepubescent children, and some that are incomplete.

As Table I clearly shows, the cemetery registry recorded 91 fewer burials than the number of skeletons we found in the graves. A majority of these — a total of 77 skeletons — were males.

Table I. Comparison between Cemetery Registry for Sector 134 and Number of Skeletons Exhumed

	Male	Female	Undetermined	Totals
Exhumed Skeletons	252 indiv. 75%	71 indiv. 21.13%	13 indiv. 3.86%	336 indiv.
Cemetery Registry	175 indiv. 71.42%	53 indiv. 21.4%	17 indiv. 6.91%	245 indiv.

Table II shows the age distributions of the skeletons exhumed from Sector 134.

In the first group, comprised of thirteen individuals aged 13 and under at the time of death, two correspond to children in the first and second stages of infancy. One was identified in 1992 as Carlos Manfil using mitochondrial DNA testing. Seven correspond to newborns and four to foetuses. Of this last group, the ages are between 9-10 lunar months and 1-1.5 years. None of the skeletal remains compatible with newborns were found in direct association with a female adult skeleton.

Of the skeletons recovered from Sector 134, the largest concentration is in the 21 to 35 age group, with 135 skeletons, or 40.17%. This coincides with the ages distribution of the population described by Snow and Bihurriet in their demographic study of people disappeared in Argentina's Dirty War.^{xv}

The next largest concentration is in the over-50 category, with a total of 108 individuals, or 32.14% of the remains recovered from Sector 134. Fifty-two persons registered in the cemetery record books form part of this concentration. In terms of sex, age, and cause of death, this group coincides closely with the profile of the indigent population. Nevertheless, it is significant that eleven individuals in the over-50 years age group showed bullet wounds.

Table III shows distribution by age group according to the cemetery registry and according to exhumed skeletons. The largest under-recorded population is among the 50-and-over age group (56 individuals); followed by the 36 to 50 age group (27 individuals), and finally by the 21 to 35 age group (17 individuals).

Table IV compares the distributions by sex and age of the entire exhumed population.

Of the 75% of the population that was male, the highest concentration is in the over-fifty category, with 96 individuals, or 38.09% of the males. Almost equal, the next largest concentration of males was in the 21-35 age group, with 92 individuals, or 36.5% of the male population.

Of the 21.13% of the total population that was female, the largest concentration was in the 21-35 age group, with 43 individuals, or 59.72% of the females. The next largest concentration was in the over-fifty group, with 12 individuals, or 16.66% of the female population.

Thus, the overall pattern is a reflection of the fact that during the six years that Sector 134 was in use (1976-1982), the bodies of ordinary "people" (mostly elderly male indigents) were buried in the same mass grave as the *desaparecidos*, who were predominately young, and often, female.

Table II. Age Distribution of Exhumed Skeletons at Sector 134

Age Group	0-13 years old	14-20 yrs old	21-35 yrs old	36-50 yrs old	Over 50	Undetermined	Totals
Exhum. Indv.	13	15	135	58	108	7	336
Percentages	3.86%	4.46%	40.17%	17.26%	32.14%	2.08%	100%

Table III. Age of Exhumed and Registered Individuals

Age Group	0-13	14-20	21-35	36-50	≥ 50	Undetermined	Totals
Exhumed Skeletons	13	15	135	58	108	7	336
Cemetery Registry	10	19	118	31	52	15	245

Table IV. Age and Sex Distribution of Exhumed Skeletons

Age Group	0-13	14-20	21-35	36-50	≥ 50	Undetermined	Totals	Percentages
Male	1	11	92	48	96	4	252	75%
Female	1	4	43	10	12	2	72	21.42%
Undetermined	11	0	0	0	0	1	12	3.57%
Totals	13	15	135	58	108	7	336	100%

Table V. Perimortem Trauma on Exhumed Skeletons

	With Peri Mortem Lesions*	Without Peri Mortem Lesions	Undetermined	Totals
Totals	178	133	25	336
Percentages	52.97%	39.58%	7.44%	100%

*Peri mortem lesions refers to wounds produced immediately before or after death.

Cause of Death

Many causes of death leave no trace in skeletal remains. For this reason, sometimes the cause of death must be left as “undetermined.” Also, even in cases where sufficient trauma to cause the death of an individual is found in a skeleton, other elements may also have contributed or even caused the death of a person, and are no longer available as they only affected the soft tissue. In Sector 134, among the traumatic causes of death, we recorded evidence of gunshot wounds and cases of partially or totally burned skeletons. Among those classified as “undetermined” are skeletons found incomplete and/or disarticulated, newborn infants, and fetuses.

Table V shows distribution of exhumed skeletons by cause of death.

Evidence of gunshot wounds to the head and/or the chest were found in 178 individuals (52.97%) of the total, almost all of whom were under 50 years of age at time of death. On the other hand, gunshot wounds are rare in the age group over fifty. Some of the other younger individuals show blunt force trauma and burning; others

within this same group show no signs of gunshot wounds, burning and/or blunt force trauma; however, they may have also died violently since it is known that a number of disappeared died due to physical torture (mostly electric shocks) that would not leave marks on the bones.

In sum, the remains exhumed at Sector 134 illustrate the two groups of *N.N.s* discussed at the beginning of this section: an older one, where most individuals show no signs of violent cause of death, very likely representing the “normal” or “traditional” population of *N.N.s.*; and a younger one, showing in most cases a violent cause of death, mostly by gun shot wound, very likely corresponding to the *N.N. desaparecido* group. This distribution and features are consistent with the Snow and Bihurriet study.

Of the 52.97% exhibiting evidence of gunshot wounds, we can further divide the victims according to the location of the wounds.

Table VII shows the number of skeletons that exhibited gunshot wounds (GSW) and signs of having been burned, grouped according to sex.

Table VI. Anatomical Distribution of Gunshot Wounds from Exhumed Skeletons

Anatomical section	No./Skeletons	Percentage
Skull	17 indiv.	9.55%
Thorax	03 indiv.	1.68%
Skull and upper and/or lower limbs and/or pelvis	119 indiv.	66.29%
Thorax and upper and/or lower limbs and/or pelvis	39 indiv.	21.91%
Total	178 indiv.	100%

Table VII. Exhumed skeletons showing fire trauma with and without gunshot wounds

	Male	Female	Totals
GSW With Burning	5	5	10
Burning but no GSW	14	5	19
Totals	19	10	29

Twenty-nine skeletons were found partially or totally burned. Ten of these also showed signs of gunshot wounds. In these cases, the presence of gun shot wounds could be an indication of a possible *desaparecido*, as the burning could have been used to cover up the cause of death, as well as the identity of the person. Based on careful archaeological study of the site itself, we can conclude that these skeletons were not burned in the graves where they were buried. The earthen “matrix” in which they were found showed no traces of fire, such as changes in the color of the sediment, or the presence of ash or carbon.

Another interesting feature observed in the remains from Sector 134 was that sixteen showed evidence, mostly in the skulls, of having been autopsied

Although it was standard for local authorities to perform an autopsy when a body was unidentified, and/or whenever the cause of death was violent, suspicious, or unattended, the practice of these autopsies are remarkable given the way that the bodies were treated afterward.

Of the 336 skeletons recovered, ten presented saw marks in distal part of the forearm, but the bones of their hands were not found at all. This was the result of a standard procedure of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police until the 1970s. When bodies were discovered in public places, they would often sever the hands and send them to their dactyloscopy laboratory for fingerprinting, with the goal of identifying the body. Nine out of ten

presented gun shot wounds. Thus, it is very likely that they correspond to disappeared people. Considering that fingerprints were taken, it is very likely that these nine individuals were identified by the police at the time, as explained above.

Identification

One main objective of forensic work is to arrive at positive identifications. Lack of sufficient antemortem data, the complexity of the repression, similarities in the general biological profile of the victims, and insufficient access to DNA analysis contribute to the low numbers of positive identifications in Sector 134.

As in other cases, we have used two basic strategies to work toward making identifications in the case of Sector 134. First, there is the anthropological process, which consists of comparing the premortem physical information given by the families of the victims with the data gleaned from the exhumation and laboratory work. Unfortunately, the pre mortem data from families is not always sufficient or decisive enough for identification.

Second, and simultaneous to the first comparison of physical data, there is the historico-documentary research, which traces individual fates through written sources, such as the archives of the CONADEP, judicial proceedings, death certificates, cemetery records, autopsy reports, and Federal Police archives. Although

we have started to discern patterns in the ways that people were imprisoned and transferred between sites, as explained above, these are among the most difficult hypotheses to establish.

Nine individuals have been positively identified so far, using historical and anthropological methods and DNA testing. To date, we have identified the following people: the Manfil family, Carlos Manfil, 30 years old; his wife, Angelica Zarate de Manfil, 28 years old; and their son, Carlitos Manfil, 9 years old; Rosario Ramirez, 30 years old; María Mercedes Hourquebie de Francese, 77 years old; María Adela Garín de De Angelis, 29 years old; Luis Adolfo Jaramillo, 42 years old; Leonor Herrera de Mangini; and Lidia Masseroni de Perdoni.

Through the analysis of documents, we also determined the names of twenty-four other disappeared people that were buried in Sector 134. However, in all of these cases we cannot establish with certainty a connection between the identified person and a specific skeleton. Therefore, the next step in the identification process consists in comparative DNA testing.

We are still trying to identify the remains of more than 200 individuals from Sector 134. The historical

investigation continues and in 1998 was tremendously advanced when EAAF finally gained access to crucial non-public police records. Hopefully, data from these records, together with better access to laboratories performing DNA analysis and funding for the tests, will allow us to positively identify a larger number of individuals faster than previously. In January 2003, EAAF sent fifty-one additional tooth samples from victims, and forty-seven blood samples from families of victims presumably related to the skeletons for analysis to Dr. Michelle Harvey at the Applied Centre for Genomics of The Sick Children Hospital, in Toronto, Canada. These samples all came from the remains of females buried in Sector 134. The investigation continues.

Associated evidence and personal effects

Ninety-six skeletons were found in association with some kind of clothing. Of these, twenty-eight had only socks. Of the ninety-six skeletons found with clothing, only thirty-two showed signs of gunshot wounds. The other sixty-four without perimortem wounds corresponded to individuals over 50 years of age.



Some of the disappeared people identified in Sector 134. *From left:* Lidia Nelida Massironi, Maria Adela Garin, and Luis Adolfo Jaramillo, EAAF Archives, photos provided by families.

To bury a person naked is against normal burial practices in urban Argentina. (But of course, many more serious cultural habits have also been broken in the burial of individuals in Sector 134). If we consider clothing as a possible identification element, the lack of it could likewise show the division between the two groups of the *N.N.* population indicated above. The older one, with no signs of violent cause of death, more likely corresponding to the “normal” *N.N.* population, were more likely to have clothing. Most of the young skeletons, many of which show gun shot wounds that most likely correspond to disappeared people, were buried naked.

Two skeletons were found with wedding rings and two were found in association with metal crosses bearing no inscriptions.

Finally, EAAF members recovered three coins, one from 1958, and two from 1976.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the skeletons from Sector 134 represented the first time it was possible to compare the data from cemetery registries collected by Snow and Bihurriet with data from a significant group of bodies from a specific cemetery. Sector 134, a burial site that was only used during the military regime, reflects the characteristics of the *N.N.* population they found in statistically significant cemeteries — in terms of excesses of *NN* bodies — for those years. First, we have the two groups of the *N.N.* population described in the Snow and Bihurriet study, the younger and the older, the prior of which is not present in “normal years.” Second, among the younger group that appears during the years of repression, a high proportion of the skeletons fall into the 21-to-35 age group. Third, the number of male victims is still higher than the number of females during the military years, but the proportion of females is much higher than that of the pre- and post-military period. Finally, we observed a considerable increase in numbers of deaths produced by violent means as compared to non-military periods, also strongly concentrated among the younger group of individuals.

These three tendencies show strong coincidences with the biological profiles and traumatic profiles of the disappeared population.

2.5 The CÓRDOBA Project

During 2002, EAAF made advances in a long-term investigation of clandestine burials in Córdoba, capital of Córdoba Province, and Argentina’s second largest city. This work confirms the existence of individual and mass graves allegedly containing remains of people disappeared mostly during Argentina’s last military government. After an intensive preliminary historical investigation, in 2002 we began exhumations of individual graves in Córdoba’s San Vicente Cemetery. The project continues in 2003, and at the time of this writing, EAAF is conducting a large-scale exhumation of a mass grave in the same cemetery, with the support of ARHISTA, a local human rights organization, and the Anthropology Museum at the Nacional University of Córdoba.

Historical Background

Most of EAAF’s investigations in Argentina have focused on the Greater Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area, which includes the Federal Capital and the suburban part of Buenos Aires Province. The main reason for this focus was the fact that two thirds of all disappearances in Argentina reportedly occurred in the metropolitan zone.

For most of the military period — between March 1976 and June 1982 — the Armed Forces divided the country around five army command zones, each containing a major population center. Zone One covered the Federal Capital and the majority of Buenos Aires Province; Zone Two included the northeastern provinces, with headquarters in Rosario, Santa Fé Province; and Zone Three contained the central, west, and northwest regions. The Fifth Army Corp controlled southern Argentina. The seat of Zone Four, located at the Campo de Mayo Army base in Buenos Aires Province, was the most important military installation in the country, and



February 2003. Mass Grave at San Vicente Cemetery, Córdoba, Córdoba Province. Excavation in Progress. *From left, EAAF consultant Claudia Bisso and collaborators. Photo by EAAF.*

had jurisdiction over the northern zone of Buenos Aires Province. Consequently, most of our previous investigations have centered on the patterns of repression in Zones One and Four.

Zone Three, which was controlled by the Third Army Corp, was based in Córdoba, some 780 km northwest of Buenos Aires. The Third Corp also had jurisdiction over the provinces of Córdoba, San Luis, Mendoza, San Juan, La Rioja, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Salta and Jujuy — an area of approximately 800,000 km². In this zone, no fewer than forty clandestine detention centers (CDCs) were in operation between 1975 and 1980. Based on the information collected so far, the repression in the Córdoba area was organized in such a way that most of the people “disappeared” by the state were taken to two CDCs, called La Perla and Campo La Ribera, both controlled by the Army. La Perla, which was located in a military barrack on the highway between Córdoba and the city of Carlos Paz, started functioning as a CDC after the military coup (March 1976). La Rivera, a military prison, started operating as a CDC in December 1975, before the coup. CONADEP estimated that between 1976 and the end of 1979, approximately 2,200 disappeared people passed through La Perla, making it one of the largest CDCs in the country.

Although the repression was organized on a national level, with a certain degree of coordination among the command zones, Zone Three enjoyed a high degree of autonomy relative to the other zones. In contrast to most of the CDCs managed by the Army, where prolonged contact between repressors and prisoners was avoided, at La Perla there were several cases of prolonged imprisonment. Long imprisonments in the Third Corp led to a greater number of survivors, who tended to have detailed memories regarding the way that the unit functioned, who was on the staff, and who passed through the CDC as a prisoner.^{xvi}

The centralization of repression, seen in the concentration of prisoners in two CDCs, seems to have been applied to the disposal of the bodies of the victims. It is clear now that the bodies of most of the people disappeared in the

Córdoba area passed through the Córdoba city morgue, and were later sent to the San Vicente Cemetery for burial. According to several sources — EAAF’s and ARHISTA’s preliminary investigations, testimonies collected in an investigation of irregularities opened by morgue and cemetery workers in 1980, and a court file opened by families of disappeared persons with the CONADEP in 1984 at the Federal Court #3 in Córdoba — the morgue received over 200 cadavers exhibiting gunshot wounds and other signs of violence.^{xvii} Most of the time, the bodies reportedly arrived without papers, so there was no indication of which state agency had sent them, although they were delivered by security forces. The bodies were recorded as “found in the street” or “killed in confrontations with security or military forces,” and were buried in the San Vicente Cemetery.^{xviii} According to the morgue and cemetery workers, the bodies were buried clandestinely during the night, in common or individual graves, without coffins or any identifying markers, and without making the requisite entries in the cemetery registers. Thus, hundreds of citizens whose names were known to the authorities were systematically transformed into *N.N.s*.

In 1984, the existence of at least one mass grave in the San Vicente Cemetery became a matter of public knowledge when morgue and cemetery employees submitted their official testimonies to the CONADEP. At that time, they declared that beginning in 1976, members of the security forces delivered a large number of unidentified bodies to the Judicial Morgue of Córdoba, located in the Hospital San Roque, and later to the Córdoba Hospital. In almost every case, they exhibited bullet wounds, clear signs of torture, and ink stains on the fingers. Some of the morgue employees also stated that they had taken part in the transfer of the bodies to San Vicente Cemetery. At least four mass transfers of bodies were documented in 1976, involving approximately 200 bodies. Beginning in 1977, the transfers were comprised of smaller groups of bodies, which tended to be buried individually. According to the testimonies, the overall number of bodies that year was lower. In some cases, the bodies were identified, and the Military Judges (*Jueces de Instrucción Militar*) delivered the victims’ bodies to their



February 2003. Human rights organizations and associations of families of disappeared people holding the photos of their loved ones at the San Vicente Cemetery, Córdoba, Córdoba Province. Courtesy of La Voz del Interior newspaper.

families. Police physicians were responsible for signing the death certificates.

In 1984, judicial and CONADEP investigations led to the identification of some bodies buried in this manner. It was determined that one of the common graves contained, among many others, the bodies of seven youths which had been sent to the Córdoba city morgue in October 1976 from Los Surgentes, Córdoba Province. Their records state that they died in a “confrontation.” Investigation revealed that the corpses had been bound at the wrists, which allowed the acting judge to qualify it as a homicide. This was confirmed by a partial exhumation of the mass grave by cemetery staff, on orders from the Federal Court. Fingerprint comparison led to the identification of one young man, and his remains were delivered to his family.

Subsequently, the CONADEP and the Federal Judiciary declared themselves unable to make further identifications because they lacked access to appropriate technology, such as the possibility of extracting DNA samples from bone.

EAAF’s Participation

On March 25-26, 2002, one EAAF member was invited to Córdoba to participate on a panel called “Creation, Reflection, and Construction of Memory Workshop,” at the Psychology Department of the National University of Córdoba. During the conference, EAAF formed a relationship with a group interested in pursuing excavations in the San Vicente Cemetery. Among the group were the judge and the public prosecutor involved in the ongoing judicial case about the clandestine burials at San Vicente, who were gathering information. We then sought the support of other institutions involved in the case, including the Forensic Medical Institute of Córdoba, which offered space for safe storage and analysis of remains and associated evidence from the field. The director of the Córdoba Museum of Anthropology also offered their full support, and expressed interest in participating in all the stages of the work. The Museum provided field equipment, and members of its professional staff joined the project as peers. Beatriz Pfeiffer, Alicia Dasso and Lucila Puyol, from the Association for the Historical



February 2003. Demonstration of human rights organizations and associations of families of disappeared people in the city of Córdoba. Photo courtesy of La Voz del Interior newspaper.

Reconstruction of Argentina (ARHISTA) were crucial to the historical and documental investigation of the case.

During a second trip in May 2002, EAAF members began the preliminary phase of the research by gathering all the available documentary material. This included the cemetery's own records, the morgue registry, and the eight volumes from a judicial case — “Abad de Perucca and others” — which involved the testimonies of morgue and cemetery employees, including information on burial locations. From the morgue and cemetery registries, for example, we learned the exact locations of the burials of two disappeared persons: a woman recorded as “Female N.N. Palacios”, Death Certificate 1184, and buried as “Female N.N. Morgue 1184 Grave B 326 s/n Folio 76”; and a man, recorded as “Male N.N. Carlos Enrique Lajas” Death Certificate 1185”, and buried as Lajas, Carlos Enrique #1185, Morgue Grave C518, Folio 20”.

We also surveyed the site and interviewed cemetery staff.

During the trip, EAAF was named as expert witness to the case by Judge Cristina Garzón de Lascano, of Federal Court N°3 in Córdoba, where the case about the San Vicente cemetery is being processed.

A reading of the assembled documents showed that the repressive system, although integrated at the national level, had regionally distinct expressions. The pattern of abduction, secret detention, and extrajudicial execution was repeated everywhere. But in less densely populated regions, it was harder to maintain secrecy. This difficulty was related to the challenge of keeping the repressive functions of government separate from its other bureaucratic functions. In a megacity like Buenos Aires, the security forces that carried out the clandestine repression operated relatively independently of the various bureaucratic agencies charged with keeping records on the population, such as civil registries. Thus, we usually find death certificates, burial certificates, and some cemetery records for unidentified bodies that

belonged to disappeared people. In Buenos Aires, we also find substantial documentation of the functioning of police departments, in spite of all their secrecy. In Argentina at least, one expects to find less documentation in the smaller towns, because of the greater difficulty of preserving anonymity there.

For similar reasons, where the population was less dense, it was harder to maintain the separation between missing person and unidentified body — the split at the heart of the phenomenon of disappearance. Responses to these basic problems explain many local idiosyncrasies, as well as the general form of the repression. In the civil registries, for example, the quality of documentation had to decline in order for the disappearances to continue. Documents readily available in larger cities could not be located in places like Córdoba, or simply did not exist. In Córdoba, we could not count on being able to work with most of the bureaucratic or judicial documentation regarding “the finding of bodies” or fingerprints from unidentified bodies, as we do in the Buenos Aires Province.

Before opening the mass grave in December 2002, we exhumed a few selected individual graves. These were graves that the preliminary work indicated would likely contain the remains of victims of the repression buried in 1977, whose families were not notified at the time. On December 4, 2002, on orders given by Judge Garzón de Lascano, we went to the San Vicente Cemetery and began the archaeological excavation of three presumably individual graves: Grave 518 in Section “C,” grave 326 in Section “B,” and Grave 249 in Section “R.” The team conducting the work included seven researchers from the Anthropology Museum of the National University of Córdoba — Dr. Andrés Láguens, Dr. Mirta Bonnin, Mariana Frabra, Laura Lazo, Fernando Olivares, Marina Mohn, and Mariela Zabala — and EAAF members. With the help of cemetery staff, we started by opening Graves C 518 and B 326.

In both graves, the remains buried in 1977 were located beneath remains that were buried years later. In each, we found the skeletons buried in 1977 out of anatomical order. They were fragmented and incomplete. These



February 2003. Excavation of mass grave in progress at San Vicente cemetery, Córdoba, Province of Córdoba. Claudia Bisso and collaborators. EAAF Photo.



ARHISTA members Alicia Dasso, Beatriz Pfeiffer and EAAF consultant Dr. Mercedes Salado compare results from the laboratory analysis of the remains of San Vicente graves with documents and historical information gathered by ARHISTA.

conditions are consistent with disturbances, in this case very likely caused by multiple burials in a single grave, in which the earlier remains were disturbed when the grave was reused. We recovered the remains corresponding to the 1977 burials following standard archaeological methods, and transported them in cardboard boxes to the Forensic Medical Institute.

On December 5, we returned to excavate Grave 249 in Section “R.” As we proceeded, we saw signs of at least two other concentrations of skeletal remains, disarticulated and out of anatomical order, on the north and south edges of the grave. This complicated the work, since there were now at least six different individuals to consider. This exhumation was extended through December 7.

At the Forensic Medical Institute, we cleaned the remains and began the anthropological study of the skeletons from C518 and B326. We immediately found that the biological characteristics of the skeleton from C518 were compatible with the general premortem profile of Carlos Enrique Lajas, who was presumably buried there in November 1977. We also confirmed that the remains in B326 were consistent in general terms with the premortem profile of Hilda Flora Palacios, the person presumed to be buried there. In both cases, not enough premortem information was available to reach positive identifications. Based on these tentative conclusions, we sent bone samples from each skeleton to be

studied at the Molecular Biology Laboratory of the Córdoba Science Agency (*Agencia Córdoba Ciencia*) and also to a genetic laboratory in Canada. There, geneticists will compare DNA extracted from the remains with blood samples donated by the presumed relatives of the victims. At the time of this writing, we are awaiting the results.

The remains from R249 were extremely fragmented and partial because, as in the other cases, the grave had been reused in the 1980’s. The laboratory analysis confirmed that they corresponded to a minimum of six persons. When the genetic analysis of the remains from C518 and B326 are complete, we will submit DNA samples from at least one of the six individuals buried in R249, for whom we have a hypothetical identification.

Exhumations in 2003

On February 11, 2003, exhumations began in the large common grave in the San Vicente Cemetery. Its location was determined using witness testimonies, aerial photographs, and the Cemetery’s registries.

In the first three stratigraphic levels, we found dark brown sediment and a high concentration of disarticulated human remains, remnants of coffins, and hospital trash — syringes, serum bags, etc. At Level 4, the sediment became

light brown, and the human remains consisted of complete, articulated skeletons. We recovered twenty individuals from Level 4, Stage 1. Some of the skeletons showed trauma consistent with gunshot wounds. In addition, some were found in direct association with aluminum plates bearing engraved numbers. One of the morgue employees present explained that these were attached to cadavers on arrival at the morgue.

All the skeletons were numbered, photographed and located on a three-dimensional site diagram before being removed and placed in bags. Beneath Level 4, there was another stratum — Level 5 — also composed of light brown sediment, but containing no bone remains. At Level 6, we found and recovered another concentration of remains: seventy-two articulated skeletons, fifty-five body parts, and seven concentrations of bone. Beneath this level, we did not find any more human remains, and the soil did not appear to have been disturbed. All remains were placed in boxes and taken to the city of Córdoba's Institute of Forensic Medicine for analysis.

Archaeological work will continue through 2003.

Laboratory Analysis

The Córdoba team is carrying out anthropological, odontological and radiological analysis of all the remains as they are recovered. Information on the individual skeletons is being compared with the historical and antemortem dossiers of disappeared persons from Córdoba Province. The first skeletons to be studied were those who were young at the time of death and those who exhibited signs of violence — that is, the individuals most compatible with the biological and traumatological profile of the disappeared population.

The Immunogenetic and Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory (LIDMO) of the city of Córdoba, under the direction of Dr. Carlos Vullo, compared genetic material recovered from selected groups of skeletons with blood samples contributed by relatives of disappeared persons. One of these tests resulted in the identification of the remains of Mario Andrés

Osatinsky, an Argentine citizen who disappeared in 1976 and whose body had never been returned to his relatives. He was 18 years old at the time of his death.

At the time of this writing, EAAF has identified the remains of Horacio Miguel Pietragalla, buried in the San Vicente Cemetery in November 1975, and of Liliana Barrios, who disappeared on April 27, 1976. Barrios' identification was based on DNA analysis. Details on both of these cases, among others, will be provided in EAAF's 2003 Annual report.

An excellent slide show depicting the ongoing investigations can be viewed at the website of a major Argentine newspaper, *La Voz del Interior*, at <http://www.lavoz.com.ar/sanvicente/home.htm>.

3. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING:

Besides the research work proper, EAAF's activities in Argentina have been focused on a number of extension/continuing education activities and on the development of human resources in Argentina and other countries.

ARGENTINA

Latin American Meeting on the Archives of Repression and the Search for Truth and Justice

In 2002 Daniel Bustamante, a member of EAAF, participated in the first "Latin American Meeting on the Archives of Repression and the Search for Truth and Justice." The meeting took place from October 23-34, 2002 in La Plata, province of Buenos Aires, and was organized by the Provincial Commission for Memory and the Association for the Investigation and Study of Latin American Archives, directed by French sociologist Alain Touraine. The purpose of the meeting was to address the need to search for formulas, tools and spaces to coordinate efforts and experiences with Southern Cone institutions based on the

conviction and the desire to verify that a systematic plan of repression was conceived on a regional scale.

The event consisted of four sessions where the following themes were discussed:

- Analysis and inventory of existing regional archives and other stored documents, and the character and state of their contents;
- Criteria of organization, cataloguing, preservation and digitalization; sources for funding, training and other possibilities;
- Public-private tensions around sensitive archival material;
- The historical and legal uses of archives; the examination of documents;
- Discussion of deontological codes, of confidentiality and forms of accessibility;
- Search strategies for archives and stored documents; searching political archives and archives of repression and state force;
- The construction of oral testimony archives;
- Stored documents from human rights, judicial, and academic organizations, of organizations in exile, censured organizations and personal documentation of victims and families;
- Future projects involving exchanges of experiences;

The organizations present proposed lines of inquiry for joint projects. Among these were:

- 1) Require states, provinces and municipalities to search for and open new archival sources and formulate public policies for the preservation of collective memory;
- 2) To promote the development of national laws of preservation in each country pertaining not only to bone remains but also to archives containing documents relative to different authoritarian periods;

- 3) The inclusion of survivors, militants and members of political organizations and civil society in the examination of documents;
- 4) To work to recover other archives and collections that allow for the reconstruction of historical contexts and political situations that permitted the growth of repressive governments in the southern cone, and the political and social identity of the victims;
- 5) To collaborate with local and private initiatives in the preservation of memory;

In addition to EAAF, the following organizations also participated in this meeting:

- Center for the Documentation and Archive for the Defense of Human Rights, Paraguay
- Mothers and Family Members of Detained and Disappeared Uruguayans
- Peace and Justice Service, Uruguay
- Documentation Foundation and Archive of the Vicarage of Solidarity, Chile
- University of San Pablo, Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil
- National Security Archives, USA
- Association for the Investigation and Study of Latin American Archives, France

From Argentina:

- Memory Commission, Province of Buenos Aires
- Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, *Núcleo Memoria*
- Open Memory Biographic Archive, Grandmothers of de Plaza de Mayo
- CONADEP Archives
- Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo – *Línea Fundadora*
- Legal and Social Studies Center (CELS)

- Argentine League for the Rights of Man
- Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ)

(For more information see the *Revista Puentes de la Comisión Provincial por la Memoria*.

[/www.comisionporlamemoria.org/](http://www.comisionporlamemoria.org/))

Other Academic Activities

EAAF members participated in the following meetings:

a panel on Forensic Entomology at the National Congress of Entomology, Buenos Aires, March 2002; and as presenters in the Fifth Congress of the Association of Forensic Medicine of the Republic of Argentina, (AMFRA) which took place in May in Colón, Entre Ríos.

In October, EAAF members Darío Olmo and Luis Fondebrider took part in a conference organized by the Memory Nucleus of the Institute for Economic and Social Development (IDES) and the project “Legacies of Authoritarianism” at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on “Memory Through the Generations: the Future of *Nunca Más*.” This conference was the continuation of a project initiated in June 2001, when the same EAAF members participated in the INCORE Summer School seminar, “Dealing with the Past”, facilitated by Brandon Hamber, in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

In November 2002, Mercedes Doretti traveled to the United Kingdom at the invitation of the Center for International Forensic Assistance (CIFA) to participate in the CIFA BAHID International Conference on ‘Human Rights, Torture, Genocide and Identification.’ The conference took place on November 16-17 at St. Georges Hospital Medical School, London. Doretti spoke about the work of EAAF and human rights investigations. CIFA, a new international network of forensic experts, was initially established at Glasgow University, in July 2001 under the direction of Dr. Peter Vanezis. Now headed by Danish forensic pathologist Dr. Jorgen Thomsen, CIFA works on forensic investigations related to human rights violations around the world. The organization contributed to Doretti’s expenses.

Training:

The Chacarita Project: Exhumations and Laboratory

Analysis. In 2002, twelve instructional archaeological exhumations were performed for students studying Anthropological Sciences from the National University of Buenos Aires. These took place in the Cemetery of Chacarita, the largest in Argentina. The graves chosen for practice exhumations corresponded to cases involving remains that will eventually be removed by cemetery personnel as the period for free burial has expired and there are no known family members. Among this group, EAAF selected cases that had passed through the Judicial Morgue; therefore, autopsy records existed that served as a basis of comparison at the time of the laboratory analysis. This analysis is carried out at the Forensic Medicine Department of the Medical faculty, where EAAF has access to the forensic anthropology facilities.

Between August and November an ‘Introduction to Forensic Anthropology’ postgraduate course was again offered to medical and anthropology professionals at the School of Medicine, University of Buenos Aires. It consists of 44 hours of course work and a similar amount of field work. EAAF members teach the course in collaboration with Drs. Luis Bosio and Dr. Norberto López Ramos. Fourteen students successfully finished this course.

Members of EAAF taught the Forensic Anthropology module in a post graduate course for medical specialists in Legal Medicine taught by Dr. Poggi, and the Forensic Odontology course with Dr. Marta Maldonado.

In November 2002, an EAAF member gave an intensive seminar on ‘Forensic Anthropology (18 course hours) as a subject in the Masters of Anthropology offered by the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at the National University of Córdoba, directed by Dr. Andrés Laguens.

In October, an EAAF member gave a talk about the work of the team at the Universtiy of Foz do Iguazú (Brasil).

A member of EAAF gave general lectures on forensic anthropology to students at the University of Buenos Aires.

An EAAF member member gave a lecture in a class on the fundamentals of Biological Anthropology, taught by Dr. Carnese in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, University of Buenos Aires.

EAAF Volunteers:

Throughout 2002, EAAF worked intensively on the development of human resources within the context of investigative projects. Colleagues who have collaborated include:

University of Buenos Aires Anthropology students Victoria Hernández, Mariela Fumagalli, Analía González Simonetto, Mariana Selva y Soledad Gheggi are assisting EAAF members in inventorying and analyzing human bone remains from the Medical Legal Institute of the Province of Buenos Aires, under the auspices of the Supreme Court of Justice (see above section). EAAF provides the students with stipends to cover basic transportation expenses to the Legal Medicine facility where the work is carried out. This investigation will continue through 2004.

University of Buenos Aires anthropology student Laura M. Panizo examined the contents Federal Judicial Archive No. 2 of the Judicial Department of San Martín, Province of Buenos Aires (see above.) In addition, Ms. Panizo is finishing a thesis about the impact of identification and restitution of remains on groups of families of victims of forced disappearance.

Lorena Campos carries out projects at EAAF Buenos Aires offices in the area of historical preliminary investigation and has collaborated in fieldwork and laboratory work. **Alejandra Ibáñez** has been working in EAAF's laboratory and began fieldwork in Córdoba in February 2003. Both are students at the Anthropology Department, University of Buenos Aires.

Celeste Perosino y Soledad Arbeletche, collaborate in the Forensic Anthropology Laboratory directed by Dr. Luis Bosio in the Judicial Morgue in the city of Buenos Aires. Both students, who have worked with EAAF since 2000, assist in the analysis and study of remains in the laboratory and in the cleaning of the sternal ends of fourth right ribs that the Morgue has requested for an investigation carried out by Ms. Gabriela Slepoy, who is conducting research for her thesis that tests a methodology for establishing age at the time of death.

Another two anthropology students, **Maia Princ and Mariana Segura** re volunteering with EAAF while they continue their regular studies in anthropology.

Macarena Peruset has regularly collaborated in the digitalization of photographs of disappeared persons and in the improvement and enlargement of our photograph archive.

In these way, EAAF participates in the training of numerous anthropology students interested in the experience of the team in particular and in forensic anthropology in general.

DNA TESTING AT UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM, UK

Lic. Ana Topf continues to conduct DNA testing in the Biology Laboratory of Dr. Charles Shaw on the remains of disappeared at the University of Durham, UK. We hope to obtain positive results in 2003.

FOOTNOTES

- i. C.C.Snow and M.J. Bihurriet, 1992. "An Epidemiology of Homicide: *Ningún Nombre* Burials in the Province of Buenos Aires from 1970 to 1984" in *Human Rights and Statistics: Getting the Record Straight*. Eds. T.B. Jabine and R.P. Claude. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- ii. Although the military government extended to 1983, the 1976-1980 period is considered to have had the highest concentration of "disappearances."
- iii. Capital of the Province of Buenos Aires, the city of La Plata is located about 60km south of the city of Buenos Aires.
- iv. Her work was submitted and approved as a research project within the initiatives supported by the University of Mar del Plata, and won the "Solution of the year 2000" prize in the category Forensic Sciences awarded by Advanced Magazine. The candidates for this prize are selected from research groups that work in the area of Digital Imaging Processing (IDP) around the world, and who make significant contributions to the technological development of this field. Her research findings have been published in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, in May 1998.
- v. The Federal Appellate Chamber of Criminal and Correctional Cases of the Federal Capital communicates with relatives of victims and authorizes some of the exhumations and, in the case of non citizen victims, arranges for repatriation of remains.
- vi. Herrera de Mangini's disappearance and identification are described in EAAF's 2000 Annual Report
- vii. For more information on the aftermath of this assassination, see the case of Méndez and Correa, in the chapter on Uruguay in EAAF's 2001 Annual Report.
- viii. For an explanation of the legal concept of "truth trials," please see the special section in this annual report.
- ix. *Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos* (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights), a national human rights organization.
- x. The figure 336 is the minimum number of skeletons that EAAF retrieved during the archaeological phase of the project.
- xi. See Snow and Bihurriet, 1992.
- xii. "Forensic Anthropology and Human Rights. The Argentine Experience" by Doretta, M. and Snow, C.C. at "Hard Evidence. Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology" ed. By Dawnie L. Wolfe Steadman, Prentice Hall, NJ, page 294.
- xiii. Cemetery personnel used this term for large common graves. Literally, an entire cow could fit into it.
- xiv. We use Microsoft Access to organize and store all the data on Sector 134.
- xv. See Snow and Bihurriet, 1992.
- xvi. La Perla is located on the site of the Air Cavalry's Exploration Squadron #4 (*Escuadrón de Exploración de Caballería Aerotransportada N° 4*).
- xvii. On June 30, 1980, workers from the city of Córdoba Judicial Morgue sent a letter to General Videla, complaining of the poor state of cadavers being stored there, sometimes with no refrigeration and for long periods of time.
- xviii. Sources: CONADEP, *Nunca Más*, p. 245; EUDEBA (Editorial Universidad de Buenos Aires) CONADEP Archive #1420, entitled "Interior Ministry of the Province remits presentation by staff of the Judicial Morgue before the President of the Nation," opened at the Tribunal Superior de Justicia, Córdoba, on August 8, 1980.



January 12, 2001, Mar del Plata. Retired Colonel Pedro Alberto Barda at the Truth Trials where he refused to testify regarding the disappearance of lawyers from this city. Behind him are relatives of the disappeared. Photo courtesy of DYN/Mar del Plata Agency.