

Archives Unearthed In Paraguay Expose U.S. Allies' Abuses

NFT 8/11/99

By DIANA JEAN SCHEMO

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay — When Martín Almada asked a judge for records of his arrest under the dictatorship of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, he hoped merely to learn more about his own private tragedy: nearly four years of captivity, during which the police telephoned his wife so she would hear his screams under torture.

Instead, the one-time schoolteacher unearthed a mountain of records detailing repression among United States-backed military regimes throughout South America during the cold war. From floor to ceiling, five tons of reports and photos detailed the arrest, interrogation and disappearance of thousands of political prisoners during General Stroessner's 35-year dictatorship.

The documents trace the creation and work of Operation Condor, a secret plan among security forces in six countries to crush left-wing political dissent.

Paraguayans quickly named the files the "archives of terror." Though discovered six years ago, the files have gained new prominence throughout Latin America with the arrest of Chile's former dictator, Gen. Augusto Pinochet, in London last October. To this day, they remain the only extensive collection of public records of a project by the region's military rulers that succeeded in exterminating thousands of political opponents, many of whom

Continued on Page A8

Files in Paraguay Detail Atrocities of U.S. Allies

Continued From Page A1

had sought sanctuary in one another's countries.

The files have given a kind of vindication to survivors, their families and the families of those dead and missing by delivering concrete proof of a darkly secretive era.

The archives have also provided fodder for the developing case against General Pinochet, the only one of the region's dictators to face the prospect of trial. General Stroessner remains a fugitive from justice living in Brazil.

Baltazar Garzón, the Spanish magistrate seeking the extradition of General Pinochet from England, has collected more than 1,500 pages of evidence from the archives. Last December, he requested records on Hugo Banzer, the current President of Brazil, who ran the military regime there from 1971 to 1978, and on General Stroessner.

"This documentation might exist in other countries as well, but it's hidden, while in Paraguay they didn't manage to hide it all," Juan Garcés, the lawyer who brought suit against General Pinochet, said in a telephone interview from Madrid.

"It proves that there was an organization with a structure and discipline that didn't only exchange information but committed criminal acts," he said.

Intelligence sharing between Washington's allies in South America did not begin with Operation Condor, but the plan formalized and deepened cooperation among police and military forces that had taken power in six countries: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia.

After Gen. Manuel Contreras of Chile invited security chiefs to create "the basis of an excellent coordination and improved action" at a meeting in November 1975, police forces

then moved to Argentina. But in March 1976 the military took power in Argentina as well, making Dr. Sannemann and other exiles targets.

Hours after the coup, the Argentine police abducted Dr. Sannemann and tortured her at the Escuela Mecánica in Buenos Aires. Dr. Sannemann said she was bound and plunged into a bathtub of vomit and excrement in a torture nicknamed "the submarine."

"They accused me of killing a patient in my office," Dr. Sannemann said, calling the charge "a total lie." Then the police falsely accused her of selling drugs, she said, adding, "They said anything that occurred to them." A week later, Dr. Sannemann's husband was abducted and tortured as well.

Dr. Sannemann landed at the Emboscada camp for political prisoners in Paraguay, where she treated more than 400 fellow prisoners from several South American countries, including women whose husbands had been executed and their children. The women had been imprisoned to silence them.

Dr. Sannemann and her husband were eventually given asylum in Germany in 1997 after the German Government pressed Argentina to bring about their release.

The fate of Dr. Goiburú, who also refused to whitewash torture, remained a mystery until the archives were opened. In 1977, Dr. Goiburú was kidnapped from a street in Misiones, an Argentine town where he had gone to escape the Stroessner regime. The Government steadily denied any knowledge of Dr. Goiburú's disappearance to his wife, Elba Elisa Benítez de Goiburú.

The archives, however, contained surveillance reports and photos of the doctor's house and office, and showed that eliminating him had become a priority for General Stroessner. In a bitterly comic twist, one effort to kidnap Dr. Goiburú collapsed after the Paraguayans balked at the price Argentine agents demanded for the job, according to documents in the archive. General Stroessner declined repeated requests for comment.

Mrs. Goiburú said she had no doubt that it was Condor that had persecuted her family and eventually took the life of her husband, though he has never been found.

The archives do not detail Washington's role in cold war repression here. Along with documents surfacing elsewhere, however, they suggest that United States officials backed Condor nations not only with military aid, but also with information. Last month, the United States declassified



Gen. Augusto Pinochet, left, the Chilean dictator, on a visit to Paraguay in 1974. With him is the Paraguayan dictator, Gen. Alfredo Stroessner.

ley, wishes Pastor Coronel, the head of the Department of Investigations who is now serving a 25-year sentence for torture, "a truly joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with all the good things you so richly deserve." Mr. Kelley died two years ago.

The archives also shed light on the killing of Mr. Letelier in Washington. Two weeks before the assassination, General Contreras requested \$600,000 from the Pinochet Government, in a memo, for "the neutralization of the Governing Junta's principal adversaries overseas, especially in Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, the United States, France and Italy."

Earlier this year, the F.B.I. defended the sharing of information with Chile as standard practice among law enforcement agencies of governments friendly to Washington. A State Department spokesman declined to comment on the record of United States cooperation with the South American dictatorships, saying it was "ancient history."

The discovery of the archives in 1992, coming as Paraguayans tackled their first democratic presidential elections, brought euphoria at first.

the methods used to obtain them. Gaps in the sequences of numbered letters from the F.B.I. suggest missives for torture, "a truly joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with all the good things you so richly deserve."

Only five officials here have been convicted for torturing and killing Paraguayans who challenged the Stroessner dictatorship. None have apologized for their acts or broken the security forces' code of silence. Nobody has said where the bodies are buried.

Mrs. Goiburú said the present Government had pressed her to drop efforts to find her husband's killer, as well as a lawsuit against General Stroessner for her husband's disappearance. Recently, Paraguay's new President, Luis González Macchi, dismissed her from her job representing the Ministry of Education and Culture in a national professional association, and Mrs. Goiburú said she had been warned not to challenge the move.

The dictatorship is over, the widow said, but the reflexes of terror linger on.

Pakistani Plane Shot Down By India in Border Incident

Continued From Page A1

several boundary disputes between the two countries.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, called the incident a "blatant unprovoked act of military aggression" and said, "Pakistan reserves the right to make an appropriate response in self-defense."

The Indian military announced that it was in a "state of alert."

India and Pakistan have fought three wars in their half-century as independent countries, and both tested nuclear weapons last year. Their last war was in 1971-72, and in recent months tensions have been at their highest since then.

From mid-May to late July, the Indian military fought ferocious battles against hundreds of infiltrators who had sneaked into territory India controls in the snow-capped mountains of Kashmir. India said that the intruders were Pakistani soldiers, while Pakistan insisted that they were Islamic warriors engaged in a holy war.

During that conflict, India lost two fighter jets, both of which fell in Pakistani-controlled territory. The downed aircraft were repeatedly shown on Pakistani television. One of the two pilots was said to have died in the crash, but when his body was returned, Indian officials contended that an autopsy proved that the man had been tortured and shot dead.

The two nations managed to apply the brakes at the brink of all-out war, but since then shelling has remained heavy across the so-called Line of Control that separates the parts of Kashmir held by the two sides.

For 14 years both countries have also been fighting a high-altitude, low-temperature war in some of the world's least habitable terrain in the western Himalayas near the Siachen Glacier.

There is other fighting as well. In just the last week, Pakistani-backed insurgents have been unusually audacious, launching rocket attacks on Indian military bases in Kashmir. On Sunday, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India said he had asked the United States to designate Pakistan as a terrorist nation.

The Pakistani aircraft is a twin-engine model that looks similar to a cargo plane. It is used by many navies for aerial reconnaissance and anti-submarine combat.

In New Delhi, early press accounts referred to it as a spy plane, high-



The approximate site where a Pakistani naval plane was shot down.

lighting its capacity to fire missiles and sink submarines with torpedoes.

But Mr. Hussain, the Pakistani Information Minister, said the airplane, as operated, was "entirely harmless" and carried no weapons. He confirmed that 16 people — 5 of them officers — had been on board and were presumed dead.

"This was a routine flight, frequently repeated, and India was certainly familiar with it," he said.

But the Indian Defense Ministry said such aircraft had been traced "intruding" into India's airspace eight times from May to July. In a television interview, Mr. Fernandes said that Indian jets had scrambled to confront those planes but that they "ran away before our aircraft could reach them."

The United States took note of the ominous events today. "We are concerned about an increase in tensions," said David Leavy, the spokesman for the National Security Council.

He said the White House was monitoring all reports about the downed aircraft, adding that Washington hoped that the two nations would return to the effort toward peace that began in February when Mr. Vajpayee made a celebrated bus trip to Pakistan.

That effort, once hailed as the inevitable coming together of two neighbors with a shared heritage, has in a few months come to seem the improbable pipe dream of two enemies lastingly bound in hatred.

How six military regimes forged a pact to repress their critics.

from member countries began to operate in each others' jurisdictions. Their new ties allowed security officials to take part in joint interrogations, to pursue people across borders and to order surveillance on

nations.

Trained during the cold war at the School of the Americas in Panama, the officials viewed their enemy as Communism, backed by Moscow in a subversive war without frontiers. To prevail, governments too would have to work across borders, they said.

The security threats were not entirely imagined. Rebels like the Montoneros in Argentina did aim to destabilize some governments. But in other countries there were no rebel movements, and military regimes used the club of anti-Communism to snuff out any calls for democracy or labor rights.

In Chile, General Pinochet had overthrown the democratically elected President, Salvador Allende Gossens, a Socialist, and hunted down his Cabinet officials and supporters. Among them was Orlando Letelier, who died when his car exploded on a street in Washington, also killing his American aide, Ronni Moffitt.

According to a 1979 Senate Foreign Relations report, which remains classified, the killings of Gen. Carlos Prats of Chile and Gen. Juan José Torres of Bolivia in Argentina were also reportedly the work of Operation Condor, as was the attempted assassination of a Chilean Senator, Bernardo Leighton, in Italy.

In Paraguay, the targets of General Stroessner included members of a rival faction in the governing Colorado Party, doctors who refused to cover up torture and Mr. Almada, who criticized the educational system in his dissertation.

"They said I was an intellectual terrorist," Mr. Almada said. He blames the Paraguayan police for the death of his 33-year-old wife, who suffered a heart attack and died after hearing his screams over the telephone.

Two of the thousands of cases contained in the archives are those of Gladys Sannemann and Agustín Góburu, physicians in Asunción who refused to falsify an autopsy to show that a man beaten to death under police custody in 1958 had died of natural causes. Instead, Dr. Sannemann took the cadaver to her medical school in Asunción and performed a proper autopsy before her students.

"Practically from that moment it began," said Dr. Sannemann, an immunologist who is now 69 and practicing here in Asunción. The challenge marked her out for the Stroessner regime.

Seeking safety, Dr. Sannemann and her husband, Rodolfo Jorge, fled to Brazil in 1963, a year before the military seized power there, and

cold war era, mostly involving Chile. Some have made their way to Judge Garzón.

The archives here show that a United States military official, Col. Robert Thierry, apparently helped draw up the apparatus of the police state as he trained police officers for the Technical Section soon after General Stroessner seized power here in 1954. A relative, Margaret Van Skike, located in Galveston, Tex., said that Colonel Thierry died several years ago.

Earlier this year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation released a document confirming that it had provided the Pinochet regime with information about Jorge Isaac Fuentes de Alarcón, the leader of a leftist movement in Chile who, the archives here show, was first seized and interrogated by Paraguayan agents. F.B.I. officers checked addresses in the United States found in Mr. Fuentes's personal phone book and gave the results and information on Mr. Fuentes's questioning in Paraguay to the Pinochet regime. Mr. Fuentes disappeared in Chilean custody.

The archives include friendly letters, law enforcement magazines and books sent by the F.B.I. to Paraguayan police officials. In one letter, the F.B.I. director, Clarence M. Kel-

ties of the dictatorship hooked to the police station at Lumbare, some 15 miles outside the capital. Mrs. Góburu sought word about her husband. Dr. Sannemann came in disbelief. Gloria Estrago, a former political prisoner, felt as if she had stumbled onto "the Vatican's secret treasures."

"It was almost like finding our comrades alive again, like something from science fiction," said Ms. Estrago, who is now a judge. When she saw the files, Ms. Estrago imagined an old friend who vanished in police custody, Mario Sher Prono, calling out to her, "Here's proof of what happened to me."

But for many activists, early exhibition has given way to disillusionment. On discovery of the archives, they complain, journalists, the police and even victims like Mr. Almada hauled away cartons of records. Key documents published in newspapers days after their discovery vanished from the archives.

"There's no doubt they have been sanitized," said Rosa Palau, the director of the archives. The archives, at least now, contain no direct accounts of tortures or deaths, only of prisoners whom the police arrested but never released, and formulaic confessions that say nothing about



BERMUDA JAZZ FESTIVAL

AL JARREAU, GEORGE BENSON, PATTI AUSTIN, JOE SAMPLE W/ LALAH HATHAWAY & OLETA ADAMS, ANDREW CHAMBERLIN, DELETTA GILLESPIE, & THE BERMUDA ALL-STAR JAZZ BAND

live



OCT 15th-16th

FOR A TASTE OF THE ULTIMATE JAZZ EXPERIENCE, THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE TO BE. THE ROYAL NAVAL DOCKYARD IN BERMUDA THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 11TH. FEEL THE ENERGY OF THE ISLAND. FEEL THE GROOVE OF THE MUSIC. FEEL THE CALM WASH OVER YOU AS YOU LISTEN TO THE WORLD'S COOLEST JAZZ PLAYED FROM A SPECIAL FLOATING STAGE BUILT ON THE WATER. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND YOU'LL SWEAR YOU'RE IN PARADISE. OPEN THEM UP AND REALIZE YOU'RE THE BERMUDA JAZZ FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE OCTOBER 15TH AND 16TH. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR 1-800-BERMUDA.

4 DAY 3 NIGHT JAZZ PACKAGES

NEW YORK	BOSTON	PHILADELPHIA	BALTIMORE WASHINGTON D.C.	ATLANTA
\$779	\$729	\$789	\$839	\$899

Prices are per person and include round-trip air, 3 night accommodations (double occupancy), transfers, hotel taxes, gratuities, and up to two Jazz Festival tickets. Information subject to change, prices based on capacity, availability, and departure date, new bookings only. Taxes and fees may vary. Cannot be combined with discount vouchers or promotions. Travel dates vary.

www.bermudajazz.com

BERMUDA JAZZ FESTIVAL

presented by Traveler

Sonesta Beach Resort, Bermuda

American Airlines

SOUTHAMPTON PRINCESS

Bermuda Department of Tourism



VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.churchsshoes.com

50% OFF
Regular Price

EXTRA SPECIAL VALUE

TRADITIONAL ENGLISH DOUBLE-SOLE CLASSICS

While Stocks Last, Step into a pair of our English Benchmark Calfskin Double Leather Sole Straight-Tip Tie or Wing-Tip Blucher Lace Ups from our Churchill Dress Collection. Available in Black Polished Calfskin, widths D & EEE. Phone, fax or mail orders gladly accepted.

Church's, we put the world at your feet!

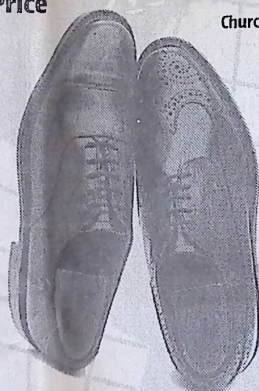
Reg. Price \$250.

• Special •

Until 8/14/99

Sale Price

\$125.



WELLS

TYNE

Church's English Shoes

428 MADISON AVENUE (AT 49TH ST.), NEW YORK, NY 10017

PHONE OR FAX ORDERS ACCEPTED (212)755-4313 (800)221-4540 FAX: (212)750-0985

Hrs: Mon-Fri 9-7 Sat 9-6 Sun 12-5 All major credit cards. All merchandise shipped in prior sale. All Sales final.

MAKE SUMMER SPECIAL:

SUPPORT THE FRESH AIR FUND

Hutledge in
Paraguay