

I, Patricia Ann Erb, age 19, United States citizen, feel it my duty as a human being and as a Christian, to communicate to national and international organizations what I saw and experienced during my abduction and imprisonment by the Armed Forces of Argentina in the military headquarters of Campo de Mayo.

As a student at the University of Buenos Aires, I participated in a student organization sponsored by the University with delegates from the various classes in the University. As a sociology major I participated along with other sociology students in field work in the poverty ghettos.

On September 13, 1976, I was abducted in Buenos Aires, where I lived with my parents (protestant missionaries) since 1953, by armed men in civilian clothing. I was blindfolded and conducted to a room that gave the impression of being in a barn, where there were many men and women. Days after, when security was relaxed by officials and subofficials, I was able to see many persons blindfolded and chained to the floor, as I was. Sometimes when our hands were free we could remove part of our blindfolds enough to see and talk in low voices.

The day after my abduction, I was conducted as were many others, to rooms which we called "the torture house." There, men dressed in civilian clothing, would begin interrogations, using torture "when it was necessary" in attempts to extract confession. That torture took various forms: beating with clubs, fists, kicking, immersing in water or in fecal substance to almost the drowning point and applying "La Picana," (electric machine) that is touched to the more sensitive parts of the body, like mouth, eyes, nose, ears, vagina, breast, penis, feet, and hands. To cause a stronger sensation they would tie us with rope to a wire bed which carried an electrical current, plus entangled wire between the fingers and toes, splashing water on to augment the pain. These methods were aimed at obtaining confession of our own activities, names, and addresses (which in some cases did not exist), or sometimes used only as punishment. After these interrogations we were conducted again to the "barn" where the rest of the prisoners were being held, and they by their turn were conducted to the interrogation etc; while the rest of us from our place heard their screaming and howling. They would come back almost unconscious and moaning in great pain. Sometimes doctors would come and look after the worst injuries such as broken bones, ribs, bleeding kidneys, etc.

I am very sorry I can't remember the names of all the prisoners who were with me. When I knew about the possibility of being freed, because of my nationality, I tried to memorize as many names as I could. I gave them out in the Federal Prison of Devoto, so that their families, who didn't know of their whereabouts, would be aware of where they were. Among the names I remember are: Eduardo Raul Herbilhas; Elena Barberis; Ana Maria Lansilotto, pregnant; Domingo Menna, this man tied with large chains and tortured to extremes; Lilliana Delfino; Maria Eugenia Lopez; a man whose last name was D'Angelo; and then names like Silvia; Maria Rosa and her husband Miguel; Juan Carlos; Cristiana; Osmar; Lila; Tony; Augusto; Pancho; Graciela. They all were very badly nourished and tortured. Some with broken bones and wounds of which they complained.

By night our sleep was accompanied by rats that ran over and around our bodies. We were also at the mercy of being raped by the sub-officials. I wish to share my concerns with the international organizations; the United States Congress; and American Churches so that they will act on behalf of the many Argentine persons whose lives are affected. At the same time we appeal to the Argentine Government to declare which Argentine and foreign citizens are being held as prisoners, for until now many imprisoned people are considered dead or missing.

- Patricia Erb

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