



MUSEO
SITIO DE MEMORIA
ESMA



HISTORIAS SIN OLVIDO

In the Officers' quarters where the Clandestine Detention Center of Torture and Extermination set up in the Naval Mechanics School operated. There were more than 700 places of illegal detention during the last dictatorship from 1976 to 1983.

Here, in the ESMA approximately 5000 men and women were detained or missing. They were members of political parties or social activists, revolutionary organizations either armed or unarmed, workers, trade union members, students, professionals, artists and members of religious orders. Most of them were dropped alive into the ocean.

Here, in the ESMA the Navy planned abductions and systematically carried out murders. Here, prisoners were kept in hoods and shackled. Here, they were tortured. Here, the Navy made them disappear.

Here, in the ESMA children were born in captivity and were separated from their mothers. Most of them were illegally adopted or robbed. We are still looking for many of them.

Here, in the ESM a crime against humanity was perpetrated.

**memory,
truth &
justice**

ESMA MUSEUM AND SITE OF MEMORY Former Clandestine Centre for Detention, Torture and Extermination

The ESMA Museum and Site of Memory will remain closed until further notice as a preemptive measure against the spread of Coronavirus in our country.

Contents not suitable for children under 12.

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Argentina **unida**

Secretaría de
Derechos Humanos



Ministerio de Justicia
y Derechos Humanos
Argentina

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

THE CIVILIAN ARM OF THE DICTATORSHIP



The civic-military dictatorship in Argentina set itself to discipline the working class –together with silencing dissidence and political activism– that had gained political and social power throughout the decades, imposing boundaries to corporate power. It transformed the country's economic and social structure by attacking the source and level of income, altering labor and union structures and guaranteeing higher levels of exploration and production instability.

One of the policies the dictatorship's Minister of Economy José Alfredo Martínez applied was the regulation of wages by the State, which dropped about 40% compared to those of 1974 in a context of rising unemployment, abolition of overtime and cuts in social benefits. This decision was followed by an indefinite suspension of wage negotiations, the repeal of 27 articles of Law 20,744 of the Labor Contract, in addition to military officials' intervention of most of the large unions and federations, from the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), to the main labor unions, breaking the centralized national structure of the union movement. They also suspended the right to strike, eliminated trade union jurisdiction; banned any assemblies, meetings, congresses or union elections; and empowered the Ministry of Labor to intervene and replace union leaders in the factories.

The financial reform of 1977, the opening of tariffs and the foreign indebtedness restructured the industrial sector, dropping the level of production and causing a concentration of the economy in local and international groups that, having access to international credit, turned to financial speculation rather than productive investment. The increase in external debt (from 8.2 billion at the beginning of the dictatorship, to 45 billion dollars on December 10, 1983) was linked to the process of financial appreciation and capital flight. In addition, in 1982 the then president of the Central Bank, Domingo Felipe Cavallo and his successor Julio González del Solar, implemented the nationalization of the private sector's foreign debt. More than 70 private companies benefited in about 23 billion dollars. A

large part of the loans that generated that amount were simple accounting records between the headquarters and their Argentine branches –they were self-loans and fraudulent maneuvers.

It was in the factories where the Armed Forces and the corporations combined their efforts to exercise a repressive power against the workers. The companies carried out repressive practices with their own features, such as passing on information, contributing logistical and material resources to the repressive forces, and setting up clandestine detention centers on the premises of their factories, among others. Notorious cases include the Astarsa and Mestrina shipyards in the north area; the Acindar steel company in Villa Constitución, Santa Fe (whose





chairman of the board up until 1976 used to be Martínez de Hoz); the Grafa factory in the Villa Pueyrredón neighborhood of the City of Buenos Aires; the Mercedes-Benz and Ford automobile companies; and the Ledesma Sugar Mills in Jujuy.

Up until recently, corporate responsibility in the repression had not been addressed by the courts, even when its role had been mentioned since the very first judicial reports. Delays and obstacles on the investigation are being imposed to this day in courts throughout the country. Still, there has been progress. In March 2016, a businessman was convicted for the first time for his involvement in crimes against humanity. Marcos Levín was the owner of the Salta bus company La Veloz del Norte during the dictatorship, and he made use of the repressive structure to discipline his employees, obtaining benefits from dictatorship officials such as the contract for the expansion of trade routes. In December 2018, the San Martín TOF 1 convicted two former managers of the Ford factory and a former army chief. It was the first time

that the Argentine courts convicted executives of a transnational company not only for being accomplices of the civic-military dictatorship, but also as active participants in the crimes. The company gave the Armed Forces a list of workers, personal files and photographs. A clandestine detention center was set up in the barbecue area of the factory's sports field, and many of the kidnappings took place inside the Pacheco plant. In its verdict, the court unanimously considered that they were crimes against humanity.

The Astarsa Shipyards Case

Founded in 1927, Río de la Plata Shipyards LC (Astarsa) was one of the oldest of its kind. Its manufacturing plant was located in Tigre and had two large workshops, for metal and ships, employing about 1500 workers, with 700 naval workers and 800 metallurgists. By 1973, the workers were on 12 hour shifts by regulation and with each ship that was built, a colleague would die. With the death of the worker José María Alessio, the internal union commission –which had a very important degree of

participation and organization and was made up of mostly young people close to the Montoneros Union Youth– started a strike and took over the facilities. After the strike, the Safety and Hygiene Commission came under the control of the factory workers, shifts were taken down to 6 hours 45 minutes and the number of accidental deaths at work was reduced to zero. That is why by 1976 Astarsa was a benchmark in the naval sector of the northern area of Greater Buenos Aires: what the company and the workers negotiated there became guidelines for negotiations in the other shipyards.

On the day of the coup, at dawn, army troops showed up at the factory on assault cars and helicopters, carrying lists of people and abducting activist workers who had been previously marked. There were 60 kidnappings that day in Astarsa, in Mestrina, and other shipyards in the area. Most of them passed through the Tigre police station, some of them were released and some went to Campo de Mayo. The kidnappings and disappearances continued through the following months. There are also testimonies of threats made by executives, with the participation of the security forces. At all times, corporate officials appear as a privileged source of information for the repressive forces. Between Astarsa and Mestrina, there are 30 shipping workers who have disappeared.

In 2014, six repressors were sentenced at the Trial #11 of the Campo de Mayo Mega Case –known as “The Trial of the Workers”– for the kidnappings and disappearances of 32 workers from the Astarsa and Mestrina shipyard plants and the Lozadur and Cattaneo ceramic factories. The prosecution referred to corporate responsibility, in addition to that of the defendants in the trial, who were former chiefs of the army, police and prefects. ♥



Trabajadores de Artasa durante la toma de la planta.