

Following charges by Uruguayan

Judge views Orletti detention centre

JUDGE Alicia Baungarten yesterday inspected an automobile repair shop on Venancio Flores 3519/21, in the Buenos Aires neighbourhood of Floresta, where, according to Uruguayan journalist Enrique Rodríguez Larreta, a clandestine detention centre known as *Automotores Orletti* operated.

Rodríguez filed a suit last week charging that he and nearly 30 other Uruguayans had been abducted, held and tortured there briefly in 1976 by a joint Argentine-Uruguayan military team. He

said they were taken to Montevideo after two weeks. The journalist filed charges against the three members of the former régime's first military junta, as well as against a large number of other Argentine and Uruguayan military officers.

The judge questioned the owners of the repair shop, reviewed their bookkeeping, and visited an adjoining vacant lot, which she ordered sealed off. Neither Judge Baungarten nor the shop-owners made any statements, while Rodríguez and his lawyer said the development of the case is up to the court and to any information that neighbours might provide.

The shop, which is only metres from the Sarmiento railway tracks, matches the physical description given by Rodríguez in his suit.

Several neighbours have expressed shock at Rodríguez' denunciation and volunteered information which might confirm the past existence of a clandestine prison.

Two employees at a car electricity repair shop on the corner of Venancio Flores and Emilio Lamarca, a few doors from the suspected premises, said they had witnessed the escape of a woman and a man — both of them handcuffed — from *Automotores Orletti* in 1976 or 1977.

"The woman," another neighbour said, "was nude from the waist up. After both had run across the railway tracks, they escaped in a car which they stopped in the street."

The same man, who refused to give his name, said the door at Venancio Flores 3521 "was made of iron, much thicker than the one there is now, and had in its upper section a peephole that resembled a camera lens."

Yet another neighbour said that after the couple had escaped, a group of people fired bursts of machine-gun at the door, the marks of which were repaired a few years ago. At that time, he and the others said, the *Automotores Orletti* sign was

also removed and replaced with a sign which read *Automecánica Nacionales e Importados*. The people living inside, who "ate a lot of food, according to the man who owned a food shop on this corner until recently," left the premises shortly after the attack.

The neighbours said there were many "mysterious" deaths in the area of people who "were run over by the train when they crossed the Sarmiento tracks. This usually happened at night," in 1976 and 1977.

One of the electricity shop employees concluded that "we are such fools. So many things happen right in front of our noses, and we only realize it much later, when everything has already happened." (NA)



Uruguayan journalist Enrique Rodríguez Larreta is seen with his lawyer (centre) during a court inspection of the premises of an auto repair shop, where he claims he was held under illegal detention and was subject to torture by Uruguayan military officers in 1976. (NA)

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