

Story of Chile Executions

By Joseph Novitski
Washington Post

Santiago, Chile

Two men arrested by government investigators two weeks ago in a small Chilean town near Santiago died the day they were detained, each with one bullet in his head, according to the records of the Santiago Court of Appeals.

The court, in two recent

decisions, agreed to extend a form of judicial protection to the widows and daughters of the dead men, both of whom were members of Marxist political parties that had supported the late President Salvador Allende.

The court action, agreeing to consider a plea to prevent an arrest order for the widows, laid onto the public record what appeared to have been the first sum-

mary executions in many months in Chile.

The military junta that last September overthrew Allende, a Socialist, prohibited summary executions early this year.

Furthermore, so far as is known, none of the death sentences handed down by courts-martial has been carried out since February 13.

However, Dr. Hector Gar-

cia, 50, a physician and member of the socialist party, and Ruben Lamich, a 48-year-old contractor and member of the Communist party, died without trial while under official custody, according to the cases considered by the appeals court.

The two men, according to court files, were detained separately on August 13, in Buin, town south of Santiago.

Their bodies were returned to their families through the Santiago morgue; Garcia on August 14 and Lamich on August 15.

On petition by the widows of the two men, the Appeals Court agreed last week to ask military and police authorities if there are any orders to arrest the women or their children. There has been no answer yet.

Maria D. Garcia, the doctor's widow, told the court her husband was detained at the Buin hospital, where he worked, on the morning of August 3. She said he has been questioned briefly, in her presence, shortly before dawn on the same day, when eight men in civilian clothes and two uniformed policemen came to the Garcia home in a police car.

Garcia's death certificate, cited in the petition, gave the time of his death as 10:30 a.m., August 13, a little over one hour after he had been detained.

Court sources reported that the record showed Lamich had been arrested on the same day in Buin and had died as a result of one shot in the head.

If an arrest order has been issued for either Mrs. Garcia or Mrs. Lamich, the court will consider issuing a preventive writ of habeas corpus, which would enjoin authorities not to arrest the women or their children. Some wives of political supporters of President Allende have been detained in the 11 months since he was overthrown. Minors have also been detained for political offenses.

Of the 1008 habeas corpus petitions considered this year by the appeals court here, all but one of those entered on behalf of people detained for political reasons have been turned down by the court.

Chilean Officials Threatened Newsmen

Washington

The accompanying story by Joseph Novitski about the apparent summary execution of two Chileans was withheld from publication by Washington Post editors for two days because of threats against Novitski made by Chilean officials in Santiago.

The threats were never specific, but it is known that the government prepared an expulsion decree against Novitski last June which it never put into effect. The two Chileans were arrested and killed about two weeks ago.

On Saturday, Novitski was told by security officials that he was under house arrest.

He was ordered not to make any efforts to gather news or to transmit news stories to Washington. The house arrest was lifted Saturday night and Novitski was told that he was free to pursue his profession in ac-

cordance with the credentials issued by the Chilean government.

The government officials in Santiago never made clear that it was the accompanying story that prompted them to send agents to Novitski's apartment on Friday and then place him under house arrest Saturday.

But, in response to questions, officials indicated the story was the cause for the actions which were ordered at a high level. The story is based on Chilean court documents.

Novitski reports that the Chilean security men who dealt with him personally over the last two days went out of their way to be courteous and helpful, given the circumstances.

Novitski was permitted to telephone The Washington Post and the American Embassy in Santiago whenever he wished. An American Embassy official stayed

with him most of the last 48 hours.

When The Post protested Novitski's treatment to the Chilean ambassador in Washington Saturday evening, Ambassador Walter Heitmann said he knew nothing of the case but expressed no concern over Novitski's house arrest, saying that the reporter had been warned before for writing "misleading" articles.

The Radio Corporation of America subsidiary in Santiago refused to transit Novitski's story about the executions.

The subsidiary's manager cited a Chilean government decree that makes managers or telecommunications officers potentially responsible for any news story they transit that the government says is detrimental to Chile's image in the world.

Novitski dictated his story to Washington by telephone.

Washington Post

Junta Hints of Pardons

Santiago

Chile's military government hinted yesterday at the possible relaxation of sentences for some of those imprisoned nearly a year ago in the coup which toppled the government of President Salvador Allende.

General Augusto Pinochet, in a letter to religious leaders that was published in Santiago newspapers, indi-

cated the military junta he heads may soon pardon or lower the sentences for a number of the estimated 2000 to 6000 persons held in jail.

The religious leaders sent Pinochet a letter August 23 asking an end to the political imprisonment since the military took power September 11, 1973.

Pinochet made no con-

crete declarations.

He is to give a news conference at mid-week for foreign newsmen arriving here to observe the military's commemoration of the coup's first anniversary.

In his letter, Pinochet said a precise response will be made "at an opportune time" to the general public.

Associated Press