

British Doctor Details Charges Of Torture by the Chilean Police

NYTimes

By BERNARD WEINRAUB JAN. 5 1976

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Jan. 4—A British surgeon who said last week that Chilean authorities had tortured her during her imprisonment in a Santiago jail today detailed her charges.

The doctor, 37-year-old Sheila Cassidy, who plans to become a nun, was released last week after being held for 59 days in Chilean jails for having treated a wounded guerrilla leader. Chilean authorities in Santiago and London have strongly denied the torture allegation.

Dr. Cassidy's charges were reported in an article in the mass circulation Sunday Mirror in which she was quoted extensively. They echoed the comments she made last week when she arrived in London after strong British pressure on the Chilean Government to release her. The British Foreign Office has accepted her story and called home the Ambassador to Chile, Reginald L. Secondé.

Today's detailed allegations included Dr. Cassidy's sketches of her prison cell and of her ordeal there. One sketch showed her spread-eagled on the springs of an iron bunk bed, her shoulders, wrists, stomach and ankles strapped to the frame. She said that every time policemen administered electric shocks, they forced a towel into her mouth so that her screams could not be heard.

"The pain was excruciating," she said.

Role of Priests Cited

Dr. Cassidy said that during a period of 12 hours, Chilean policemen fixed electrodes to her body three times and administered shocks in an effort to learn the location of the house where she had treated the guerrilla leader Nelson Gutiérrez.

Hoping to protect Chilean priests who were working in the underground, she lied at first about the place where she had gone to treat Mr. Gutiérrez, she said.

"Electrodes were placed on various parts of my body and the strength of the shocks progressively increased," she said. "Eventually I couldn't stand it any longer and after an hour of questioning and repeated shocks I told them I had lied and that I had in fact treated Gutiérrez in the convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame."

Dr. Cassidy, who lived in Chile for four years, has said that she was never involved politically. Initially she worked in a hospital in Santiago, but after the coup that overthrew the Government of President Salvador Allende Gossens in October 1973, she worked as a physician for the Committee for Peace, which operated under the leadership of the head of the Catholic Church there, Raúl Cardinal Silva Enríquez.

She said that on Oct. 18, a friend, a priest, asked her to treat a wounded man — Mr. Gutiérrez—who could not go to a hospital because he was a political fugitive. Dr. Cassidy treated him and he later took refuge with the Papal Nuncio in Santiago. She was arrested on Nov. 1.

Dr. Cassidy said that she had been "very weak and absolutely terrified" after the shock treatments, and that on the third day of her arrest she had been forced to write a seven-page statement that detailed her treatment of Mr. Gutiérrez and gave the names of the priests and nuns involved. She also signed a statement that the confession had not been made under duress.

Several Conservative Members of the British Parliament have expressed doubts about Dr. Cassidy's charges, and the Chilean Government has accused her of "moral cowardice," apparently for having used her profession to maintain contacts with guerrillas.

Dr. Cassidy said in a news conference last week: "The methods of torture are such that they leave virtually no physical marks. And remember, you are talking to me two months later. If people don't believe me, I am sorry."