

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo

Photographs of 30 Years in Struggle

Idea

Abel Madariaga

Compilation and production

Alejandro Reynoso

Text

José María Pasquini Durán

Captions

Guillermo Wulff

Design and digital retouching

Horacio Petre

Translation

Tamara Lamela

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Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo

Photographs of 30 Years in Struggle

The Wait¹

J. M. Pasquini Durán*

Some of the photographs in this book could belong to any family album: their protagonists are not heroes or bandits, but just ordinary people, in most cases young men and women who only differed in the type of dreams they had. Other photographs, by contrast, should be exhibited at a horror museum to be duly condemned by future generations. The so very different pictures of this collection, beyond the good work of their authors, aim to remember the protagonists of events that crashed at a crossroads in recent national history. Events that gave rise to the emergence of the Abuelas thirty years ago. Needless to say, tragedy took most of the Abuelas by surprise. They were mothers desolated by the terrible shock caused by the dictatorship and who, for a while, were willing to believe that cruelty would end. Mothers who were willing to believe that the fruits of their wombs, as life dictates, would return to be by their side to the end of their days. What these mothers found instead was the dreadful category of detained-disappeared, that elusive trait that a person abducted under State terrorism acquires. As if that was not tragic enough, gradually or abruptly these women came to know that the diabolical swipe had also appropriated their grandchildren, those who were already born and those who were delivered on a clandestine prison floor. With utmost arrogance, heartless executioners decided to trim those flowering branches away from the family trunk to graft them on other homes, with changed identities. The executioners made these children part of the “booty” to which they were “entitled” and for which they took lives and goods, driven many times by greed, envy, or resentment, although they hid such meanness behind “patriotic” and “antisubversive” rhetoric. Perhaps to compensate for those acts of infamy, history gave birth, three decades ago, to the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, a group of grandmothers calling for the appearance of five hundred grandchildren, most of whom were intuitively sensed, never enjoyed, but always loved.

Before horror knocked at their doors, these women, in most cases housewives without political inclinations, heard, and sometimes pictured their children’s dreams, in which noble ideals were in full blossom. Those were simple but huge dreams: a better life for all, particularly for the poor and helpless, justice and freedom within collaborative communities. Although these boys and girls bet their lives on their beliefs, even when not all took the shortcut of armed insurgency, their vigorous young blood could combine the seriousness of their commitment to a political cause with music, parties, laughs, and, clearly, romantic passions that had started at a very young age. That explains why today the sons and the daughters, who are in their thirties, are older than their parents at the time they

were arrested. Was it not irresponsible of the youth to procreate when their own lives were at risk? In any case, they did it because they were completely confident about victory and they deeply believed in another possible world and in another possible life for future generations. After all, instances of glorious insubordination had taken place during the 60s: the *Cordobazo*, the Cuban Revolution, the events of May 1968 in France, and the groundbreaking music of The Beatles, just to name a few among many others. At the outset, the 70s looked promising: Chile, for the first time, had a socialist president popularly elected and, here, Argentina saw the end of the eighteen-year proscription of Peronismo, the country’s biggest popular political movement during the second half of the 20th century. In 1973, the founder of that movement, Juan Domingo Perón, returned from exile, and his reappearance provoked mixed reactions in those who followed him and in those who didn’t. In those days, no passion was extravagant and the rebellious acts, even the most extreme ones, made sense. To criticise the past, it is necessary to understand it first.

It took years for the Abuelas to crack the puzzle of politics and to understand the scope of the disappeared dreams. From time to time those dreams would come to their minds but at the core of the Abuelas’ will was the need to search for their snatched loved ones, which was becoming increasingly stronger. As a result of the strength of their feelings and their persistence, reality started to give in to the Abuelas’ cause: in 1980 they found the first two granddaughters and so far, or more precisely up to the moment of this writing, they are almost ninety; eighty-eight is the exact number of recovered grandchildren. These restitutions are vast achievements, considering that the Abuelas’ search started in the night and in the fog. However, there are still four hundred stories that lack an ending. These venerable and stubborn women were determined to penetrate not only the mysteries of politics but also those of genetics and of national and international law. Their perseverance gave rise to the Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos (National Bank of Genetic Data), where nowadays people can dispel doubts about their origins. Also, at the Abuelas’ insistence, the right to identity was set in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the CONADI (National Commission for the Right to Identity) was created in Argentina. Nowadays, the Abuelas are inaugurating three libraries: one with documents, one with videos and one with newspapers and periodicals for graduate students. They are also carrying out other initiatives for the benefit of the entire society.

After so many years and so many achievements, it would be impossible to summarise the work of these mothers-grandmothers. Still, it would be even more difficult to measure the magnitude of their social and cultural influence that for years has been spreading across the national borders. For thirty years these women have been part of a movement for the defence of human

¹**Translator’s note (t/n):** These introductory words by J. M. Pasquini Durán and the ones in the following section by Alejandro

Reynoso were written in 2007. At that time, there were 88 recovered grandchildren. Now, by June 2017, there are 122.

rights, for truth and justice, and they have had the civic courage that this work demands. Their boundless love for the victims and their willingness to impose punishment to the terrorism of past years were combined with their search for life in the rubble of those years of lead. Being a grandmother duplicates maternity, and from the very beginning the Abuelas were determined to give birth to grandchildren originally conceived in the wombs of their daughters and stolen by the wickedness of those who believed themselves to be pagan gods that could arbitrarily choose who lived and who died. The rescue of life is such a strong message that there is no artistic discipline, from opera to rock, from theatre and film to soap opera, and from photography to literature, which has ignored the Abuelas, all these disciplines refer to their work, and by showing it, they keep these women alive. The same is seen in the social and political sciences, which have taken them as the subject of essays and studies. It must also be said that the Abuelas are a model and a mirror in which other communities that have also suffered the merciless violation of the most essential human rights reflect. There is no doubt that the Abuelas must feel proud about all these facts, not so much for mundane reasons as for the fact of knowing that these are all ways that rapidly spread an urgent message to grandchildren that these grandmothers need to recognise as their own. Of all the recognition they deserve, the first place is for the eighty-eight joys of recovering their grandchildren's identities. Then, the second one is for their tireless fight against impunity: the abduction of children and newborns is one of the crimes that popularly elected governments could not disregard in spite of their attempts to consign the past to oblivion arguing that there should be a reconciliation. However, it is impossible to seek reconciliation without truth and justice. For the same reason, Jorge Rafael Videla and Emilio Eduardo Massera, as well as others of their ilk, returned to prison. All the achievements resulted from the use of law as a tool and not from revenge in the hands of the Abuelas. These women bore the blows of misfortune, people who gave in to external pressures during democracy, the occasional dogmatism of those who walked by their side, the attempts made

with the intention to reconcile with the past, and the indifference of those who had always deliberately ignored the events of those days. These women bore it all because they had relentless confidence in the dripping water that hollows out the stone.

At this point, would it not be better if men and women in their thirties remained ignorant of their past? Does confronting the unknown truth redeem the victims or destroy them? Although none of these questions has only one answer, there are lessons learnt from experience. There is no birth without pain, and recovering one's true identity is like being born again, feeling the mother's and the baby's pain at the same time in the same person. Likewise, that pain forges life, but in these cases, without the naivety of the newborn. These men and women are adults who have developed feelings of love towards their abductors, some of whom have even aroused those feelings in good faith. They are adults who have matured in family cultures that might be opposed to or different from those of their biological homes. They are adults who, when faced with their real identities, remain indefinitely in suspense, without a sense of belonging. The grandmothers-mothers would not have withheld so much impatient love if they had not been capable of understanding, each and all, the twists and turns of human nature. That is why they gave each reunion its own course so as to reconcile past, present, and future times in the soul of the innocents. The Abuelas know that their own time slips through their fingers like fine grain sand, but at this point, after thirty years, they have built a solid legacy that will last despite the unexpected turn of events. They have taught all those who wanted to learn the action of waiting, the wait, that wise combination of hope, of struggle, of faith in one's inner strength, and of that absolute certainty that at the end of the road somebody has been waiting for them, either knowingly or not, for three decades. That wait cradles the sweet and firm decision to illuminate lives.

*Journalist, writer, and activist deceased in 2010. He wrote the prologue for the first edition of the book.

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo
Photographs of 30 Years in Struggle

A Few Words

Alejandro Reynoso

Like green leaves among dry leaves, the photographs in this book change their colours. These images honour those women who, some times without even knowing they were going to be grandmothers, set on an inconceivable journey the very same day of the abduction of their daughters and sons, and of their born or yet-to-be-born grandsons and granddaughters. The dictatorial tragedy that devastated Argentina struck their bodies with great strength and the most essential ties were severed: the ties of blood. The eternal crime of denying the true identity of their children made these grandmothers feel compelled to compulsorily abandon the domestic sphere and begin a public struggle. The Abuelas started a formidable task after understanding that even though they had their children's bedrooms clean and a cigarette packet that had just been bought, waiting for the return of the disappeared was pointless and talking to the authorities was useless. At the risk of being swallowed by the horror machine operated by the government, their collaborative work over all these years has honoured life and has gained worldwide recognition.

The Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo's work and its context are fragmentarily shown in the stories behind these images. These pictures do not aim to reflect the historical truth of the Abuelas' work, since volumes would be needed to reveal the hundreds of registered cases and the almost ninety recovered grandchildren. This book is just a handful of photos. It is a book that combines portraits of the warm simplicity of a spontaneous family album with other striking images that reflect the professionalism of Argentinian photojournalists. From the perception offered by the language of photography, these pictures try to get the invaluable fruits of the Abuelas close to our sensitivity. They are photos intended to make us remember the past and seek truth and justice. Photos to help us reinterpret those years, in freedom. Photos that do not aim to make us wallow in nostalgia but to collectively commit to forging a future without impunity, with inclusion and equity. These are photos of persons that bet on life, these are photos of terror, of pain, of contributions, and of intelligence. These are photos of love.



[The banner on the left reads: "Our children must be returned alive". The one in the center reads: "Where are the hundreds of babies born in captivity?"]

The Abuelas begin their struggle

On 22 October 1977, twelve women found Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. They search for their grandchildren abducted by the dictatorship. Children abducted with their parents or born while their mothers were in captivity. The Abuelas Chela Fontana, Raquel Radio de Mariçurrena, Clara Jurado and Eva Castillo Barrios march with the Madres de Plaza de Mayo.



1976

The dictatorship kills and destroys entire families. In the photo Cristina Navajas de Santucho plays with her son Camilo. Shortly after, she would be abducted when she was pregnant. Her mother, Nélida Gómez de Navajas, would join the Abuelas (see p. 45).



1976

Betina Tarnopolsky (15) reads a newspaper in the privacy of her home. On 15 June 1976, she would be abducted together with her parents, her brother Sergio, and her sister-in-law Laura. Only her brother Daniel would save his life because that night he had been sleeping at a friends' house.



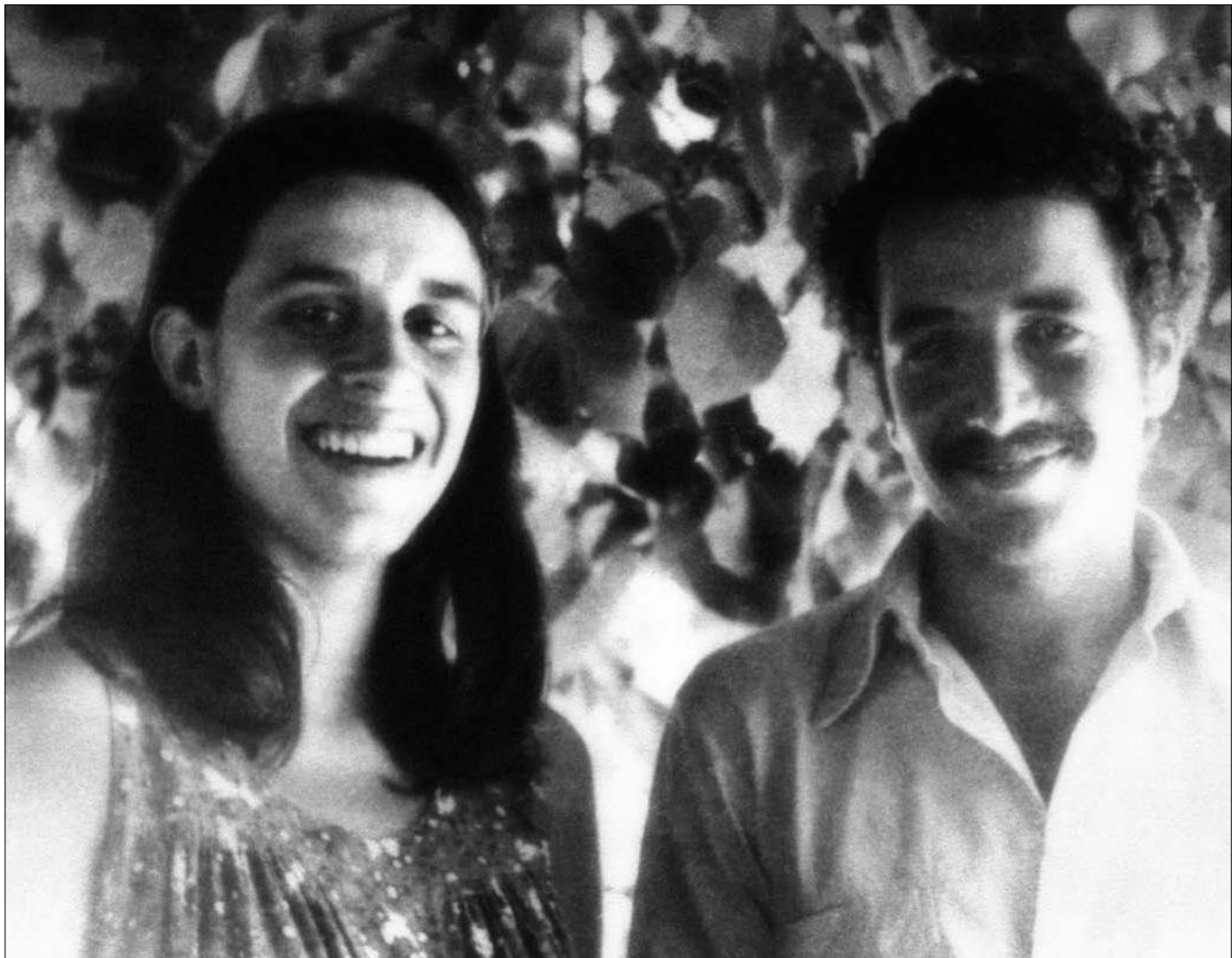
1977

Militants bet on life. Alicia Elena Alfonsín (17) and Damián Abel Cabandíe (19) are expecting a baby. Both of them would be abducted on 23 November 1977. In March 1978, at the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada or ESMA (Naval School of Mechanics), Alicia would give birth to a boy who she called Juan (see p. 98).



1977

Mónica María Lemos (25) with her daughter María (see p. 82) and her brother Mario Alberto (22) at Haydeé Vallino de Lemos's house. Some months later, Mónica and Mario would be abducted. Haydeé, their mother, would become one of the founder members of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo.



1977

Valeria Belástegui Herrera (24) and Ricardo Daniel Waisberg (29). The couple and their fifteen-month-old daughter Tania would be abducted on 13 May 1977 in San Antonio de Padua. The little girl would be left at the local police station with a sign hanging from her neck that would read: "I'm the daughter of Valeria Belástegui" (see p. 64). Valeria was pregnant. Both she and her husband would be seen in Campo de Mayo. Valeria's two brothers, José and Martín, and their wives, were also abducted. Matilde Herrera, Valeria's mother, and Reina Waisberg, Daniel's mother, would join the Abuelas.



1977

*The young María Elena Isabel
Corvalán some days before being
detained and disappeared in the city of
La Plata.*



1976

Liliana Corti (26) and her son Horacio (see p. 99), who didn't have the chance to get to know his father, murdered in October 1975 by the Triple A. Liliana would suffer the same fate as her husband and the military would also appropriate her baby.



1977

A policeman holds Manuel Gonçalves Granada. His mother has just been murdered in a raid in San Nicolás, province of Buenos Aires. The child is safe. Security forces take him to the local hospital and some months later he is placed for adoption (see p. 116).



24 March 1976

*Military vehicles and soldiers armed with war weapons
patrol Plaza de Mayo square and its surroundings.
State terrorism takes over the country.*

Photo: Eduardo Di Baia/AP File



Emilio Eduardo Massera, Jorge Rafael Videla and Orlando Ramón Agosti lead an official ceremony. They are the most faithful followers of the systematic plan for the disappearance of people and appropriation of children. Supported by civilian sectors and by dint of constant terror, the dictatorship imposed an economic model that split popular sectors and that laid the foundations for an unfair and unequal Argentina.

Photo: Guillermo Loíacono/ ARGRA Photographic library



Garment worn by María Asunción Artigas, a pregnant woman who was held in the clandestine detention centre Pozo de Banfield. It is estimated that there were 340 centres of detention and torture throughout the country, and the vast majority of them were located in urban zones. In those places, the abducted were stripped of their clothes and they were dressed in boods and hessian rags like the one in this photo. María Asunción gave birth to a girl who she called María Victoria (see p. 69). Elena Santander, her mother-in-law, would then join the Abuelas to search for the girl.



4 September 1976.

Joint forces bombard a house in San Isidro. The official statement reports that there are “five criminals dead”. On 25 January 1984, at the request of Abuelas, the alleged “criminals” would be exhumed. It would then be proved that the dead were Roberto Francisco Lanuscon, his wife Amelia Bárbara Miranda and two of their children: Roberto (5) and Bárbara (4) (see p. 26, photo 1). In the grave of the little Matilde, who was only five months old, only her clothes, a blanket, a teddy bear and a dummy would be found.

Photo: NA File



A sort of large attic was used as bedroom for those abducted at the ESMA. In 1981, through the testimony of survivors, the Abuelas learnt that there was a clandestine maternity unit in that place.

Photo: Enrique Shore
CONADEP



12 August 1976

The Ministerio del Interior (Ministry of the Interior), located at the Government House, is one of the places where relatives go to get information about their loved ones. They also go to courts, prisons, police stations and churches.

Photo: Jorge Sanjurjo/Crónica File



1



2



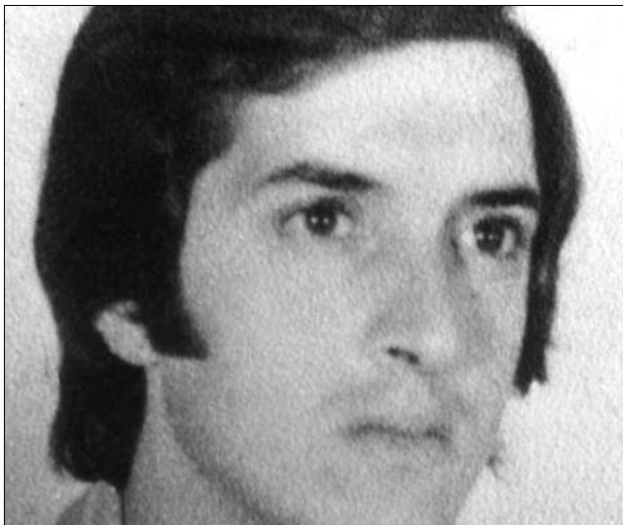
3



4



5



6

The military regime systematizes the forced disappearance of people of all ages. Hundreds of babies are abducted with their parents and hundreds of pregnant women give birth in clandestine maternity units. Later, it would be known that there were lists of families who were “waiting” for a birth in those detention centres. More than 400 children were appropriated and deprived of their identities.

(1) Bárbara Lanuscou, murdered in 1976 by joint forces. In the raid there also died her parents and her brother Roberto (see p. 23). Bárbara’s younger sister, Matilde, remains disappeared.

(2) When his mother was abducted, Juan Pablo Moyano was given to some neighbours who then took him to the Juzgado de Menores N°2 (Juvenile Court No. 2) in San Isidro. The Court placed him with a foster family without even trying to contact his real family. The Abuelas found him in 1983 and he got to know his identity (see p. 66). His mother and his father are disappeared.

(3) Mariana Zaffaroni Islas was abducted with her parents and was appropriated by an intelligence agent. In 1991 she recovered her identity.

(4) José Antonio Míguez (14), abducted with his mother on 12 May 1977. Both of them remain disappeared.

(5) Elena de la Cuadra and (6) Héctor Carlos Baratti were abducted on 23 February 1977 in La Plata. Elena was pregnant. In 16 June she gave birth to a girl who she called Ana. Four days later Ana was taken away from her mother and it was not until 2014 that she was given her identity back. Elena and Héctor remain disappeared.



1



2



3



4

(1) *Lilita Beatriz Caimi*, abducted on 11 October 1976 with her husband *Andrés Marizcurrera*. *Lilita* was five months pregnant. Her mother-in-law, *Raquel Radío de Marizcurrera*, participated in the creation of both *Madres* and *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.

(2) *Patricia Julia Roisinblit*, abducted on 6 October 1978 with her partner *José Manuel Pérez Rojo*. *Patricia* was eight months pregnant. On 15 November, at the ESMA, she gave birth to a boy who she called *Rodolfo Fernando*. The baby was appropriated. His grandmothers, *Rosa Tarlorsky de Roisinblit* and *Argentina Rojo*, joined the *Abuelas*. *Rodolfo* recovered his identity in 2000 (see p. 107).

(3) *María Rosa Ana Tolosa*, abducted in February 1977 with her partner *Juan Enrique Reggiardo*. *María Rosa* was seven and a half months pregnant. On 16 May she gave birth in Olmos Prison. She had twins: *Gonzalo Javier* and *Matías Ángel*. The twins were appropriated by a represor. In 1989 the children's identities were genetically proved. *María Rosa* and *Juan Enrique* remain disappeared. *Antonia Oldani de Reggiardo*, *Juan Enrique's* mother, remains disappeared too.

(4) *María Emilia Islas Gatti*, abducted with her husband *Jorge Zaffaroni* and her daughter *Mariana*, who was one and a half years old. *Mariana* was appropriated by a security agent but in 1991 she was able to recover her identity. *María Emilia* and *Jorge* remain disappeared.



5



6

(5) *Laura Estela Carlotto*, abducted on 26 November 1977. She was two and a half months pregnant. *Laura* as well as her partner *Walmir Oscar Montoya* were held in the clandestine centre *La Cacha*, in the outskirts of *La Plata*. She was then taken to another place to give birth. On 26 June she gave birth to a boy who she called *Guido*. *Laura* was taken back to *La Cacha* without her son. *Laura* and *Walmir* were murdered. *Guido* got to know his life story and his real family in 2014 (see p. 127).

(6) *Ana María Lanzillotto*, abducted on 19 July 1976 with her partner *Domingo Menna*. She was eight months pregnant when she was abducted. According to the testimonies of survivors, she gave birth in captivity. Her twin sister, *María Cristina*, was abducted on 17 November 1976 with her husband *Carlos Benjamín Santillán*. *Alba*, the eldest sister of *Ana María* and *María Cristina*, joined the *Abuelas*.



[The banner reads: "Disappeared children"]

1978

As time goes by, there are more and more Abuelas. They meet one another in juvenile courts and in orphanages. Silence is the only answer they get. They walk together to make their claim be heard.



[The banner reads: "Restitution of the disappeared children to their legitimate families"]

Children's day in Plaza de Mayo

On 5 August 1978, the newspaper La Prensa publishes the first open letter from Abuelas. It is titled "Llamado a la conciencia y a los corazones" and it states that children have the right to be reunited with their grandmothers, who, in every possible way, will search for them for the rest of their lives. The letter puts the Abuelas in the public eye and after its publication they start to get international support for their search.



[The banner at the back reads: "Disappeared children"]

The Abuelas have no fear. The worst that could happen to them has already happened. Their voices defy the military regime that keeps denying the existence of the disappeared.



[The kerchief on the right reads: "My son Alberto García disappeared on 29-7-76"]

The number of women from Madres de Plaza de Mayo that march around the monument Pirámide de Mayo increases every week. The Abuelas take part in the march that would symbolise their resistance to horror.



[From left to right the words on the tracings read: "Jose Héctor Mangone (Pepe), disappeared, July 1977" and "María José Rapela de Mangone, disappeared, July 1977"]

1983

During the third Marcha de la Resistencia (Resistance March), a group of artists paste human-sized silhouettes representing the disappeared on the walls of the Metropolitan Cathedral. Madres and Abuelas demand that their children and grandchildren are returned to them alive.

Photo: Daniel García



[The banner reads: "Disappeared children"]

1983

Tragedy changed the course of these women's lives. All of them took on the struggle with courage, creativity and an exemplary ethical behaviour.



Human rights organisations unite and march on the streets demanding justice.



[The banner reads: "Disappeared children"]

The Abuelas demonstrate in downtown Buenos Aires. The Obelisco, an icon of the country, stands behind them as a silent witness to their pain.



The Abuela Clara Jurado screams in Plaza de Mayo. Madres and Abuelas demand to know the truth about the fate of their loved ones.

Photo: Daniel García



Two women cry in Plaza de Mayo under the eye of passers-by. This is a scene that is now commonly seen in the urban landscape of the dictatorship.

Photo: Daniel García



Abroad, the Abuelas receive support. In France, they give a press conference that is covered by the world's most important international media. In Canada, large posters featuring the face of a little granddaughter are all over the cities. In the Federal Republic of Germany a book on appropriated children is massively distributed. Politicians, intellectuals, and religious leaders from all over Europe express their solidarity. Many of them contribute money to the search. Some bring the serious problem of appropriated children to their embassies in Argentina. Others encourage people to sponsor disappeared children.



At the UN Palace, at the height of the dictatorship and over the years, the human rights activist from Equatorial Guinea, Eya Nchama, eased the access of the struggling voice of the Abuelas to the International Community.



A group of human rights activists hold a public protest in Geneva (Switzerland). The woman with her back towards the camera has a sign that reads: "Where is Mario Lemos, the disappeared craftsman?" (See p. 14).



Estela Carlotto, president of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, shows Pope John Paul II a folder with files on the disappeared. For a long time the Catholic Church was reluctant to admit the role it served during the dictatorship.



Chicba Mariani and Estela Carlotto with the French first lady Danielle Mitterrand, who contributes to the Abuelas' cause.



The international press portrays Madres' and Abuelas' sorrow. On the right, Raquel Radio de Marizcurrena, one of the founding members of Abuelas.



Genetics takes action at the Abuelas' request, 1983

While their grandchildren grow up, the Abuelas start wondering how they are going to identify them. Many of these women do not even know whether they have a grandson or a granddaughter, or when he or she was born. Blood tests to establish paternity are already known. But in this case the parents are missing. It is necessary to get blood from grandparents, uncles, brothers and cousins to reconstruct the genetic map of the disappeared grandchildren. To achieve this, the Abuelas contact scientists from the American Association for the Advancement of Science or AAAS. After working for a year, these researchers solve the problem. Now the Abuelas have a technique for identifying their grandchildren. In this photo, the geneticist Mary Claire King explains to Estela Carlotto and Nélida Navajas (see p. 11) how "The Grand-Parenting Index" is calculated.



16 December 1982

Political parties unite and form the Multipartidaria. They organise a march to Plaza de Mayo. The police brutally repress them. Hundreds of people are detained and one man is killed: Dalmiro Flores. Amid tear gas, a group of demonstrators makes its way through the fences and they even reach the entrance to the Casa Rosada.

Photo: Jorge Rilo



[The banner reads: "Disappeared children"]

The Abuelas get organised. They listen to accusations, investigate cases, meet with judges, officials and bishops, and march for their grandchildren.



[From the back to the front the banners read: "Ecumenical movement for human rights", "We demand that the detained-disappeared return alive", "Mothers of Uruguayan youths disappeared in Argentina", "They must return alive", "Restitution of the disappeared to their legitimate families", and "Disappeared children"]

1983

The Military Junta issues the "Documento final de la lucha antisubversiva" ("Final Document on Anti-Subversive Struggle") that states that the disappeared are dead. The Act of Autoamnistía is imminent. Protests by both political and human rights organisations become more and more frequent. They demand the safe return of the disappeared and condemn the dictatorship.



26 October 1983

UCR political party's end of campaign in the Federal Capital. Two days later, the last political rally of the Justicialist Party led by Luder and Bittel was held in the same place. The popular fervour for the end of the dictatorship is strongly felt during the election contest.

Photo: Marcelo Ranea



10 December 1983

The provisional president appointed by the dictatorship, General Reynaldo Bignone, and the elected president, Raúl Alfonsín, go into the White Room of the Government House for the handover of power.

Photo: Rafael Calviño



20 September 1984

After a year of work, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons or CONADEP, presided over by the writer Ernesto Sábató, gives President Alfonsín the Nunca Más (Never Again) report, which details the crimes committed by the dictatorship. The national president commissioned this report after the Military Justice refused to judge those responsible for State terrorism. The Nunca Más is criticised. “Argentina was shaken by terror from both the far right and the far left”, says the prologue. The misconception that there was a war persists.

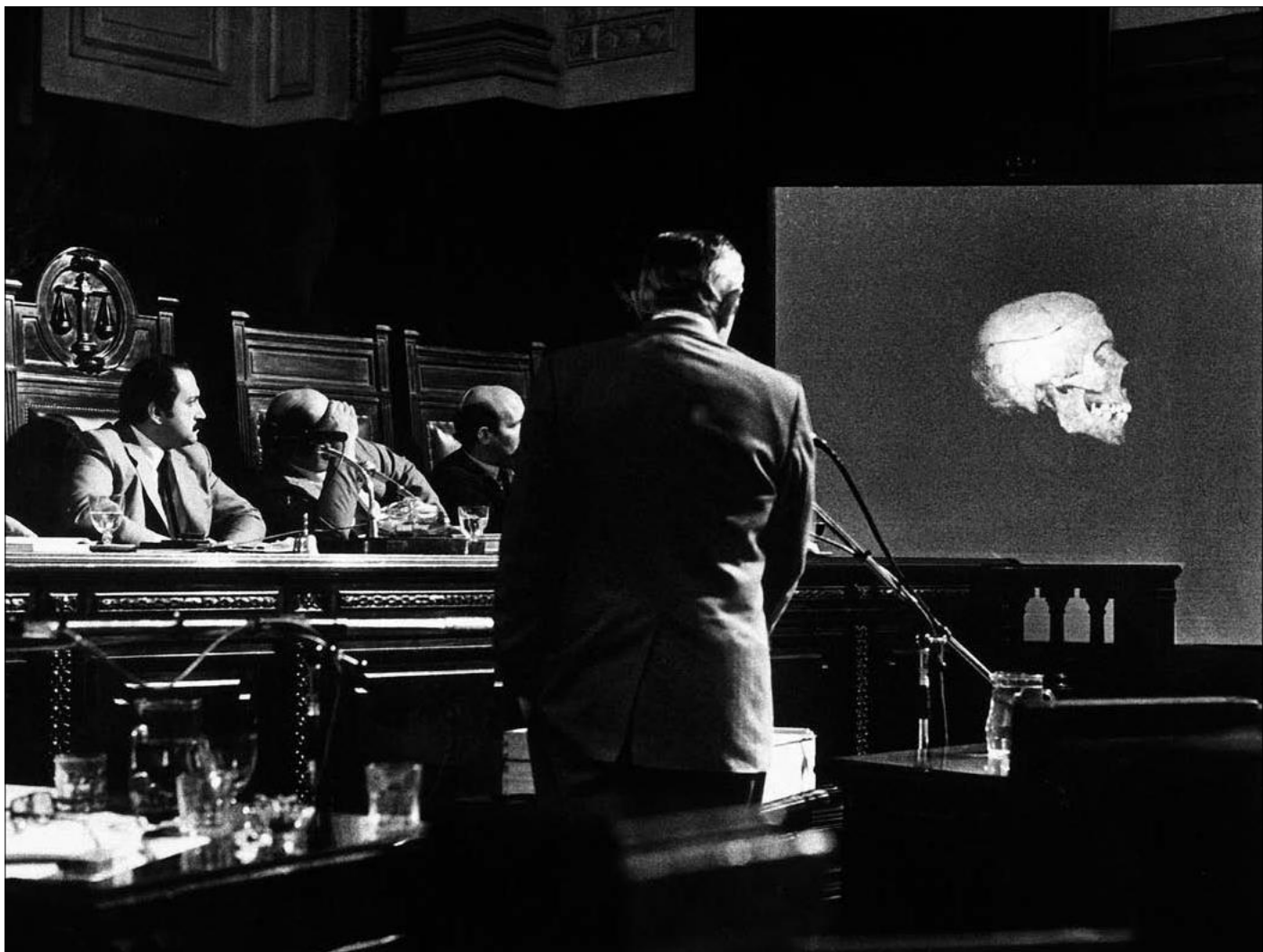
Photo: Alejandro Cherep



1985

Rubens Grafigna, Emilio Massera, Jorge Videla and Armando Lambruschini unmoved bear testimonies on the horrors of the dictatorship. More than 700 cases go to court and around 800 witnesses testify throughout the trial of the military juntas. The sentences imposed by the Federal Chamber encourage the quest for justice and deepen democracy. But the trial has its limitations. The Abuelas continue searching for their grandchildren.

Photo: Dani Yako



22 March 1985

This photo shows forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow, who in 1984 exhumed family Lanuscou's remains at the Abuelas' request. He files a complaint before the court that is judging former commanders and he presents documents which prove the torture inflicted on a disappeared man and the way he was murdered (see p. 26).

Photo: Daniel Muzio



February 1986

The Abuelas meet with Alfonsín and make him several requests. Among them, they ask him to submit their proposal for the creation of the Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos to the National Congress. The effectiveness of the DNA analysis leads the president to grant the Abuelas' request.



Chicba Mariani and Estela Carlotto meet Julio Strassera, prosecutor in the trial of the military juntas, in a UN General Assembly. In 1989 the Abuelas succeed in getting three articles on the right to identity included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



The dozens of restitutions achieved in the early years of democracy are a result of the Abuelas' constant work. They pose for this photo in their flat at 700 Montevideo Street in the Federal Capital. Soon this place turned to be too small for them.



April 1988

The Abuelas begin to prepare their own lectures. Estela Carlotto, Chicha Mariani and Mirta Baravalle give a talk at a seminar for psychology professionals.



3 August 1984

The Abuelas give Paula Eva Logares her identity back. She was appropriated by a represor who registered her as his biological daughter. This is the first case in which justice uses DNA tests to prove filiation. At a press conference, Elsa Pavón announces that legal proceedings will be brought against the appropriators of her granddaughter.

Photo: A. Becquer Casaballe



1984

Not all Abuelas' cases are the same. But what all of them share is the healing that results from the restitutions. Appropriated children who were cruelly taken away from their parents when they were babies suffered from psychic mutilation. There is only one therapy that can relieve so much pain: the truth. This photo shows Paula Eva Logares and her grandmother Elsa Pavón, shortly after the child's restitution.



August 1983

Tamara Arze is reunited with her mother Rosa Mary Riveros in Peru. Tamara disappeared on 13 June 1976, when military forces abducted the couple that looked after her. By that time, her mother was a political prisoner. In 1981 Rosa Mary was released and had to go into exile. But before leaving the country she entrusted the search for her daughter to the Abuelas, who eventually located the girl. She had been left behind during the raid and a neighbouring family came to her when she cried. This family found Tamara's identity card in her house, so they kept on calling the girl by her name, waiting for someone to come for her.



1988

Abuelas' family gets bigger and bigger. In this photo some granddaughters pose with Estela Carlotto. From left to right: María Lavalle Lemos, Tamara Arze, Carla Rutila Artes, Paula Logares, Tania Waisberg (see p. 15) and Mariana Pérez. At the back, Clara Jurado.



1985

María Eugenia Gatica Caracoche, who has just got her identity back, embraces Chicha Mariani. María Eugenia and some of her neighbours were abducted on 16 March 1977. One month later her mother Ana María and her brother Felipe were abducted when Oscar, her father, was not at home. Ana María was released two months later. Oscar and Ana María began the search together with the Abuelas. But Argentina was not a safe place to live in. That is why they went to Brazil. There they had two more children: María Paz and Manolo. In 1984 Oscar went back to Argentina and restarted the search together with the Abuelas, until he found Felipe and, shortly after, María Eugenia.



Easter Day at the Abuelas' house

All children who recover their identities bloom, become more open, as if they are born again. This photo shows Juan Pablo Moyano (see p. 26, photo 2) with the siblings Felipe and María Eugenia Gatica, and Paula Eva Logares.



Estela Carlotto cradles the baby of a couple of relatives who are visiting the Abuelas' house.



Each birthday becomes a good opportunity to celebrate life. The Abuelas try to give back to their grandchildren all the love they were deprived of by State terrorism.



January 1988

María Victoria Moyano gets her identity back. She was born while her mother María Asunción Artigas (see p. 22) was in captivity at Pozo de Banfield. The girl moves in with her paternal grandmother, Elena Santander, who had been searching for her from the outset. This grandmother would keep on working in the organisation alongside her partners.



María Lavalle Lemos, Paula Eva Logares, Mariana Pérez, Laura Scaccheri and Elena Gallinari Abinet, who recovered her identity in 1987. She became the first recovered granddaughter born in captivity. She had been appropriated by a policeman. As for Laura Scaccheri, she had been registered as the legitimate daughter of some neighbours who had witnessed the raid in which Laura's mother was abducted, in Lanús, southern Great Buenos Aires.



Some cases of disappeared children, like the one of Carla Rutila Artes (second girl from the left) are part of the Plan Cóndor, the sinister intelligence and coordination operation conducted by the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. Carla and her mother were detained in Bolivia. Some time later, they were given to the Argentine National Gendarmerie, which took them to the clandestine detention centre Automotores Orletti in the Federal Capital. Carla was appropriated by Eduardo Ruffo, who was a represor at that centre and a former member of the Triple A. The girl would move in to Spain with her maternal grandmother Matilde “Sacha” Artes Company, and from there she would often write: “I want you to never forget that I am Carla Rutila Artes and that you helped my grandmother find me, and that is why I am here”, she would say to the Abuelas in one of her letters. In this photo Carla is accompanied by Paula Eva Logares and the little sisters María Eugenia and María Paz Gatica.



*María Eugenia Gatica receives her
First Communion after having recovered
her true identity.*



Holy Week, 1987

Carapintada rebellion in Campo de Mayo. The rebels, mid-ranking military officers, assert that during the dictatorship they proceeded following orders from their superiors. They believe that the Act of Punto Final, passed some months before, is not enough. That Act set a date after which no prosecutions could be brought against the represores of the dictatorship.

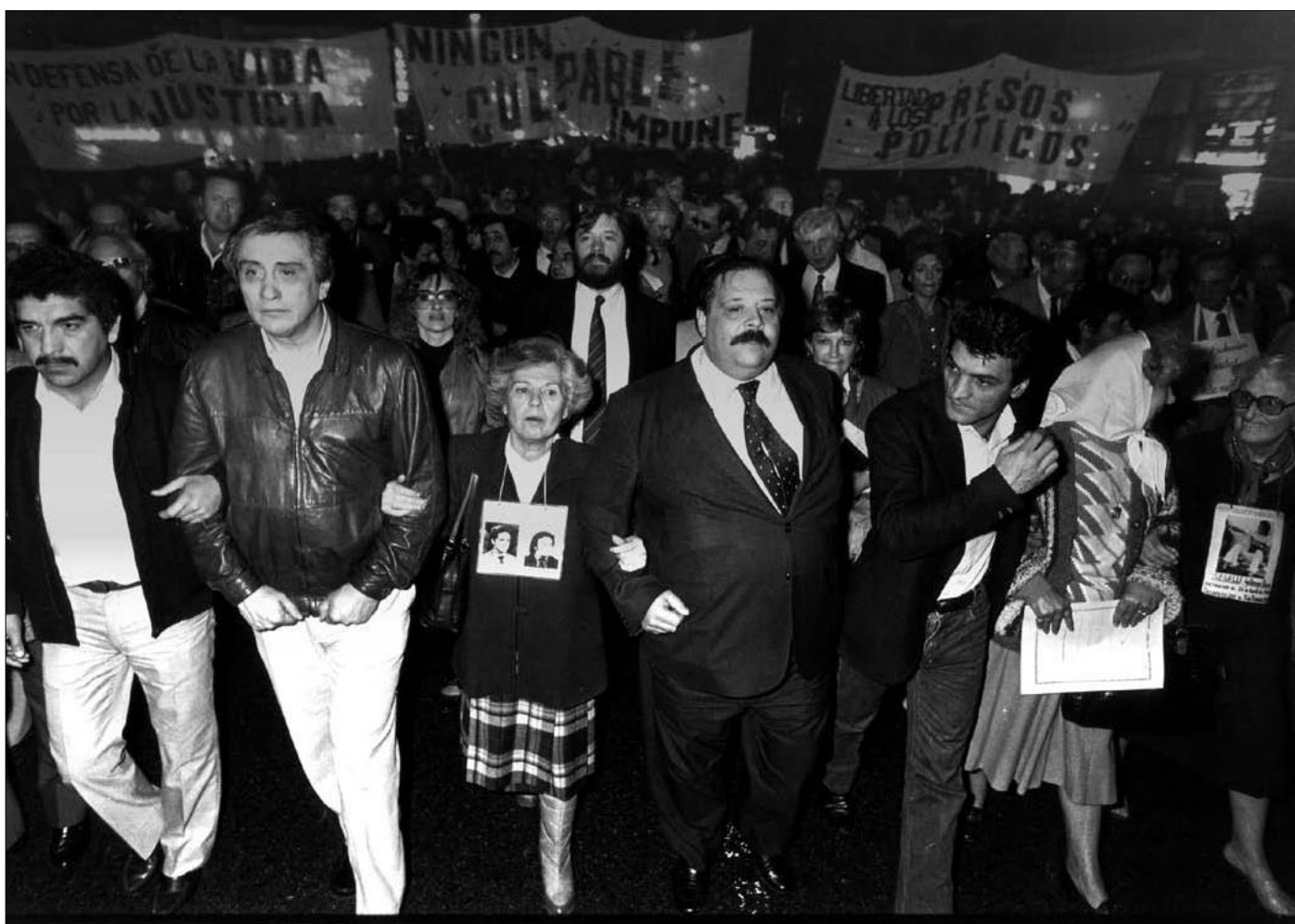
Photo: Enrique Rosito



Holy Week, 1987

Military officers threaten to launch another coup, but their ultimate goal is to obtain impunity.

Photo: Rafael Calviño



[From left to right the banners read: "In defence of life. For justice", "Culprits must not go unpunished", and "Release political prisoners"]

Human rights organisations, political parties and unions march in defence of democracy. Alfonsín soon gives in to military pressure and before thousands of demonstrators repudiating the Carapintada uprising he proclaims that "la casa está en orden" ("the house is in order"). One month later the Act of Obediencia Debida would be passed and it would become evident that the Government negotiated the military surrender in exchange for the Act. However, the Obediencia Debida would not apply to those responsible for the appropriation of children. Abuelas' causes would become the banner of the organisations searching for justice.



[The banner reads: "1977—10 years of struggle—1987. We are searching for two generations. The responsible for this horror must be judged and convicted. We reject the Act of Obediencia Debida (Law 23521).]

22 October 1987

It has been 10 years since the Abuelas started their struggle so they hold a ceremony in Plaza de Mayo. They reject the Act of Obediencia Debida.



Pardons complete the impunity system

Businessman Jorge Born greets the newly elected President, Carlos Menem. In those days the Abuelas meet with Menem and, in view of the disclosures of forgiveness for perpetrators of State crimes, they ask him not to pardon the represores of the dictatorship. The President's answer is that he will do "the best for all citizens". Pardons are a done deal.

Photo: José Luis Soldini



[The biggest banner reads: "Restitution of the disappeared children to their legitimate families"]

1990

Mass demonstrations against military pardons take place throughout the country.



By clinging to their “no” to pardons, the Abuelas keep the memory of their disappeared children alive.



Many young people approach the Abuelas. Society starts to listen to the problem of the appropriation of children. Estela Carlotto leads a demonstration calling for truth and justice.



1987

María hugs her sister María José Lavalle, born while Mónica Lemos, both children's mother (see p. 14), was in captivity. The girls have recently met but they feel as if they have known each other forever.



María José, years later, and her sister María. Nowadays both of them work at Abuelas, helping other grandchildren be reunited with their families.



16 October 1997

The Abuelas meet with Hillary Clinton, First Lady of the United States, who is visiting Buenos Aires. They request her to intercede with President Menem in order to find their disappeared grandchildren.



The Abuelas meet every week. They organise their work, discuss strategies, and vote on proposals. In one of these meetings, in 1997, they decided to change their search method. Since their grandchildren were already adults, these women decided to foster the grandchildren's own approach to the Abuelas. That was why mass communication campaigns (theatre, music, plastic arts, sport, printed press, radio, television) started.

Photo: Martín Zabala



October 2000

Musicians collaborate with the Abuelas to spread their search. Gustavo Cordera, lead singer of Bersuit Vergarabat, reads the Abuelas' monthly newspaper at the cultural centre Centro Cultural Recoleta.

Photo: Martín Zabala



[The banner reads: "Do you know who you are?"]

22 November 1997

More than 50,000 youths gather at Plaza de Mayo to listen to different bands: Los Caballeros de la Quema, Los Visitantes, Las Pelotas and Bersuit Vergarabat. The first event of Rock por la Identidad (Rock for Identity) exceeds all expectations. From that moment on, the Abuelas would start to use music and culture as a communication channel to spread their struggle. The granddaughters Tatiana Sfiligoy (holding the microphone) and Elena Gallinari celebrate with the crowd that went to the square on Abuelas' 20th anniversary.



October 2002

Gabriel Matías Cevasco hugs Estela Carlotto at an ecumenical gathering that takes place at Casa Nazaret in the City of Buenos Aires. Gabriel, who disappeared on 11 January 1977 with his mother, voluntarily went to the Comisión Nacional para el Derecho a la Identidad or CONADI (National Commission for the Right to Identity). There he was able to know his true identity and he was reunited with his father Enrique and his maternal family.

Photo: Carlos Greco



October 2002

Estela Carlotto has not found her grandson Guido yet, (see p. 27, photo 5). María Lavalle has been lucky enough to find her sister María José. Estela and María lock in an embrace that gives them strength to continue searching.

Photo: Carlos Greco



October 2002

The Ballet del Mercosur and the Teatro Colón Children's Choir give a benefit performance for Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Many are the tributes and the honours in the year of the 25th anniversary of the Abuelas. "We were deeply moved, perhaps it was one of the best experiences we have had", says the great dancer Maximiliano Guerra after the performance.

Photo: Martín Zabala



October 2002

Many Abuelas from different provinces, as well as recovered grandchildren and other grandchildren searching for their siblings, attend Maximiliano Guerra's performance at the Teatro Colón. Some even come from abroad, such as Tamara Arze and the siblings Felipe and María Eugenia Gatica.

Photo: Martín Zabala



20 September 2002

Some groups still use violence as a means of threat. In the small hours, they shoot the door of Estela Carlotto's house in La Plata.



2002

A few days after they shoot her house, Estela Carlotto receives support from those engaged in the same struggle as her in Plaza de Mayo.

Photo: Martín Acosta



[The banner reads: "Do not remain uncertain about your identity"]

2003

*As part of the new dissemination strategy, the national campaign *Deporte por la Identidad* (Sport for Identity) is launched. It includes giving informative talks and distributing material on the *Abuelas* in clubs of all divisions, sports and cities.*



Until recently Gustavo Godoy (standing on the left) believed he had been born in Paraguay –where he was raised– and that he had survived the car accident in which all his family had died. This is what his appropriators told him. At the age of 19 he went to Córdoba to study. Gradually a feeling of doubt started to awaken. Every time he returned to visit his “parents” he tried to get some information. Finally, one day his appropriator confessed that, through a contact in the military, he had gone to Campo de Mayo to fetch him soon after his birth. Gustavo Godoy went to Abuelas’ affiliate in Córdoba and on 24 November 2003 the genetic test proved that he was the son of Olga Mabel Ferreyra and Oscar Donato Godoy. Both of his parents disappeared in 1978 in General Pacheco. In this photo, Gustavo is with his whole family at the Abuelas’ house.



20 November 2003

President Kirchner receives some of the Abuelas' grandchildren, and they ask him to promote a law that makes genetic tests mandatory. They also ask him to be recognised as former disappeared people. In this photo Kirchner is with Gabriel Cevasco, Horacio Pietragalla, Mariana Pérez, María Eugenia Sampallo, Lorena Battistiol, Tatiana Sfiligoy and María Victoria Moyano at the Government House. That year in August the Acts of Obediencia Debida and Punto Final were repealed. In April 2007 pardons would be nullified.

Photo: Damián Neustad



26 January 2004

Elena Opezo hugs Juan Cabandié, whom she searched for 26 years. "Muñeca", as everybody calls her, was a member of Abuelas' research team. She joined the organisation shortly after her husband's son, Damián Cabandié, and his wife, Alicia Alfonsín, (see p. 13) were abducted in November 1977.



30 October 2004

Pedro Luis Nadal García meets with his father at Abuelas' house. Pedro had disappeared on 5 March 1975 with his mother. At that moment, Jorge Adalberto Nadal, his father, was detained. The child was appropriated by a policeman from Buenos Aires and his false birth certificate was signed by Jorge Antonio Bergés. Horacio Pietragalla (see p. 17), who recovered his identity in 2003, looks at them and claps. Both Pedro and Horacio got their girlfriends' help and advice when they had doubts about their identities.



October 2004

Victoria Donda Pérez has just recovered her identity. This young woman had not been suspicious of her “parents” until one day a group of young people from the organisation H.I.J.O.S. and from Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo’s research team approached her to tell her that they had information confirming that she probably was the daughter of a disappeared couple. The only proof that was lacking was her DNA test. Victoria took quite a long time to decide whether to have that test done or not. One of her fears, like that of most young people who refuse to undergo the test, was the harm that she might cause to those who raised her. Victoria confirmed that she was the daughter of disappeared people and that she had a sister called Eva. In this photo, Victoria smiles with Irma Rojas and Raquel Marizcurrena. At the back, Maria Lavalle and Buscarita Roa smile too.



30 October 2004

The granddaughter Laura Scaccheri, her husband and her son León enter La Trastienda Theatre, where Abuelas' 27th anniversary celebration takes place.



2004

María de las Victorias Ruiz breastfeeds her baby while the documentary “Nietos, identidad y memoria”, directed by Benjamín Ávila, is being filmed. María de las Victorias, like other grandchildren who recovered their identities, was sure that she had been abandoned by her parents. However, one day she saw a picture on a newspaper which published photographs of the disappeared children and when she saw them she felt that she looked very similar to one of the girls. She started shouting “this is me, this is me”. María de las Victorias met with her brother Marcelo, who recovered his identity in 1989, and in 2008 both of them were reunited with their sister Laura, born at the ESMA.



[The sign on the door reads: "In this place many disappeared women gave birth and their babies were stolen by those who committed genocide."]

24 March 2004

Fabio de De Vincenti, member of the organisation H.I.J.O.S., when the ESMA was transferred to the Federal Government.



2004

Not even the Greek, who conceived all tragedies, imagined that of the disappeared children. Through its plays, Teatro por la Identidad (Theatre for Identity) tries to show the Argentine horror of the disappeared. It soon becomes a success in terms of audience and contributes to spread the work of the Abuelas.



[The image reads: "Find yourself"]

The CONADI works together with the Abuelas to recover the appropriated children.

Photo: Matan Zabala



[The banner reads: "We are looking for you"]

The Abuelas celebrate their 27th anniversary at La Trastienda Theatre.



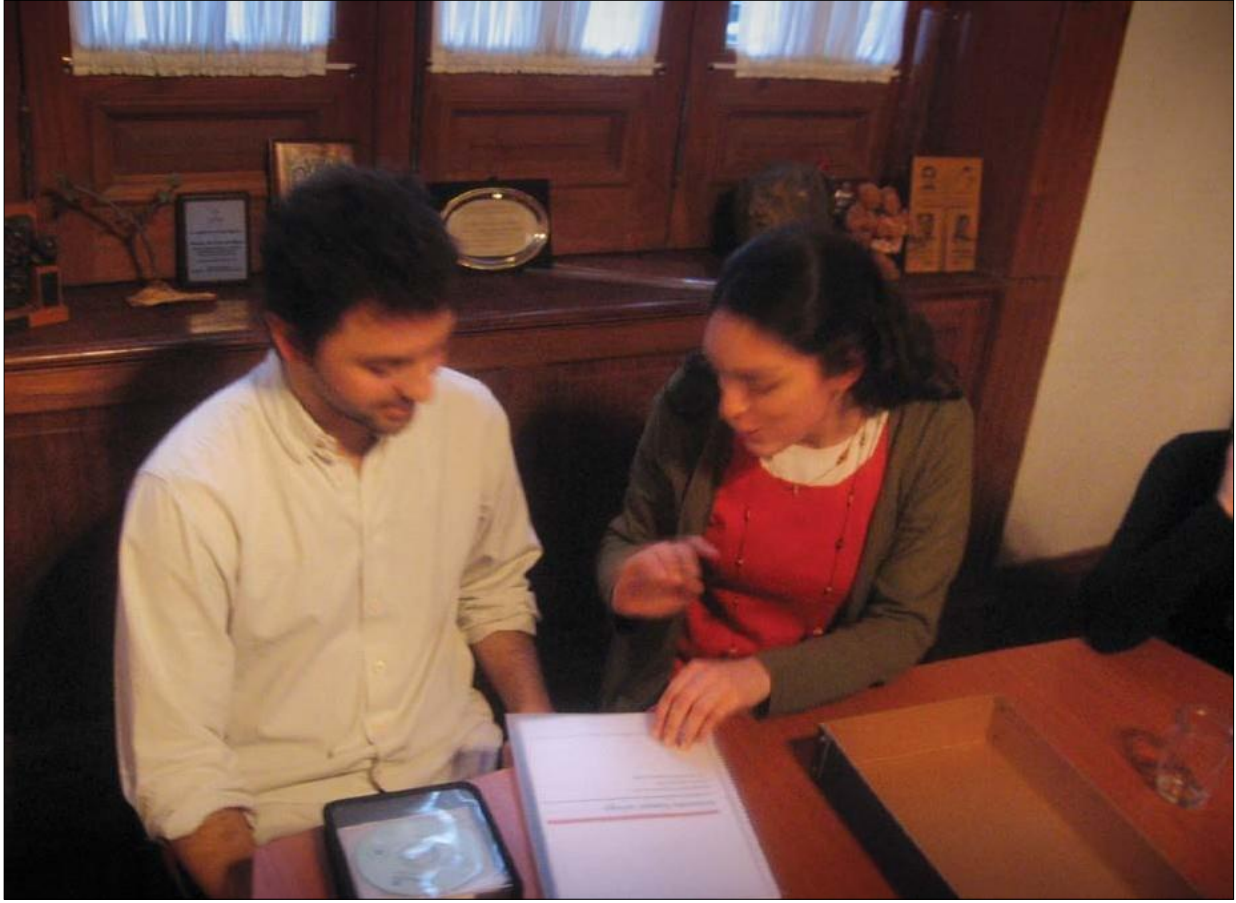
2004

At the Abuelas' house birthdays are sacred. In the celebration, Rosa Roisinblit (see p. 27, photo 2) points at something to Luisa Barabona. Estela Carlotta, the grandson Juan Pablo Moyano and the granddaughter María Lavalle (with her back to the camera) watch the scene.

Photo: Martín Zabala



Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo has six main areas of specialisation: psychology, law, genetics, research, spread of information, and spontaneous appearances. This last area deals with requests for assistance and information from those who doubt their identities. This photo shows María Lavalle and the granddaughter Tatiana Sfiligoy, from the psychology area, at Abuelas' house.



2005

María Josefina Nacif Casado gives the Archivo Biográfico Familiar (Biographical Family File) to Leonardo Fosatti, who spontaneously went to Abuelas with doubts about his identity. The file contains the life story of his disappeared parents. All the grandchildren get this file when they recover their identities.



The Abuelas with a group of children at Santa Cruz Church in the City of Buenos Aires. A group of relatives of disappeared people used to gather in this parish church during the dictatorship. Some Madres and Abuelas were part of that group. On 8 December 1977, in that place, due to Alfredo Astiz's infiltration, the Madres Esther Ballestrino de Careaga and María Ponce de Bianco were abducted together with the French nuns Léonie Duquet and Alice Domon. They were taken by surprise while they were raising funds to publish a request with the names of the detained-disappeared. It would then be known that the two Madres, as well as Azucena Villaflor, abducted two days later, and the nuns were tortured. It was also known that on 18 December they were thrown alive into the sea from a "vuelo de la muerte" (death flight).

Photo: Eduardo Farré



The Abuelas, relatives, and contributors celebrate Otilia Lescano Argañara's birthday. She and Sonia Torres have always been the backbone of Abuelas' affiliate in Córdoba. Otilia passed away in September 2005.



2005

This photo shows a tribute to those Madres who disappeared on the banks of the Río de la Plata. Azucena Villaflor's, Esther Ballestrino de Careaga's and María Ponce de Bianco's remains were identified by the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense or EAAF (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team). Their remains had been buried as N.N. in the cemetery of General Lavalle.

Photo: Pepe Mateo



30 March 2006

30 years after the military coup, different human rights organisations march and hold a ceremony in Campo de Mayo. They place a commemorative plaque in front of the Military Hospital that functioned as a clandestine maternity unit during the dictatorship.

Photo: Paula Sansone



28 June 2011

After the impunity laws were repealed, hundreds of lawsuits over crimes against humanity were resumed all throughout the country. In many of them Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo was the complainant, as in the Courts of Mar del Plata, Rosario, San Juan, Mendoza, Córdoba, and La Plata among other cities. This photo shows the represores of the Fifth Army Corps, headquartered in Bahía Blanca, who were found guilty in the lawsuits over 90 victims, including two pregnant women.

Photo: Rolando Andrade



9 August 2013

From left to right: former Lieutenant Juan Amelong (holding a folder), former Major of the Army Jorge Fariña, former agent Walter Pagano, and former Doctor at the Military Hospital in Paraná Juan Zaccaría. All of them as well as the represor Pascual Guerrieri were convicted of the appropriation of the granddaughter Sabrina Valenzuela Negro and her twin brother.

Photo: Franco Trovato



Manuel Gonçalves (see p. 19), his daughter Martina and his grandmother Matilde Pérez. Many great-grandchildren, offspring of appropriated grandchildren who have not yet recovered their identities, still do not know their origins. Nowadays Martina is one of the great-granddaughters who, thanks to the search done by the Abuelas, has known the truth about her life story.

Photo: Paula Sansone



17 February 2010

Abel Madariaga, secretary of Abuelas, locks in an embrace with his son Francisco after 33 years. Francisco's mother, Silvia Quintela Dallasta, gave birth in captivity in Campo de Mayo.

Photo: María Laura Fabrizio



14 September 2011

President Cristina Fernández hugs Estela Carlotta, who has just received the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, the highest honour bestowed by UNESCO. Irina Bokova, director of the organisation, and Mario Soares, president of the jury, stand from their seats and clap.

Y CUMBRE DE PRESIDENTES DE LOS ESTADOS PARTES DEL MERCOSUR Y ESTADOS ASOCIADOS

ASUNCION, 28 - 29 DE JUNIO DE 2011



[The banner reads: Summit of Heads of State of Mercosur Member States and Associated States. Asuncion, 28-29 June 2011]

29 June 2011

Estela Carlotto expresses her gratitude for the honour of “Distinguished Citizen of Mercosur”. She is accompanied by the presidents of Mercosur Member States.

Photo: Paraguayan Presidency



5 July 2012

The accused of the crimes related to the systematic plan of appropriation of children –the most representative cause of Abuelas– wait for the delivery of the judgment. From left to right: Jorge Rafael Videla, Reynaldo Bignone, Jorge Omar Riveros, Rubén Franco and Antonio Vañek. At the back, Víctor Gallo and Jorge “el Tigre” Acosta.

Photo: Enrique García Medina



5 July 2012

The grandson Francisco Madariaga, his father Abel, and the Abuelas Estela Carlotto, Rosa Roisinblit and “Coqui” Pereyra listen to the harsh sentences against the military officers. At the back, Abuelas’ legal team and behind them the audience that filled the Amia Room of the Federal Courts of Comodoro Py.

Photo: Enrique García Medina



[The sign reads: "Dispel the doubts about your identity now"]

6 June 2014

The football star Lionel Messi, before leaving for the World Cup in Brazil, joins the search for the grandchildren.

Photo: Manuel Barbosa



Only truth can relieve the pain caused by the disappearance and appropriation of people. The grandchildren who recover their identities forge bonds of true love.

Photo: Paula Sansone



The former ESMA is nowadays known as the Espacio para la Promoción y la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (Remembrance and Human Rights centre). Ten years after the transfer of the property (see p. 103), Casa por la Identidad opened its doors there. This is a place that is dedicated to the memory of the Abuelas' struggle and their achievements.

Foto: Alejandro Reynoso



20 October 2012

It has been 35 years since the Abuelas started their struggle. They celebrate their anniversary at the main office of the telecommunications union. From left to right: Buscarita Roa, Elena Opezgo, Aída Kancepolsky, Sonia Torres, Elda Evelina Rossetti, Estela Carlotto, Elsa Oesterheld, Berta Shubaroff, Rosa Roisinblit, Irma Rojas, Raquel Marizcurrena, Delia Giovanola, Martha Vázquez and Elsa Pavón.

Photo: Nicolás Castiglioni



8 August 2014

This is the first public photo of Estela Carlotto with her grandson Guido. The picture went around the world. Nowadays the Abuelas keep on searching for hundreds of men and women who still do not know their identities. The struggle continues.

Photo: Martín Zabala

