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ARGENTINA

MISSING URUGUAYAN CHILDREN TRACED TO CHILE

On 31 July, 1979, news was released through CLAMOR, a human rights group working in Sao Paulo, that the Uruguayan brother and sister, Anatole and Victoria Eva Julien Grisonas, who had been missing for 3 years, had been found living with an adoptive family in the city of Valparaiso, Chile.

The children had been kidnapped with their parents, Uruguayan exiles, Roger Julien and his wife Victoria Grisonas, from their home in San Martin Buenos Aires on 26 September 1976. According to neighbours the family were taken from their home by members of the security forces who had opened fire wounding one of the adults. Since that moment there had been no further information on the whereabouts of the family despite attempts by the family and international organisations to locate them. The UNHCR immediately presented writs of habeas corpus. Hopes of finding the father alive were raised in December 1977 when a lawyers' delegation were informed by the President of the Supreme Military Tribunal of Uruguay that Roger Julien was detained in the Libertad Prison of Montevideo but this was never confirmed and the family has never been permitted to visit this prison.

During September and October 1976 more than 30 Uruguayan exiles were kidnapped in Buenos Aires. A few were later acknowledged by the Uruguayan government to be in prison there, but the vast majority have remained unaccounted for. Among this group is Jorge Zaffaroni Castilla and his wife Maria Emilia Islas, who were abducted from their home with their two year old daughter, Mariana, in Buenos Aires, not far from the Julien's house, on 27 September 1976, a day after the disappearance of Anatole and Victoria. Over the past three years numerous efforts have been made to find the missing children by international bodies who have made representations to the governments of Argentina and Uruguay and have sought a thorough survey of the registers of orphanages in both countries. But it resulted in failure until in February of this year a Chilean, now living in Venezuela, noticed a report about the Julien children in the local press and from the photographs that were published believed that she could recognise them as two children who had been found abandoned in Valparaiso in Chile in 1976.

Preliminary inquiries were carried out by CLAMOR and the UNHCR in Chile which confirmed that these children really were Anatole and Victoria Julien. In July 1979 the grandmother, Maria Angelica Cáceres de Julien, travelled to Chile with Clamor delegates to being moves to formally identify them. On 26 July she met with the adoptive parents, Jesus Iarrabaiti, a dentist, and his wife, a kindergarden teacher, Silvia Yañez. They had only one week left before the formalities of the adoption would have been concluded. Now señora de Julien has entered a lawsuit to prevent this happening for under Chilean law once the adoption becomes final the real family would lose all rights to the children.

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- 2 -

It emerged that Anatole and Victoria had been found wandering hand in hand in the Plaza O'Higgins, Valparaiso, on 23 December 1976. Anatole told the police who picked them up that they had crossed by car from Argentina to Chile with a woman they referred to as Tia Monica (aunt Monica) and one other little girl who was about the same age as his sister. The local magistrate ordered them to be placed in the children's home at Playa Ancha but as conditions there were not considered suitable the children were taken in by social workers until they were adopted by the Larrabeiti's several months later.

A journalist wrote an article for the local Valparaiso paper El Mercurio on the mysterious case of the two children on 29 December 1976 in which he remarked that the children were clearly different from those normally abandoned in that they were well dressed, healthy and well cared for. Anatole did not speak with a Chilean accent and did not recognise figures from children's television programmes in Chile. The reporter speculated that the children must have lived in a country like Argentina. Despite the foreignness of the children it appears that the local magistrate only undertook a routine search for the parents and agencies such as Interpol were not contacted. One of the social workers who had looked after Anatole has reported that the boy was very bright and knew his full address in Buenos Aires. It is hard to explain why the Argentine authorities who were dealing with energetic requests for information on these cases failed to identify these as the missing Julien children.

On 8 August 1979 the grandparents of Mariana Zaffaroni travelled to Chile to conduct initial inquiries into the possibility that she had been the third child in the car with 'Tia Monica'. They checked the registers of children's homes in Valparaiso and Santiago but have been unable to obtain any lead on Mariana's whereabouts. The theory lawyers have put forward is that Mariana Zaffaroni has been illegally adopted in Chile but without passing through the proper formalities.

On 2 August 1979 Dante Paladini, the Uruguayan Ambassador in Santiago gave an interview to La Tercera about the tracing of the Julien children: "I cannot discuss these particular cases because I do not know much about them. Anyway I believe, that for unclear motives, there has been some exaggeration. I have asked for information and I do not know if it will be sent because our government has no reason to possess such information.

Although the Julien children will remain in Chile, Maria Angelica Cáceres de Julien, their grandmother, will have full access to them and the rights of the real family to the children have been permanently guaranteed.

The reappearance of Anatole and Victoria Julien holds out hope for many other families in Argentina and Uruguay that now other missing children will also be traced, particularly Mariana Zaffaroni.