

Chronology

November 1971: Juan María Bordaberry is democratically elected President of Uruguay. The opposition from both the right and the left claims the election was fraudulent.

1972: Confrontations between guerrilla group MLN-Tupamaros and security forces/death squads intensify. Guerrillas, students and leaders of labor and social movements are jailed. The MLN also assassinates police and government agents.

March 1, 1972: Juan María Bordaberry takes office.

April 14, 1972: The Parliament approves a state of internal war.

April – November 1972: The “Central Nacional de Trabajadores” (CNT) calls for work stoppages in protest for the deaths of political and social leaders.

May 1972: The U.S. government approves covert material and intelligence assistance for the counter-insurgent campaign in Uruguay.

July 10, 1972: State Security Law (No. 14.068) is approved. This legislation transfers part of the judicial function from the ordinary courts to military courts, thereby extending their power.

August 1972: Security forces defeat guerrilla group MLN-Tupamaros.

1973: Numerous strikes and calls for work stoppages by CNT and the amplified Front (the losing leftist party in the 1971 elections) intensify.

February 9, 1973: In a demonstration of force, the Armed Forces reject the recent replacement for Minister of the Defense put in by Bordaberry and take over the airwaves by transmitting the first of a series of communications made directly to the population. Bordaberry loses substantial support from the population in general.

February 13, 1973: A secret agreement between Bordaberry and the Armed Forces through which the military is integrated into the government. This agreement creates the National Security Council (COSENA).

June 26, 1973: The last Senate meeting comes in the middle of a confrontation between the Congress and the executive branch allied with the military. In the final months, Congress had commenced an investigation into massive torture allegations committed by the security forces. Bordaberry and the Armed Forces accuse members of Congress of being part of the MLN guerrilla group.

June 27, 1973: Bordaberry's government dissolves Congress and suspends the Constitution. Political activity is also prohibited, and censorship is imposed to silence critics. The base of power is moved from the President to the Armed Forces.

July 25, 1973: The police receive orders calling for increased coordination between the military and the police, primarily in the area of intelligence gathering and in operations of a "special" nature. In the realm of counterinsurgency, the term "special" refers to "death squads."

April 1974 – May 1976: A wave of opposition leader arrests gives Uruguay the notorious reputation of being the country with the largest population in jail per capita in Latin America. Tens of thousands are detained and tortured. Of the victims, nine of the disappeared and two of those killed at the hands of security forces will provide the backbone of the case against Bordaberry.

Mid-Late 1975: The police and military forces of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile keep open lines of communication and carry out assassinations for one another. The coordination of the security forces becomes formalized in Santiago de Chile with the creation of the secret pact, "Operation Condor."

May 18, 1976: Senator Zelmar Michelini and legislator Héctor Gutiérrez are assassinated in Buenos Aires in a joint operation between Uruguay and Argentina as part of Operation Condor.

June 12, 1976: The military dismisses Bordaberry who intends to abolish the two political parties and prolong the state of emergency.

February 28, 1985: The military hands over power to the elected government.

December 1986: The "Ley de Caducidad" or "Amnesty Law" is approved. It covers all members of the armed forces accused of human rights violations during 1973-1985. The law is confirmed by a referendum in November 1989.