

OLGA WEISFEILER

April 19, 2004

The Honorable Ricardo Lagos Escobar
President of the Republic of Chile
Palacio de La Moneda
Santiago, Chile

Via fax: 56- 2- 690 4958

Dear Mr. President,

I write in regard of my brother Professor Boris Weisfeiler who disappeared in Chile in 1985 during the rule of General Augusto Pinochet. On March 28, 2001, I sent you a letter asking what measures your government would take against the settlement known as Colonia Dignidad, where one CNI informant told U.S. officials Boris was taken after being arrested by a military patrol. In December 2002, I sent you another letter asking for your attention to the issue of “a State inside the State,” which the Colonia, now operated as Villa Baviera, has clearly become. I was hoping to meet you and discuss this issue here in Boston, Massachusetts, when you came with First Lady Luisa Durán for her medical treatment in October 2003.

To date, I have no reply to any of my requests. The only response I received from your office in December 2002 was a short letter signed by Domingo Namuncura Serrano, Asesor de Gestion del Gabinete Presidencial. The letter stated that Minister of Interior Mr. José Miguel Insulza would reply promptly. A year and a half has passed since then, and I have received no response.

A month ago I returned from my third trip to Chile. U.S. Ambassador to Chile William R. Brownfield organized a news conference at the U.S. Embassy to support my advertising campaign in search for new information on my brother’s disappearance. Many news and TV reports were published and aired in Chile and abroad during and after my trip. You may see some of those reports posted on www.weisfeiler.com/boris.

I wrote you before, in 2002, after visiting the actual place of my brother’s disappearance in the south of Chile. After that trip, and talking with local witnesses, I became convinced more than ever that the key to my brother's fate is hidden behind the gates of Colonia Dignidad. Recently new and very disturbing information became available. According to a news feature published by La Nacion Domingo on April 11, 2004 (“Memories from hell”), a witness who was kidnapped by Colonia Dignidad 36 years ago and left the settlement in 2002, Efrain Vedder, testified that Colonia leader, Paul Schäfer, was visibly and personally concerned about publicity

on my brother's case and to what degree Colonia was implicated in his disappearance, ordering a meticulous collection of all public information on the issue. Mr. Vedder also testified that rumors of Boris's fate circulated among colony members: that Boris had been prisoner there and killed there. This new testimony fully supports the version provided by a former member of the Chilean military patrol who arrested my brother, and reported on this in 1987, 1990, and 1997.

I am very concerned and saddened to see no reaction from you, Mr. President, or any other Government officials on new evidence of criminal activity inside the settlement. As far as I know, 27 child sexual abuse cases against Schäfer are pending in the local courts. Numerous cases of crimes committed by colony's officials including fraud, court evasion, and child abuse cover up, abduction of children, retaining residents against their will, segregating families, and inflicting harsh physical punishments on residents have piled up in the courts. However, all of those cases lay dormant in the courts, while those indicted flee the country, as happened most recently with one of the Colonia directors, Wolfgang Müller Altevogt, indicted as accomplice to kidnapping. The Boris Weisfeiler disappearance case includes charges against leaders of Colonia Dignidad who are responsible for his fate.

My brother was not the only one who disappeared behind the barbed fence of Colonia Dignidad. "It is proven there were various links between the DINA and Colonia Dignidad," stated the conclusions drawn up by the National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation. Reports refer to over 100 prisoners in Colonia Dignidad, most of them now disappeared. New evidence also supports those statements. Efrain Vedder gave the names of two people -Willi Malessa and Erwin Fege – who were in charge of getting rid of the cars of the disappeared that were in Colonia, and an order by Schäfer to transfer the remains of the disappeared to another burial place. He was also witness to how Colonia directors destroyed documentation in 1998. Nevertheless, during the past fourteen years, very little has been done by the government or by the courts to investigate those claims.

Besides the issue of prisoners who disappeared during the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, there are crimes being committed every day now, which are destroying the lives of unprotected Chilean and German citizens held there. It includes forced labor with no pay; no schooling for children, as is mandatory according to the Chilean law; forced drugging of colony members for "disciplinary reasons", harsh physical punishments, among others. These are crimes that have been committed for decades, and continue now, and of which the Chilean government and courts are fully aware, and nothing is being done to stop them.

Those who can likely provide first hand information about the disappeared are impeded from telling the truth under threat and duress. More than 200 Colonia members are potential witnesses, but they cannot say the truth, as they have no way of leaving the Colonia to continue normal lives elsewhere, given that neither the Chilean nor German government authorities and institutions have ever provided them with the social, economic and psychological support and the vital protection they need in order to abandon Colonia safely and integrate to Chilean society without fear of reprisals.

With this letter I am raising the issue of Colonia Dignidad again in hope of your, Mr. President, personal attention to the daily criminal activities of the leaders of the German settlement, even in the absence of its leader, Paul Schäfer. For more than forty years one Chilean

government after another has allowed that community to operate and to continue to commit crimes.

For the sake not only of discovering the truth about my brother and the other disappeared, but also for the generations of Colonia residents currently living like slaves in this sect, I call on you urgently to shut down settlement once and for all, and open its gates for a broad investigation, providing legal, financial, social and moral assistance for its current victims. I also hope that the Government of Chile will play an active role in prosecuting the leaders of Colonia Dignidad.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Olga Weisfeiler

Cc: Alejandro Salinas, Director of the Human Rights Office of the Foreign Ministry:
Jose A. Viera-Gallo Quesney, Senator VIII Region
Jaime Naranjo Ortiz, Senator VII Region
Hernan Larrain Fernandez, Senator VII Region
Jeffrey Galvin, Second Secretary, the US Embassy
Joachim Schmillen, Ambassador, the German Embassy
Sebastian Brett, researcher, Human Rights Watch Americas
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