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Ex-Dictator Stroessner Dies

by LADB Staff

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Former Paraguayan dictator Gen. Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989) died of complications related to pneumonia on Aug. 16 at the age of 93. Paraguay refused him official honors. He was buried outside the nation he ruled for three decades, with his family instead burying him in Brasilia, Brazil, where he had lived in exile for the last 17 years since his 1989 overthrow.

Final escape from prosecution

A staunch US ally, Stroessner made Paraguay a refuge for some Nazi war criminals among the 200,000 Germans he sheltered after World War II, including Dr. Josef Mengele, the infamous "Angel of Death" at Auschwitz. The general described almost all his opponents as Marxist subversives bent on returning the country to political chaos. His fatal stroke while suffering from pneumonia on Aug. 16 represented his final escape from prosecution. Brazil had not fulfilled repeated extradition requests from its neighbor government. Human rights groups attributed at least 900 cases of murder and forced disappearance and several thousand cases of torture to Stroessner.

The failure of the Paraguayan government to obtain extradition meant the ex-general never faced trial for human rights crimes committed under Operation Condor, the plan launched jointly by the military governments that ruled Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay in the 1970s and 1980s (see NotiSur, 2001-06-01, 2005-07-01). The operation sought to track down, capture, and eliminate left-wing opponents.

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