

THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL IN ASUNCION, PARAGUAY: ADDENDUM

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WHEN IN ASUNCIÓN RECENTLY, I APPROACHED THE ARCHIVO NACIONAL WITH JOHN Hoyt Williams' excellent article, "The Archivo Nacional in Asunción, Paraguay" (LARR 6:1, Spring 1971) in hand. During the days spent there I noted several major changes which have occurred since 1968, as well as some evidence of increased interest in the archive.

Perhaps symbolic of new activity is the fact that the National Museum, housed in the same building as the National Archive, is no longer closed. Within the archive, things are now brighter, literally. All Asunción has enjoyed increased supplies of electricity following the inauguration of the dam on the Río Acaray in December, 1968. The present lighting within the Archivo Nacional in Asunción is sufficient for reading and is superior to that of the main reading room of the Arquivo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, for example, or to that of the Bibliotecta Nacional in Rio at night. Neither is the Archivo Nacional of Paraguay any noisier than the average Brazilian archive, or less frequented than many in Brazil. Some mornings the Paraguayan National Archive is full of young girl students from the Colegio Nacional, who occupy all but one or two of the chairs.

The major advance facilitating research in the Paraguayan National Archive is the cataloging of the Sección Nueva Encuadernación. Once almost impossible to use, lacking any sort of guide, this large section is now the best catalogued in the archive. Such progress results from the long-range project of microfilming the entire archive, financed by the Banco Central del Paraguay. Not only has the Sección Nueva Encuadernación been microfilmed in its entirety, but so has the Sección Historia, and work has begun on the Sección Propiedades y Testamentos.

Another welcome advance derived from this microfilming is the re-cataloging of the final ninety volumes of the Sección Historia, for the typed "Catálogo general, sección historia, 1536-1871" of the archive was virtually useless as far as these volumes were concerned.

The current 13 red volumes of the *Catálogo sistemático de documentos del Archivo Nacional de Asunción* cover the Sección Historia (Vol. I) and the Sección Nueva Encuadernación through volume 2,888, of the 3,417 volumes of this section (Vols. II-XIII). Each volume of documents is described individually, with summaries ranging up to a typed page and at times including lists of individual documents. While the first part of Volume I, encompassing the first 358 volumes of the Sección Historia, is merely a repetition of the UNESCO catalog of the material microfilmed by the mobile team from UNESCO which was in Asunción in 1956 and

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1957,* the final section of Volume I and Volumes II to XIII contain the new cataloging. Hopefully, as the microfilming of the archive continues, other difficult to use sections, such as the Sección Propiedades y Testamentos, with its two incomplete catalogs, or the properly preserved and completely uncataloged Sección Juridical y Civil will be similarly cataloged.

At present a copy of this new *Catálogo sistemático*, of which five are said to exist, is found in the office of the director of the Archivo Nacional, Dr. Hipólito Sánchez Quell. It is best to attempt to see it in the mornings, when the director is in his office. The actual negative is stored in the National Bank, although destined to be guarded in the archive at some future time when special facilities have been constructed and a microfilm reader acquired, and after all the microfilming has been completed.

In a perhaps less welcome move, the valuable Colección Solano López of books, pamphlets, and periodicals has been transferred from the National Archive to the National Library, where it sits in a separate, small, dark room near the entrance. To use this collection it is best to secure prior permission from the director of the National Archive and to request him to telephone ahead, as the collection is not "open to the public," and to work on sunny days, as the library has no electricity. In contrast, the collections of the Centro Paraguayo de Estudios Sociológicos, headed by Dr. Domingo M. Rivarola, which is amassing materials on the past, including such newspapers as *El Paraguay Independiente*, are far more carefully preserved. A wealth of documentation on Paraguayan history awaits the diligent researcher in the National Archive and elsewhere.

* Instituto Pan Americano de Geografía y Historia. Comisión de Historia. *Guía de los documentos microfotografiados por la unidad móvil de microfilm de la Unesco*. México, 1963, pp. 13-84.