

tourists to the nation's capital have a new monument to visit, one worthier than most. At Sheridan Circle, on the Embassy Row section of Massachusetts Avenue, a beautifully crafted granite and bronze memorial to Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt now graces the scene.

Five years ago this month both were slain at the circle while driving

Colman McCarthy

to work at the Institute for Policy Studies. A bomb had been planted in Letelier's car on orders, it was to be charged later, from the secret police of Chile. Letelier had been a senior diplomat in the democratically elected Allende government that was violently overthrown in 1973 with the help of the CIA. Mrs. Moffitt, whose husband was in the back seat and survived the blast, was 25, a former teacher and from a Jewish family in New Jersey.

A few days before the fifth anniversary of her husband's assassination, Isabel Letelier received a visitor in the living room of her Washington home. She talked about her four sons, her goals as the director of the Committee for Human Rights in Chile and the violence — open and hidden — that the Pinochet regime continues to inflict on her homeland.

A conversation with Mrs. Letelier offers the chance, initially, to enjoy an oral memoir of Chile's culture. Motioning to a brightly colored hand-woven mural of a Chilean countryside, she explains that it was made by peasant women at a rural center in Isla Negra. The center was once supported by Pablo Neruda, Chile's Nobel laureate poet whose home was ransacked after his death in late September 1973 when the military dictators took power.

Without the context of Chile's rich culture, it is impossible to understand

A Crime to Remember

Mrs. Letelier's passionate love of her country. She tells of a new wave of "cultural repression" ordered by the junta through "a law which eliminates advanced study of the humanities and social studies in the public universities."

Damage done to a people's culture is less easy to detect than the violence inflicted on citizens themselves. But despite the Pinochet regime's effort to gussy its image and the Reagan administration's eagerness for diplomatic quietness about authoritarian excesses, reports persist about this damage.

In February, a resolution passed by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights told of the "continuation of the state of emergency [in Chile], the increase in the number of detentions



The memorial; by Lucian Perkins

... banishments and cases of torture, ill-treatment and unexplained deaths."

A month after Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick visited Chile in August

for some public chumming with President Pinochet, Amnesty International declared that "torture still appears to be a systematic part of official policy. There are consistent reports of electric shock being applied for hours to the most sensitive parts of the prisoners' bodies. . . . In other cases, squirting water at high pressure into body orifices, burning with cigarettes, rape and other sexual abuse are used."

Not one to talk about electric shockers or high pressure hoses even when the dictators are thousands of miles away, Kirkpatrick apparently didn't upset Pinochet by getting finicky about the details of torture when he was directly in front of her. She said her conversation with him had been "most pleasant."

In her living room, Mrs. Letelier spoke ironically of how pleasant Pinochet surely found the Kirkpatrick visit and her desire to "normalize" relations between the Reagan administration and the junta: "When she

left, a very heavy repression followed. For example, they expelled the president of the commission for human rights, Mr. Jaime Castillo Velasco." Three other opposition politicians were also ordered to leave.

The grief that Mrs. Letelier still carries about the assassination of her husband is something she bears privately. What is public, though, and what cries out to be shared by everyone, is her anger over the Reagan administration's warm regard for the Chilean regime.

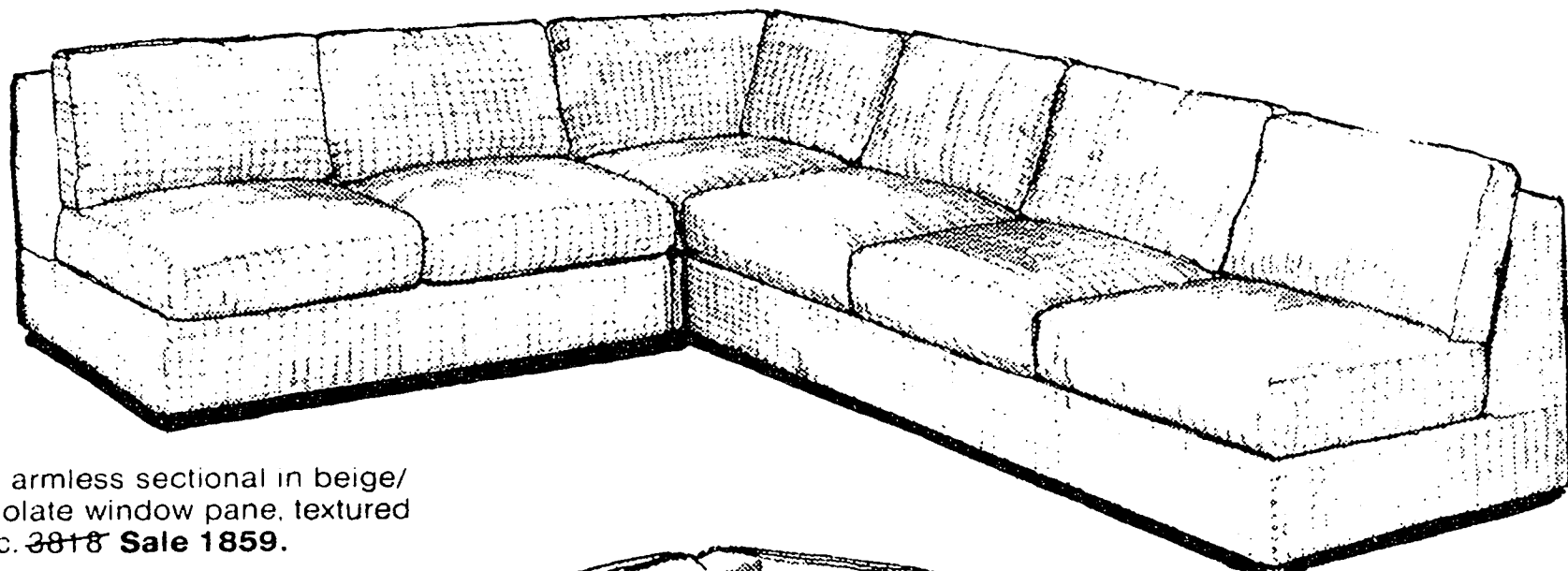
Two people were slain — one an American citizen — on a street in Washington, and the Kirkpatrick answer is that "outstanding questions" about this unsolved crime should not spoil a north-south friendship.

If that's so, how many killings in Washington, and how much more torture in Chile, will it take before the United States expresses its disgust and says enough?

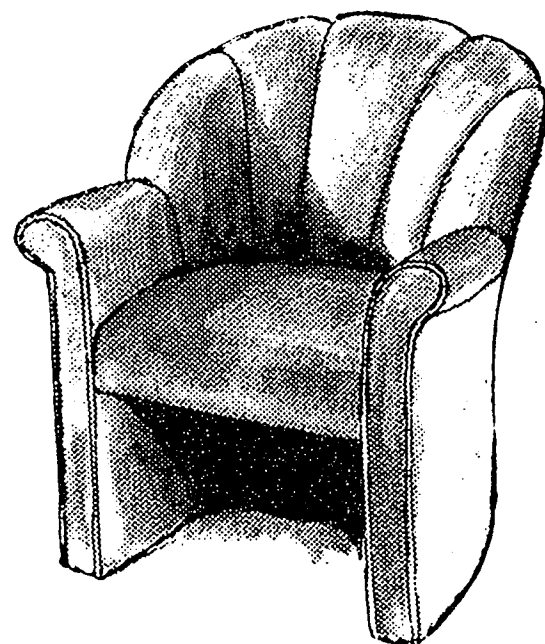
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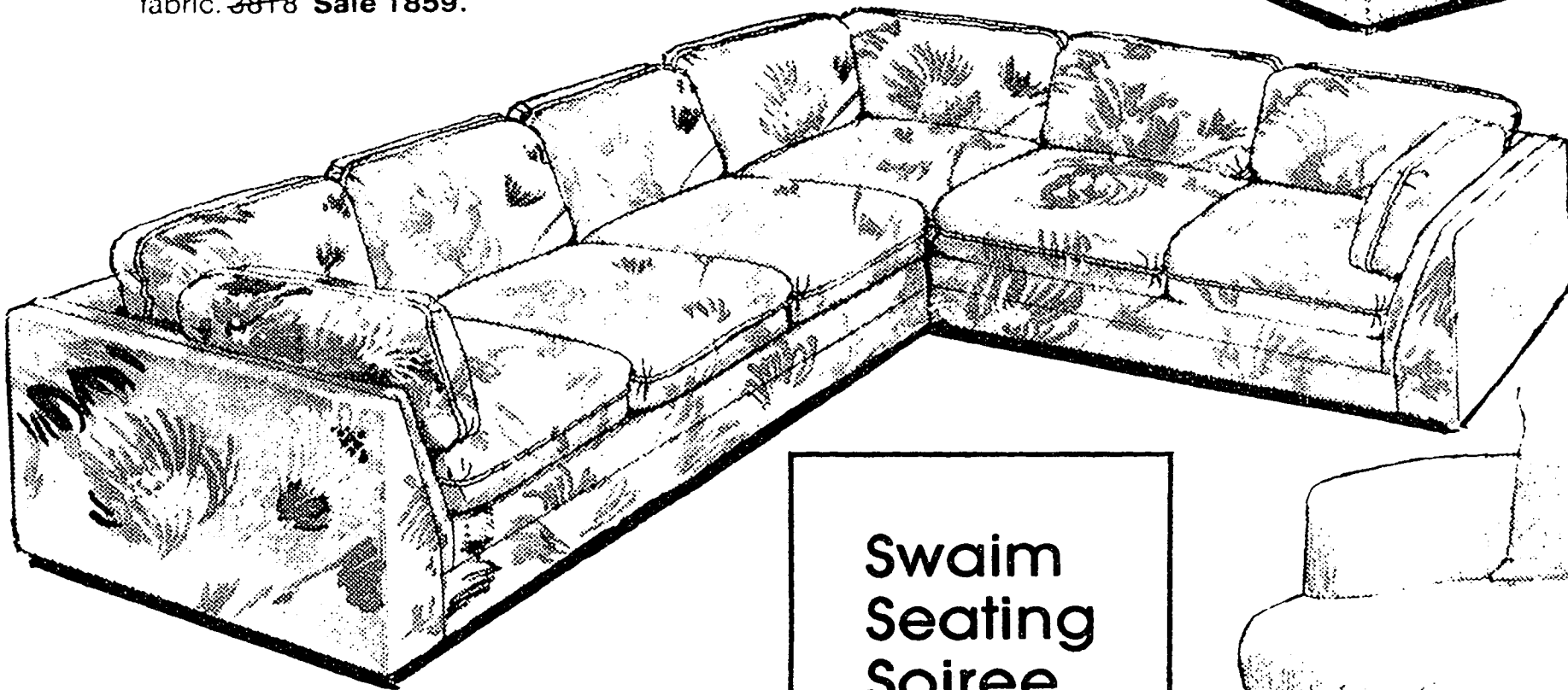
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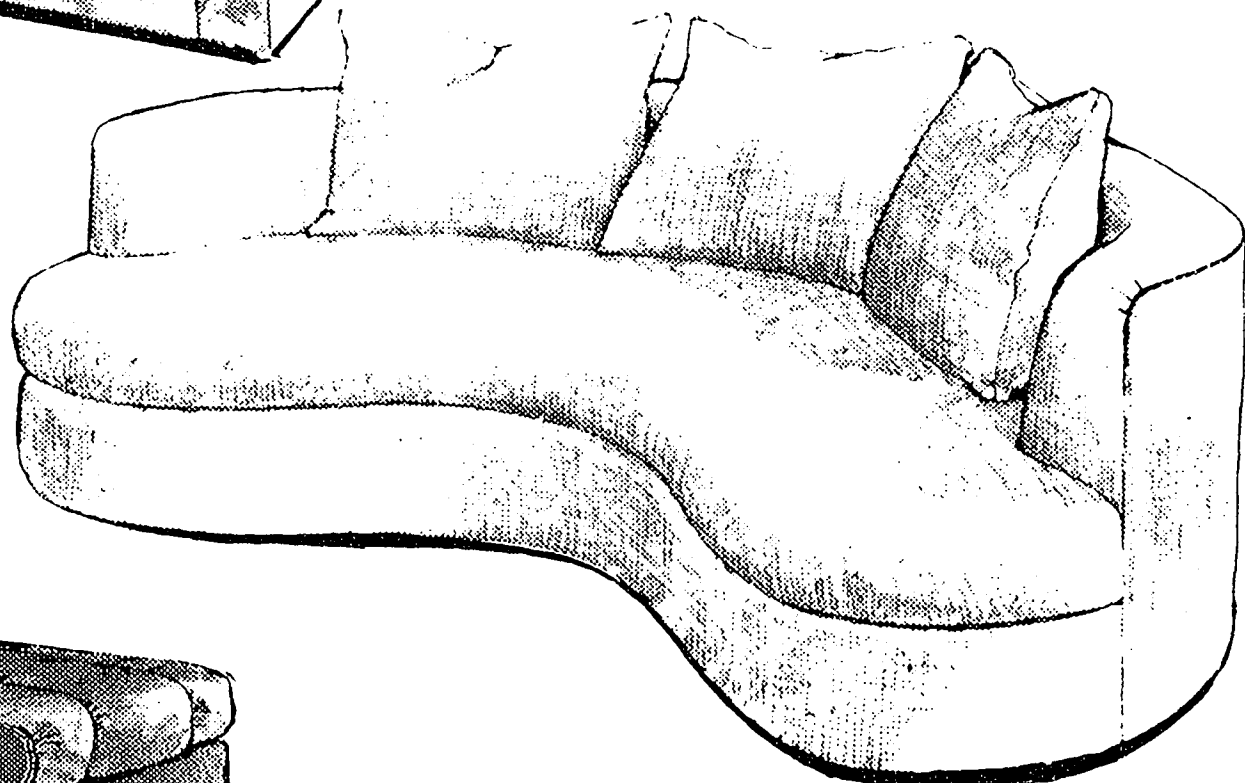


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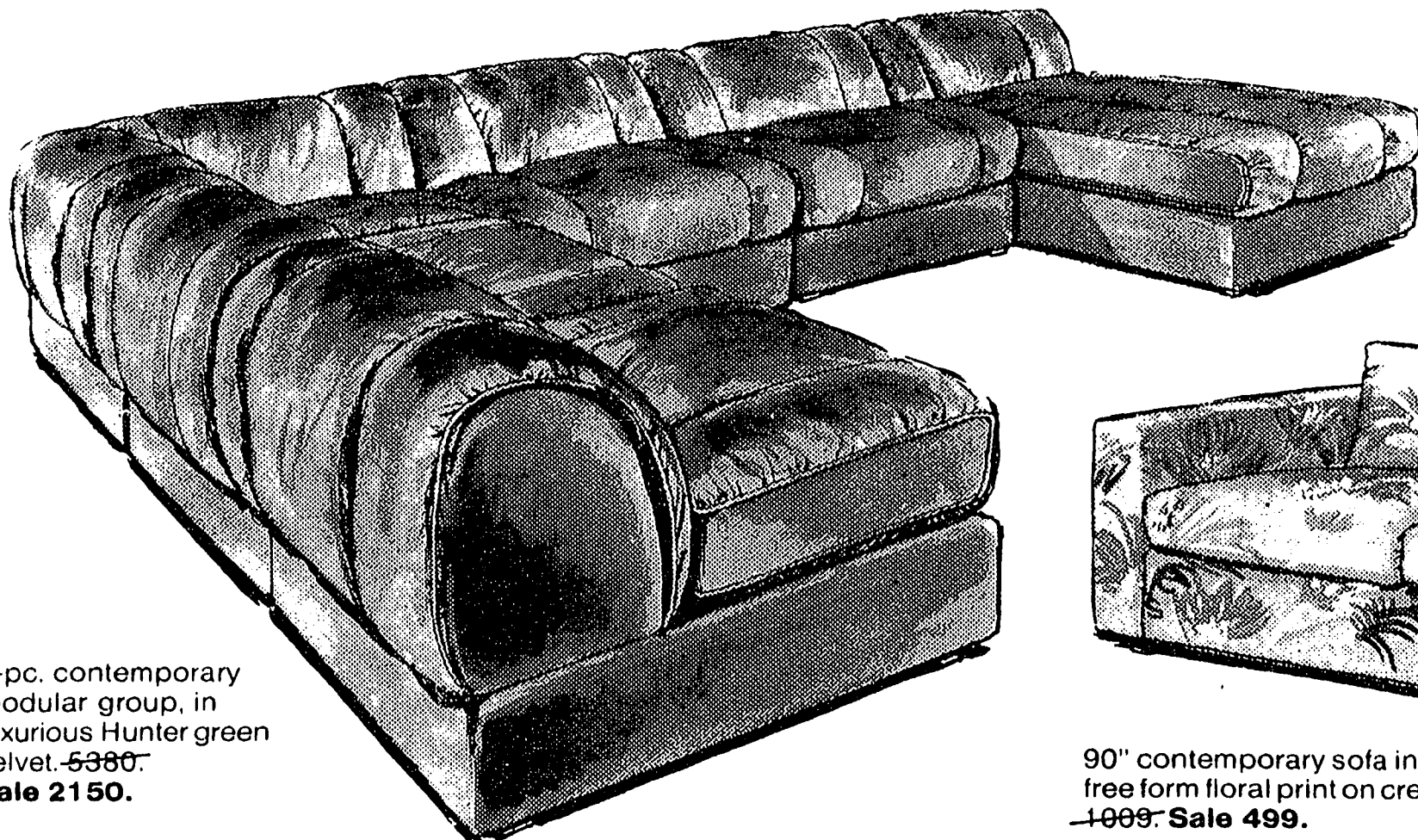


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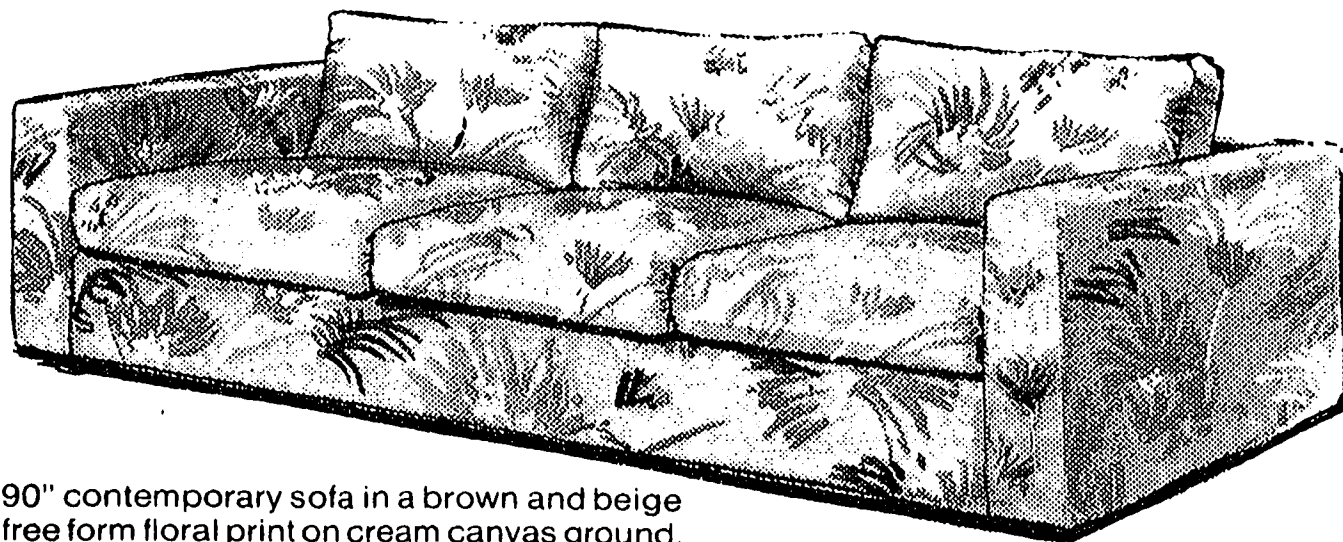
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