

occasional mentioning of a ‘*Patriarchat*’ (pp. 436, 487). Such a homogenisation is misleading, evoking Henrietta Moore’s suggestion that ‘The difficult thing to explain is not why gender relations are so violent, but why violence is so gendered, so sexualized’ (‘The Problem of Explaining Violence in the Social Sciences’, in Penelope Harvey and Peter Gow (eds.), *Sex and Violence. Issues in Representation and Experience* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 138–55).

It is also problematic to render female victims of state terror as ‘rebellious women’ or ‘politically engaged women’ (pp. 24, 9), reiterating unintentionally the military discourse. Of course, many of the *desaparecidas* were ‘rebellious’ and leftist activists, but what about those abducted at random – discernible in Abrego’s own affirmation of ‘an increasingly arbitrary selection of victims’ (p. 293) – and the irrational side of state terror which does not need any personal attribute? The author is right in pointing out that the relatives of *desaparecidos/as* engaged in their depoliticisation, in a reaction to international Human Rights NGOs and the dehumanising image of *subversivos* (pp. 270–1, 310). Yet, does that conversely mean that all female victims were rebellious, politically active etc., particularly if state terror also requires contingency to spread as far and deep as possible?

Finally, it is strange that only 20 per cent of the text is dedicated to female writings about state terror which, in addition to societal discourses, is the supposed subject of the book. Despite an extensive bibliography of more than 50 pages, relevant local and foreign anthropological work on Argentina, memory, representation and violence is almost entirely lacking, while unnecessary references to a great many intellectual icons – from Adorno, Agamben, Arendt (just to name the twentieth-century ones beginning with ‘A’) to Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza etc. – abound in frequent digressions.

But certain flaws aside, this book is a valuable contribution to Latin American studies. Abrego’s informative and critical work is of great interest and very useful for scholars working on Argentine society, the long-term effects of state terror and the intricacies of testimonial writing.

Freie Universität Berlin

CRISTIAN ALVARADO LEYTON

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Lucas Bilbao and Ariel Ledesma, *Profeta del genocidio: El Vicariato castrense y los diarios del obispo Bonamín en la última dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2016), pp. 495, pb

The history of military clergy and more broadly the role of the Catholic Church during the Argentine dictatorship (1976–83) has seen a remarkable revival, thanks both to recent political events and the availability of previously inaccessible sources. In 2007 Christian von Wernich, the former chaplain to the police force of Buenos Aires province, was convicted of crimes against humanity. In 2013 Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became Pope Francis. His election to the papacy renewed a debate about his role in the kidnapping and tortures of the Jesuits Orlando Yorio and Franz Jalics. Serendipity and political changes also made available new archival material from the archdiocese of Buenos Aires, state security archives and the personal diary of the military Pro-Vicar Monsignor Victorio Bonamín here reviewed. This critical edition of his diaries from 1975 and 1976, saved from destruction on his explicit order, is ‘prefaced’ by a compelling book-length study of the Military Vicariate.

The first part of the book is a monograph by the authors on the bishop and the Military Vicariate. This is introduced by a preface written by Horacio Verbitsky

(who provides a sketch of military–church relations since 1950) and a text by José Pablo Martín (who provides an ideologically distant, but respectful and humane portrait of Bonamín). The first two chapters describe Bonamín’s firm adherence to integral Catholicism and his lifelong and intimate relationship with the armed forces. Chapters 3 and 4 turn to the history of the Military Vicariate in Argentina (an institution sitting at the point where state and Church coalesce) from its creation in 1957 after an agreement between the Vatican and generals who overthrew Perón to its involvement in the ‘Dirty War’. In agreement with Stephan Ruderer (‘Between Religion and Politics: The Military Clergy during the Late Twentieth-Century Dictatorships in Argentina and Chile’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 47: 3 (2015), pp. 463–89), Bilbao and Lede use the Military Vicariate’s territorial density (a higher number of priests, chapels and oratories per parishioner than its diocesan counterparts) as a proxy for its importance and growth after 1975. The chapter also deals with the Vicariate’s early involvement in the ‘Operativo Independencia’ (the ‘anti-terrorist’ military operation that began under Isabel Perón in February 1975) with a mirroring ‘Operativo Oración’ (Operation Pray) meant to provide ‘spiritual logistical support’ (p. 127). Bonamín proudly notes ‘I made Isabelita go to Tucumán’ with a sermon in which he called upon the congregation to be more concerned with Tucumán than with Vietnam and Cambodia (‘it is necessary to feel Tucumán closer than Vietnam and Cambodia’ – ‘hay que sentir a Tucumán más cerca que Vietnam y Camboya’ (p. 289)). Bilbao and Lede also analyse how the pro-Vicar closely followed the involvement of priests in clandestine centres during this period and his reflections on how to justify torture and deal with ‘problems of consciousness’ of soldiers. The authors highlight that giving ‘supernatural criteria to the actions of the military’ (p. 105) and assisting ‘the souls of the repressors’ (p. 202) is early taken on as a task by the Vicariate.

Chapter 5 turns to the relationship of the Vicariate with the rest of the Church in order to demolish the idea that the Vicariate was opposed to the Catholic Church as a whole or that it acted against its will. Besides specific political conflicts with a few diocesan bishops stemming from the overlap of jurisdiction, ‘*the vicariate exercised a relative and bestowed autonomy* which is explained by the organic help it received from all the bishops and by the development of the relative power between them’ (p. 163; original emphasis). Chapter 6 presents a reading of the degree to which the Catholic Church was necessary for carrying out repression. Bonamín’s sinister public statements are matched to his private notes: e.g. ‘If, according to Saint Thomas, the death penalty is legitimate ... torture is not as severe as death ...’ (p. 359).

The final two chapters present interesting insight into the pro-Vicar’s daily routine, including the important dimensions of his clientelist work (influence peddling, access to the state) and his role in supervising, controlling and spying on the chaplains within his jurisdiction and the priests beyond it (which he achieved using his access to state intelligence). The final chapter discusses the Vicariate as an authoritarian legacy after the democratic transition and the impasse in its existence during Kirchnerism after ‘unfortunate’ statements by the Vicar in 2005 (an impasse overcome recently by President Mauricio Macri).

The second part of the book contains an annotated transcription of Bonamín’s diaries of 1975 and 1976. Extensive footnotes provide necessary historical context (though a bit dry at times, they rightly contrast Bonamín’s naming of ‘X, a good Catholic’ with a list of ‘X’s’ crimes against humanity). This meticulous work is complemented online with a list of the more than 400 military chaplains and the

biographies of the four bishops and more than 30 priests indicted for their role in human rights violations.

The diaries illuminate issues that are particularly interesting for scholars who work on the Right in Argentina and that could be explored further in the future: the banality of someone in the business of contributing to the systematic plan of torture and disappearances (Bonamín's worries about food, travels, his own weight and blood pressure), his antisemitism (e.g. p. 400), his dislike for beards (p. 370) or for electric guitars used to play music during church services (p. 346).

The book is a valuable contribution that follows in the tradition of Emilio Mignone's *Iglesia y dictadura* (Ediciones del Pensamiento Nacional, 1986) and Horacio Verbitsky's *La mano izquierda de Dios* (Sudamericana 2010) that posits an organic relationship between integral Catholicism and the Argentine Church, and its peculiar intertwining with the National Security Doctrine and French colonialism which were at the root of the 'Dirty War', thus successfully establishing a connection between integralism and genocide. It also joins a healthy scholarly renewal of the field (including Gustavo Morello's *The Catholic Church and Argentina's Dirty War* (Oxford University Press, 2015) and María Soledad Cattoggio's *Los desaparecidos de la iglesia* (Siglo XXI, 2016)) that revisits the relationship between Catholicism and the armed forces in Argentina. It makes a sound argument against the narrative of 'many churches' and of the subordination of the Church to the state (*pace* Morello), although it could have gained from considering a horizontal relation between the two.

By insisting on the *necessary* role of Catholicism in genocide (p. 161) Bilbao and Ledé seem to assume a hierarchy that has the Church at the top. However, no matter how essential the Church's 'blessing' was for sections of the armed forces (e.g. naval officer Adolfo Scilingo's testimony that detailed the importance of the reassurance that the death flights provided a 'Christian, non-violent death' (in Horacio Verbitsky, *El vuelo* (Planeta, 1995), p. 13) or in shaping specific practices (such as the 'death flights' or handing over 'disappeared' babies as spoils of war to 'healthy, patriotic and Catholic families'), this does not suffice as an argument for the necessity of the church's involvement and cannot account for the tribulations of Bonamín nor for his overwhelming *defeat* in his battle to build a Catholic nation. The diaries show how his attempts to give repression the sense of a fight to make Argentina a Catholic nation are frequently faced with despair and his own weakness. Bonamín complains that 'guerrilla prisoners were sent a confessor who was an intelligence officer disguised as a priest. I find this hard to believe' (p. 316). He also realises that the sexual morality of his 'crusaders' is low: 'During the night, they fight, at night, [they go] to the brothels ... There is a liberal mentality in their social performance. It is awful: what kind of 'mysticism' do we want to inspire?' ['Durante el día se combate; por la noche, a los prostíbulos ... Mentalidad liberal en la interpretación social. Es penoso: ¿qué 'mística' queremos infundir?'] (p. 401). Despite his public speeches defending repression as a Thomistic 'just war', as early as February 1976 he refers to it as a 'dirty war' (p. 371). Thus, the Catholic Church willingly provided one form of legitimisation of repression in an attempt to influence the dictatorship's politics, win social influence and deal with 'their own ranks' (see Cattoggio, *Los desaparecidos de la iglesia* and also Bonamín's use of secret intelligence to spy on members of the movement 'Priests for the Third World', pp. 192, 263, 264, 285, 288, 302, 305). In fighting communism, Bonamín

and his ilk willingly became part of a ‘dirty war’ that ultimately helped strengthen their second arch-enemy, liberalism.

In sum, the book is a remarkably well-accomplished reading and presentation of the source – used in at least six trials – and constitutes a key contribution to studies of the Argentine Church.

Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, CONICET

JUAN GRIGERA

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Cara Levey, *Fragile Memory, Shifting Impunity: Commemoration and Contestation in Post-Dictatorship Argentina and Uruguay* (Oxford and Bern, Peter Lang, 2016), pp. xi + 295, €52.60; £42.00; \$68.95 pb and E-book

What do a 2009 advertisement for Sprite, the former Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ex-ESMA) in Buenos Aires, the Punta Carretas shopping centre in Montevideo and public denunciations of human rights abusers have in common? The answer, according to Cara Levey’s new book *Fragile Memory, Shifting Impunity*, is that each is related to the continual contestation of commemorative projects in post-dictatorship Argentina and Uruguay. Through side-by-side analyses of transitional justice, commemoration and memory in each country, with a particular focus on the placial (and, to some extent, spatial) construction of commemorative sites, Levey demonstrates the vulnerability of commemorative projects to pressure from political leaders, members of the armed forces and civil society organisations for the victims of violence.

Whereas previous literature, as this book highlights, has drawn attention to the boom of memory projects developed across Latin America in recent years, and has identified commemoration as the process by which ‘space becomes a place’ (Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland, *Marcas, memoriales, y marcas territoriales* (Siglo XXI, 2003), p. 3), Levey takes her analysis a step further to demonstrate that commemorative places are not simply made, but are continually reconstituted, contested and imbued with new meaning by a diverse array of societal and state actors. Throughout the book, the focus on commemorative sites remains consistent, and goes beyond an aesthetic or architectural appreciation of such spaces to also incorporate the political and social significance.

Chapter 1 outlines the scope and theoretical approach of the book, and highlights the importance of commemorative sites for studying memory by drawing on the work of Elizabeth Jelin, Tim Cresswell, and Jens Aldermann (among others). In Chapter 2 Levey provides an in-depth account of the transition from dictatorship to democracy, and from impunity to accountability, in Argentina and Uruguay. For readers not familiar with the legal process of transitional justice or specific details of landmark cases, this is a useful summary which provides important context for the rest of the book. Levey is also careful to highlight that these transitions have been uneven processes, and that they remain incomplete.

The following three chapters, however, are where the key contributions of this book are located as Levey performs comparisons between Argentine and Uruguayan examples of three types of commemorative site, combining an array of photographs, interviews and details from archival research. Chapter 3 compares the Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo del Estado in Buenos Aires and the Memorial de los Detenidos Desaparecidos in Montevideo (which was, allegedly, covered up whilst Sprite filmed their advertisement). In Chapter 4, Levey analyses sites of ‘state