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Gustavo Morello S.J. & Fortunato Mallimaci

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## Political pluralization and the declining scope of religious authority in Argentina's 1960s: the case of *Cristianismo y Revolución*

Gustavo Morello S.J.  and Fortunato Mallimaci

### ABSTRACT

The transformation of global Catholicism during the Second Vatican Council affected the Argentinean Church. Argentinean Catholics became involved in different sides of the political discussion. While some supported a dictatorial regime, others thought the end of the dictatorship and a fair society could only be achieved through a revolution. In that context, we explore Mark Chavez's idea of secularization as the decline of religious authority. The magazine *Cristianismo y Revolución* (CyR) is a case which allows us to see this process displayed. Different Catholic actors, independently of the Church's structure, claimed Catholic beliefs to support opposing political positions. However, religion remains an important element of the public sphere in contemporary Argentina.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### Pluralization and the influence of religious authority

The Argentine National Congress approved same-sex marriage on 15 June 2010. Not surprisingly, Argentina's Catholic bishops campaigned against this. However, many congresspersons in the House and the Senate legitimized their positions in favor of gay marriage using Catholic principles (*Página12*, 15 July 2010). No religious authority tried to take them to task. By contrast, in 1954, when the Argentine Congress passed a Divorce Law (14.394/54), Catholic congresspersons who did not vote against it were excommunicated.

This case shows that there are actors in the public sphere that, while claiming to be Catholic, support opposed political stances (Levine 2009). Religion still inspires political decisions, but this occurs with actors assuming autonomy from religious authority (Chavez 1994). In this article we analyze both the political pluralization and the reconfiguration of the authority of religion within Argentinean Catholicism in the 1960s. We understand that the emergence of revolutionary Catholics marks a watershed in Catholics' political pluralization and in the scope of religious authority.

Secularization theory has been criticized as a valid framework for understanding Latin America's religious landscape (Casanova 1994; Mallimaci 2008; Romero 2009). The main problem is that the forecasts of religious decline have not been fulfilled. Certainly, the religious landscape is different compared to what it was 50 years ago. While, in the 1960s, 90% of the Argentines identified as Catholics, today, only 70% do so. However, 90% of the population still believe in God (Mallimaci 2013, 33; Pew Research Center 2014, 7). Religion has changed, but not declined. Some authors argue that the decline of religion is not an essential part of the secularization theory (Casanova 1994, 211–234; Goldstein 2016). Mark Chavez (1994) states that rather than a decline of religion, secularization should be understood as a decline in the scope of religious authority, that is the diminishing influence of structures that relies on supra-empirical legitimation.

In this article, we explore a case of change of religious authority in Argentina during the 1960s. We will show that, in these years, the pluralization of political options within the Catholic field modified the scope of the bishops' authority. The bishops lost the power to control the access of individuals to the Catholic identity in a political dispute. Different Catholic sectors, claiming that they acted for the sake of their religious faith, supported different political stances with little regard for the bishops' authority. As Chavez (1994) suggested, secularization meant a reduction in the scope of religious authority. However, we will show that, in the case of Argentina, it did not mean a decline of the authority of religion in the public sphere. On the contrary, new actors became involved in the public sphere because of their religious allegiances.

### **Goals, methods, and sources**

Our goal is to explore the political pluralization and the change in the scope of religious authority of Argentinean Catholicism in the 1960s by analyzing the impact of the Catholic renewal processes on a network of Argentinean Catholics that ended up supporting the 'revolutionary war'. We focus on changes in the Church's identity resulting from the Second Vatican Council and on the needs and desires of the faithful at a very specific moment in history, which was characterized by political violence.

We conducted a historical–sociological case study of the magazine *Cristianismo y Revolución* (Christianity and Revolution) or *CyR*. Through contextual discursive analysis we present a case that contributes to the understanding of the political pluralization and the change in the scope of religious authority in Argentina's Catholicism. To conduct this study, we followed Daniel Levine's (2012) qualitative approach. Levine explains the meaning of actions by actors accepting the power of a group's ideas and concerns to construct a "moral vocabulary" (Levine 2012, 51) that orients

and legitimates their actions. The heart of the matter is understanding how religion and political power are related, what ideas and vehicles for ideas are involved, and which “social locations” are the “contexts for articulation between religion and politics” (Levine 2012, 35). It is in those “critical social spaces” where “the abstractions of human agency take a concrete form” (Levine 2012, 36). Critical social spaces are platforms for recurrent encounters of persons and groups, where people meet in any sort of regular activity, like reading and discussions (Levine 2012, 36).



Figure 1. Front cover of *Cristianismo y Revolución* 5.

We think that *CyR*, published in Argentina between 1966 and 1971, and the social network built around it constituted a ‘critical social space’ that allows us to track the religious pluralization and the diminishment of religious authority in Argentina’s public sphere. The magazine became one of the connecting links for revolutionary Christians in Argentina.<sup>1</sup> It was a means for revolutionary groups to make contact (a ‘social space’) and to build a religious argument for the revolution (a ‘moral vocabulary’).

There were many religious actors in the Argentinean field in those years. For the first time, the ‘non-Catholic’ population of the country reached 10% (Mallimaci 2013, 33). Protestants accounted for almost 5% of the population and some Protestant seminaries and theologians were engaged in dialogue with their Catholics counterparts. In the Catholic field, together with the bishops and the recently founded Catholic universities, there were other influential Catholic groups in the 1960s: the *Cursillos de Cristiandad* (short workshops on Christianity), the *Movimiento de Sacerdotes del Tercer Mundo* (the Movement of Priests for the Third World), and the *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* (the Christian Family Movement). The bishops also exercised their influence through the different organizations within Catholic Action (the lay organization the Vatican had started in the 1920s), such as the specialized groups for high-school students, college students, workers, and farmers (Di Stefano and Zanatta 2000; Donatello 2010; Schwaller 2011). During this time, some theologians and pastors started to take seriously the phenomenon of popular Catholicism (Cuda 2016). In that scenario, among the revolutionary Catholics, *CyR* was the most influential social network (Terán 2006; González 2005).

Many factors contributed to the relevance of *CyR*. The magazine was the only religious publication that reached groups of Catholics throughout Argentina<sup>2</sup> and encouraged debate about the new Catholic identity and mission that was debated in the Second Vatican Council (Morello 2003; Donatello 2010). *CyR* was key in shaping a discursive space that paved the way for the religious acceptance of revolutionary action (Campos 2016, 9). The type of religiosity supported by the magazine helped radicalize people to the point of them believing that a true Catholic should take up arms to fight for the revolution. The question “Can a Catholic be a revolutionary?” became the statement “The only way of being a true Catholic is being a revolutionary”.

*CyR* was not only a rhetorical space. The group associated with the magazine evolved into the *Camilo Torres Commandos* (‘Camilos’), an insurgent group that in less than two years became the ‘Montoneros’, arguably one of the most important guerrilla organizations in twentieth-century Argentina (Campos 2016, 42; Moyano 1995, 2). It was not that all revolutionary Catholics (not even all the Camilos) ended up in

the Montoneros; many joined other left-wing organizations.<sup>3</sup> Our main point here is to highlight the contribution of *CyR* in building political pluralization within the Catholic field, with those involved doing so autonomously from the Argentinean bishops.

The data for this study come from a variety of primary and secondary sources. The primary data are the 30 regular issues of the magazine and 3 special issues. Since most of the articles which were published listed no authors, we consider *CyR* a collective voice or a homogeneous corpus (Altamirano 2001, 125). In the context of this corpus, we analyzed the content of some of the editorials penned by Juan García Elorrio, the director of the magazine and the activist who helped to build the network and suggested the idea of a revolutionary Catholicism for public consideration. We also analyzed the content of Church documents and consulted press archives. Finally, we reviewed secondary literature and did a historical review of the context.

### **The Argentine religious and political context on the eve of the Second Vatican Council**

The Peronist party was in office from 1946 until September 1955 when a military *coup d'état* removed Juan Perón from power.<sup>4</sup> Several months later, the government, headed by General Pedro Aramburu, banned any sort of political activity related to Perón and his political movement. The banning of Peronism, which lasted until 1973, made a sham of the Argentine political system. The so-called 'democratic institutions' excluded Perón's constituents (mainly workers and poor people) from national political life.<sup>5</sup> This situation made the political system permanently unstable.

The liberal institutions' lack of political legitimacy was compensated by the support given by the Army and the Church. The bishops supported only governments that enforced Catholic values in the public sphere (Mallimaci 1992a; Zanatta 1998). When General Juan Onganía seized power in June 1966, he appointed many well-known Catholics to different cabinet positions. Most of the Argentinean bishops, who opposed the disestablishment of the Catholic Church and the reduction of the Church's influence in the Argentinean public sphere, supported Onganía's military rule. They endorsed a society modeled after Francisco Franco's Spain (Campos 2016, 18; Morello 2015, 12).

In Argentina, the bishops' political positions were unchallenged until the 1960s. In the 1940s, two Jesuit priests that had acted against the bishops' political will had been expelled from the order. Fr. Leonardo Castellani had run an anti-liberal nationalist party in the elections of

1946, while Fr. Hernán Benítez had traveled to Spain with Eva Perón, against the explicit mandate of the bishop of Buenos Aires and his Jesuit superior (Di Stefano and Zanatta 2000). As mentioned, in the 1950s, the congresspersons who had voted for divorce had been excommunicated. Catholics were pluralizing, but no one could contest the bishops' authority and remain a member of the Catholic Church.

By the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council had introduced changes and opened the door for a discussion about Catholic identity and the ways in which Catholics might relate with the secular world (Morello 2007, 85–86). This identity shift allowed the discussion of Catholic positions in the social realm. For many Catholics, Onganía's government was not Catholic according to the spirit of the Council since it had prevented the political participation of the citizens. Onganía kept the ban on Peronism, sent federal interventions to the states, and shut down unions and student organizations. The Catholics who objected to these developments believed that Onganía had endorsed violence as a legitimate way of political engagement.

### **The Second Vatican Council and the changes in the Catholic mission and identity**

The theological renewal (known as *aggiornamento*) brought about by Vatican II looked for redefining the identity of the Catholic Church in modern society (Casanova 1994, 71; Morello 2007, 89–92). In the document *Dignitates Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom, paragraph 1), the Church recognized the right to freedom of conscience for every person. *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, LG) stated that laypersons, bishops, and clergy share the same priesthood of Christ, so all are 'People of God' (LG, 9–13). Finally, in *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, GS) the Church accepted the dialogue with the secular culture of the modern world and made attempts to understand it. Catholics should thus "scrutinize the signs of the times" (GS 4) to understand their culture and engage with its hopes and struggles.

The *aggiornamento* inspired many other documents, such as *Populorum Progressio*,<sup>6</sup> the *Manifesto of 18 Bishops from the Third World*,<sup>7</sup> and the Latin American Bishops' conference in Medellín, Colombia.<sup>8</sup> This corpus reflects the change of identity and mission in the universal Church and in Latin American Catholicism. However, if, for the European Church, the problem was the dialogue with the 'secularized' culture in Latin America, the main concern was the dialogue with the poor, who were believers and who were oppressed.

Argentine ecclesiastical authorities were against any attempt of *aggiornamento* (Mallimaci 1992b). Before the Council, the Argentinean bishops dreamt about reconquering influence on the state apparatus. During and after the Council, differences among Argentinean Catholic factions grew worse. While some Catholic sectors fostered the renewal of theological ideas and social commitment, other groups regarded such renewal as heresy that threatened to destroy Western civilization and Christian values. (Morello 2005, 231–235)

### **The Catholic groups as ‘critical social spaces’**

The changes in the Catholic identity were discussed at the meetings of Catholic Action (CA) and its affiliates (Workers’ CA, Students’ CA, etc.), the ‘Cursillos’ (short retreats for Christians), and in an important number of parish youth groups (Schwaller 2011, 223). Since the government had banned any activity of political parties, unions, and student associations, the Catholic groups were the few open spaces allowed in the political vacuum. It was not surprising that radicalization occurred in the environments that debated the Catholic *aggiornamento*. The institutional structure, which consisted of the Catholic groups, played as important a role as Catholic beliefs did. Part of the new sense of identity was the idea of exploring new styles of mission that would help Catholics discern the ‘signs of the time’ (GS 4) and be aware of the social situation. The engagement with the world involved social thinking based on faith, a strong personal commitment to work, and debate about the most appropriate ways to transform reality (Morello 2013a, 52–54).

Without having many other places to go, important numbers of young adults joined these groups. Some scholars estimate that, during the 1960s, around 70,000 faithful Catholics were affiliated to the Argentinean Catholic Action alone (Di Stefano and Zanatta 2000). At that time, Argentina had 23 million inhabitants and 5 million young adults (15–29 years old) (Miranda, Otero, and Corica 2007, 233).

Due to the impact of these experiences, some Catholic groups agreed that it was necessary to be closer to the poor and to change the social system (Donatello 2003, 99–101). Questions were asked about the values and the structures that generated the exploitation of the poor. Catholics debated which political ideas were more appropriate for the structural transformation of Argentina. Some opted for traditional parties. Others thought that democratic modes of participation were unavailable and unreliable. Moreover, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution had made the choice of insurrection feasible. For many Catholics in Argentina, it was clear that it was misery and not Marxism that was opposed to the



Gospel (Morello 2003, 277–281). The moral pressure that injustice and poverty put on the young adults and the incapacity of the Argentine institutional system to handle the situation paved the way for revolutionary action.

The process we are describing here happened within Catholic institutions. However, once the believers decided to get involved in politics, they did not need the institutional endorsement any more. They had received the ideas and the social networks from Catholicism, but they were ready to follow a secular path, outside the control of the religious authorities, which became more frequent in the years to come (Romero 2009, 377). *CyR* is a ‘critical social space’ for exploring this process.

### ***Cristianismo y Revolución: a Catholic network for the Socialist revolution***

*CyR* was both a magazine reflecting the theological radicalization and a social network of radicalized Catholic individuals and groups; it was both a theoretical idea of revolutionary Catholicism and a concrete vehicle for implementing this idea. Juan García Elorrio was the leader of the group. A former seminarian, García Elorrio came from a conservative Catholic background and was well connected with the hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> He had organized a series of conferences to which he had invited bishops to discuss Vatican II. By 1966, a following had consolidated around García Elorrio. They saw Onganía’s regime not only as anti-Catholic, but as using Catholicism to impose oppression (Morello 2003, 137). After the debates on the Catholic mission in the contemporary world, they decided to launch the magazine *CyR* to put like-minded people who were spread all over the country in contact with one another and to represent an alternative Catholic discourse (*CyR* 1, 2, 23).

García Elorrio wrote the editorials. Journalists, political activists, artists, and some priests were either members of staff or frequent contributors. Casiana Ahumada, García Elorrio’s wife, funded the magazine, relying on her family’s wealth; she was also in charge of the distribution network that reached the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Tucumán, and Santa Fe. As indicated, the group published 30 regular and 3 special issues between September 1966 and September 1971 and produced between 2,000 and 5,000 copies per issue (Morello 2006, 8).<sup>10</sup>

The magazine’s main emphasis was the role Catholics should play in the revolutionary war that, according to its point of view, was spreading all over the world. In every issue, they published articles on the Catholic Church, highlighting the work of progressive Catholics, and theological reflections discussing the *aggiornamento* and the revolution around the world.

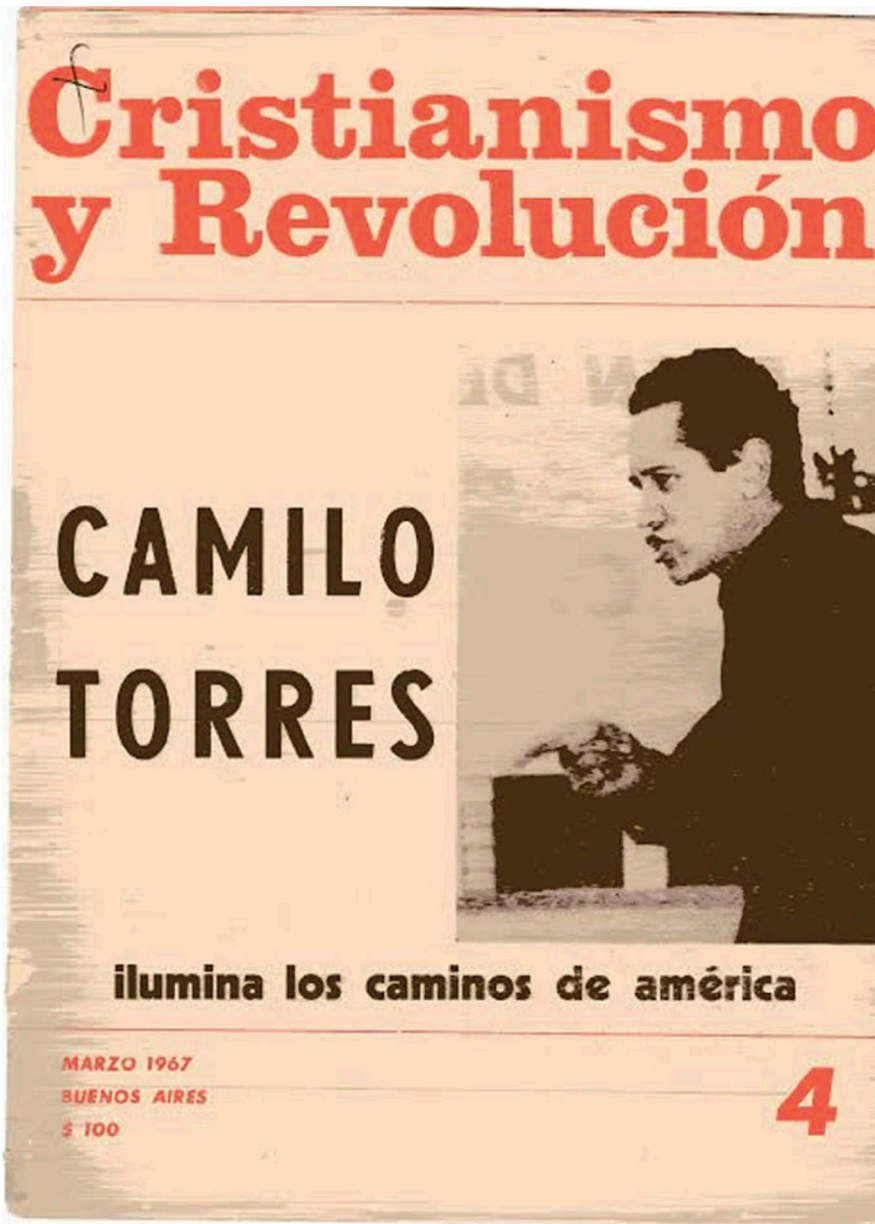


Figure 2. Front cover of *Cristianismo y Revolución* 4.

The Colombian priest Camilo Torres,<sup>11</sup> the Argentine guerrilla Ernesto Ché Guevara, and former first lady Eva Perón were the icons of their ideals. *CyR* was based on two statements, one by Torres, “The duty of every Christian is to be a revolutionary”, and the other by Ché Guevara, “The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution” (*CyR* 5, 2). The merging of the two mottos identified the magazine and served as a criterion for selecting the material to be published. The authors built their own Catholic interpretation without any concern for orthodoxy

(Campos 2016, 53–88; Morello 2003, 276–292; Pittaluga and Rott 2004, 3–4). They used some authoritative statements such as *Populorum Progressio* and the *Message from 18 Bishops*, but they did not worry about having the blessing of the Catholic hierarchy. If the Church was “the people of God” (LG 9–17), they only needed the people’s approval.

The reasoning proposed by *CyR* was that the poor created wealth and that the rich took it from them because they controlled the state apparatus. By describing the social and political situation as a ‘sin of injustice’, *CyR* appealed to the moral desire of its Catholic readers to redeem their neighbors and rescue them from suffering. The aim was to conquer power in order to build a better world where everybody could live a decent life. Therefore, the revolution was a Christian duty (*CyR* 1, 14–20). Christians had to struggle for a new society in which men and women could fulfill themselves and all social structures had to lead to that end (*CyR* 23, 20–25). The aim of the struggle was thus to conquer power and to establish socialism (*CyR* 18, 26–35). The revolution looked for a radical change in structures (*CyR* 4, 16–17) so that people could be truly free (*CyR* 2–3, 9; *CyR* 20, 19–24).

According to García Elorrio, Latin America’s situation was a case of oppression and violence from above. Famine, unemployment, exploitation, and poverty were caused by imperialism. There were enough resources to solve these problems, but the *status quo* was a political choice of those in power. Instead of investing money in solving the problems, the wealth generated by the people was used for the benefit of the imperial forces. (*CyR* 1, 2, 23) The world, in García Elorrio’s view, was divided into

Two worlds, one that fights for human dignity and freedom, and the other that fights to preserve the status quo, to prevent the success of the struggle for liberation and human dignity. (*CyR* 1, 1, 23)<sup>12</sup>

In such a scenario, Christians had to choose sides. Catholics should commit themselves to the revolution because it was trying to build a society of love based on solidarity (*CyR* 13, 14–19, 22–24). Revolution was part of God’s plan for the world:

[The new world] is growing from the revolutionary processes [...] Revolution is hard and violent, but it is also profoundly human. We Christians should incorporate into it, since, as Camilo Torres said, “[Revolution] is the only efficacious way to achieve love for all.” (*CyR* 1, 1, 23)

The Catholic faithful should engage in revolutionary warfare as a way of identifying with Jesus, even if the struggle meant baring weapons. The revolution would be violent not because the revolutionaries chose it to be so, but because of the institutional violence that was imposed from above, causing the lack of affordable housing, inaccessibility to drinkable water, the absence of proper health-care services, the starvation and mortality of

children, and life in unbearable conditions for the poor. (CyR 27, 53–64) Violence was not a Christian choice, but the only way to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and set the oppressed free:

[Camilo Torres] understood that the oligarchy would shut down all other ways and push people to use violence. [...] Together with Camilo, we believe that the Revolution is the only efficacious way to achieve love for everyone. (CyR 4, 2–3)

Updating the doctrine of tyrannicide, CyR stated that revolutionary violence was a legitimate means of resisting unbearable and unjust structures (CyR 1, 3–5). Tyranny was related not just to the rulers but also to the system and its economic interests. *Populorum Progressio* 31<sup>13</sup> paved the way for violence as a means to change unjust systems (*Suplemento CyR* 6–7, 2–3). That is why CyR stated that non-violence was equivalent to connivance with the regime's injustice (CyR 8, 14–15).

CyR challenged the Catholic identity of Onganía's government. Its strategy was to use Catholic ideas to challenge Onganía's 'false Catholicism', setting a scenario of 'true Catholics' being set against 'fake Catholics'. The consequence was the consolidation of different and opposing political positions, with and without the bishops' support, claiming to be the 'real' Catholicism.

### **The Camilo Torres Commandos: concrete forms of human agency**

The revolutionary rhetoric contributed to the formation of a radical organization. As indicated, not every CyR reader became a revolutionary and even those who did, did not always join the Montoneros guerrilla (Campos 2016, 121). However, the group as a collective actor, and most of its members, became closer to the Peronist organization.

In the beginning of 1967, García Elorrio and other CyR followers founded the Camilo Torres Commandos. To gain public attention, they decided to launch a spectacular operation. In Argentina, as in many other countries, Labor Day is celebrated on 1 May. That day in 1967, while Cardinal Antonio Caggiano was celebrating the workers' mass at Buenos Aires cathedral with the attendance of president Onganía, the Camilos broke into the church. According to the newspapers (*La Nación*, 2 May 1967; *La Prensa*, 5 May 1967; *Crónica*, 2 May 1967), García Elorrio made his way to the reader's stand and read a 'prayer' before Cardinal Caggiano delivered his homily. At the same time, other members of the group distributed the prayer that was actually a critical statement against the government. After a confrontation with the police, García Elorrio and others were arrested. (*Clarín*, 2 May 1967; *Así*, 11 May 1967)

During that year, García Elorrio drew closer to the revolutionary sectors in the Peronist Party.<sup>14</sup> In July 1967, groups from all over the country met to discuss the choice between 'insurreccional' and 'Guevarist' strategies.<sup>15</sup>

A month later, García Elorrio attended a meeting of the 'Latin American Solidarity Organization' in Cuba. Between October and November 1967, some Camilos who were pursuing a Guevarist strategy also went to Cuba for military training. The membership of the Camilos had grown to almost 100 persons by the second half of 1967 (Lanusse 2005, 154; Wornat 2002, 159). Groups from Córdoba, Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Mendoza agreed on the need for revolutionary violence and, although some of them were not Catholic, they made sense of their actions through the ideas provided by the new Catholic identity (Donatello 2010).

In February 1968, members of the different Camilo Torres Commandos from Colombia, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina met in Uruguay. In that meeting, García Elorrio was criticized for not having taken the necessary steps to form a guerrilla group (Vélez Carreras 2005, 9–10). The revolution was urgent.<sup>16</sup> By mid-1968, García Elorrio separated himself from those who had chosen the Guevarist approach (Donatello 2003, 95). This meant the end of the Commandos (Campos 2016, 44–51). García Elorrio devoted himself to the magazine, focusing on bonding revolutionary-minded groups across the country. The rest of the group worked on building a revolutionary army, a project that led to the Montoneros (Morello 2003, 148–151).

Industrial workers from Córdoba's car factories called a strike on 29 May 1969. The protest evolved into an uprising known as the 'Cordobazo'. The government decreed martial law. As a measure to prevent further protests, many social and labor leaders were sent to prison, García Elorrio among them. A month later, on 27 June 1969, Emilio Jáuregui, a journalist working for *CyR*, was killed while taking part in a demonstration in Buenos Aires against Nelson Rockefeller's visit to the country. García Elorrio was released from prison in December that year. A month later, on 24 January 1970, he received a death threat. Two days later, the driver of a car provoked a crash, assassinating García Elorrio in the streets of Buenos Aires, and then escaped. Casiana Ahumada then directed *CyR* for a year. She decided to leave the country in September 1971, after the government had banned the thirty-first issue of the magazine and she had received anonymous threats.

When *CyR* was closed down, the 'revolution' had already started and the insurgent groups were in contact with one another. *CyR* contributed to building a Catholic moral vocabulary that encouraged religious actors to join the revolution. Many Camilos joined the Montoneros (Lanusse 2005, 176; Vélez Carreras 2005, 11–12). In May 1970, the Montoneros made their first public attack. They kidnapped former president General Pedro Aramburu and killed him. One of the most important guerrilla armies in Argentina's contemporary history concluded their first public pronouncement with a prayer: 'May the Lord have mercy on his soul.'

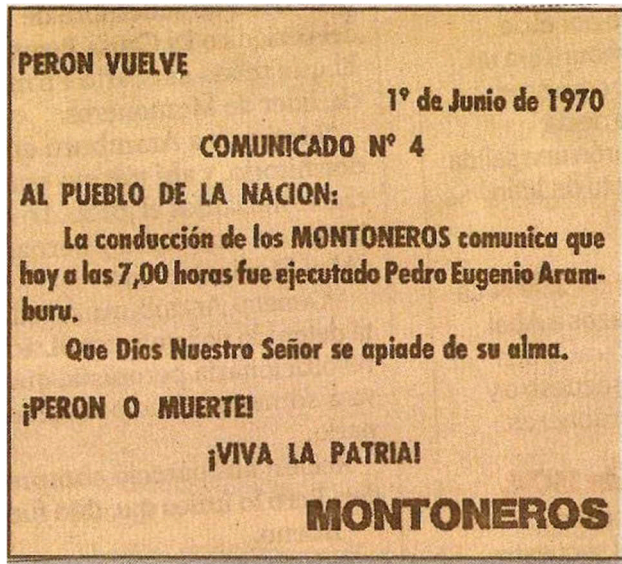


Figure 3. Press release 5 from the 'Montoneros' guerrilla organization.

A revolutionary group opposed to a government that self-identified as Catholic and autonomous from the Church's hierarchy justified its political actions (the kidnapping and killing of a former *de facto* president) with its Catholic beliefs. Opposing political actors justified their actions using the same religious tradition. Religious authorities were not able to control such claims.

### **Conclusion: political pluralization of Argentinean Catholicism**

We identified two main transformations in the Catholic identity that led to a shift in the way the Catholic Church implemented its mission in Argentina. The first was a universal trend. The *aggiornamento* transformed the Catholic location in the world, moving from rejecting any negotiation with modern culture to engaging in a dialogue with it. The Church's mission was reinterpreted as a commitment to civil society and not only as a struggle with the modern state as had been the case since the beginnings of modernity. This shift also allowed the Catholic faithful to claim their global Catholic identity despite the local religious authorities.

Secondly, we explained what *aggiornamento* meant for the Latin American Church's openness toward the poor and pastoral commitment to their situation of injustice. We also explained the impact of these transformations in the history of Argentina in the 1960s. When Catholics wanted to embrace the poor and seek social justice, they found that, in the Argentina of the 1960s, democratic institutions were closed. They also

realized that political violence was used by an authoritarian government. We have expounded how a group found in the Catholic tradition a case for revolutionary violence. Because of the transformations of the Catholic identity in this specific context, which we have analyzed, the Catholic Church became politically pluralized.

We consider *CyR* as a relevant case to understand political pluralization and changes in religious authority in the Argentina of the 1960s. *CyR* expanded the spectrum of what it meant to be a Catholic at that time. Those who were involved in producing this magazine were, without any doubt, a radical group. However, their impact was relevant in the public sphere. Religious authority could no longer control the political pluralization of the flock, due in part to changes in Catholic theology and in part to the changes in the local and international political contexts.

However, as we have also shown, the authority of the religious discourse in the public sphere continued. *CyR* did not give up its Catholic identity, the group claimed it against Onganía's Catholic regime, and they sought to identify with Father Camilo Torres. Being a Catholic was an important element in the Argentinean political sphere. The ability to use the Catholic brand, without concern about what the religious authorities would say, became commonplace in Argentina's political realm. The political pluralization of Catholics shows a decline in the bishops' power to impose their authority on the faithful. At the same time, that opposing political actors did not resign their religious identity indicates the remaining importance of the authority of religion in the public realm.

The same dynamic was observed during the so-called Dirty War in the 1970s (Morello 2015) and, as mentioned, during the debates about the law allowing gay marriage. Political actors holding different positions present themselves as 'Catholics' and base their claims on religious grounds, despite what the religious authorities might say. The fact that, during the same-sex marriage debate, in 2010, some congresspersons made the point of 'being Catholic' is a sign that religion is still relevant in Argentina's plural public sphere. Argentina's secularization is more a case of the reduction of the scope of religious authority (the authority of the bishops and priests) than a case of the reduction of the authority of religion in the public sphere.

## Notes

1. Many Protestant believers shared the trends of Liberation Theology. *CyR* published documents, reflections, and statements from different Christian groups (Campos 2016) and some Protestants joined guerrilla groups, including the Montoneros (see below for further details), following their religious commitment. Many members of

- reformed churches ‘were disappeared’ in the 1970s and Protestant Churches were instrumental in organizing the first groups that spoke out against the violations of human rights in the country. (Morello 2015)
2. There were many other religious magazines that were mostly sold in the city of Buenos Aires; if they had a national readership, they were only aimed at priests (Lacombe 2014).
  3. Many of Argentina’s revolutionary groups—the *Vanguardia Comunista* (Communist Vanguard), the *Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas* (Peronist Armed Forces or FAP), the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (Revolutionary Armed Forces or FAR), the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (People’s Revolutionary Army or ERP), the *Descamisados* (‘Shirtless’)—had revolutionary Catholics among their ranks.
  4. Then a colonel, Perón was Undersecretary of Work during the military regime between 1943 and 1945. From that position, he created a political movement that incorporated industrial workers into the political system by granting them labor rights and political representation. His government (1945–1955) developed a welfare state and workers shared almost 50% of the country’s GDP. However, Perón and his followers disregarded the liberal institutions, blaming them for ignoring workers’ rights and dismissing the political rights of the lower classes. The press and the political opposition were harassed under his regime.
  5. Since the Peronists had won the election in 1954 with more than the 60% of the votes, we assume that a significant part of the population was deprived of its political rights.
  6. Asia, Africa, and Latin America contributed to the debate of the Vatican Council with themes such as justice and development, although they were not directly treated during the Council. However, in March 1967, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, which addressed these issues.
  7. The *Message of 18 Bishops from the Third World*, which dates from 15 August 1967, stated that Socialism is better than Capitalism because “true Socialism is Christianity fully lived”; it is the system that best adapts to the present time the moral requirements of the Gospel (paragraph 14) and its commitment to human dignity (17). Religion is not opium for the people but strength for the weak (19). (Botán, Ramondetti, and Ricciardelli 1968)
  8. In the Medellín conference (Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopacy 1968), the Latin American bishops referred to the social situation as “institutionalized violence” (Paz, paragraph 16). “It is no surprise, therefore, that Latin America should be ‘tempted by violence’. Nobody should abuse the patience of a people that has undergone a situation that would hardly be endured by those more aware of human rights” (Paz, 16). Structural changes that Latin America needs will not occur without a deep reform in the political system (Justicia, paragraph 16).
  9. García Elorrio’s father Aurelio was the director of the magazine *Catholic Youth* (1924–1925) and editor of the education section for the Catholic newspaper *El Pueblo* (1933–1935). In 1934, he organized the International Eucharistic Congress in Buenos Aires. From 1936 he worked at the National Ministry of Education where he advocated mandatory Catholic education in state schools. This initiative became law in 1946, while Aurelio García Elorrio staffed Perón’s first government.
  10. It is difficult to obtain data about press circulation in Argentina for these years, mainly for the kind of magazines that were facing political persecution. However, to have a point against which to compare these figures, we should keep in mind that *El Combatiente* and *Estrella Roja*, both left-wing magazines linked to revolutionary armies, delivered around 10,000 copies per issue in the 1970s (Lewis 2002; Morello 2013a; Plis-Sterenbergh 2005).



11. Camilo Torres was a Catholic priest who, after teaching Sociology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, joined the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army) in December 1965. He was killed in an ambush in February 1966. He became an iconic figure for Latin American revolutionary Catholics (Brienza 2008).
12. All the quotes from *CyR* have been translated from the Spanish by the first author.
13. Paragraph 31 states: “Everyone knows, however, that revolutionary uprisings—*except where there is manifest, longstanding tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country*—engender new injustices, introduce new inequities and bring new disasters” (emphasis added).
14. Since the proscription of the Peronist party, some activists were fighting to recover political rights for Perón and his followers. The groups that were known during the 1950s and early 1960s as ‘Resistance’ later became ‘special organizations’ in the Peronist jargon. García Elorrio connected with these ‘special organizations’. (Campos 2016, 123–124)
15. While the insurreccional approach tried to get most of the population to join the revolution, the Guevarist strategy (named after Ché Guevara) advocated the creation of a small guerrilla army as a *foco* or a focal point to start a revolution.
16. In many writings of the magazine, as in other political magazines of the time, there was a millenarian component: the end of the world was close, the triumph of the revolution was imminent, good Catholics should be ready to give up their lives for it, since they would be rewarded in a revolutionary heaven. They were invited to follow Camilo Torres’s example, giving up their lives for their oppressed sisters and brothers (Campos 2016, 74–81; Lacombe 2012, 33–34; Morello 2003, 277–281).

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## Notes on contributors

*Gustavo Morello*, SJ, is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA. He works on the relations between Catholics and politics in Argentina and Latin America’s recent history as well as the religious transformation of Latin America. He is the author of *The Catholic Church and Argentina’s Dirty War* (2015).

*Fortunato Mallimaci* is a Sociology Professor at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is a researcher at the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas—Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales (CONICET–CEIL) in the *Sociedad, cultura y religión* program. His research focuses on the history of Catholicism as well as on class and religion. His most recent book (co-authored with Luis Donatello and Julio Pinto) is *Nacionalismos, religiones y globalización* (2017).

## ORCID

Gustavo Morello S.J.  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0332-9616>

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