

fought this *just war* in Argentina's defense.

War is a consequence of original sin. It has accompanied man since the time of Cain and Abel. In all wars, in all times and places, excesses have been committed. To be able to fight in a war with a clear conscience, one must be sure that it is a *just war*. Yes, it is true that the military vicars and chaplains comforted the combatants and their families by talking to them of the *justness* of the war . . . not of the kindness of the sins which they inevitably committed. And who today remembers that that lucid and saintly military Vicar General, Monsignor Tortolo—viciously attacked by certain leftist press—spent his Christmases in Paraná with the families of dead or jailed guerrillas, perhaps among them those who brutally killed the Cáceres Monié couple, whose bodies were mutilated? Monsignor Tortolo was one of a kind. I am waiting for some of those families of Montoneros to publicly acknowledge how much that great bishop comforted and aided them. That would be justice!

Two reflections in closing. First, the journalist Verbitsky,

reportedly a Montonero captain and ex-chief of intelligence (that is, responsible for preparing operations), a charge he has not denied—is he an excellent swimmer or did he get his lifesaver on before they threw him from the plane? Second, a request to the priests of the Catholic flock. At least 99% of the military family is Catholic. Do not abandon this reviled family! If you are going to make a mea culpa as the pope has requested, let it also include a sincere repentance and an “honest acceptance of the truth” for the thousands of Christian youth who, guided by certain priests such as [leftist] Father Mujica, made up those “special formations” in the war. And let it also include those ideological priests who preached “armed revolution” and “theology of liberation,” and many more of their ilk, who gave their support to the “idealistic youth.” To suffer a partial amnesia is not possible or just, and much less Christian. In the decade of the 1970s, Argentina already had its “Samuel Ruiz” phenomenon. Forgetting, indifference, or the silence of the priests would be the greatest pain for the military family.

## Legal assault planned on Ibero-American armed forces

For the last several years, the Anglo-American political establishment has directed a propaganda campaign against Ibero-America's armed forces, harping on their supposedly “undemocratic” nature and demanding that the institutions be completely dismantled. Now the Anglo-Americans are threatening to escalate this offensive by taking it into the realm of international law, in violation of the precept of national sovereignty.

A first indication of this strategy was seen in the annual report issued in late March by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which functions under the aegis of the Organization of American States (OAS). The report warned that the Argentine government's laws which granted pardons and exemption from prosecution to military leaders involved in the 1970s war against communist subversion, are “incompatible with its international treaty obligations under the American Convention on Human Rights.” The commission also took issue with amnesties approved in Uruguay and more recently in El Salvador.

The amnesties in Argentina and Uruguay were passed in the late 1980s to help put an end to internal debate which threatened political stability in those countries, following an internationally orchestrated campaign portraying the armed forces as brutal murderers in their war against communist guerrillas.

The amnesty in El Salvador was passed in March, following the issuance of the U.N. Truth Commission report, which accused the Armed Forces of carrying out Nazi-style atrocities over the past 12 years of the war and demanded both the punishment of officers and the dismantling of the military.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher told a House Appropriations subcommittee on March 25 that the United States was studying the possibility of thwarting El Salvador's amnesty law by prosecuting Salvadoran military officers *in U.S. courts* for alleged atrocities committed in their own country. Christopher argued that under international law, foreign nationals—in this case, American citizens whose family members may have been killed in El Salvador—might be able to bring Salvadoran officers to trial in the United States.

A precedent for what Christopher is talking about is seen in the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the Law of Foreign Sovereign Immunity cannot protect the Argentine government from prosecution in U.S. courts by citizens seeking indemnization for alleged torture by the 1976-83 military junta. While refusing to hear an appeal from the Argentine government, the court ruled in March that Argentine citizen José Siderman, now a U.S. resident, has the right to seek \$2.7 million in damages for alleged torture by the military in the mid-1970s.

Implied in this debate is the false premise that there is no difference between what the Armed Forces of El Salvador did over the past 12 years and the crimes of the Nazis in World War II, or what the Serbians are doing today in former Yugoslavia.—*Cynthia R. Rush*