

# “Change of Skin”, From Argentina’s “Dirty War” to the Vatican: Pope Francis “Dissociates Himself” from Father Bergoglio

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Global Research, March 19, 2013

Página 12 (Translated from the Spanish)

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Religion](#)

[Translation of an article from \*Página 12\* of Buenos Aires for March 17, 2013 \(Global Research Spanish page\)](#)

[Original Pagina 12 article \(Spanish\)](#)

*The first press conference Pope Francis’ spokesman gave was for the purpose of detaching him from Jorge Mario Bergoglio, accused of turning two priests over to the ESMA [Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada]. Since the statements and the documents are incontestable, the method chosen was to discredit those who circulated them, characterizing this newspaper as leftist. The traditions were followed: it is the same thing that Bergoglio said about Jalics and Yorio to those who kidnapped them.*

In his first meeting with the press after the election of the Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio as Pope of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, his spokesman, Federico Lombardi, also a Jesuit, dismissed as old calumnies of the anti-clerical Left, spread by a newspaper characterized by defamatory campaigns, the allegations on the performance of the former provincial of the Company of Jesus during the Argentine dictatorship and, especially, the role he played in the disappearance of two priests under him, Orlando Yorio and Francisco Jalics. Argentine opposition media and politicians at the same time included the article “Un Ersatz,” published in this paper the day after the papal election, among *Kirchnerista* reactions to Bergoglio’s enthronement. In addition, a sector of the governing party chose to acclaim him as “Argentine and *Peronista*,” the same slogan with which José Rucci is remembered every September, and to deny the incontestable facts.

## **The reconciliation**

From Germany, where Jalics lives in retirement in a monastery, the German Jesuit provincial said that the priest had been reconciled with Bergoglio. The aged Jalics, now 85 years old, declared on the other hand that he felt reconciled with “those events, which are a closed matter for me.” But he said nevertheless that he would not comment on Bergoglio’s actions in the case. For Catholics, reconciliation is a sacrament. In the words of one of the major Argentine theologians, Carmelo Giaquinta, it consists of “pardoning others from the heart for offenses received,” by which is meant only that Jalics has forgiven the harm they did to him. That says more about him than about Bergoglio. Jalics does not deny the facts, which he recounted in his 1994 book *Ejercicios de Meditación*:

“Many people who held political convictions on the extreme right looked unfavorably on our presence in the slums. They interpreted the fact that we would live there as support for the guerrilla and they proposed denouncing us as terrorists. We knew which way the wind was blowing and who was responsible for these calumnies. So I went to speak with the person in question and I explained to him that he was playing with our lives. The man promised me that he would let the military know that we were not terrorists. From later statements by an officer and 30 documents I had access to later, we were able to prove without a doubt that this man had not kept his promise but that, on the contrary, he had given a false denunciation to the military.”

In another part of the book, he adds that that person made

“the denunciation credible by the weight of his authority” and “testified to the officials who kidnapped us that we had worked at the scene of terrorist activity. Shortly before that I had told that person that he was playing with our lives. He must have been aware that he was sending us to a certain death with his statements.”

In a letter he wrote in Rome in November, 1977, to the assistant general of the Company of Jesus, Father Moura, Orlando Yorio gives the same account but replacing “a person” with “Jorge Mario Bergoglio.” Nine years before Mignone’s book and 17 years before Jalics’, Yorio tells how Jalics spoke twice with the provincial, who “made a commitment to stop the rumors within the company and to go forward to speak with people in the armed forces to give witness of our innocence.”

He also mentions the criticism that was circulating in the Company of Jesus against him and Jalics: “Making strange prayers, living with women, heresies, commitment to the guerrilla.” Jalics also tells in his book how in 1980 he burned the documents proving what he calls “the offense” of his persecutors.

Until then, he had held on to them with the secret intention of using them. “Since then I feel truly free and I can say that I have forgiven with all my heart.” In 1990, during one of his visits to this country, Jalics met with Emilio Fermín Mignone and his wife, Angélica Sosa, at the Instituto Fe y Oración at 2760 Oro Street. He told them that

“Bergoglio opposed his staying in Argentina once he had been freed and spoke with all the bishops about not accepting him in their dioceses if he should resign from the Company of Jesus.”

All of this is told not by *Página/12* but by Orlando Jorio and Francisco Jalics.

So who wants to destroy the church? Every volume of my *Historia Política de la Iglesia en la Argentina* includes a warning:

“These pages do not contain value judgements on the dogma or the cult of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church but an analysis of its behavior in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 as ‘sociological reality of a concrete people in a concrete world,’ by the terms of its own Episcopal Conference. On the other hand, its ‘theological reality of the mystery’ belongs only to the believers, who deserve all my respect.”

## In defense of tradition

The characterization of this newspaper by Bergoglio's spokesman as of the anti-clerical Left shows the continuity of deep rooted traditions. It is the same as the man now pontiff made 37 years ago about his priests, although then it carried a serious danger. The accusations against Bergoglio were made for the first time before *Página/12* existed. The author was Mignone, director of *Antorcha*, the official organ of Acción Católica, founder of the Unión Federal Demócrata Cristiana and vice minister of education in the province of Buenos Aires and in the nation. He could not have attained any of these positions without an episcopal blessing. In his 1986 book *Iglesia y Dictadura*, Mignone wrote that the military cleaned "the inner patio of the church, with the acquiescence of the prelates."

The vice president of the Conferencia Episcopal, Vicente Zazpe, revealed to him that shortly after the coup the church made an agreement with the military junta that before arresting a priest the armed forces would notify the respective bishop. Mignone wrote that "on some occasions the green light was given by the bishops themselves" and that the navy interpreted the withdrawal of licenses from Yorio and Jalics and the "shows of criticism by their Jesuit provincial, Jorge Bergoglio, as authorization to proceed." Mignone believes Bergoglio is one of the "pastors who turned their sheep over to the enemy without defending them or rescuing them."

Two decades later I found by chance the documentary proof that Mignone did not know about and that confirm his version of the case. That Bergoglio may have aided others who were being persecuted is not a contradiction: Pio Laghi and even Adolfo Tortolo and Victorio Bonamin did the same.

## Cronus

The case was delved into in these pages four year before Kirchner came to power. The first article, "Con el mazo dando," published in April, 1999, said that the brand new archbishop of Buenos Aires, "according to which source is consulted, is either the most generous and intelligent man ever to say mass in Argentina or a Machiavellian felon who betrayed his brothers for the sake of an insatiable thirst for power.

The explanation may lie in the fact that Bergoglio brings together two traits that don't always go together: he is an extreme conservative in matters of dogma and he possesses an obvious social concern. In both respects, he resembles the person who placed him at the head of the principal diocese of the country, Pope Karol Wojtyla." The concept is the same as the one I expressed on Thursday when the heavenly white puff of smoke moved all the faithful, from La Quiaca to Tierra del Fuego. That article set Mignone's version against that of Alicia Oliveira, attorney with CELS [Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales] and a friend of Bergoglio's, whose sister worked in the slum of Flores, together with Mignone's daughter and the two priests. "He told them they had to straighten up and they didn't pay any attention to him.

When they kidnapped them, Jorge found out that the navy had them and he went to talk to Massera, whom he told that if he didn't release the two priests, 'I, as provincial, will denounce what happened.' The next day they were freed." It also included the refutation of a priest of the Company of Jesus:

"The navy did not get involved with anybody in the church who didn't bother

the church. The Company did not have a prophetic or denouncing role, in contrast with the Palotinos or the Pasionistas, because Bergoglio had ties with Massera. It is not only the cases of Yorio, Jalics and Mónica Mignone, about whose kidnappings the Company never made public denunciations. Two other priests, Luis Dourrón, who later left the priesthood, and Enrique Rastellini, were also active in Lower Flores. Bergoglio asked them to get out of there and when they refused he let the military know that he was no longer protecting them and with that wink they kidnapped them.”

That priest, who died six years ago, was Juan Luis Moyano Walker, who had been a close friend of Bergoglio’s.

Because of the article, Bergoglio offered me his own version of events, in which he appears as a super-hero. Both he and Jalics, whom I telephoned at his German retreat, asked me to attribute their statements to a priest close to both of them. Bergoglio said that he saw [Jorge Rafael] Videla twice and Massera twice. At the first meeting with each of them, both told him they didn’t know what had happened and that they were going to find out. “At the second meeting, Massera was annoyed with this 37-year-old kid who dared to insist.” According to Bergoglio, they had this dialogue:

“‘I’ve already told [Archbishop Adolfo Servando] Tortolo what I knew,’ Massera said.

“‘Monsignor Tortolo,’ Bergoglio corrected him.

“‘Look, Bergoglio...,’ Massera began, annoyed over the correction.

“‘Look, Massera...,’ Bergoglio responded in the same tone before repeating that he knew where the priests were and demanding their release.”

I limited myself to transcribing what Bergoglio said, with the attributions that he asked for. But to this day that dialogue does not seem believable to me, with one of the most powerful and cruel officials, who, with no hesitation, would have had him disappeared. They both had in common a relation with the Guardia de Hierro, the rightist Peronist group in which Bergoglio was active in his youth and which Massera named as a mediator beginning at the time of the coup, with the purpose of adding it to his campaign for *Peronista* heritage.

In 1977 the Universidad Jesuítica del Salvador took on as honorary professor Massera, who objected to Marx, Freud and Einstein for questioning the inviolable character of private property, for attacking the “sacred space of personal privilege” and for imperiling the “static and inert condition of the material.”

Massera suggested that the university was “the instrument best suited to initiating a counteroffensive” from the west, as though Marx, Freud and Einstein were not a part of that tradition. Bergoglio was very careful in climbing on the dais that day, so that no one has seen a photo of him with Massera.

But it is unimaginable that the dictator would have received that distinction without the ceremony being authorized by the Jesuit provincial, who delegated daily management to a civil association led by the Guardia de Hierro but retained its spiritual guidance. Then Massera was invited to lecture at the Jesuit university of Georgetown, in Washington. The Irish priest Patrick Rice, who could leave Argentina after being kidnapped and beaten, interrupted that conference by demanding an explanation for the crimes of the dictatorship.

According to Rice, the United States provincial would not have invited such a personage without the approval, or the request, of the Argentine provincial. These demonstrable facts contradict the fantasy dialogue in which the young Bergoglio defies the head of the ESMA.

## **A Christian death**

In 1995, a year after Jalics' book, *El Vuelo* was published, in which naval Commander Adolfo Scilingo confesses that he threw 30 people who were still alive into the sea from airplanes belonging to the navy and the prefecture after drugging them. He says as well that that method was approved by the ecclesiastical hierarchy because they considered flight a Christian way of dying, and that the navy chaplains consoled those who returned upset from those missions with the biblical parable on the separation of the chaff from the wheat.

Impressed, I took up again an investigation I had begun years earlier on the island of El Silencio, in Tigre [a town in Buenos Aires province], in which the navy hid 60 detainees so that the Inter-American Human Rights Commission would not find them at the ESMA.

It was the property of the archbishop of Buenos Aires and there departing seminarians celebrated their graduations every year and Cardinal Juan Aramburu rested on the weekends. The Priest Emilio Grasselli had sold it to the ESMA task group, who bought it with a false document in the name of one of their prisoners. But I had not seen the property titles until Bergoglio gave me the precise data on the inheritance papers for Antonio Arbelaiz, the bachelor administrator of the Curia that was listed as owner.

This shows that it had no relation with that episode. Arbelaiz testified in favor of the Curia, which is where the money that the navy paid Grasselli for the island ended up, where the 60 prisoners spent two months in chains. It seems like a typical route for a laundering operation: Arbelaiz sells to Grasselli who sells to the ESMA which buys it with a false document and the mortgage is raised by paying the Curia, which is Arbelaiz's heir. In one of his judicial testimonies Bergoglio admits that he spoke with me about the kidnapping of Yorio and Jalics. But he said that he never heard the El Silencio island being talked about. Always the double game, the private admission and the public denial.

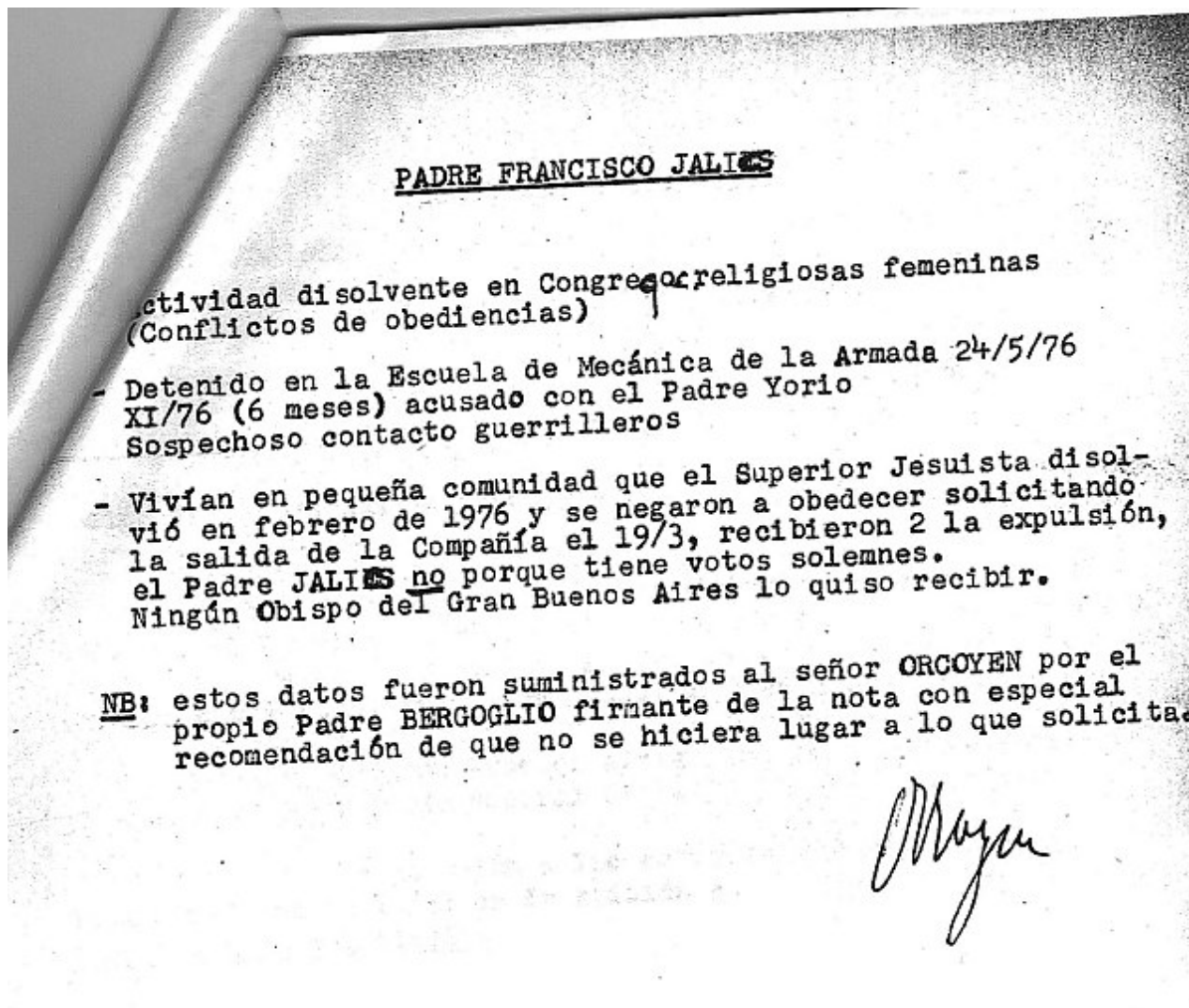
## **By the sword**

During the investigation I found by chance in the archives of the Foreign Affairs Ministry a folder with documents that, in my view, put an end to the discussion of Bergoglio's role in relation to Yorio and Jalics. I looked for a clerk, who certified its location in the archives, whose director at the time, minister Carlos Dellepiane, kept them in a safe to protect them from being stolen or destroyed. The story that folder tells sounds familiar. Upon being freed in November, 1976, Jalics left for Germany.

His passport had expired in 1979 and Bergoglio asked the ministry to renew it without his returning to the country. The director of the Culto Católico in the ministry, Anselmo Orcoyen, recommended the request be rejected "because of the petitioner's historical antecedents," which were supplied to him "by Father Bergoglio himself, the signer of the note, with a special recommendation that what he requested not be granted." He said that Jalics had conflicts over obedience and corrupting activity in feminine religious congregations, and that he was "detained" in ESMA together with Yorio, "suspected of guerrilla contacts." That is, the same charges made about him by Yorio and Jalics (and that many priests and laymen that I interviewed corroborated): while he seemed to aid them, Bergoglio was turning them



in behind their backs. It is clear that this act in 1979 is not sufficient to convict him legally of the 1976 kidnapping.



The document signed by Orcoyen was not even made part of the folder, but it traces out a line of conduct. Adding the director of the Culto Católico of the dictatorship to a conspiracy against the church would be too much. Therefore, Bergoglio and his spokesman are silent about these documents and choose to dismiss those who found them, preserved them and published them.

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