10. The Seven Deadly Sins of a Guerrilla

1. Hubris | 2. Spectacular Murder | Gibraltar | Fatigue | 3. Spreading Fear and Creating Cohesion by Murdering One's Own Comrades | One of the Best | Revolutionary Justice | 4. Being a Victim Hero | Two Bodies with Martyr Status | 5. Cyanide | Paco Urondo | 6. Indifference | 7. Succumbing to Triumphalism | To the Short End

Deadly sins usually lead to downfall, not only political but also moral. There are seven that, illustrated here as an example for the Montoneros, can determine the fate of a modern guerrilla movement.

The first sin is succumbing to hubris/the fascination of violence; the second sin, wanting to become famous through a spectacular murder – the Aramburu case; the third sin, spreading fear and creating cohesion by murdering one's own comrades; the fourth sin, stylising oneself as a victim and achieving martyr status when it is no longer enough to be a positive hero; the fifth sin is preserving the sect through self-sacrifice and escaping the price of revealing information under torture by taking deadly cyanide; the sixth sin is indifference towards the victims; and the seventh sin is succumbing to one's own propaganda.

These sins usually occur together, albeit in different combinations and with different meanings. The fascination with violence determines thoughts and actions, including hubris, hero worship and so on. Hubris, in turn, determines the extent of the fascination with violence.

The First Deadly Sin – Hubris / Succumbing to the Fascination of Violence In ancient Greece, hubris referred to the danger inherent in human existence of overestimating oneself, which is counterbalanced by nemesis, or poetic justice. A cautionary example is Icarus, who flew too close to the sun with his self-made wings despite all warnings, causing his glued wings to melt so that he fell into the sea and drowned.

But no revolutionary is impressed by this. The liberation movement wants the extraordinary, the overthrow of the government and the political and socio-eco-

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nomic system. It must therefore radically break with the existing power structures in terms of its actions, thinking and propaganda. The goal is nothing less than the creation of a new world. To be like God is the claim, hubris the corresponding attitude, violence the means, heroes and martyrs the embodiment of these sins. Hybris is therefore the most important attitude, which is also evident in all other attitudes. Together, they form the ethos of the liberation movement, regardless of whether it is a violent revolution like Lenin's or a more moderate one like the one involving liberation theology in Nicaragua.

As the armed wing of Peronism, the Montoneros are eager to go underground. Propaganda messages are published in their magazine Evita Montonera:

> 3 March, Santa Fé
> A combat group of Peronist militias blew up a railway depot in Rosario where 500 tonnes of sugar had been stored.
>
> 4 March, San Juan
> A Montoneros combat group fired an MP at the house of Antonio Polenta, managing director of Peñaflor....
>
> 7 March, Santa Fe
> The Montoneros combat group led by Constantino Razzetti executed police doctor Jorge Rail Capitanelli, a well-known torturer and direct collaborator of the forces of repression. (Evita (Montonera, 1/4, 1975).

There are also reports of the lives and deaths of the heroes.

> When he learned of the planned operation, he decided to take the lead. He assumed the role of commander and died in the fight. Comrade Lewinger recognised that one of the essential ways to respond to the repression in Mar del Plata lay in the military sphere. He maintained this conviction until the end. His life and death are an example of this. (Evita Montonera, 10, 1975)

After the bloody defeat, leader Mario Firmenich explained:

> When we went underground, we expected [...] that the coup would take place immediately. But it did not happen. There was a political strategy behind the coup, known as the 'ripe fruit' strategy, which consisted of keeping Isabel's government in office until society had had enough, until the calls for a coup became louder. This put us in a situation where we had gone underground and yet a political process was underway – with repression, with violence, with a civil war in which anyone on the street could be killed – but nevertheless a political process. And since we had not gone underground solely for personal self-preservation, but as part of an organisation that claimed to have a political strategy, we could not have a polit-

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> ical strategy that ignored the existence of a parliament, a space for freedom of the press, the existence of regular elections, etc. So in a sense it became necessary to take a step back from the idea of going underground and building legal political structures. (Firmenich at Pigna)

At the same time, he explains the indifference to human fate and suffering in a way that fits with hubris: "The goal of a political organisation is not to save people, but to seize power at the lowest possible cost."

Violence also affects those who perpetrate it. A 16-year-old girl wanted to plant a bomb in a police station on her birthday in 1977 and was blown to pieces by it. Giussani dedicated his book *Montoneros. La superbia armada* (Montoneros. The Armed Arrogance) to this young woman, Adriana, and wrote in an epilogue to the book:

> She had left home under a pretext and promised to return to the party her parents were preparing for her sixteenth birthday. […] Adriana was killed by an illness that was not only inflicted on her. An evil that decimated a large part of a generation and still haunts the survivors. That is why I feel compelled to identify it and help ensure that it is recognised wherever it rears its head in all its alienating and monstrous forms. […] Amidst the great massacre that Argentina has suffered in recent years, Adriana's death is one of the few exceptional cases where the military regime cannot be held responsible. Why do I choose this particular death to focus my dedication and indictment? Does this choice signify a reluctance to condemn a regime that wiped out thousands of young people like Adriana?
> I think it is clear from what I have written so far that I am repelled by the ideology that dominated the actions of this military regime, by the perverse practices that derived from this ideology, and by the unpleasant personalities in which these practices were concentrated. But coincidentally, the military regime is not the subject of these reflections, any more than the equally reprehensible Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot or Pérez Jiménez.

The responsibility of the military for their crimes is clear:

> Unlike those of the military regime, which are exposed to general revulsion, these others are protected and concealed by a prestigious revolutionary phraseology and by a particular state of consciousness that generates in a certain enlightened middle class a tendency to share, understand or excuse any irregularity committed in the name of the revolution.

Giussani cannot support this. He wants to address the errors and their causes among the armed youth and thus his own transgressions as a fascist in his youth.

> I think with horror of Adriana's tragic end and of the personality of the person who may have programmed her for this sacrifice. When I try to give this personality a

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> face and a name, I find among its possible identities that of Paco, my old and dear friend Paco Urondo. The extent of a condemnation does not diminish when I see this face; it only becomes more painful. For Paco's face reveals other faces, which are materially further removed from this child murder, but equally committed to the culture that made it possible. Faces that include mine and those of an entire generation that, in a frenzy of literary frivolity, proclaimed the dialectic of machine guns, which was later to be appropriated by their children in less bookish terms.

Even 40 years after the end of the dictatorship, many find it difficult to see the whole iceberg, as Giussani says.

His daughter Laura, born in 1960, said that she had only two goals at the time: to graduate from high school at 17 and to become a martyr of the revolution. "It sounds like a fairy tale, but yes. When the Montoneros said that 70% of the activists would die, but that the remaining 30% would be enough to achieve the goal, I had no doubt that I would be one of those who would give their lives to build a just world."

Eduardo Pereyra Rossi, at 33 the youngest surviving leader of the Montoneros, was one of the last to be murdered shortly before the end of the dictatorship. He left behind poems such as this one:

> Hoy es el día / Mañana no sé / Hoy es el día para hacer / Lo que hay que hacer
> Hoy es el día para soñar / Mañana no sé / Si vale la pena esperar / Todo un día, no sé
> Hoy es el día para luchar / Mañana no sé /Si vale la pena para esperar / Todo un día no sé
> Mañana será el día / Lo sé / Que vale la pena / Lo sé
>
> Today is the day / Tomorrow I don't know / Today is the day to do / What needs to be done
> Today is the day to dream / Tomorrow I don't know / If it's worth waiting a whole day, I don't know
> Today is the day to fight / Tomorrow, I don't know / If it's worth waiting a whole day, I don't know
> Tomorrow will be the day / I know / That it's worth the effort / I know

After heavy defeats, the Montonero leadership published a meagre self-criticism in 1983 at the end of the dictatorship, which was not further explained and mistakes were played down in view of the noble goal of a people's democracy, which was also not described in detail: "Along with these correct approaches, there were mistakes, which we do not deny, but we affirm that such mistakes were made in the struggle to defend sovereignty, the popular sovereignty of the democratic system and the sacred interests of the Argentine nation."

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The distancing of the vanguard from its followers is not a new issue, but it is not perceived as one of the main causes of failure due to an illusory assessment of reality. "In practice, it happens that our theory is miles ahead of reality. When that happens, the vanguard runs the risk of becoming a lost patrol," Walsh remarks laconically.

The end does not justify the means, and the claim that no militaristic sentiments were harboured is clearly intended to reduce the distance between the members and the population:

> All of the above shows that when the fighters of the "Montonero" Peronism had to resort to armed resistance, they did not do so out of a militaristic and even less out of a terrorist desire, but in obedience to the constitutional duty that obliges all citizens to arm themselves for their defence and for legitimate self-defence in the face of state terrorism. […] The "Peronist Montonero Movement" believes and asserts that violence is pointless in the face of a government that fully respects constitutional rights and guarantees. […] The " Peronist Montonero Movement" will act and try to ensure that the next constitutional government is the one that wins the elections. It will begin and end its period of cooperation peacefully and without political agendas or prohibitions for anyone. […] It is the responsibility of all of us to form it.

Republican political scientist Natalio Botana laments the inability to look at the past with self-criticism:

> One of the biggest problems in Argentina is the lack of self-criticism. It is very weak. And since those responsible for the Montoneros show no remorse, we are facing a decline that we have seen in recent years […], the country has always moved between partial amnesty, pardon, forgetting and a lack of self-questioning and recognition. Somehow, over time, the era of political violence in this country came to an end […]
> In Argentina, there was no appeal for a republican democracy. A government of violence prevailed. There were very few who defended the ideal of democracy, as was the case after 1983. […] They (the Montoneros, WH) want to be portrayed as idealists and dreamers.

Daniela Slipak examines the reasons for dissent within the Montoneros, which manifested itself in four short-lived new groups: "La columna José Sabino Navarro" (1972–1975), "La Juventud Peronista Lealtad" (1973–1974), "El Peronismo Montonero Auténtico" (1979–1980) and "Montoneros 17 de Octubre" (1980–1982). The critiques are essentially consistent with those of Perdía and Gelman, but are more radical on the question of violence. This is linked to militarism, a mystified military authoritarianism. Not only is the isolation of the avant-garde noted, but also a reason for it is given, namely the legitimacy of a popular rebellion, which contrasts with the

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illegitimacy of *foquismo*, the armed actions of the avant-garde. Criticism is levelled at the superimposition of the political by the military; violence has taken on a life of its own. Internal discussions, possibly dissent, are suppressed with reference to the "rules". The answer is: "This is not a place for discussion, but for obedience." Ultimately, it remains unclear who the people actually are and what Peronism is.

Overall, the leadership is criticised for its behaviour, its contempt for its members, censorship and sanctions, as well as the loyalty it demands and the accusation of treason when this is not forthcoming.

One of the tragic aspects of the Argentine Guerrilla War is that its dogmatism and coldness stand in stark contrast to the sensitivity and subtlety of the eloquent and cultured writers and journalists such as Haroldo Conti, Rodolfo Walsh, Paco Urondo, Juan Gelman and Osvaldo Bayer. Gelman published Urondo's last poems and wrote in his introduction, "Words":

> When we remember the polemics of the 1960s in this time of passion, when some sought revolution through their writing and others gave up writing for the sake of revolution, we recognise in all its significance what Paco, Rodolfo and Haroldo showed us: the profound unity of life and work that a writer and his texts can achieve. For Urondo, there was no gulf between experience and poetry: "I took up arms because I am searching for a just word," he once said. He often corrected his poems, but he knew that the only true way for a poet to correct his work is to correct himself.
> He was and remains one of the most courageous and lucid poets of the Spanish language, fighting with less complacency against the impossibility of writing. He also fought with and against a social system that was so violent as to create suffering so that the whole world could enter the history of joy. For him, the two struggles were one. Both wrote him, and in both he remained written.

Rodolfo Walsh wrote to him about this suffering in a letter in 1976, not long before the death of both men:

> The deeper you look and the more quietly you listen, the more you perceive the suffering of people, the misery, the injustice, the arrogance of the rich. The cruelty of the executioners. So it is no longer enough to look, it is no longer enough to listen, it is no longer enough to write.

The Second Deadly Sin – Spectacular Murder On 9 May 1970, retired general Pedro Aramburu was kidnapped and a few days later his murder was announced. No one knew who the perpetrators were, but rumours soon spread that the newly formed armed group Montoneros was responsible. In no time at all, the group became famous, just as intended. But it took until 1974 for the Montoneros magazine to publish "La Causa Peronista" in the form of a long conversation between the leading

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cadres Mario Firmenich and Norma Arrostito, which included a confession and a detailed description of the course of events. It was the last issue of this magazine before the Montoneros went underground while Argentina was still a democracy. The look back at the first act forms a bracket around the descent into the illegality of armed struggle. Political struggle is replaced by military struggle, paving the way for a bloody civil war. Only when the Montoneros guerrilla movement was destroyed did the survivors find critical words for what was a misguided decision. With the passage of time, it became clear that the temporary influx of members had blinded them to the misjudgements of the situation. This included the hope that the rapid transformation of the wild mob into an army would give them greater significance and enable them to wage a war of liberation under the protection of international law, which would protect them from possible state terror.

The report by a guerrilla fighter about the spectacular assassination of a leading opponent is another example of hubris. The Montoneros wanted to take revenge on Aramburu, who successfully led a coup against Perón in 1955. They wanted to bring justice and declare themselves representatives of the entire people, in whose name they wanted to dispense justice in a self-appointed prison. At the same time, however, they wanted to mock civilised forms of justice and the balance between politics and morality. This also gave the impression that this was a process that had been practised before, that it is a reference in the narrative of the modern revolutionary liberation of mankind.

"La Causa Peronista" lifted the veil. Three goals are explicitly stated: first, to present themselves to the public as a powerful and fearless organisation; second, to show the most intelligent of the coup plotters "the path to true justice"; and third, to find the exact whereabouts of the body. The leading representatives, Mario Firmenich and Norma Arrostito, recall:

Mario: Aramburu's execution was an old dream of ours. We planned the operation in early 1969. It was about the principle of popular justice – redress for the murders of June '56 – but we also wanted to recover Evita's body, which Aramburu had had disposed of.
But we had to let time pass because we hadn't formed the task force yet. In the meantime, we worked quietly: Aramburu's execution was to mark the organisation's public debut.
At the end of 1969, we thought it was possible to carry out the operation. In the course of the year, the coup plot led by Aramburu to replace the military regime weakened by the Cordobazo had been added to the original motives.
Because of the political significance of the event and the importance we attached to our own actions, we approached the operation on an all-or-nothing basis. The initial group of "Montoneros" was putting all its eggs in one basket with this event.

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Arrostito: The entire "organisation" consisted of twelve of us, including those from Buenos Aires and those from Córdoba. Ten of us were involved in the operation.
In the early 1970s, we began compiling a file without any further information. To obtain addresses, names and photos, we went to newspaper archives, mainly at La Prensa. In the magazine Fernando, I found interior photos of the apartment on Calle Montevideo. This gave us an idea of what it might look like inside.

M.: But we put the most effort into the external file. The building where he lived is opposite the Champagnat School, and we found out that there was a reading room or library on the first floor. So we sneaked in and wanted to read there. The one who initiated this method was Fernando, who was quite cheeky. More than reading, we looked out of the window. We only stayed for a short time, half an hour or an hour. No one ever asked us anything.

A.: That was where we saw him for the first time, up close. He always came out around eleven in the morning, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, sometimes not at all. We saw him three times from Champagnat.
Then we saw him from the corner of Santa Fe Street, taking turns. We came every five minutes to form relays. We had to do it that way because there was a policeman standing on that corner, a blond, chubby one, and we didn't want to attract attention.

M.: We varied our approach during the investigation. The first idea was to pick him up on the street when he went for a walk. We thought about using one of those cars with curtains on the windows and covering the windows on each side with a suit. We thought about it for a long time until we rejected the idea and decided to go in and get him directly from the eighth floor.
To do this, we needed a good "key." The best excuse was to pretend to be officers. Fat Maza and another friend had been high school students and therefore knew how the military behaved. Fat Maza even liked it; he was a real militiaman and began to teach Fernando the movements and commands. They rehearsed together.

A.: They bought some of the clothes at Casa Isola, a military tailor's shop on Avenida de Mayo, next to Casa Muñoz. Fernando Abal was 23 years old, Ramus and Firmenich were 22, Capuano Martínez was 21. That's where they bought the badges, the caps, the trousers, the socks, the ties. To buy some things, they even pretended to be Boy Scouts. A retired Peronist officer donated his uniform: he felt sorry for us, even though he didn't know what we wanted to use it for. The problem was that it was too big for Fernando. I had to act as a seamstress to adjust it to his body. We threw the cap away – it was a bit of a flop, it danced on his head – but we used the jacket and the badges."
How did you get into the house?

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M.: One thing we noticed was that Aramburu had no guards, at least not from the outside. Later, it was said that Minister Imaz had withdrawn them a few days before the kidnapping, but that's not true. In the five months we spent investigating, we never saw an external guard or patrols. Only the doorman looked like a policeman, a stocky, dark-haired man.
Someone thought: if he doesn't have security, why shouldn't we offer it to him? It was absurd, but that was the excuse we used.
The country. In those days, when the operation was taking shape, someone thought of repairing Montevideo Street, one of those light or gas repairs they always do; who knows. What is certain is that half the street was torn up, right next to his house. And we had to erect a protective wall there. […]

M.: Ramus drove the Chevrolet pickup with Norma beside him in the passenger seat. In the back seat sat a colleague dressed as a priest, and I wore a police corporal's uniform.

A.: I wore a blonde wig with light highlights and was well dressed and wearing a little make-up. […]
One companion stayed on the seventh floor; the lift door was left open for support. Fernando and El Gordo rode up one more floor. They rang the bell, standing stiffly in military posture. Fernando was even stiffer because of the "Metra" he was carrying under his olive-green *pilotin* raincoat.
They were greeted by the general's wife. She invited them in and offered them coffee while they waited for Aramburu to finish his bath.
Finally, he appeared, smiling, impeccably dressed. He drank coffee with them while listening with pleasure to the young soldiers. Maza's accent immediately struck him: "You're from Cordoba." "Yes, General." The pleasantries lasted a few minutes while the coffee cooled and the weather grew cooler, and the two tall boys stood and stood and stood, until Fernando's cutting voice said:
"My general, you are coming with us."
Just like that. Without further explanation. At nine o'clock in the morning.
And if he resisted? Then we would kill him there. That was the plan, even if none of us were left alive.

M.: But no, he walked peacefully between Gordo Maza, who put his arm around his shoulder, and Fernando, who gently pushed him with the Metra under his coat.
He probably didn't understand anything. He must have thought that someone had got ahead of him in his planned coup, because he still had no doubt that his kidnappers were military men. […]
He sat on the spare wheel. He didn't say anything, perhaps because he didn't understand. I grabbed his wrist with a twist and felt it slip, give way. Maza, "the priest,"

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Flaca and another comrade got out at Pampa and Figueroa Alcorta and took the bags with the uniforms and some of the iron. […]
In all my years of service, I can't remember an easier escape route than this one. It was a walk in the park. […]
We crossed the Luján River on an old wooden bridge between Luján and Pilar, where no one drives. If the alarm had been raised immediately, we would probably have escaped anyway, because the route was perfect. It took us eight hours to cover a distance that can be done in four, but we didn't drive into any villages or stop to eat or refuel. That's what the taxi was for, a legal taxi that brought us supplies.
Aramburu didn't speak the whole way, except when his companions had to search for the canister in the darkness. "Here it is," he said.
At 1 p.m., the radio began to talk about the "alleged kidnapping." We were already halfway there. […]
We took Aramburu to a bedroom, and that night the trial began. We sat him on a bed and Fernando said to him:
"General Aramburu, you are being held by a revolutionary Peronist organisation that will put you on trial."
Only then did he seem to understand. But all he said was:
'Very well.'
He was calm. If he was nervous, he had it under control. Fernando photographed him sitting on the bed without his coat and tie, against the bare wall. But the photos didn't turn out because the film broke on the first shot.
A tape recorder was used for the trial. It was tedious and exhausting because we didn't want to pressure or intimidate him, and he took advantage of this by delaying his answers to every question, replying, "I don't know," "I can't remember," etc.
The first accusation we made against him was the shooting of General Valle and the other patriots who had risen up with him on 9 June 1956. At first, he pretended to deny it. He said he was in Rosario when it happened. We read him, syllable by syllable, the decrees 10,363 and 10,364, which he had signed, sentencing the military rebels to death. We read him the chronicles of the executions of civilians in Lanús and José León Suárez.
He gave no answer. Finally, he admitted: "Well, we made a revolution, and every revolution shoots counter-revolutionaries."
We read him the press conference in which Admiral Rojas accused General Valle and his men of being Marxists and amoral. He exclaimed, "But I didn't say that!" He was asked if he agreed with him anyway. He denied it. He was asked if he was willing to sign it. His face lit up, perhaps because he thought it was over.
"If that were the case, they would have asked me at home," he said, and immediately signed a statement denying that he had slandered Valle and the revolutionaries of '56. This statement was sent to the newspapers, and I believe it was published in Crónica.

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The second point in the trial against Aramburu concerned the military coup he was preparing, for which we had evidence. He categorically denied this. When we gave him precise details about his connection to an active general, he said that he was "just a friend." It was impossible to get anything out of him with the tape recorder running. But as soon as the tape recorder was turned off and he was having a meal or a break with us, he admitted that the regime's situation was no longer tenable and that only a transitional government – which he saw himself leading – could save the situation. […]

In any case, I believe the subject of Evita came up on the second day of the negotiations, on May 31. We naturally accused him of stealing the body. He was frozen. With a pouting mouth and gestures, he refused to speak and signalled that we should turn off the tape recorder. Finally, Fernando turned it off.

"I cannot speak on this subject," said Aramburu, "because of a question of honour. The only thing I can assure you is that she has a Christian burial."

We insisted on knowing what had happened to the body. He said he couldn't remember. Then he tried to negotiate: he promised to have the body turned up at the right time, on his word of honour.

We persisted. Finally, he said, "I should remember."

"Fine, remember."

It was already getting dark. We took him to another room. He asked for a piece of paper and a paper clip. He wrote before falling asleep. When he woke up the next morning, he asked to go to the bathroom. There we found several torn pieces of paper written in shaky handwriting.

We went back to the courtroom. We questioned him without a tape recorder. He told us the true story: Eva Perón's body was in a cemetery in Rome, under a false name, in the custody of the Vatican. The documents relating to the theft of the body were in a safe deposit box at the Central Bank in the name of Colonel Cabanillas. He could say no more because his honour prevented him.

It was already the night of June 1. We informed him that the court would be hearing his case. From then on, no one ever spoke to him again.

We tied him to the bed. He asked why. We told him not to worry. In the early hours of the morning, Fernando informed him of the verdict:

"General, the court has sentenced you to death. You are to be executed in half an hour."

He tried to persuade us. He spoke of the blood that we young men would shed.

When the half hour was up, we untied him, sat him on the bed and tied his hands behind his back.

He asked us to tie his shoelaces. We did so. He asked if he could shave. We told him there were no utensils. We took him through the inner corridor of the house to the basement. He asked for a confessor. We told him we couldn't bring a confessor because the roads were being monitored.

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"If you can't bring a confessor," he said, "how will you get my body out?"
He took two or three more steps forward.
"What will happen to my family?" he asked.
They told him that they had nothing against them and that they would give them all his belongings.
The cellar was as old as the house, seventy years old. We had used it for the first time in February '69 to bury the confiscated rifles from the federal shooting range in Córdoba. The ladder was wobbly. I had to step forward to help him down.
"Ah, they're going to kill me in the cellar," he said.
We went down. We stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth and stood him against the wall. The cellar was very small and the execution had to be carried out with a pistol. Fernando took on the task of executing him. The boss always had to take the greatest responsibility. He sent me upstairs to hammer on a vice with a wrench to muffle the sound of the shots.
"General," said Fernando, "let's continue."
"Go ahead," said Aramburu.
Fernando fired the 9-millimetre pistol into his chest. Then he fired two shots with the same weapon and with a .45. Fernando covered him with a blanket.
"No one dared to uncover him while we dug the hole where we wanted to bury him."
Then we found what he had written on the night of the 31st in his coat pocket. It began with an account of his kidnapping and ended with a description of his political project. He described his kidnappers as well-meaning but misguided young Peronists. In his opinion, this confirmed that Peronism as a whole would resort to armed struggle if there was no institutional solution for the country."

Every targeted murder tears down the barriers of civilisation and is a step towards a barbaric world. Each subsequent murder becomes easier to commit. But since sooner or later the civilised world will hold the barbarians to account, concealment is the best option. The best way to do this is to kill one of the perpetrators, onto whom the crimes of the others can be pinned. Of the three people involved in the execution, Firmenich, Abal Medina and Arrostito, none of them allegedly fired the fatal shots. Shortly afterwards, when Fernando Abal Medina was killed in a shootout with the police, Firmenich rose to become head of the Montoneros and claimed that Fernando Abal Medina had shot Aramburu.

Although the use of another weapon has since been proven on the body of the deceased, there is no evidence pointing to two of the three participants.

The brother of the alleged perpetrator, Juan Manuel Abal Medina, said in an interview: "I saw him very agitated. He seemed calm, but there was something inside him. Then he said to me: 'Killing is terrible, it's monstrous,' or the other way around: 'It's monstrous, it's terrible.' It was clear that the killing had not been good for him. He pressed me on my shoulders, I squeezed his hands, and he got out of the car. That

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was the last time we saw each other." The alleged confession of an alleged perpetrator, which is primarily propaganda but denies the act.

The confession is veiled. But this does not diminish the hubris. The scientist Pacheco explains loudly:

> There is no doubt that the Montoneros, with their successes and mistakes, are among the great deeds that our people, or at least parts of Peronism, have been able to accomplish. If, in every era, we must try to wrest tradition from the conformism that seeks to subjugate it – as Benjamin emphasises – then it is of fundamental importance to accept anniversaries as emblematic as the half-century that has passed since the emergence of the Montoneros as a challenge to find in this past the spark that can ignite all the hope for the great work of economic, political and cultural transformation that the damned of the earth still deserve to be the protagonists of.

Great deeds. And Firmenich explains in an interview how nobly the death squad behaved: "No, we did not humiliate him, we respected him to the point – I have even said this before – that we did not feel the need to prevent a man who was about to die from tripping over his shoelaces because he was tied up. No, we respected him and even prayed for him publicly. And that's where I learned that you shouldn't hate your enemy." "But you murdered him," the journalist Neustadt objects to this hypocrisy. No, is the polished reply. "That was not a decision made by us," Firmenich claims, "but by the people. It was a decision of the people"; a populist phrase that allows one to sidestep personal, moral and political responsibility in a familiar populist manner. "And with reference to the violent coup of 1955 and the suppression of a Peronist resistance in 1956, Firmenich absolves the 'Montoneros' of any guilt, because 'that is the sad thing about it, because we cannot talk about this situation without talking about the bombing of the Plaza de Mayo, without talking about the shooting of General Valle.'"

"May I ask you a favour?" Neustadt interjects. "Never represent the people in this way again. I beg you." Firmenich replies: "I also want the people to never again feel the need for revenge, as I did."

Juan Manuel Abal Medina is more honest and accepts no excuses. Justifying the physical elimination of one's opponent as a lesser evil:

> … was widespread in Argentina at that time. And it was under the influence of this conviction that all the guerrilla organisations emerged. Not only that, but the violence that was widespread throughout Argentine society at that time was analysed and criticised by many people involved in those events. […] For Peronism, then as now, Aramburu's death was not an assassination, but an execution. Aramburu was not seen as the great enemy of Peronism, but as the murderer of comrades. In his persona, perhaps unjustly, the person responsible for all the violence

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> against Peronism was personified. […] In a publicly available letter, General Perón approves the operation and calls it "an act of justice desired by the entire Peronist people." I believe that crimes committed in a political capacity must always be condemned, and I condemn the crimes of the Montoneros organisation.

Another aspect plays a role here, which was already discussed in Chapter 5 in connection with Martin Fierro's world of gauchos and their violence: pre-modern punishment. Beatriz Sarlo sees a connection between revenge, passion and concreteness in the 19th century, which is replaced in the 20th century by the concept of justice, intellectuality and abstraction. Not everywhere, and not everywhere completely. Argentine history is full of events that indicate the inadequate transition from the age of revenge to that of justice. The fact that the coup plotters kidnapped Evita Perón's body in 1955 not only served to prevent opposition pilgrimages, but was also intended to demonstrate their power to stop at nothing, not even sacred places and symbols. "Aramburu's death was not a murder staged as a trial, not a genuine defence of the idea of justice, but revenge carried out with the added evidence of a conviction."

Of course, the Montoneros are proud of their successes in the fight against the state apparatus and list the victims they inflicted on the police in the second half of 1976 after the dictatorship began. In their magazine "Evita Montonera" they report: On 17 June, the assassination of the head of the federal police, General Cesáreo Cardoso; on 2 July, the bombing of the roof of the headquarters of the federal police security department, killing nine officers; on 12 September, an attack with a car loaded with explosives, killing eleven police officers and two plainclothes police officers. On 9 November, the headquarters of the Buenos Aires provincial police in La Plata was blown up, killing a senior police officer and wounding eleven ordinary police officers. Finally, in December, the Montoneros ended the year by placing explosives in the Ministry of Defence during a conference on counterinsurgency. More than 30 officials were injured, and eleven high-ranking military officers and intelligence service officials were killed in the explosion.

This is not just about fighting the state authorities, but also about raiding police stations to seize weapons and kidnapping people for ransom. The reactions of those attacked are swift and devastating. The losses of the Montoneros are very high. In 1979, the question arises: Who were the Montoneros ? The extremely reckless counteroffensive in 1978 by infiltrators returning from exile costs three-quarters of them their lives.

Only when the victims of the guerrilla movement are honoured without resentment and mutual recrimination can the path to a non-violent society be taken.

Gibraltar Particularly curious constellations arise in the war over the Falkland Islands. According to the Chinese Three Worlds Theory of the 1970s, the countries of

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the Third World should join forces with the smaller developed countries against the superpowers in order to become independent and thus allow greater scope for emancipation movements. In Argentina, this means gaining independence from the United States and also from Great Britain, which had controlled Argentina's economy and politics since the 19th century.

The Montoneros now want to apply this logic to the military and in the war against Great Britain.

When the Argentine military dictatorship attacks the British Falkland Islands in 1982, Prime Minister Thatcher strikes back hard, invoking international law. Under pressure, the Argentine military commissions two experts from the camp of their arch-enemies, the Montoneros, to blow up a British warship in the port of Gibraltar. The terrorists enter Spain, pick up the explosives at their embassy and settle in Algeciras with rental cars and hotel rooms within sight of Gibraltar. But no suitable ship arrives, either because they are too small or because they are oil tankers whose cargo would contaminate the large bay and outrage the environmental movement. Weeks pass until the weekly cash payments for cars and rooms arouse suspicion and the hotel informs the police. Madrid knows about the plot through wiretapping of the Argentine embassy, but wants nothing to do with it and promptly flies the foiled assassins back to Buenos Aires.

The operation is reminiscent of the amateurish counter-offensive. In "Operation Algeciras," just about everything is done wrong. Like drug dealers, the Argentinians pay for hotels and rental cars in cash for weeks, they only have a tourist map of the area, no accurate military maps, and even the forged passports arouse suspicion among the authorities.

Fatigue Ultimately, the attempt to save the reputation and existence of the Montoneros also failed. Firmenich, Perdía and Vaca Narvaja took turns trying to characterise the actions of the guerrillas as resistance in defence of democracy or as a civil war. At the beginning, during the transition to democracy, the resistance thesis prevailed, but later it was seen as a civil war, without renouncing the democratic right to resistance. Firmenich was sentenced to 30 years in prison for murder until Peronist President Menem granted a general amnesty for guerrillas and military personnel. Firmenich espoused the idea of a "flashing" civil war that had existed since 1955, which, like the flashing light on a vehicle, flares up again and again. Unlike Perdía and Vaca Narvaja, Firmenich was in favour of a grand national pact instead of a democratic party system. The multi-party society should give rise to a "National and Social Liberation Front" based on a pact between "the working class, the popular movement and the national entrepreneurial class against the oligarchic-imperialist alliance." After studying economics in Spain, he described this national unity in his doctoral thesis as an alternative to the liberal economic model.

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Like most survivors, Vaca Narvaja definitely wanted to end the fratricidal confrontations.

"I sense a weariness," explains Juan Manuel Abal Medina, "a very healthy reaction by Argentine society to the violence. I hope and believe that it will now be possible to achieve civilised forms of coexistence, and I believe that this is a central goal of the next government. Society must be demilitarised. Not just that of the military officers of the armed forces. We must demilitarise trade union and political life. We must banish arrogance from Argentine society. And I believe that this is something that all Argentinians in their right mind, after the absolute madness that all this has become, with the incredible climax regarding the Malvinas (Falkland Islands, WH) that there is no reasonable Argentinian who does not share these ideas. I believe that this time it will be possible."

What remains is the dispute over the unfortunate wording of "two demons" (Alfonsin), which, in the form of guerrilla warfare and state terrorism had plunged the country into a bloody conflict. In comparison, state terrorism caused far more victims, and the guerrilla forces did not torture or murder sympathisers of the opposing side, kidnap anyone, throw them out of aeroplanes into the sea or invent the category of "disappeared persons". Their murders were limited to representatives of the repressive forces and representatives of the state. Whether the victim figures are accurate or exaggerated, 30,000 victims by the military and around 17,000 by the guerrilla group, as claimed by the "Centro de Estudios Legales sobre el Terrorismo y sus Víctimas" (Celtyv), or whether this is being used for party politics, is irrelevant. Every person kidnapped or killed is one victim too many. And the silence of the former guerrillas about their victims is inappropriate. Take, for example, the murder of businessman Soldati and his driver on the open road, when several Montoneros fired at the car and attempted to plant another bomb under the stationary vehicle to explode 20 minutes later when the police arrived. However, the bomb exploded in the hands of the perpetrator.

Nevertheless, this latest outbreak of violence, which is hopefully the last, is accompanied by the long-overdue democratisation of the country. Violence has overcome the perpetrators of violence. As is usually the case, hubris has led to their own downfall.

The Third Deadly Sin – Spreading Fear and Creating Cohesion by Murdering One's Own Comrades Two murders of members of the EGP (Guevarist Popular Guerrilla Army) founded by Che Guevara in 1964 are particularly spectacular. The EGP mainly attracted members of the Communist Party who were disappointed with its bureaucratic internal workings. The EGP was led by Jorge Masetti, a successful journalist who was the first to interview Castro and Guevara in the Sierra Maestra in 1958, who founded the news agency "Prensa Latina" and was second in command to Guevara, who was formally the leader. The guerrilla group was supposed to operate with

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30 men in the rugged, mountainous area near the Bolivian border, but remained isolated and was eventually largely wiped out in a confrontation with the police. From then on, it played no further role. The reasons for its failure are Masetti's erratic authoritarian leadership style, the low importance of politics in relation to military matters, and the isolation and harsh living conditions. A former member of the guerrilla, group psychiatrist Héctor Jouvé, considered the mental state of many members to be unstable.

The murders served to maintain the cohesion and survival of the group under difficult conditions. They were glossed over by a set of prohibitions used to feign legitimacy. Further details can be found in the "Provisions on Revolutionary Justice" of 1972 and in the "Code of Revolutionary Criminal Justice" of 1975. These stipulate the death penalty for homosexuality, high treason, exploitation of the civilian population, sexual abuse, robbery and other offences.

Pupi Rotblat's "offences" consisted of fainting spells, asthma attacks, disorientation in the terrain, and nervous breakdowns. When he asked to be allowed to return early from a patrol, his comrades suspected that he was trying to escape and feared that he would betray them. He was therefore sentenced to death and murdered with a shot to the head. Bernardo Grosswald, another guerrilla fighter and former bank employee, also could not endure the military climate and training. He did not adhere to military discipline, did not wash, cried frequently and masturbated several times a day. This was enough to warrant a trial, a death sentence and murder.

In an interview, Hector Jouvé explained the background:

- Why was the EGP's military code so strict?
- Because in Cuba they said that the fighters had to be galvanised. If there were homosexuals, I think they also had to shoot them. It was a copy of the code used in Cuba. Camilo Cienfuegos and Che shot some of them.
- What changed after the shooting of "Pupi"?
- I was against it. My brother and Gringo Canelo were there. I didn't take part in the tribunal and refused to give him the coup de grâce. "If you don't obey, I'll shoot you too," Masetti said to me. "Do what you want," I replied.
- Was there a pact of silence about the shootings?
- I couldn't see any improvement in the group. That prompted "Pirincho" to desert as well. Those of us who were there knew what had happened. Just like the second shooting, where I was Grosswald's defender. They killed him on the spot because there was nothing to shoot him with. He was masturbating and delaying the march of the column. It's true that choosing this boy was extremely stupid. A boy who was short-sighted, really short-sighted! And he had flat feet. [...]
- Did the criteria change after the shootings?
They let a lot of people go.
- Why were they so strict with "Pupi" and "Nardo"?
- It was arbitrary. It was as if the group would function better if you did that. Not

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> because the others influenced the group, but because you had to take care of it. It was a message to both sides; the idea was that if you shot one person, the others would change and put more energy into things. None of those who were shot were fighters, they were candidates. And they had physical difficulties keeping up with the pace of the column.

The Montoneros also had their "traitors" and the consequence of the death penalty. Since the leadership believed that torture could be endured, they did not accept the thesis that a statement was forcibly extracted by the enemy, but rather that it constituted voluntary treason.

In 1975, Fernando Rubén Haymal was arrested. He was a specialist in building hiding places for weapons, money, documents and also hostages, who were held in so-called people's prisons. This technique was invented by the Uruguayan Tupamaros. Under torture, Haymal confessed to having been involved in such constructions and revealed so many details that 36 Montoneros were eventually arrested, including the "high-ranking officer" of the Montoneros, Marcos Osatinsky.

One of the Best Haymal is released and tells other members that the military threatened to kill his family. The Montoneros, however, claim that 95 percent of those tortured refused to testify. After thorough investigation, the Montoneros concluded that Haymal was a traitor and, according to the so-called Revolutionary Justice Code, he was sentenced to death for treason, causing torture, humiliation and the death of Osatinsky. Since he was once again a free man, it was not difficult to capture him. No trial was scheduled; instead, he was immediately murdered with two shots. He was then tied up and dragged behind a car until his body was almost unrecognisable, before being dumped on a pavement.

Although only the families of the victims of state terrorism received compensation of up to 100,000 euros, Haymal's family also received compensation.

Finally, the Montoneros condemned one of their best, most popular members, Roberto Quieto, often referred to as number three or even number two. Born in 1938, he was about ten years older than most of the members. He grew up in a working-class family and graduated with honours in law. Like many others of his generation, he was among the critics of the Communist Party. They founded new parties and guerrilla movements such as the Vanguardia Revolucionaria (VR) and the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Quieto joined the ELN and underwent military training in Cuba twice in 1966. With the death of Guevara, the members turned away from the ELN and towards the cities. Quieto became co-founder of the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Like the founders of the Montoneros, but earlier, Quieto also carried out a spectacular action to make his organisation known: in 1969, an attack was carried out simultaneously on 16 stores of a supermarket chain. The target

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was obvious: one of the millionaire shareholders of the Rockefeller family, Nelson Rockefeller, was visiting Argentina as an envoy of President Nixon.

In 1971, Quieto was kidnapped, but thanks to public awareness and protests by lawyers, his abduction was recognised as a legal act. Quieto was back and imprisoned in Rawson. There, in 1972, he and five other leading members of the FSR, PRT-ERP and Montoneros staged the spectacular escape mentioned above, which took him first to Chile and then to Cuba. Sixteen other prisoners who did not manage to escape were shot by the military in their cell block during the Trelew massacre. Quieto was later involved in the merger of the FAR with the Montoneros, which made him the second-in-command. With the establishment of democratic conditions in 1973 under Cámpora, he represented the Peronist strategy of "national reconstruction and liberation," which was to be led by a Peronist movement. Its main force was to be the working class, which would take the first step towards building socialism in Argentina.

In 1974, the Triple A death squad published a list of people to be murdered, including Quieto. In the two years between Perón's death and the military takeover, scientist Marín counted 639 people killed or wounded in "anti-subversive" actions and just as many, 624, in actions carried out by "subversives". In total, there were 8,509 armed incidents during this period, half of them in 1975 alone. That year, there were 359 disappearances. (Izaguirre)

Quieto supervised the "execution" of Alberto Villar, the police chief of Buenos Aires, in 1974. He was accused of stealing the coffins of the "martyrs of Trelew," who had been buried in 1972 at the headquarters of the Justicialist Party in the capital. Villar boasted of having "a box for every Montonero." Quieto was also the leader of the kidnapping of twins Juan and Jorge Born from Bunge & Born carried out by Galimberti, as already mentioned. At the same time "Triple A" murdered the left-wing lawyer Ortega Peña, at whose funeral 350 people were arrested.

In December 1975, while the country was still under democratic rule, Quieto was arrested again by members of the First Army Corps and the federal police in plain clothes. How long he was tortured to obtain information about the Montoneros is not known, nor is the date of his death.

Revolutionary Justice Marxist friends such as Juan Carlos Portantiero and José Aricó were aware of Quieto's strong opposition to the increasing militarisation of the Montoneros. This included the attack on the second largest barracks in the country, where the 29th mountain infantry regiment in the province of Formosa, to seize weapons, resulted in 28 deaths, including eleven Montoneros. Quieto did not support this action internally, even though it was carried out in a manner worthy of a film, with a scheduled flight hijacked in Buenos Aires to transport the attackers there and back.

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Quieto also disagreed with the assassination of the liberal former interior minister of the dictatorship, Mor-Roig, who intervened to support Quieto during his arrest. Quieto did not rule out the possibility of withdrawing from the Montoneros. Thus, the suspicion that Quieto passed on information under torture and must therefore be sentenced to death became a decisive issue in the power struggle within the "Montonero" leadership of the Argentine National Liberation Army. This trial was unjustifiable, not only legally but also politically and morally. If Quieto had made significant statements under torture, this would have had obvious consequences, as Quieto was responsible for military affairs. The trial therefore suggests that it was about the rivalry between the two leaders. The author Gillespie characterises Firmenich as intellectually mediocre, pragmatic, rather cynical, a poor strategist who was useful to the Montoneros in Argentina at certain stages in their history, but who had little charisma and is therefore never a true leader of the people.

Evita Montonera reports on the revolutionary judicial proceedings in the Quieto case. It states:

> In the first days of the year, the National Leadership requests the National Council to initiate a revolutionary trial against Roberto Quieto "for breach of duty as a revolutionary who fell into the hands of the enemy." A few weeks later, in view of evidence that Quieto had passed information to the enemy, the National Leadership requested that he also be charged with treason […]. In February, the Revolutionary Court was established, which as its first measure decided to strip Quieto of his rank of revolutionary lieutenant colonel and to sentence him in absentia. […] Even speaking under torture is an expression of serious selfishness and disregard for the interests of the people. […] According to the Revolutionary Court, this series of liberal and individualistic behaviours has its origins in R. Quieto's practices, particularly in poor decisions regarding problems in his family life […] [The verdict follows] On the basis of all this, this Revolutionary Tribunal has found Roberto Quieto guilty of desertion in the line of duty and treason, taking into account the aggravating circumstances of the crimes, and proposes degradation and the death penalty, to be imposed in a manner and at a time yet to be determined.

Firmenich explains in an interview what the verdict does not say. The trial against Quieto is not about him personally, but about the case. It serves to establish a precedent for behaviour in the face of the coming repression. "We do not allow denunciation; it does not seem reasonable to us that someone should denounce another, even if the torture can be very terrible."

The criticised behaviour of the Montonero leadership, particularly authoritarianism and detachment from the masses, is evident in practice. The murders within the organisation corresponded to this behaviour. They were primarily intended to serve as deterrents. If one compares them with bourgeois laws, they are also pun-

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ishable by penalties for non-compliance. The difference to revolutionary violence, however, is that bourgeois society has largely abolished the death penalty and a plurality of lifestyles is possible. The administration of justice is anchored in the limitation and control of law and politics. Such a bourgeois or republican system of freedom does not exist in a guerrilla movement. A liberation movement that aims to overthrow the political order allows freedom only within the limited framework of struggle and liberation. It strongly criticises, as in the case of the Montoneros, the principles of liberalism, not as a category of economic activity, but as a category of morality, of the creation of a new human being. In doing so, however, the movement adopts the behaviours, mentalities and values practised in the society it criticises and fights against.

Even after the demise of the Montoneros, Firmen seems to dream of a new human being:

> It was not just about a new society, a change in structure, a change in the legal framework or a mere change in ownership of the means of production; it was about a new society in cultural and spiritual terms as well. A society that would produce a new human being, and this new human being was the future of society. The revolutionary fighters were to approach this new human being or even embody him. (In an interview with Pigna)

That is why there can be no liberalism. In a long statement on this subject in Evita Montonera No. 3, March 1975, it says:

> Liberalism is extremely harmful in revolutionary organisations. It is a corrosive agent that breaks unity and solidarity and generates inaction and desertion. […] The liberal does not tolerate anonymity. The liberal opposes organisation, any form of organisation or criticism, because he defends his selfish individuality. And when forced to do so by special circumstances and wanting to defend himself against his inaction, he becomes a permanent critic who never offers solutions and ultimately isolates himself. The liberal resists addressing his personal problems. He separates his political life from his private life. He does not want to reveal the facets of his life that he has no interest in changing, even if he knows that it is necessary and that the whole would demand it.

Liberalism is the main enemy of the armed avant-garde organisation, and the demanded unity of private and political life embodies its totalitarian claim. Political and moral life must follow revolutionary principles that define an "uncompromising, obedient, self-sacrificing, effective and convinced fighter" whose private life also supposedly follows revolutionary principles and is committed to "marital fidelity, monogamy and heterosexuality." (Slipak) Just as the avant-garde construction bears Leninist traits, so the internal criticism and self-criticism bears Maoist traits.

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The Fourth Sin – Being a Victim Hero / Stylising Oneself as a Victim and Achieving Martyr Status When One Is No Longer Able to Be a Positive Hero In addition to the avant-garde and the masses, one of the central elements of a dictatorial liberation movement is the figure of the martyr. He dies for the cause and the movement. He is a special kind of hero, whose lowest form is the example, the role model, and whose exaltation is the hero and ultimately the dying hero. Every political movement has at least one such figure. He is known by name, remembered through texts, images and reports, and also glorified and mystified. His birthplace or grave becomes a place of pilgrimage.

Martyrs serve to mobilise the masses. As chairman of the Montoneros, Firmenich calls out to the 40,000 people gathered in the Atlanta stadium in August 1973: "Today we commemorate the death of all our martyrs, the struggle of an entire people and the example of that great revolutionary who still enlightens us and guides our struggle, Comrade Evita."

A group of Montoneros wanted to carry out an attack, but the bomb they brought with them killed activist Alicia Camps instantly, as we already know. It is October 1973, and democratic conditions prevail in Argentina. Perón won the elections in September with an overwhelming majority. It can hardly be claimed that the bomb defended democracy. An obituary is published in the Montoneros' weekly newspaper, El Descamisado (Oct. 1973, No. 20, p. 8)

> Alicia "Elena" Camps: Present
> You were and remain in the memory of all your comrades who knew you, and also those who did not know you.
> You were not yet 24 years old, but you had already fought and fought hard. You were the first to die in your organisation: DESCAMISADOS.
> Elena: today and always, together with Evita and all our fallen comrades, you are still present in us, you are still calling out: WE WILL WIN IN ONE YEAR OR WE WILL WIN IN 10 YEARS, BUT WE WILL WIN!

A cynical and bombastic text that turns victims into heroes and sacrifices heroes, victim heroes, hero victims. The dead woman is addressed as if she were in a limbo between life and death; she is dead but still present. She can thus be used for an ideological appeal for cohesion. Look, this is what an exemplary fighter looks like. Sacrificial death is the highest means, it serves the goal best. She would have liked to live, but she couldn't decide that for herself. She wanted to be a heroine, but not a suicide bomber, not even a suicide attacker. The bomb exploded uselessly. At least the dead must still serve an ideological purpose. She was simply clumsy, a heroine out of clumsiness. We can use her well as a martyr. She did not die in battle with the enemy, but because of her own clumsiness. This is concealed; instead, she is honoured as the first of a whole graveyard of heroes. The fact that she and the future dead are united

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with Evita in the realm of the dead gives the whole thing a civil-religious veneer. After all, the prospect of victory within ten years at the latest has been dashed. Not only is everything futile, but it is also, from the outset, a high-risk endeavour based on a reckless sedative: "It'll work out somehow." The strategy, based exclusively on violence and isolating them from the rest of the Peronists and the population, blinds the Montoneros to reality. The illusory "counteroffensive" has only filled the heroes' graveyard further.

Norma Arrostito, who was involved in the murder of Aramburu, behaved in an exemplary manner. She was imprisoned in the ESMA and remained alive for a long time in order to identify other detainees, according to the futile hopes of the military. She was no traitor, but thanks to her political and military presence, she was "an important element in the development and strengthening of our party." At times, she was the most wanted woman in Argentina. "Today she has fallen to the bullets of the dictatorship, but she is still with us in her relationships with the MST and through her example."

Moustache is another positive example. In view of his death, he is being added to the gallery of exemplary figures. "Moustache is certainly dead, and we must learn to turn such defeats into victories. The enemy is a specialist in lies; we must be specialists in truth. The enemy steals lives, labour and even illusions. And we must take all that back."

The lives of those who died in battle are exemplary, so death through a positive act is beautiful, the cause is just, and therefore even in death, promotion is justified. Combat groups are given names. Heroic deeds are extremely risky and unexpected actions, such as the aforementioned raid on a barracks.

The escape from prison in Rawson and the flight to Chile in a hijacked plane seems heroic, but the fact that not everyone was able to escape and that some were taken from their cells by the military and murdered gives the story a tragic aspect. Similarly, the fact that those murdered were not leading representatives of the ERP and Montoneros, such as Santucho and Vaca Narvaja, who managed to escape, leaves a bitter aftertaste. The only heroes are those who successfully escaped. Those who were murdered could not escape; they are neither heroes nor martyrs, nor did they die in battle, but were liquidated while defenceless.

The fact that the three survivors of the Trelew massacre were killed years later during the "counteroffensive" is tragic, given their history.

The attack on the aforementioned second-largest barracks of the 29th Mountain Infantry Regiment in the northern province of Formosa in October 1975 was more amateurish than heroic. The goal of capturing as many weapons as possible was far from achieved, with only 50 weapons seized. This was less than hoped for.

A 40-page report by the Montoneros recounts the daring undertaking:

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> The battle begins: The soldiers – armed or unarmed – refuse to obey the order to surrender. They put up fierce resistance everywhere, some of it suicidal. Instilled with a mythical fear of the "extremists, drug addicts, angry 'soldiers' who kill without mercy. [...] To get an approximate idea of the intensity of the attack, one must assume that there were about 60 people on both sides firing simultaneously with FALs, pistols, machine guns, the heavy MA machine gun and grenades. [...] There was strong resistance, which slowed the advance of the platoon and allowed most of them to escape through the streets. *[...]*. The use of grenades decided a fight of three against more than thirty in our favour.
> TAKING OVER THE SERVICE COMMAND This is done by the commando platoon without any major difficulties by disarming the guard. There, the armoury is broken into and more than 50 FAL rifles and an FAP machine gun are found, which we immediately put into operation.
> RESULT OF THE ATTACK ON THE BARRACKS In the attack on the barracks, we lose all of platoons 2, 3 and 4, with the exception of, two comrades who are able to retreat from the guardhouse. This fact significantly changed the operation... The approximately thirty soldiers armed with FALs who started the shooting were joined by officers and non-commissioned officers from the neighbourhood and at least five other soldiers who were on guard duty ten minutes after the attack began. The shooting is impressive and it is difficult to keep track of where exactly the shots are coming from, how many of them are shooting and what kind of weapons they are using. In addition, we were left defenceless on the side from which the main counterattack came, while they reinforced their positions to advance on us, and we should add here that at this point, five of the six vehicles used in the attack had already been put out of action by enemy fire.

The Montoneros killed in the attack are buried in a mass grave nearby. About 20 survivors are murdered by the Triple A before and during the short military dictatorship established shortly afterwards.

In view of the heavy losses, slogans calling for perseverance and heroism are issued during the dictatorship. "Today, less than two years after the gorilla dictatorship began, only eight months after that call, we feel not only deep pain in our hearts, but also hope, the daughter of the heroism of the people, and the satisfaction that an unstoppable process has been set in motion." (Movimiento)

In the end, however, a "Montonero" is chosen as a martyr: the leading member, Sabino Navarro. Perhaps only they can be martyrs. The path to martyrdom begins with a firefight with the police, from which he escapes seriously wounded. Three years later, Evita Montonera writes:

> After wandering through the Sierra de Alta Gracia for days, Negro Sabino ordered his comrade to leave him alone and flee. It was not a request, it was an order. One of those orders that Negro rarely gave. It was an order to disappear and leave him to his fate. His companion obeyed, believing that Negro would fall down on the

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> spot. Sabino had a wound on his leg and another in his chest. He had a fever and his wounds were bleeding constantly. He had also been without food or water.
> Shortly afterwards, the comrade was caught by the police and forced to retrace his steps. When they arrived at the place where the leader of the "Montoneros" had been left behind, they found no one. The Negro had escaped again.
> It was his last courageous act, the one that people remember most. El Negro walked more than ten kilometres alone, almost unconscious from fever. He was weak and exhausted from blood loss. Almost completely powerless, El Negro fell down a slope and lost consciousness. Death overtook him. It was 1 August 1971.

No one knows where Navarro ended up. The Montoneros task one of their comrades with finding him. He finds the death certificate and the grave in Córdoba. Officially, the body was exhumed because the grave had not been paid for. The comrade spoke to the cemetery staff. They knew that the coffin of a woman named Machado had been buried on top of Navarro's coffin. They dug and found Navarro's body. His hands were missing, apparently severed to establish his identity.

> Negro was back among us. At the sight of his companion, who had endured three years of uncertainty and pain, I had a lump in my throat. But I looked at Negro's children, whom he loved so much, those children who were proud of their heroic father [...], and I was happy. Happy and certain that Negro's sacrifice had not been in vain.... A corpse that the enemies of the fatherland had hidden for three years. [...] We have already saved Negro. We will also save Evita, the standard-bearer of the people for more than twenty years, and we will bring her back to her Descamisados, no matter what it takes.

The family fears that Navarro will be heroized as a martyr, which would inevitably lead to his expropriation from his family.

An outstanding example is Marco Osatinsky, who was allegedly betrayed by a comrade. Osatinsky was the organiser of the escape from the prison in Rawson. It was "his great masterpiece," according to Evita Montonera.

> He always knew when something was needed. Generous and open, he always had the right answer. Comrades went to him for advice on family problems. He was always a role model. His partner was exemplary. He never separated family life from militancy. It was important to him to integrate these aspects. He was not only respected for his abilities, but also very much loved. In short, he was a true leader.

Arturo Lewinger, a senior officer in the Montoneros, is also described as particularly warm-hearted. He is supposed to be a role model, but all that remains is the memory of a "fallen hero":

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> (He) always built a sensitive relationship with his comrades; he took the time to talk to those who had problems, to support them, to give them backing. He was not someone who made concessions, but he had a lot of respect for his comrades; this enabled him to achieve a leadership style that was less and less centralised and more focused on teamwork.

Two Bodies With Martyr Status The first is the body of Evita Perón, the second that of Fernando Aramburu. This may seem surprising, as neither of them are martyrs according to the definition just given. Evita is a martyr because she lost her battle against cancer while fighting for her "Peronist people." She, who was able to stir the masses into emotional turmoil from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, despite her advancing illness, which, incidentally, was kept secret from her by her husband and the doctor treating her, gave her best,

After Evita's death in 1952, Perón plans to build a large mausoleum to serve as a place of honour for distinguished Argentine personalities. Perhaps similar to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington or Kubicek's in Brasilia. Time passes. The body is embalmed and placed in the CGT trade union building. The next coup, carried out by Aramburu and others in 1955, is inevitable. As soon as it took place, the military transported the body away to prevent it from becoming a place of pilgrimage. It is known that two additional wax figures were made alongside the embalmed body. To verify the authenticity of the corpse, a finger was removed. It was the real one. The corpse was stored in a military armoury for a while. Aramburu commissioned Carlos Moori Koenig, the head of military intelligence, to do this. Koenig placed the body in the personal care of his deputy, Major Eduardo Arandía, who hid it in his attic. One night, suspecting burglars in his apartment, drew his pistol. A fatal mistake, in which he shoots his pregnant wife.

Koenig takes Evita to his office, where he places her in an upright position, hidden in a box that originally contained material for radio broadcasts. The Vatican arranges for her transfer and burial under a false name in Milan's Cimitero Maggior. For 14 years, Evita's grave is tended by someone who believes that a Milanese woman is buried there.

It is not until 1971 that President Lanusse allows the remains to be returned, initially to Perón's residence in Madrid. It is reported that Perón's wife Isabel has to endure having the body in her house and that Evita's hair is regularly done. Only after Perón's death are the remains brought to Buenos Aires in November 1974, restored and buried next to Perón.

Isabel took up the idea of a grand mausoleum, but nothing came of it. The military ordered the burial in the grave of the Eva Duarte family. Conflicts within the Peronist movement led the Montoneros to use unusual pressure to force Isabel Perón's government to return the body. To this end, they stole the body of Aramburú, who had died in 1970 and was buried in the La Recoleta cemetery.

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On 15 October 1974, the moment arrives. The group is led by Francisco "Paco" Urondo. Their goal is to pressure Isabel Perón's government to return Eva Perón's body to Argentina. The elaborate cemetery operation involves overpowering a police officer with amorous means, using a stolen garbage truck and creative improvisation to lift the heavy coffin out of the crypt and transport it away. The incident had a strong symbolic meaning and demonstrated the strategic and ideological determination of the Montoneros.

The Fifth Deadly Sin – Cyanide / Keeping the Sect Alive Through Self-Sacrifice So that murdering comrades become unnecessary. On 28 December 1975, Roberto Quieto is arrested on a playground in Martínez, Buenos Aires province. Some time later, activists close to the leader are kidnapped and some houses are searched, resulting in the loss of weapons and logistical resources important to the organisation. Convinced that these events were due to Quieto's confession under torture, the national leadership decided to use cyanide capsules. Suicide was to prevent further confessions. Initially, their use was mandatory for senior officers, but at the request of the other members, they were made available to all fighters.

Paco Urondo He is just 46 years old and becomes regional leader of the Montoneros. The dictatorship has only just been established, and many people, including those abroad, are now discovering the gifted poet – who is driving to Mendoza that day and falls into a deadly trap set by the police. He is stopped, the police officers approach him, and now it is a matter of survival. His partner, Angela, with their eleven-month-old child, knows what to do in Paco's place. He urges her to get out of the car and take refuge in a shop while he provides cover. He knows that his ammunition will be exhausted within minutes and that he will succumb to the superior forces. They will not shoot him immediately, but take him away to squeeze as many names as possible out of him, names of Montoneros and other opposition figures.

However, Rodolfo Walsh gives a different version of Urondo's death in a text dated 29 December of the same year, according to former activist and editor Sergio Bufano of the magazine "Lucha armada en la Argentina":

> Paco's transfer to Mendoza was a mistake. Cuyo (region, WH) had been suffering a constant drain since 1975 that could no longer be tolerated. Paco only lasted a few weeks. […] What happened was terrifying. There was a collision with an enemy vehicle, a chase and, at the same time, a shootout between the two cars. Paco, Lucía with her baby and a colleague were there. They had an MP, but it was in the boot, and they couldn't get to it. Finally, Paco stopped, searched for something in his clothes and said, 'You shoot first.' Then he added, 'I've taken the (cyanide) pill and I feel sick.' His companion recalls Lucía saying, 'But Dad, why did you do that?' Paco was shot twice in the head, although he was probably already dead.

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> Walsh, who was a friend of Paco Urondo and describes the events in meticulous detail, adds that the incident took place "in a context of defeat," meaning that many activists – and probably Urondo as well – were unable to bear the climate of repression and death that prevailed in 1976. The denunciations, the betrayals, the advance of the military dictatorship had caused a demoralisation that had to be covered up by any means necessary, even lies. How could anyone recognise that Paco Urondo, a revolutionary poet who had been in prison and whose militant achievements were remarkable, had died from the hasty ingestion of cyanide without resisting death, as required by some procedural rules? The use of poison was permitted if there was no possibility of escape or if the victim was unarmed when confronted by the police. But Paco, discouraged like many of the militants who saw the disastrous situation in the ranks of the National Liberation Guerrilla at the end of 1976, chose to die, even though he might have been able to live. Or at least inflict losses on the enemy. This attitude, this gesture of suicide, which is so human in the face of defeat, as Walsh defines it, could not be tolerated by the "Montonero" leadership, which altered the facts in its official newspaper to avoid any possible contagion of the despair that had overcome the poet. Anyone who witnessed the guerrilla militancy after Videla's coup will remember the deep scepticism that began to spread after 24 March.

The leadership takes cyanide, fleeing to death to save life, the lives of others, of the organisation, of the future, of Angela. Paco Urondo is dead, is the terrible news, like that of the many leading cadres who perish.

In the last of his posthumously published poems, Urondo addresses the contradictions within the population that clearly hinder the revolutionary path. The poem reads:

> Por Soledades.
> Un hombre es perseguido, una / familia entera, una organización, un pueblo. La / responsable de esta situación no es la codicia, sino un / comerciante con sus precios, con la imposición de las reglas del juego. Los empresarios, la policía / con la imposición / de las reglas del juego. Por eso / ese hombre, ese pueblo, esa familia, esa organización, se / siente perseguida. Es más, comienzan / a perseguirse entre ellos, a delatarse, / a difamarse, y juntos, a su vez, se lanzan a perseguir / quimeras, a olvidarse de las legítimas, / de las costosas pero realizables aspiraciones; / marginan la penosa esperanza. / Entonces toda la familia, todo el pueblo, entra / en el nivel más alto de la persecución: la paranoia, esa refinada búsqueda de los perseguidos históricos y culturales. Y ésta / es la triste historia de los pueblos / derrotados, de las familias envilecidas / de las organizaciones inútiles, de los hombres solitarios, la/ llama que se consume sin el viento, los aires / que soplan sin amor, los amores que se marchitan / sobre la memoria del amor o sus fatuas presunciones.

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Through loneliness.
A man is persecuted, an entire family, an organisation, a people. It is not greed that is responsible for this situation, but a trader with his prices, with the imposition of the rules of the game. The entrepreneurs, the police with the imposition of the rules of the game. That is why this man, this people, this family, this organisation feels persecuted. What is more, they begin to persecute each other, to betray each other, to slander each other, and together they chase illusions, forgetting their legitimate, costly but achievable aspirations; they suppress their laborious hope. Then the whole family, the whole people, reaches the highest level of persecution – paranoia, the final stage of the search of the historically and culturally persecuted. And that is the sad story of defeated peoples, of degraded families, of useless organisations, of lonely people, of the flame that dies without wind, of the winds that blow without love, of the loved ones who wither at the memory of love or its vain pretensions.

A great poet whom the public deserves to know. A sensitive and initially surreal poet. Who came to politics from literature. "I took up arms because I am searching for the just word," he said. In 1973, he published the interview "The Shot Fatherland" (La Patria fusilada). An idealist who stood up for humanity without training. The police officers involved in his murder and others were sentenced in 2010 to long prison terms for their involvement in 24 crimes against humanity. His daughter subsequently declared: "This act of justice gives us the comforting knowledge that we no longer walk the same streets as mass murderers." A building for cultural activities has been named after him on the site of the former torture centre at the ESMA in Buenos Aires. How we would love to hear him speak.

Benefacción
Piedad para los equivocados, para / los que apuraron el paso y los torpes / de lentitud. Para los que hablaron bajo tortura / o presión de cualquier tipo, para los que supieron / callar a tiempo o no pudieron mover / un dedo; perdón por los desaires con que me trata / la suerte; por titubeos y blabuceos. Perdón / por el campo que crece en estos espacios de la época / trabajosa, soberbia. Perdón / por dejarse acunar entre huesos / y tierras, sabihondos y suicidas, ardores / y ocasos, imaginaciones perdidas y penumbras.

Benefaction
Mercy for those who erred, for those who hurried and those who were clumsy and slow. For those who spoke under torture or pressure of any kind, for those who knew when to remain silent or could not lift a finger; forgiveness for the slights with which fate treats me; for hesitations and idle chatter. Forgiveness / for the field that grows in these spaces of the difficult, arrogant era. Forgiveness / for letting oneself be cradled between bones / and earth, know-it-alls and suicides, passions / and sunsets, lost imaginations and shadows.

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In January 1977, a document entitled "Report on the Basics and Use of Cyanide" circulated among the Montoneros. The prerequisite was the slogan of every "Montonero" – Resistance until escape or death. Organisational measures were taken to enable escape in extreme cases, including planning dates, deciding to take up arms, and making plans to defend homes.

Forty days before the impending coup, the Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced the leading Montonero, Roberto Quieto, to death. He should have taken the pill.

Years later, Firmenich justified Quieto's suicide as an act of extreme devotion to the cause of national liberation:

> How was it possible that the one who was supposed to be the "new man" could sing under torture? […] From then on, we decided on two things: a trial in Quieto's absence, which had real symbolic value. We knew we wouldn't find any trace of him […] In this trial, Quieto was convicted because he had sung under torture, convicted because he had denounced others. This had the effect of saying: "We will not allow denunciation; it does not seem reasonable to us that someone should denounce, even if the torture can be very terrible […] And there, the compulsory nature of the cyanide capsule was established for the members of the leadership, so that they would not surrender alive" (Pigna).

Everyday life with cyanide seems bizarre in its normality. Rulo from the North Column complained to the leadership that they were not being given tablets or weapons. "We from the north asked for them, but they refused. So we started making them ourselves. We got cyanide, about half a kilo. It was enough to kill the whole gang, and we laughed our heads off about it" (Celosio, Waissberg).

Amidst all the heroism, there is of course also grief and preoccupation with death. The partner of a kidnapped woman writes to her. It is the first letter after her death

> a death that says a lot, or rather, says everything. What was your death if not life itself? What was your resistance if not the conviction of a struggle? […] What I would like to ask you – although I can imagine – is what you felt. It is one thing to be ready to be killed, it is another to say: Kill me now! – Here and now! I don't want to say that they are different […], but between readiness and decision there is a distance, and we know that many have fallen by the wayside."

In this vein, the back page of issue 13 of Evita Montonera, under the headline "I don't want to surrender alive," reported how a fighter killed his "comrade" after she asked him to do so in order not to be handed over "alive" to the "enemy." Given that both had placed the "revolution" and the "organisation" above their own lives in fulfilment of a "just order from the organisation," it was decided to promote them and award them honours.

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Moni was a soldier in the "Montonero" army. Her partner belonged to a base unit of aspirants.

> On 7 May, my partner and I decide to go to my old parents' house, where I want to get changed and we can have some time to ourselves. We arrive at 11:30 a.m. When we go inside, we don't notice anything unusual.
> At around 2:30 p.m., Moni is reading and I am getting changed. Suddenly, the glass panes of the front door are smashed. I go to the dining room and Moni fetches the guns from their hiding place. I go to the stairs and ask, "What's going on?" to find out who it is; they tell me to open the door, police.
> We take the weapons, throw a grenade in their direction and begin to retreat. I go out into the courtyard and cheer for the Montoneros. At that moment, one or more shooters concentrate their fire on us. Crouching down, we try to take cover from their fire, but this proves impossible as we cannot locate the enemy's positions. We move towards the bathroom, passing through a passageway with no parapet, as there is only a metal railing on the side where the enemy is standing.
> When we enter the bathroom, Moni says she is wounded and leans against the wall (behind the bathroom). I can see her weakening from the wound in her chest and losing a lot of blood. She says she does not want to surrender alive and that I should help her kill herself (from the report of Moni's companion).

The article continues:

> Both comrades put the revolution and the organisation above their own lives. With their resistance metre by metre, with the comrade's wish not to surrender alive, and the comrade's attitude to help her fulfil this just order of the organisation.
> Her steadfastness and love for the people and the organisation, proven in daily practice, leave me in no doubt that I will fulfil her request.
> I take her weapon and decide to take a chance to free myself. To do this, I leave the bathroom with both weapons and fire forward and downward to locate the enemy. I see one running away down the hallway. I fire a shot at him and jump onto a rear roof that leads to a workshop. I come out and realise that I am slightly injured. This prevents me from simply walking away. I decide to commandeer a car. The guy takes me to a place near where some of our comrades are. I arrange a meeting with my superior and inform him of the situation.

The article gives an assessment of the events:

> By making these decisions, the comrades demonstrate not only their love for the revolutionary project and the organisation it embodies, but also a deep and rational understanding of the class of enemies we face. Their cruelty and determination to destroy anyone who challenges the power of exploitation means that there

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> is no return ticket on this journey. The alternatives are victory or death.
> Comrade N. was promoted to the rank of officer and honoured for his outstanding achievements in fulfilling his revolutionary duty. Comrade Moni demonstrated sufficient political understanding and ideological solidity through her attitude towards the enemy to become a full member of our organisation (our party). This status was awarded to her by the Montonero National Council in recognition of her memory.

The crucial questions are avoided. How did he shoot her? Why is this being kept secret, even though armed struggle is the top priority? And how does the comrade feel today when he thinks about the moment his girlfriend was shot – assuming he is still alive?

Towards the end of World War II in 1945, cyanide was a common poison in Germany to escape the feared revenge of enemies, rape, punishment, degradation or shame. 700 suicides took place in the small town of Demmin alone, not far from today's Polish border.

There is a photograph showing the deputy mayor of Leipzig slumped at his desk two weeks before the arrival of American troops. A woman is lying on a sofa. More than 200 politicians, officials and military personnel committed suicide. The poison was, so to speak, on everyone's lips.

The Sixth Deadly Sin – Indifference / Towards Strangers and One's Own Victims The distance between the organisation and the "people" reported in the chapter on the Montoneros and noted by many members is not due to a practice that unintentionally promotes such a distance, but to a deliberate avant-garde concept that is close to Leninist Bolshevism. This includes a vanguard, selected and ideologically trained members, and the combination of political and military struggle.

In the case of the Montoneros, however, two further elements are added: the absolute primacy of military struggle and the emotional coldness with which the organisation is placed above everything else with bombastic pathos. People are indifferent, whether they are actors or victims of their own or enemy ranks. In Germany, before the rise to power of totalitarian National Socialism, the behavioural doctrine of coldness became a cultural trend that emotionally promoted totalitarianism. (Heuer)

Among the Montoneros, as we have already seen, there was a clear difference between the warm-hearted Roberto Quieto, who was respected, if not loved, by the population, and the withdrawn Mario Firmenich, who was coldness personified. The fact that Quieto disappeared and was sentenced to death *in absentia* could only be to the advantage of the representative of coldness.

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> Firmenich advocated the rational coldness of politicians, as exemplified by Perón, the "prototype of the rational politician, the strategist, the cold man, the man who made decisions without emotion. And on that day (1 May 1974 in the Plaza de Mayo, WH), Perón was not the cold strategist, he was the emotional man, and he reacted emotionally, he reacted with insults that have no place in political discourse. That triggered a tragedy. (Pigna)

Firmenich, who grew up in a wealthy middle-class family, was educated at the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, the country's most traditional school, which has produced numerous personalities such as two Nobel Prize winners, many doctors and scientists, and numerous cultural figures, including the writers Juan Gelman and Alberto Manguel. The list of graduates reads like a who's who of Argentine society. It also includes the names of Firmenich's two friends, Fernando Abal Medina and Carlos Ramus, both co-founders of the Montoneros. They were strongly influenced by the charismatic liberation theologian Carlos Mugica and came into contact with the influential magazine "Cristianismo y Revolución".

Christianity and revolution aim at material and spiritual emancipation, a just society and a new human being, and Firmenich pursued both goals. However, he focused on structural changes and the lure of seizing power.

> The goal of a humanitarian organisation is to save people. The goal of a political organisation is not to save people, but to seize power at the lowest possible cost. Under these circumstances, the approach of revolutionary war or guerrilla warfare (as in Cuba) or urban guerrilla warfare (culminating in an uprising as in the case of Algeria) or so-called regular or irregular warfare in the Vietnam War was legitimised at the international level. General Perón developed these concepts very clearly in his writings and films. The concept of developing resistance against oppression, which was legitimised by the Church itself, is legitimised by international law, which was very clearly expressed in the foundations of the Amnesty Law of '73. (Pigna)

His instrumental thinking was already evident earlier. The statement that the goal was not to save people but to seize power was not only clearly suited to a dictatorial solution, but also differed from a similar-sounding republican orientation. Arendt also explains that she was not concerned with the salvation of individuals, but with the world, that is, the space of pluralistic freedom and its institutions. Both are concerned with the world, but they differ fundamentally in whether they advocate power in the sense of vertical domination or horizontal political equality.

Leading cadre José Amorim confirmed this in an interview:

> Personally, one can attribute a number of characteristics to Firmenich: authoritarianism, rigidity, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, irreverence, and so on. But these

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> characteristics are common to many leaders, revolutionary or not, and will continue to be so in the future. [...] The problem with Firmenich was his lack of political skills and also his lack of understanding of Perón and the unconditional support of the people for him, of the political model proposed by Peronism and of the Peronist movement as a revolutionary movement as a whole. He shared this problem with other members of the national leadership of the 'Montonero'. This led to the controversy with Perón and a feeling of humiliation over certain attitudes Perón took after the Ezeiza massacre.

This reveals an undialogical, Nazi-like character. Firmenich always kept his inner feelings hidden, rarely spoke about his past and refused to contribute to biographies.

All statements clearly reveal a pronounced connection between authoritarianism and violence, a tendency towards dictatorial behaviour that is not communicative and free of violence, but violent, not interested in dialogue-based power building, but in silent execution. In this way, the leadership promotes the bureaucratisation of the movement and unleashes violence as an end in itself. Mao saw the long-lasting people's war as a school for raising awareness and revolutionising the local population in China. This sounded like an emancipatory process of self-knowledge, enabled and guided by the avant-garde. Think of Paulo Freire's literacy campaign with socially critical content in Brazil.

But in the case of the Montoneros we encounter the opposite process. It is by no means emancipatory, but rather subject to the physical and psychological control of a clique calling itself the avant-garde. Their path leads to dictatorship. In Silencio, Cuba, Claudia Hilb clearly describes Cuba's path from the seizure of power to dictatorship as the violent establishment of equality under the leadership of those in power. The democratic alternative described by Fred Dewey as a "school of public life" is quite different. It is based on the practice of civil society participation and the experience of collective action and judgement. The school of war in the case of Argentina is the exact opposite. It is based on nothing less than discourse as obedience, dissent as treason, politics as violence, emancipation as self-criticism and judgement as logical reasoning.

The Montoneros murdered not only for political reasons, but also to mobilise their members. The assassination of Perón's confidant, Rucci, in 1973, the conservative Peronist trade union leader, "was something we needed," a Montonero told journalist Pablo Giussani some time later. "Our people barricaded themselves in the offices. At times, it was necessary to protect them from this danger by resorting to military action." It was a kind of revolutionary self-therapy with human sacrifices.

Throughout all this, Firmenich remained the undisputed leader.

The coldness is evident in an interview Gabriel García Márquez conducted with Firmenich in 1977, the year the Montoneros began their free fall with numerous ca-

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sualties. To García Márquez, Firmenich appeared like a wild cat: "Intense eyes, a slight smile, with hard, gaping teeth, sideburns with red, bushy hair and moustache hairs that could just as well be fake." The prognosis of the downfall of the Montoneros leaves Firmenich cold. He is capable of clear political analysis,

> […] but despite this political clarity, I cannot shake the impression that I am talking to a man of war – indeed, Mario Firmenich, who was born in Buenos Aires in 1948, has had little time in his life for anything other than war, and his education and experience are primarily of a military nature; moreover, that the "Montoneros" lack the ability to deal with political options, that they only have the military aspect of the problem in mind, and that, in my opinion, a military solution is the last and most risky alternative left to them.

This indifference towards the person also characterises Firmenich's TV interview with the journalist Neustadt. He gives the impression that he bases his actions on indifference. "We respected him (the kidnapped Aramburu) and even prayed for him publicly. And that's where I learned that you shouldn't hate your enemy." But the enemy is not a human being at all, but a function. There is also no question of guilt, because the crime was not committed by the Montoneros, but by the people of their own free will, represented by the avant-garde, as Firmenich explains in the same TV interview.

He remains silent about all this, because otherwise the media would pounce on him, he explains. When Maria O'Donnell interviewed him in 2020 while writing her book about Aramburu, he says: "Journalists who are functional in my exclusion treat 'Firmenich' as a 'historical figure', that is, as someone who is no longer alive". Someone who is buried. Someone who should not exist in the future of history. There have been several attempts to write a biography of Firmenich. But in vain. Not only the contemporary witnesses remain silent, but also Firmenich himself. The authors of the only comprehensive biography, Waisberg and Celesia, suspect that old scores still need to be settled or that former Montoneros are remaining silent for the time being because they hold high political office following the restoration of democracy.

The Seventh Deadly Sin – Succumbing to Triumphalism / One's Own Propaganda Triumph overshadows mistakes that have been made, which can be dismissed as insignificant. Firmenich admits that it was a mistake to go underground under democratic conditions. It was also a mistake to assassinate Rucci. The temporary surge in support for the Montoneros fuelled the illusion that this was the result of a correct strategy. Looking back with a sober eye, Rucci's murder appears to have been a mistake: "We thought we could negotiate better terms if we put a dead body on the table for the old man (Perón, WH), but history has shown us that this was not the case. It was the wrong political decision." In 2004, he confirmed his statements in the magazine

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Noticias: "Yes, from our point of view, Rucci's killing was a political mistake, like the whole civil war that Argentina went through." (Caparrós) Parallel to this self-criticism, Miguel Bonasso said at a press conference in 1997: "Instead of killing Rucci, we should have killed López Rega."

Further problems include centralism within the Montoneros and the leadership under Firmenich's control. "Under normal republican conditions," explains Firmenich's biographer Celesia, "he could have been an officer, because his vocation and his virtues for war are undeniable." Added to this is his leadership ability. Celesia explains this with the insight that "to be a leader, you first have to be determined to be a leader, and Firmenich wanted to be a leader."

Added to this is his intelligence. When he wrote his highly acclaimed essay "Peace is Possible" as a schoolboy, he was recommended as a "role model" for children of his age. His father later praised his great sense of fairness. His encounters with Christian and political movements had a strong moral influence on him.

However, none of this prevented him from making mistakes. Firmenich rejected criticism, believing that the avant-garde did not make mistakes. Decentralisation was rejected. Gelman and Galimberti's demands for more political action instead of military action were rejected. The demand for an open party conference was also rejected. On the contrary, it was expressly prohibited. And those who did not sacrifice themselves were sentenced to death. Decentralisation and participation are superfluous because everything is going so well. Triumphalism.

The fact that around 50 Montonero fighters were killed within two days in the last quarter of 1976 did not shake the leadership. Walsh, who was not only a brilliant journalist and analyst but also a politically minded comrade, criticised the blindness with which 500 military actions were carried out in 1975. In a letter to the leadership, he expressed his deep disappointment and called for two changes:

> The council document criticises militarism, but in militaristic terms. The entire document is like a strategy drawn up in the sandbox, and our reality has nothing to do with this approach. To make policy, you first have to think in political terms and formulate them simply and clearly.
> Triumphalism: Despite the blows we have suffered and the corrections made to the document, we remain triumphant. We are convinced that the enemy's plans have completely failed, and we continue to underestimate him. This is very worrying, and we believe that it is essentially due to a lack of understanding of our own history. We will try to illustrate this: if we do not reflect on the reasons for our spectacular growth and our representativeness among the population in the years 1970 to 1974, we come to the conclusion that this is not because we acted correctly, with proposals that were accepted and adopted by the people, but because we are geniuses, and if we are geniuses, then it is irrelevant whether we do things right or wrong. Whatever we do will be right,

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writes Walsh sarcastically, criticising

> […] excessive pursuit of power. We do everything and we think big. Our struggle is a war. Our propaganda must reach four million people. Although we criticise militarism, the entire document seems to be a manual on how one army can break through the encirclement of another and then defeat it. We must be more modest. We must defend ourselves against dictatorship together with the people. We need a lot of propaganda. We must organise ourselves in the struggle, without megalomania and with a long-term perspective. This is the summary of our general views. In summary, they have evolved militarily and politically. We are regressing in both areas. And that is because it was not possible to move forward without politics. We must admit this, even if it hurts.

Two years later, in February 1979, Galimberti finally broke with the Montoneros, together with Juan Gelman, Patricia Bullrich, Pablo and Miguel Fernández Long and other leaders**.** At that time, the leadership of the Montoneros, Mario Firmenich, Roberto Perdía and Fernando Vaca Narvaja, had gone into hiding in Cuba. From there, they accused the dissidents of "treason," demanded the establishment of a "revolutionary tribunal" and called for "the harshest punishment," i.e. shooting Galimberti wherever he was found. However, the sentence was never carried out.

Walsh continues his critique and develops a "hypothesis of resistance" based on two fundamental principles: "The renunciation of individual terrorism, which 'disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution' (Lenin)," and the decision "not to carry out indiscriminate military actions that prevent us from working politically within the ranks of the enemy or deprive us of the basis of human rights."

This refers to actions such as the attack on the dining hall of the Federal Police Headquarters, which was blown up on 2 July 1976 during an operation in which Rodolfo Walsh was involved in the preparations: 23 people were killed.

"After the coup, we made a mistake," Walsh said, "because instead of engaging in politics and talking to all sides, we decided that the main weapons of confrontation were military ones." The battle on the purely military level had been lost, making political steps all the more urgent. But Firmenich and his colleagues do not see it that way at all. In their triumphalism, they believed that the military had in fact run out of steam for its offensive and that they should therefore prepare for a counterattack that would enable them to seize power once and for all

Realistically, the attacks on individuals and acts of terrorism should be stopped. "A hundred officers spread across the territory are enough to support the resistance if it has sufficient resources in the form of money, documentation, propaganda and explosives."

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At the same time, Walsh argued in favour of offering peace to the military by admitting military defeat, but paving the way for peace with the "recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the validity of its principles under international control by both sides" and the mutual commitment that "the future of the country must be resolved by democratic means."

It was in the last months before his violent death that Walsh worked on alternative paths. When the Montonero leadership, misjudging the balance of power, organised a counter-offensive whose catastrophic failure was foreseeable, Juan Gelman wrote to the Supreme Council of the Peronist Montonero movement, represented by Rudolfo Puiggrós, on 12 March 1979:

"This leadership of the PM […] has developed a strategy and tactics for the counteroffensive that will lead to the total suicide of the 'Montoneros' […] It insists on a militaristic *foquismo* outside the masses. […] What the leadership of the so-called PM is trying to do is to fall back into the battle of the apparatuses that led to the death of thousands of our comrades and to the reduction of our political space within the masses." Gelman criticised the fact that military ranks were determined from above and that there was no internal democratic life. Finally, he complained of being labelled a "deserter" and thus condemned to death by firing squad according to the rules of the Montoneros.

Those criticised, the survivors, remained silent. Only a few isolated, undaunted, triumphalist voices were raised: "Without a doubt, the 'Montonero' Argentine National Liberation Movement, with all its successes and mistakes, is one of the great heroic deeds accomplished by our people, or at least by parts of Peronism."[1]

To the Short End Taken together, the mistakes paint a psychological portrait of Guerilleros as a "man of war" surrounded by Montoneros, who, in García Márquez's opinion, "lack the ability to deal with political options because they only have the military aspect of the problem in their heads." Within this world, discourse is understood as obedience, dissent as treason, politics as violence, emancipation as self-criticism, and judgement as logical reasoning.

The breath of violence blows across the country as a cultural legacy of the caudillos and gauchos, from where the path of the guerrilla war led to the dead end of dictatorship. But nothing is inevitable in politics. The guerrilla movement had been destroyed and the military had been discredited on two counts. Democracy offered opportunities for political participation and a welfare state, equality before the law and justice, republicanism. However, a democratic future was burdened by old structures and behaviours. The burden of the past weighs heavily. In his 2018 report, the UN Special Rapporteur condemned the flagrant violation of human rights, partic-

1 Mari ano Pacheco, Montoneros: 5 hipótesis, 50 años después, in Lobo Suelto, 2020

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ularly in prison conditions, with widespread violence, abuse of all kinds and an apparent culture of impunity among the security forces.[2]

However, there is the commitment of civil society organisations that are aware of the burden of the past and already opposed the power of violence during the dictatorship. It is not so much theoretical insights as courageous, joint actions that point the way to a new practice.

What remains? Juan Gelman contradicted his comrades and forgave the military who murdered his son and daughter-in-law but allowed his granddaughter to be born and gave her up for adoption. Gelman spoke poetically to gain the strength to go on living. He responded to the famous Carlos Gardel, who 50 years earlier had called for peace in his well-known tango Mi Buenos Aires querido (My beloved Buenos Aires):

Mi Buenos Aires querido /
Cuando yo te vuelva a ver /
No habrás más pena ni olvido
My beloved Buenos Aires /
When I see you again soon /
You will no longer suffer sorrow and oblivion.

Gelman, on the other hand, lives in a troubled time, unable to leave or stay, unable to rest, but in need of the strength to resist and engage in civil disobedience:

Mi querido Buenos Aires
My beloved Buenos Aires:
Sitting on the edge of a worn-out chair,
dizzy, sick, barely alive,
I write verses, previously wept over,
about the city where I was born.
They must be captured, for it was here
my sweet children were born,
who, despite all the punishment, sweeten you beautifully.
We must learn to resist.
Neither to leave nor to stay,
to resist,
    even though it is certain
that there will be more sorrow and forgetting.

2 United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Nils Melzer, 2018 https://www.ohchr.org/es/statements/2018/04/preliminary-observations-and-recommendations?LangID=S&NewsID=22974.

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