

MEMORY, STATE VIOLENCE, AND REVOLUTION:
MEXICO'S DIRTY WAR IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ

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by

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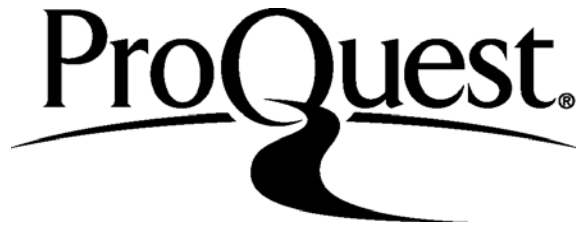
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Abstract

After the uprising that took place in Madera, Chihuahua on September 23, 1965, the first armed challenge to the state since the Mexican Revolution, the north became a region of historical significance for understanding the subsequent “Dirty War” that spanned from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Ciudad Juárez was a key locale in which a wide variety of revolutionary groups conducted both open and clandestine activities. Attempting to rouse the masses, a dedicated few organized protests, counter-meetings, popular assemblies, and launched a *prepa popular* to reorganize and democratize education. The Mexican state responded to these events with repression, with many Juárez residents jailed and some disappeared. This research compiles three oral histories of *juarenses* who were persecuted by the state for their political activity, as well as utilizes archives from regional newspapers to reconstruct several watershed events that affected the city. Through a theoretical framework that considers state violence, revolution and resistance, and collective memory, this research seeks to uncover both the motivations of some of the individuals persecuted, and questions how this time period is both remembered and forgotten today.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction and Antecedents	1
1.1 Defining “Dirty War”	3
1.2 Latin America and the Cold War	7
1.3 The Political Situation in Mexico	10
1.4 The Situation in the North.....	12
1.5 The Assault on Madera.....	15
1.6 Ciudad Juárez.....	16
Chapter 2: Historiography, Methodology and Theory.....	19
2.1 Historiography of Mexico’s Dirty War.....	19
2.2 Methodology	23
2.3 State Violence	26
2.4 Revolution and Resistance.....	28
2.5 Collective Memory	31
Chapter 3: Voices.....	37
3.1 Dr. Roberto Vázquez Muñoz, 90	37
3.2 Alberto “Beto” Domínguez Rodríguez, 63.....	42
3.3 Héctor Federico Staines Orozco, 67	48
3.4 Guerrilleras and Other Voices	51
3.5 Summary	57
Chapter 4: Events.....	58
4.1 Tlatelolco, October 2, 1968	58
4.2 Luis Echeverría’s Visit, April 26-27, 1970.....	64
4.3 The Storming of the Prepa Popular “El Chamizal”, August 27, 1972.....	67
4.4 Editorials and Motivations.....	70
4.5 Summary	74
Chapter 5: The Aftermath.....	75
5.1 From Policing to Organized Crime.....	76

5.2	The End of PRI Rule.....	78
5.3	Prosecuting the Dirty War	79
5.4	Contemporary Violence and Fears of a New Dirty War.....	82
5.5	Memory Half a Century On	85
5.6	Summary	88
Chapter 6 - Conclusion		90
Bibliography		95
Vita		99

Chapter 1: Introduction and Antecedents

“National sovereignty is bestowed essentially and originally upon the people. Every public power derives from the people and is instituted for their benefit. The people possess, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or change their form of government.” – Article 39, 1917 Mexican Constitution

“Querían tierra, pues denles tierra hasta que se harten.¹” – Práxedes Giner Durán, Governor of Chihuahua, ordering the mass burial of the Madera assailants in 1965

In August of 1977, ten heavily armed men from the feared *Brigada Blanca* (White Brigade), including its notorious commander Miguel Nazar Haro, arrived at Josefina Galarza’s house at 1523 Mimas Street in Colonia Satelite, Ciudad Juárez, demanding she turn over hidden weapons and reveal the whereabouts of her daughter Leticia.² They took away Josefina and her 18-year-old son Francisco Javier. The prior day they had detained another daughter Patricia in downtown Juárez, as well as several other neighboring families. All were blindfolded and driven to a building where they were tortured physically and psychologically, and heard the screams of others. After 48 hours the Galarza family was left near the Juárez airport with their blindfolds still on and told to count to 100. The *Brigada Blanca* was looking for Josefina’s daughter Leticia, who was a 26-year-old maquila worker for RCA and a political activist. Leticia had already left Juárez for Mexico City as she was aware she was targeted, but was subsequently arrested in 1978. She disappeared along with her husband and his family, leaving behind a one-year-old daughter who her younger sister Judith raised.

That sister, Judith Galarza-Campos, became a director of the Caracas-based human rights organization *FEDEFAM* (*Federation of Associations for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared*)

¹ “They wanted land so give them land until they are sick of it.”

² Rafael Nuñez, “Of Juárez and the ‘Dirty War’ in Mexico,” *Newspaper Tree*, May 1, 2006, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://archive.newspapertree.com/features/print/910-of-Juárez-and-the-dirty-war-in-mexico>.

and traces her current activism to the disappearance of her sister. It was not until the early 2000s that Judith and her family were able to piece together the evidence from Mexico's national archive, with photographs and confessions showing that Leticia was in the custody of the infamous military prison *Campo Militar Número Uno*. The family was warned to make no formal complaints about their detention or torture, or they would be killed.

This anecdote could have taken place in many countries in Latin America during the Cold War. Governments throughout the hemisphere targeted perceived communist threats with brutal repression, often with the consent or support of the United States. The events that we now refer to as Mexico's Dirty War largely took place in Guerrero, Mexico City, and other regions in the south. Yet while numerically smaller, there were many dedicated guerrilla groups and student activists in northern cities who maintained ties with those back in the capital. Many middle class Juárez residents went to Mexico City for their studies, and a small core of intellectuals and workers either stayed in Juárez or went back and forth, dedicating themselves to revolution through both nonviolent and violent means. Throughout the 1970s, Juárez was home to chapters of diverse organizations such as the *Liga 23 de Septiembre* (LC23S), *Comando Lacandonos*, *Frente Urbano Zapatista* (FUZ), and *Movimiento Armado Revolucionario* (MAR). Mexico was home to over 30 guerrilla groups, which were eventually targeted by the *Dirección Federal de Seguridad* (DFS) and later the aforementioned *Brigada Blanca*, a secret police created in 1976 that aimed to eliminate the last remnants of political dissidence. Since the state has never compiled numbers of people who went missing or were killed during this time period, it is hard to accurately gauge the scope of state violence. But there is consensus among activists that at least several dozen Juárez residents were murdered or disappeared following their arrests, and

many more were detained and targeted with retribution for their activities.³ Nationwide, the U.N. has calculated that 347 forced disappearances occurred between 1960 and 1980, whereas human rights groups calculate the number somewhat higher, around 557.

Broadly speaking, the Mexican Dirty War took place between 1964 and 1982, spanning the *sexenios*⁴ of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Luis Alberto Echeverría, and José López Portillo. There were both urban and rural components to this long-simmering conflict. Most of those targeted were middle class and had above-average educational attainment; the widespread popular support that guerrillas sought never materialized. Yet despite the relatively small composition of insurgent groups, the Mexican state took any threat to its power seriously, and unleashed decades of repression targeting revolutionary groups and their perceived sympathizers. This research attempts to recover the voices of those persecuted by the state, and from their perspective will address some of the following questions: Who were some of those targeted in Ciudad Juárez? What were the motivations and demands of the opposition groups? What were some of the watershed events that affected Juárez? How did the state adapt its response to the perceived threat over time? How is this history remembered today?

1.1 DEFINING “DIRTY WAR”

Prior to delving into the example of Mexico, I will attempt to define and problematize the term “dirty war”. The French term *la sale guerre* first appeared in 1945 in relation to France’s conflict and tactics in Indochina, and was further used in the Algerian conflict. Starting in the early 1960s, the Spanish *guerra sucia* was synonymous with heavy-handed state repression of

³ Héctor Staines, interview by author, El Paso and Mexico City (phone and email), March and April, 2015.

⁴ Presidential terms of six years

insurgent groups in Latin America, often situated within a Cold War context. Linguistically, there is a moral overtone in the adjective “dirty”, implying tactics that are underhanded and distasteful. However, usage by journalists and scholars diverges from this original use; often today the widespread use of rape in war is described as a “dirty” tactic.

Two experts on War Studies, M.L.R. Smith and Sophie Roberts examine four concepts that are usually present in “clean” wars and absent in dirty wars.⁵ Firstly, in widely accepted ways of waging war, there is a declaration, a stated purpose, and an identification of adversaries. Often in dirty wars there is an intentional vagueness about when, where, and against whom hostilities may be directed. Dirty wars therefore tend to linger over years or even decades. Secondly, traditional warfare is guided by rules and conventions that are upheld by international norms and treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. Dirty wars are marked by the absence of rule of law and conformance with rules, for example regarding the treatment of prisoners or use of torture. Thirdly, boundaries between combatants and civilians are usually adhered to, but in dirty wars this line is crossed. Often shadowy groups such as paramilitaries are used to explicitly target the civilian population. Lastly, traditional wars are between states, which in the Weberian conception theoretically possess a monopoly on violence. Dirty wars are often internal political struggles. All four of these elements were present in Mexico’s Dirty War.

Several other characteristics of dirty war are relevant to this study. Dirty wars often occur in weak or failed states, where there is utmost concern that political dissent could spiral out of control and threaten power.⁶ There is an overlap as well between dirty war and civil war, as was manifested in tactics in Central America during its civil wars. Mexico never approached this level of conflict. Also, dirty war tactics can engender popular support. Many Mexicans,

⁵ M.L.R. Smith and Sophie Roberts, “War in the Gray: Exploring the Concept of Dirty War,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 31 (2008): 380.

⁶ Smith and Roberts, “War in the Gray,” 380.

Argentiniens and Chileans actively backed the state using whatever means necessary to root out “subversive” elements in their societies, even if they would rather not think about the specifics.

The pattern of escalation in dirty wars is such that the government’s net is cast wider and wider in search of more collaborators, sympathizers, and other perceived threats. In practice, this means that a larger sector of the civilian population is targeted, including those who simply don’t ascribe to the government’s concept of the ideal citizen.⁷ Finally, another component of dirty war is its covertness, where governments use language and secret places to conceal their true intentions. In Marguerite Feitlowitz’s definitive book on language and the Argentinian Dirty War, she shows how two worlds were created, one modern and one clandestine, and how the press and official language handled this divide. The murdering of unarmed *desaparecidos* were categorized as “shootouts” with “delinquents, criminals, or subversive elements.” “Terrorists” were intent on subverting a Christian, modern way of life.⁸ Slogans such as the traffic-reducing efforts of Buenos Aires that said “Silence is Health” took on a whole new meaning and today *porteños* remember that as a reflexive translation exhorting passivity in the face of the dictatorship.⁹ In Mexico, the army developed a psychological counterinsurgency campaign that used colloquial speech in both leaflets and news articles. In its hunt for guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas, residents were exhorted to turn in sympathizers, given leaflets that read, “These are criminals, bandits, who steal women and your property, report them to watch your home, as these men put your family in danger.”¹⁰

⁷ Smith and Roberts, “War in the Gray,” 389.

⁸ Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 27-28.

⁹ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 39.

¹⁰ Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán, “Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency: Origins of the Dirty War (1965-1982),” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 190.

From these aforementioned characteristics, a working definition that Roberts and Smith arrive at is “a systematic campaign of violence directed against a portion of the civil populace where the perpetrators aim to conceal both the extent of the violence and the true extent of their involvement for the primary purposes of creating fear for political purposes.”¹¹ This definition fits with our Mexican case, as well as the other Latin American examples, in which a complex clandestine bureaucracy arose from what were initially smaller counter-insurgency campaigns.

Finally, it should be clear that this research does not advocate a “two devils” theory, in which both the civilian population and the government agents engaged in “dirty” tactics to equal degrees, a theory popular in Argentina. This research does not address the crimes committed by revolutionary groups, which were numerous and included kidnappings, murders, robberies, and property damage. Romain Robinet and others have written on the many failures of LC23S, which although intended to arouse widespread support, often backfired and engendered widespread hostility towards the group.¹² While there were clearly casualties and terror perpetrated by guerrillas, the two devils theory discounts the disproportionate nature of the violence against revolutionary groups. It further misunderstands the motivations of students who wanted to be taken seriously as revolutionary agents of change. Additionally, the state went even further to “remove the water from the fish” and targeted wider communities with no real links to revolutionaries, just to discourage further dissent.¹³ This research supports the idea instead that dirty war is an intuitively insupportable model of warfare, and argues that crimes by revolutionaries must instead be addressed within the criminal justice system.

¹¹ Smith and Roberts, “War in the Gray,” 393.

¹² Romain Robinet, “A Revolutionary Group Fighting Against a Revolutionary State,” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 137.

¹³ Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo, *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 8.

1.2 LATIN AMERICA AND THE COLD WAR

The best known Dirty Wars of Latin America occurred between 1964 and 1985, during the height of the Cold War, in the Southern Cone countries of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and in Brazil, and consisted of human rights abuses by authoritarian and anti-communist states in an attempt to quash insurgencies and other forms of political dissidence.¹⁴ Framed in a Cold War context, many of these countries received U.S. aid and support for repressive regimes that were linked to human rights abuses, and the groups on the receiving end of government abuse were largely linked to the left, but included *campesinos*, workers, intellectuals, and civilians. Due to the attention of international courts of justice, the cases of Argentina and Chile are particularly well known and memorialized. In contrast, Mexico's Dirty War was lesser known and smaller in scale, but the means of repression and outcome for dissidents were every bit as brutal.

Mexico played a double game in the Cold War. Officially, they had a left-leaning foreign policy, being the only member of the Organization of American States (OAS) to oppose Cuba's expulsion from the group in 1962 and to maintain relations with the island's revolutionary government.¹⁵ In exchange for this support, Cuba did not provide any logistical or financial support to revolutionary groups within Mexico. Indeed, Mexico was the only Latin American country in which armed guerrilla groups had no external support.¹⁶ Similarly in Chile, Mexico cultivated friendship with Salvador Allende's government and received many political exiles

¹⁴ Alberto Bornemann Ulloa, *Surviving Mexico's Dirty War: A Political Prisoner's Memoir* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁵ Herrera Calderón and Cedillo, *Challenging Authoritarianism*, 5.

¹⁶ Herrera Calderón and Cedillo, *Challenging Authoritarianism*, 7.

during the subsequent years of military dictatorship.¹⁷ Mexico City was known as a haven for political dissidents from throughout Latin America, but it was no haven for Mexican dissidents.

Despite this perceived cooperation, Mexico maintained close intelligence assets in Cuba and Chile and shared its findings with the United States, emphasizing the communist threat to both U.S. and Mexican society and cooperating in various counter-intelligence initiatives that infiltrated political groups along the border.¹⁸ In the years leading up to the Dirty War, Mexico City was a center of intrigue, with a large KGB presence, as well as other spies from Cuba and the U.S.¹⁹ In 1958, the Mexico City CIA station chief Winston Scott met with both Miguel Alemán Valdés and the incoming president Adolfo López Mateos. From this watershed meeting, a cooperative intelligence arrangement codenamed LITEMPO emerged. LITEMPO was essentially a network of agents and collaborators from the Mexican President's office who fed intelligence to U.S. sources. Assets included President Díaz Ordaz and even Miguel Nazar Haro, the future director of the *Brigada Blanca*.²⁰ Former CIA Director Philip Agee claimed that even Luis Echeverría was a CIA asset codenamed LITEMPO-8, years before he was President.²¹ Once in the highest office, Echeverría was a politically astute ally of Richard Nixon, who once exhorted that “the voice of Echeverría rather than the voice of Castro be the voice of Latin America.”²² It must also be noted that the United States sold large amounts of weapons and vehicles to Mexico to bolster its nascent counter-insurgency strategies in the early 1960s,

¹⁷ Lucía Rayas, “Subjugating the Nation: Women and the Guerrilla Experience,” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 172.

¹⁸ Alan Elaido Gómez, “Por la reunificación de los Pueblos Libres de América en su Lucha por el Socialismo,” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 86.

¹⁹ Jefferson Morley, *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 88.

²⁰ Morley, *Our Man in Mexico*, 94.

²¹ Eladio Gómez, *Por la reunificación*, 86.

²² Eladio Gómez, *Por la reunificación*, 87.

including machine guns, M2 rifles, vehicles for infantry and artillery, grenades, and ammunition.²³

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, which also provided cover for many CIA agents, kept tabs on the various student groups and later guerrilla groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s. A 1974 State Department memo to all consulates in Mexico summarized the students and guerrilla groups as “a serious nuisance” and “a serious annoyance”.²⁴ Their strategic interest in the protest movements and background was economic; U.S. officials’ main concern with a wave of kidnappings, murders, robberies and bombings was that it was “bad for business.” In the same memo, U.S. officials lauded the police force created to address this problem, writing that “only the small *Dirección Federal de Seguridad* – whose responsibilities also include protection of the president, intelligence collection and coordination, surveillance of some foreign embassies, etc. – emerged from this period with reason for pride in its accomplishments.”²⁵ While the U.S. estimated actual guerrillas in the hundreds, with Guerrero being the only state in which the guerrillas had broader popular support, this memo does acknowledge that there were legitimate political grievances. They explain that guerrillas have attempted to bring peasants, students, workers and soldiers into their political fold, and that the government of Mexico attempted to conceal the political motivations since their government was already a “revolutionary” one.²⁶ The outlook expressed in the 1974 memo was for a protracted struggle but one that posed no serious threat to the stability of the government.

²³ Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán, “Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency: Origins of the Dirty War (1965-1982),” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 185.

²⁴ US Department of State. INFO to All Consulates in Mexico. *The Current Security Situation in Mexico: An Appraisal*. January 1974.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

1.3 THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MEXICO

Several factors contributed to the growth of revolutionary groups in Mexico during the 1960s and 1970s. Mexico's one-party system under the PRI allowed for cooption but little dissent. The so-called "revolutionary" government was seen by some as a traitorous to the original goals of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. The economic growth that Mexico experienced following the end of the Mexican Revolution had disrupted a traditional rural existence and increased inequality. Furthermore, a demographic shift meant changing urban and rural landscapes; in the 1960s the population had roughly doubled from 1940, with over half being under twenty years old.²⁷ This youthful population, many inspired by the Cuban Revolution of 1959, attempted to use their political influence to create new parties and reduce perceived corruption. The U.S. had also ended the Bracero Program in 1964, which meant that tens of thousands of workers now were demanding jobs and land from their own government.²⁸

Following the Mexican Revolution, a new authoritarian regime quickly set to work dividing up land, rebuilding, and cultivating foreign investment. The growth that was fueled by the Green Revolution as well as mining and oil revenues largely benefited a reorganized Mexican elite and foreign-owned companies. While on paper Mexico was an example of economic progress, the reality on the ground was much bleaker, with stark inequalities, widespread poverty, and only about 2% of the population able to achieve any level of higher education.²⁹ Journalist Elena Poniatowska's essay on the student movement argues that while the protests and massacre in 1968 were a turning point, that built-up rage from years of misery

²⁷ Bornemann Ulloa, *Surviving Mexico's Dirty War*, 4.

²⁸ Elizabeth Henson, "Madera 1965: Primeros Vientos," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 30.

²⁹ Elena Poniatowska, *Fuerte es el silencio* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1980), 45.

and rampant corruption were the underlying motivation of a movement that captured the imagination of more than students.³⁰ She further enumerates many other antecedents to the student movement of 1968, including the march of miners from Coahuila to Mexico City in 1952, Demetrio Vallejo's railroad strike in 1958-59, the assassination of Rubén Jaramillo in Morelos in 1962, and a doctor's strike in 1964. Thus, while Mexico's image abroad may have been one of stability and opportunity, the simmering discontent of workers was perceived by the government as a true threat to its continued power.

With the arrival of the Olympics in October of 1968, President Díaz Ordaz was desperate to quash any dissent that could embarrass him on the international stage. Just two weeks before the Games were scheduled to start, police attacked a peaceful gathering of hundreds of students in the Plaza of Tlatelolco in Mexico City, massacring many and preventing others from leaving. This marked an official start to the national events known as the Dirty War. This definitive blow to the student movement was met with scant outrage; for the sake of diplomacy, foreign governments including the U.S. largely accepted Mexico's version of events and appreciated the underlying stability of a friendly government.

Mexico perpetrated the Dirty War in conjunction with the armed forces, and through the creation of various clandestine groups that worked at the behest of the executive branch. The best known security apparatus was the DFS, which was originally created in 1947 as a presidential guard unit under Miguel Alemán Valdés.³¹ Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the state used the armed forces, not the DFS, to break up strikes, control riots, and arrest student leaders. Yet with the urging of the U.S., it was during the decade of the 1960s that the army began to develop a more detailed counterinsurgency strategy, as well as purchase weapons

³⁰ Poniatowska, *Fuerte es el silencio*, 35.

³¹ Sierra Guzmán, "Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency," 183.

from the U.S. More than 300 military officers under Díaz Ordaz were sent to train at US military academies and given specific training in guerrilla warfare.³² One of the elite groups that came out of this training, the Olympic Battalion, helped suppress the student meeting at Tlatelolco in 1968. It was not until the 1970s that other paramilitary groups began to spring up, such as the *Halcones*, comprised of 2,000 youth and “delinquents” who were to protect Mexico City’s urban infrastructure from terrorism.³³ The *Halcones* contained different units, including groups that infiltrated universities and guerrilla groups, groups that provoked violence and terrorism at otherwise peaceful marches, and also a unit that was a hit squad. Meanwhile, the army focused on rural counterinsurgency in Guerrero and Chihuahua. It was not until 1976 that the infamous *Brigada Blanca* was formed in order to eliminate the last of the urban guerrillas, and former DFS leader Miguel Nazar Haro was put in charge of the secret police. These groups and their agents from a wide array of military and secret police services constituted the repressive arm of the Mexican state.

1.4 THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH

Chihuahua experienced much of the same discontent over land, labor conditions, and economic monopolies as other parts of Mexico, yet with even greater hostility towards the central government. The revolutionary tradition in the north was long embedded, going back to pre-revolutionary conflicts. Spanish colonists initially arrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in search of wealth, cheap land on which to graze cattle, and mining opportunities. While the Apaches were temporarily pacified in the early nineteenth century, they resumed raids in 1831 following Independence, and continued until 1886. Peasants had military obligations to the

³² Sierra Guzmán, “Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency,” 187.

³³ Sierra Guzmán, “Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency,” 188.

state to secure the frontier, and the dominant classes contributed financially to frontier wars. With Independence and the long process of state formation, civil society became the site of production of hegemony. Between 1850 and 1910, the state attempted to change the *serranos*, or frontiersman, from warriors into docile workers.³⁴ After 1876, the *Porfiriato* further reinforced many reform laws, pushing peasants from corporate lands, and gradually building a patrimonial oligarchy. Porfirio Díaz attempted to integrate the frontier into the nation state, first through compulsory education, then through the building of railroads, the demilitarization of peasants, and the integration into the national and international markets. Finally, with Enrique Creel as governor of Chihuahua from 1904 – 1910, the *serranos* became more rebellious, and ultimately rallied around Pancho Villa and other leaders.

Chihuahua historian Mark Wasserman distinguishes between an Old Elite and a New Elite that governed the state before and after the Revolution. While the emphasis was on reconstruction, the government needed the capitalist expertise of many of the old elite to recover. In Chihuahua, there was some upwards mobility and expansion of the elite, but the Terrazas and Creel families still dominated economically and politically.³⁵ Land reform remained a divisive issue for each governor, and the turnover was high; no governor served out a term until Rodrigo Quevedo in the 1930s. Even governors such as Gustavo Talamantes, who succeeded Quevedo, faced many political limitations on redistributing land. Although he had a better record of working with unions and resolving land redistribution cases, critics allege that he awarded only the worst land to *ejidos* and allowed the large landowners to maintain the best parcels.³⁶ Furthermore, a 1938 letter from an agrarian association *Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del*

³⁴ Ana Maria Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995.

³⁵ Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico 1910-1940* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 12.

³⁶ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 63.

Estado de Chihuahua alleged that Talamantes ordered the imprisonment and execution of various agrarian leaders by *brigadas blancas* and special police, a precursor to tactics that would later be used in the Dirty War.³⁷

At the end of his second book, *Persistent Oligarchs*, Wasserman presents a case study on Ciudad Juárez during the aftermath of the revolution through 1940. In Juárez, legalized gambling (until 1934) provided much of the state revenue. The city government was tumultuous, with 42 men serving as *presidente municipal*³⁸ between 1920-1940. While Juárez played a political tug-of-war with the federal government, there was an underlying stability in that the same families were competing for power. With the formation of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) in the 1930s, the arena of conflict shifted, but the fights remained the same with *juarense* politicians being particularly independent and economically entrepreneurial. Wasserman highlights the use of violence and corruption that was part of border life, increased by the presence of bootlegging, narcotics and gambling, but also inherent in the political rivalries. He identifies four characteristics of Mexican and *juarense* politics at the time: personalism, family *camarillas*, violence, and corruption.³⁹

The economically active rural population had steadily diminished since the 1930s, but between 1960 and 1970, fell from 15.23% to 9.85%.⁴⁰ By the 1960s, Chihuahua was in full transition from an agrarian society to an industrial one. The concept of the *maquiladora* was born and promoted. Yet as the political winds shifted, in the north, complaints and activism still largely centered around access to land.

³⁷ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 63-64.

³⁸ Mayor

³⁹ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 137.

⁴⁰ Victor Orozco, "Las guerrillas chihuahuenses de los 60s, parte 4" *El Diario*, September 26, 2015.

1.5 THE ASSAULT ON MADERA

Madera, Chihuahua is a small city in the foothills of the Sierra Madre, originally constructed around 1899 by Arizona rancher William C. Greene as a sawmill town.⁴¹ There were 100 sturdy company houses built for foreign managers, and the surrounding ramshackle housing without water or electricity was for Mexican workers. After Greene's bankruptcy in 1907, the Mexican government took the property, and sold parts to U.S. investors including William Randolph Hearst. In the 1940s and 1950s, Madera was dominated by the newly formed company *Bosques de Chihuahua*, whose owners included former president Miguel Alemán Valdés, members of the Terrazas and Almeida families, Eloy Vallina, and other powerful Chihuahua elite. These so-called caciques used violence and intimidation to push ranchers and *campesinos* from lands they had long lived on. This violence prompted the formation of different forms of resistance, initially in the General Union of Mexican Workers and Campesinos (UGOCM), which was linked with Vicente Lombardo Toledano's Popular Socialist Party (PPS) and later in the *Grupo Popular Guerrillero* (GPG), of which Arturo Gámiz García was a leader.⁴²

The guerrilla assault on an isolated fort in Madera, Chihuahua, on September 23, 1965 is now known as the first direct action against the state by a communist group in Mexico.⁴³ Choosing its target as a symbol of the state and intended to replicate the Cuban assault on the Moncada Fort twelve years earlier, the immediate purpose of the assault was to obtain the weapons and ammunition at the fort. Despite being outnumbered eight to one, the attackers

⁴¹ Henson, "Madera 1965: Primeros Vientos," 24.

⁴² Henson, "Madera 1965: Primeros Vientos," 20.

⁴³ Andres F. Hajar, "The Myth of Madera" (master's thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2004), 2.

believed that the element of surprise gave them an advantage.⁴⁴ There was additionally a theory that each *guerrillero* was worth 10 soldiers.⁴⁵ Nine of the assailants were killed and four survived; the dead included the two intellectual leaders of the assault, Pablo Gómez Ramírez and Arturo Gámiz. Officials in Madera responded swiftly, parading the bodies of the dead and then dumping them together into a common grave, on the orders of Chihuahua governor Práxedes Giner. This fight was not prominent in Mexico's public sphere until the creation eight years later of the urban guerrilla movement *La Liga 23 de Septiembre*, which derived its name from the date of the assault in honor of the heroism of the participants. Madera assailants Gómez and Gámiz had visited Juárez earlier in 1965, looking for support and participants for their action. The motivations for this act were rooted in unequal land distribution in Chihuahua. Prime land within *ejidos* that had been granted to *campesinos* was not always accessible. Incidents of former landowners fencing off land, then bringing in soldiers to guard or reinforce prime areas was common. Carlos Montemayor describes the lynching and murder of several *campesinos* as an inspiration for the uprising.⁴⁶

1.6 CIUDAD JUÁREZ

Ever since the creation of the border line, Juárez was inextricably linked with El Paso and the economic pull both countries exerted. Juárez had boomed during the Prohibition era and slumped following its repeal in 1933, sinking into the Depression along with El Paso. The recovery in the U.S. stemming from World War II positively affected Juárez, which experienced

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁵ Carlos Montemayor, *Las armas del alba* (Mexico City: Debolsillo, 2009), 225.

⁴⁶ Montemayor, *Las armas del alba*, 127-8.

immense population growth in the 1940s and 1950s, from 48,881 to 252,119 inhabitants.⁴⁷ At the end of the 1950s, Juárez was the fifth largest city in Mexico. The Juárez municipal government experienced cyclical crises, with infrastructure such as water, sewers, and street delivery perpetually underfunded, and the city fought with Chihuahua and Mexico City for its fair share of customs revenues.⁴⁸ For the first time, the decade of the 1950s allowed a building boom, a greater investment in infrastructure, and the beginning of foreign trade as an important industry in the city.

In Juárez, the 1960s and 1970s also saw the growth of “twin plants”, whereby El Paso factories took advantage of cheaper labor costs. In 1965, the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program (BIP), which permitted foreign-owned factories to operate in Juárez and return the products to the U.S. without an import levy.⁴⁹ In 1970, there were 22 maquilas employing just over 3,000 workers; by 1976 that number had exceeded 89 factories with over 27,000 workers, representing over half of the active working population.⁵⁰ Oscar Martínez’s book *Border Boom Town* recounts the social and economic history of these boom years, but there is scant military or political history within the volume. Martínez does however address the social criticisms that arose even during the early years of the maquila boom: increased dependence on foreign capital, an overreliance on female workers, a surge of migrants from the interior seeking jobs at twin plants in a city with limited infrastructure, and poor labor conditions within the plants.⁵¹

⁴⁷Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin and London: University of Austin Press, 1975), 96.

⁴⁸ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 84.

⁴⁹ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 131.

⁵⁰ Martín Gonzalez de la Vara, *Una breve historia de Ciudad Juárez*. (COLEF/NMSU/UACJ, 2002), 175.

⁵¹ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 134-5.

Historian Martín González de la Vara briefly touches upon the political support that both LC23S and the Comité de Defensa Popular (CDP) had in Juárez. Various student protests occurred in this era, including a large 1967 strike of the Escuela Superior de Agricultura, which led to a demand for new land in southern Juárez.⁵² *Juarenses* were well aware of a changing world; some believed that revolution was not only possible but inevitable. Furthermore, there was institutional acknowledgement of the structural violence that capitalism wrought on many of the working class. In January of 1972, the Archbishop of Chihuahua and the Bishop of Juárez co-authored a column published in several newspapers that declared the young revolutionaries justified as they were reacting to structural violence.⁵³

The subsequent chapters in this research attempt to recover portions of the history of the *guerra sucia* or Dirty War in Ciudad Juárez, through the voices of those who were intimately involved in political activities at the time. It will present three oral histories as contrasting case studies. It will then describe three watershed events that were turning points to Juárez revolutionaries. It further intends to discuss why this chapter of history is consistently minimized, forgotten, or even unknown to many. While there is ample historiography and other narratives about the events of Tlatelolco in 1968, the Corpus Christi massacre in 1971, and guerrilla activity in Guerrero, there is a paucity of research about such activities in the north. I will now turn to a discussion of the historiography of Mexico's Dirty War, as well as the methodology and theoretical framework that I will use for this research.

⁵² *Ibid*, 179.

⁵³ Héctor Pedraza Reyes, "Apuntes Sobre El Movimiento Armado Socialista en México 1971-1974." *Nóesis. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 17.34 (2008), 96.

Chapter 2: Historiography, Methodology and Theory

“A nation creates itself not just with what it remembers, but with what it forgets.” - Oscar Camilión, Argentinian Minister of Defense during that nation’s Dirty War¹

2.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MEXICO’S DIRTY WAR

Characteristic of dirty wars, the Mexican state continued to protect its information that related to the illegal acts of torture, disappearance, and murders, for decades following the actual events. Scholars could not adequately research these topics within Mexico until after the PRI fell from power in 2000. While some archives were opened at this time, practical barriers persisted.² Up until 2000, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s were primarily portrayed by historians as politically stable, albeit with some loss of legitimacy after the massacre at Tlatelolco.

English-language historiography of the Mexican Dirty War is scant, but a recently published edited volume of essays attempts to correct that. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo’s volume, *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, is a helpful starting point to understanding the Cold War context, the origins and motivations of several key groups such as the LC23S, the MAR, and the FLN, and the ongoing challenges of researching this topic. Some U.S. scholars such as Eric Zolov and Elaine Carey have examined the student movement and counter-culture movement in detail, yet their work covers a period that is more of a precursor to the most repressive decade.³ More recently, English-language historians are tackling this time period, including Louise E. Walker’s

¹ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 17

² Rayas, “Subjugating the Nation”, 167.

³ Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999) and Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power, and Terror in 1968 Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

2013 book about the political exchange between the PRI and the middle class.⁴ In 2014, another historian Alexander Aviña published an account of peasant guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican countryside, covering the rural history of the era.⁵

In Spanish, journalist Elena Poniatowska's *Fuerte es el Silencio* is a collection of essays that pertain to the student movement leading up to 1968, the era of political prisoners and disappeared persons, and the land invasion in Morelos that established Colonia Rubén Jaramillo. It provides a broader coverage of the social problems Mexico faced at the time, and the hope that people saw in tactics such as peaceful protest, armed revolution, and land invasions. Alberto Bornemann Ulloa's autobiography is a well-known memoir that gave me a better understanding of middle-class motivations.

Books regarding Mexican history and the Cold War context include the second half of Enrique Krauze's history of Mexican presidents, *Mexico: Biography of Power – A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. Jefferson Morley's recent biography of Winston Scott contains an inside account from the U.S. perspective of the massacre at Tlatelolco, as well as much background information about the CIA's relationship to Mexico's executive branch.⁶ To understand the revolutionary atmosphere in Chihuahua and its origins, I have utilized two books from historian Mark Wasserman, which explain the rise of the political oligarchy and the fractious process of land reform in the state.⁷ Ana María Alonso and Paul Vanderwood's accounts of earlier revolts in Namiquipa and Tomochic provided useful historical background of

⁴ Louise E. Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁵ Alexander Aviña, *Specters of Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶ Jefferson Morley, *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

⁷ Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984) and *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico 1910-1940* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

core-periphery tensions that plagued the state.⁸ The assault of the fort at Madera in 1965 is analyzed in a UTEP master's thesis by Andres F. Hajar, detailing the events and the subsequent mythology that emerged. Surprisingly, the most definitive work on this assault and its aftermath comes from Mexican author Carlos Montemayor, in his 2003 novel *Las armas del alba*, which retells the circumstances and motivations of the attack in historical fiction. Several Spanish-language publications from Juárez helped my grasp of the twentieth century history of the city, including Martín Gonzalez de la Vara's *Una breve historia de Ciudad Juárez* and journalist David Pérez López's *Los Años Vividos*.

Two of my sources consider the gendered aspect of revolution. Lucia Rayas' article "Subjugating the Nation: Women and the Guerrilla Experience" looks specifically at women's participation in revolutionary groups, finding that traditional gender roles persisted and that involvement was also due to the guidance of fathers or romantic partners. Another book recently published in Mexico is entitled *Guerrilleras* and is a collection of testimonies from women throughout Mexico. Other testimonies I have read come from historian Alicia de los Rios, a researcher from Chihuahua, whose own mother counts as one of the disappeared. Literature that specifically looks at the formation of state military or paramilitary groups and secret police includes Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán's chapter on *Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency: Origins of the Dirty War (1965-1982)* and Sergio Aguayo's investigation into Mexico's secret services, *La Charola: Una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México*.

Most of the files of the DFS are found in the General Archive (Archivo General de la Nación, AGN) in Mexico City, which I have not visited and they are not accessible

⁸ Ana Maria Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995) and Paul Vanderwood, *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

electronically. However, Kate Doyle at the National Security Archive's Mexico Project has uncovered and published many state memos and documents on the project's website related to Mexico's Dirty War. As my methodology relies on case studies, I supplemented these written documents by conducting many first-person interviews, three of which are heavily drawn on. Other primary source material includes newspaper articles from the Juárez newspapers *El Fronterizo*, *El Diario*, and *Cuauhtémoc*, El Paso papers *El Paso Herald Post*, *El Paso Times*, and *Newspaper Tree*, and other papers including *Proceso*, *Excelsior*, and *Frontera Norte Sur*. Much secondary source material that informed this work is taken from journals of sociology, political science, history, philosophy and war studies, some with an additional emphasis on Latin America.

Theoretical works regarding state violence and revolution include Régis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?*, a landmark work published in 1967 that led to the author's imprisonment in Bolivia. Of particular use regarding the relationship between language, memory, and dirty war was Marguerite Feitlowitz's definitive account of the Argentinian Dirty War, *A Lexicon of Terror*. James C. Scott's work *Seeing Like a State* illustrated the dangerous combination of authoritarian states and modern progress, and informed my discussion about state violence. Works regarding memory and forgetting are numerous, and I drew upon a large collection entitled *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy. The final section of this collection addressed memory, justice, and the contemporary era, and was particularly applicable to the topic of dirty war. I delved deeper into the works of two of the authors of these excerpts, considering concepts and ways of societal forgetting from philosopher Marc Augé and historian Tzvetan Todorov.⁹

⁹ Marc Augé, *Oblivion*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2004) and Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Today, new research regarding the Dirty War is blossoming, as there is a renewed interest in the time period, as well as concerns about state violence (and narco-violence) resurfacing. Plenty of recent books address the continuation of state violence as expressed in Mexico's war on drugs, but several notable examples have just been published. In 2010, Mexican researchers Carlos Santiago and Teresa Illades published a book entitled *Estado de Guerra: de la Guerra Sucia a la Narcoguerra*, and historian Sergio Aguayo this year has published one in a similar vein, *De Tlatelolco a Ayotzinapa. Las violencias del Estado*. For the purposes of this research, I used part of a 2015 book on a new resistance emerging in Juárez through the growth of civil society.¹⁰ Many books on the drug war also contain sections that refer back to dirty war actors.¹¹ To summarize the legacy of the Dirty War today, I have also examined several international treaties and cases from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and other international bodies.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

This research is informed by three decades of living in El Paso and working in Juárez for five years. My experience includes working as a scholar, an activist, in non-profit organizations and in journalism. It relies on my participant observation and informal discussions with friends, colleagues, and childhood acquaintances. I grew up visiting Juárez frequently, and my father was a member of the Juárez Rotary Club, so I interacted with many *juarenses* from a young age.

¹⁰ Kathleen Staudt and Zulma Y. Méndez, *Courage, Resistance & Women in Ciudad Juárez: Challenges to Militarization*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

¹¹ Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace, "A Narco History, *How the U.S. Created the Drug War*", (New York and London: OR Books, 2015).

I first volunteered with FEMAP¹² when I was 19, working there over a summer as a *promotora de salud*, and this was my first experience with poverty and social activism. Through connections I made there, I gradually became aware of a different, more critical perspective of the city. Finding people to discuss the Dirty War was like building a small information network; each person you know might refer you to another friend or colleague they trust, and so I built my knowledge gradually.

I applied in mid-March to receive travel permission from the University of Texas at El Paso through the submission of an International Travel Exception Request Form, so that I could cross over to Juárez for research purposes. This document is required for visiting countries with travel warnings listed by the U.S. Department of State. I was granted an initial 90 days on March 24, 2015, and I reapplied for and was granted a second period of 90 days that lasted until October 1, 2015. During this time, I not only conducted interviews in person, but I visited the archive at the newspaper *El Fronterizo* in downtown Juárez, to photograph and review the newspapers, as the years I was reviewing were not available in UTEP's archive. *El Fronterizo* was the newspaper of record for the years 1965-1972, covering the events that I examine; *El Diario* did not commence publication until 1976.

I conducted the first interview with Dr. Roberto Vázquez Muñoz at his home over the period of about three hours. I returned to his home at a later date to review the archive of the newspaper *Cuauhtémoc* independently. The second interview with Beto Domínguez was held at Sanborns, a restaurant in Juárez, and lasted about two hours. I followed up with Beto via email. The final interview with Héctor Staines was conducted exclusively by phone and email over about two months, as he lives in Mexico City and did not travel to Juárez during this time period. While these three people know of each other, they are not close associates. I relied on

¹² Federación Mexicana de Asociaciones Privadas, a Mexican non-profit health organization.

the guidance of my friend Graciela de la Rosa to independently reach out to all three, as they provided differing perspectives. Additionally, I followed the guidelines of UTEP's Department of History in conducting my three oral interviews, submitting a proposal to that department in March, familiarizing myself with the procedures, and receiving permission from the department's Oral History Review Committee (OHRC) to proceed. Each participant signed a consent form, each also consented to the use of their name for this research, and each will receive a final copy of this thesis.

Scholars must confront the limitations of oral histories and particular case studies, as they are individual remembrances and cannot provide a complete picture. This particular subject is even more problematic, as many of the groups were acting clandestinely, and so only knew the particular experiences of a few close associates; those involved with the FUZ, for example, often were unaware of the experiences and fates of those from the MAR. The act of remembering events that occurred decades prior is heavily influenced by present-day events. There are limitations to this research in the use of oral histories containing memories that are nearly half a century old. Furthermore, as an interviewer, I am aware of my own limitations and distance from the age, culture and native language of my interviewees. I have had to also tread with caution while asking subjects to speak of events that were particularly painful.

The second part of this research utilizes books, documents, and print and electronic media to reconstruct several events that were watershed moments in Juárez. I reintroduce some of my case studies as the individuals also appear and were affected by these events; also this demonstrates the difficulty of piecing together an accurate story. Even among my interviewees, many disagreed about the number of people present and other "facts" surrounding an event. Finally, in examining the aftermath I look at more recent articles and books discussing Mexico,

the Dirty War, as well as interviews with individuals regarding contemporary Juárez violence. I was challenged by the inability to collect formal interviews from people who were critical of the left, although I conducted several off-the-record interviews of elites.

2.3 STATE VIOLENCE

To build a structural framework around such disparate recollections and accounts, I will attempt to weave three theoretical approaches throughout this work: state violence, revolution and resistance, and collective memory. I will conceptualize each term and its surrounding theory.

Theories of state violence attempt to address the fundamental question of why governments harm their own citizens. Scholars have attempted to answer this question by examining economic factors, types of political regimes, and how these relate to a state's commitment to upholding the human rights of its citizens. Mexican political scientist Mauricio Rivera makes a distinction between centralized and decentralized repression, suggesting that the state is never a unified actor and that other regional bureaucracies or splintered paramilitary groups spread out the repression.¹³ Indeed, in Chihuahua and Mexico as a whole, historian Mark Wasserman explains that the model of an authoritarian or corporate state did not apply to Mexico's central government until mid-century. Rebuilding from the carnage of the Mexican Revolution took decades, and in places like Chihuahua, influential people often sought informal spheres of influence such as business groups and chambers of commerce to exert power instead of elected office or a role with the state.¹⁴

¹³ Mauricio Rivera, "Estudios sobre represión estatal en regímenes democráticos," *Política y gobierno* 17:1 (2010), 66.

¹⁴ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 153.

Rational choice theory has informed the study of state violence since the 1970s. It views the state as a rational actor that weighs the costs and benefits of exercising violence against individuals. From this basis, scholars have built up to examine which factors within a society could either decrease or increase the costs. The broad answers that Rivera comes up with from a review of three decades of research explains that internal political conflict directly increases state violence, and democracy lessens it.¹⁵

In a 1991 paper, political scientist Conway W. Henderson isolated variables that sought to determine the relationship between state violence (namely disappearance, torture, extra-judicial detention, and political murders) and socioeconomic factors within countries. Using State Department data, he assigned countries codes based on the degree of democracy, the level of inequality, economic growth and development, and socioeconomic conditions. The most important factors that he determined were correlated with state violence were the diffusion of democracy, inequality, and economic growth.¹⁶ On a scale of 1-5, Mexico was assigned a 3 for repression, meaning there was a recent history of political imprisonment and widespread acceptance of detention for political views, and a 3 as well for the level of democratization. It ranked high in both economic growth and inequality. All these factors theoretically predict the reliance on state repression, according to this study.

Political scientist James C. Scott has examined the failures of the state that lead to episodes of state violence, such as dirty wars, against a state's citizens. He cites four ingredients that can combine to create a toxic brew: the administrative ordering that is the nation state, a belief in and goal of attaining what he terms high modernity, an authoritarian state not afraid to

¹⁵ Rivera, "Estudios sobre represión estatal en regimenes democráticos," 69.

¹⁶ Conway Henderson, "Conditions Affecting the Use of Political Repression," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 35, No. 1 (1991), 130.

use force, and an anemic civil society.¹⁷ All four of these elements were present in Mexico following the Mexican Revolution, and some could argue they are still present today.

2.4 REVOLUTION AND RESISTANCE

Revolutions are historically defined as radical re-orderings of the social and political institutions of a government, and are often violent in nature. Chihuahua was proud of its heritage as the birthplace of the Mexican Revolution. Yet with the feeling among some that its ultimate goals had failed, the first revolutionary groups in Chihuahua believed it was the ideal birthing ground for a new movement. Wasserman compares post-Revolution Chihuahua with the French Revolution, showing how both had a high level of repression and authoritarianism from their “local notables.” After 1940, these notables became tools of the national government.¹⁸ Mexico City was keen to bring the north and especially Ciudad Juárez under its control, either with money or by force. Electoral fraud was common, corruption commonplace, arbitrary and capricious actions on the part of elected officials and police were rife. There was widespread cynicism among the general population as to the efficacy and intents of the political class. The middle-class students who attacked the military fort at Madera read many speeches of Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, as well as the First and Second Declarations from Havana.¹⁹ The initial success of the Cuban Revolution as well as their defeat of the Americans at the Bay of Pigs was clearly a motivating factor to these Mexican revolutionaries.

¹⁷ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-5.

¹⁸ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 121.

¹⁹ Victor Orozco, “Las guerrilleras chihuahuenses de los 60: parte 2” *El Diario*, Sept 24, 2015.

After its publication in 1967, Régis Debray's essay "Revolution in the Revolution?" circulated widely among groups and represented a major theoretical treatise. Debray advocated a Latin American revolution that was a historically unique third way, in other words distinct from those in the Soviet Union and China. Debray touted failure as a springboard for revolutionaries to amass knowledge and experience.²⁰ The first part of his essay proposed the concept of "armed self-defense," encouraging localized struggle that is offensive in nature, arguing that pure self-defense undermines the security of the civilian population.²¹ He imagined clandestine guerrilla forces in the countryside made up of peasants, and urban forces made up of workers in cities. A second aspect of Debray's conception of revolution is that of armed propaganda, in which propaganda efforts and organizing follow military action and transform it into a base of solid support.²²

Debray recognized the challenges of establishing the *foco* and guerrilla base in Latin American countries, due to the emphasis on counter-insurgency and infiltration. He warned of the problems of a proliferation of *focos*, dispersing the fronts and efforts.²³ Unlike Cuba, with a relatively united political/military leadership, Mexico's dispersion of fronts definitely hindered any united leadership. This issue of the separation or unity of a party and a military front occupied his principal lesson for the present (then 1967). Debray argued that the party must determine the political goals, and that the army merely was an instrument of implementation.²⁴ He allowed the views of Fidel Castro who asserted that those who want to make revolution have the right to, independent of a party. The "staggering novelty" though of the Cuban Revolution was that the vanguard party and the guerrilla *foco* constituted an organic whole, so that the

²⁰ Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York: Grove Press Inc. 1967), 23.

²¹ Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* 41.

²² Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* 55.

²³ Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* 79.

²⁴ Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* 96.

people's army would transition into the core of the Party after it ended the stage of guerrilla warfare.²⁵ While Debray heralded a union of theory and practice through the unity of peasants and the working class, he exhorted Latin American revolutionaries that at present, the focus must be on guerrilla warfare.

Historian Adela Cedillo examines the heterogeneity of revolutionary ideas that circulated in Mexico during the time frame of 1969-1983 in a thought-provoking essay about the emergence of the FLN and Neo-Zapatism. She argues that while the “ultra-left” (those dedicated to armed struggle) are often portrayed as delusional adventurers drawing on a classic Marxist interpretation of struggle, that most leaders were passionately concerned with theory and sought to teach the ideological meaning to the units they commanded.²⁶ In Mexico, Castro-Guevarism, Leninism, Maoism and Vietnamese Marxism inspired some, while others remained committed to peaceful intellectual and democratic struggle, particularly those in the universities. This led to an obvious factionalism of the left as rivalries, worldviews, and regional differences surfaced, something that was seen in Juárez as well as the country as a whole. Cedillo further explains how the concept of a “peaceful” guerrilla arose as a form of self-defense against a repressive state that had perpetrated massacres, assaults on universities, and imprisonment and torture of state critics.²⁷ Yet the people in this research were broadly inspired by a Marxist concept of revolution, in which the proletariat, with the aid of professional revolutionaries, would eventually overthrow the bourgeoisie and in effect the Mexican state. In contrast to the

²⁵ Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* 106-7.

²⁶ Adela Cedillo, “Armed Struggle Without Revolution: The Organizing Process of the National Liberation Forces (FLN) and the Genesis of Neo-Zapatism (1969-1983),” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 150.

²⁷ Adela Cedillo, “Armed Struggle Without Revolution: The Organizing Process of the National Liberation Forces (FLN) and the Genesis of Neo-Zapatism (1969-1983),” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 151.

revolutionaries, I have used terms including “elites”, “bourgeoisie” and “ruling class” to describe those who wielded political and economic power.

2.5 COLLECTIVE MEMORY

During my initial phases of research, I was struck by the dismissal of many people from Juárez that the Dirty War ever affected their community, either minimizing or denying the presence of revolutionary groups in the city. I have been further impressed by the insistence of former political dissidents that the state’s repressive measures remain in force, that they continue to be surveilled or face discrimination for past political views. For these reasons, I wish to first explore a theoretical framework built around memory, which includes both how societies remember and how they forget.

Theoretical studies of memory and forgetting had their roots in the nineteenth century and Freud’s scientific inquiries about memory. The idea of collective memory arose in the wake of the two world wars in the twentieth century. A new medical concept of trauma, arising from a transmutation of something forgotten but which remained in the brain, was promoted by physicians who treated soldiers returning from World War I.²⁸ More recently, events in the latter half of the twentieth century have led to what French historian Pierre Nora refers to as “a world-wide memorialism,” stemming from the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the democratization of Latin America.²⁹ Nora argues that the reason for this surge in memorialism and a scholarly interest in memory arises from the acceleration of history (speed of

²⁸ Ian Hacking, from “Memory Sciences, Memory Politics,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 409.

²⁹ Pierre Nora, from “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 438.

change) and the democratization of history (recognition of minorities and outside social groups).³⁰

Collective memory is often defined as “the collective representations of past events... that are shared by the vast majority... and are seen by them as valid accounts.”³¹ Collective memories are shared by members of the same group; my informants hold a much different account of the past than the majority of Juárez residents. The processing of traumatic events for a society usually requires some compromise in collective memory to arrive at a shared history, with each side recognizing elements of truth in each other’s narratives.³² This is often accomplished through truth commissions and judicial processes, which have so far been absent in the case of Mexico.

So why do we remember, or should we even remember? Historian Tzvetan Todorov believes that recalling the past does not serve a purpose in and of itself. Just as we interpret individual memories, he argues that larger events that affect whole groups also need to be processed and converted from the particular to the universal. He writes that “...transformation consists in going from the particular case to general maxim – a principle of justice, a political ideal, or a moral rule – which must be legitimate in itself and not just because it relates to a cherished memory.”³³ He seeks a middle ground between remembering and forgetting, so that both contribute to collective ideas but the past is not sanctified and present perils ignored.

³⁰ Nora, “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory,” 438-9.

³¹ Ervin Staub, *Overcoming Evil: Genocide, Violent Conflict, and Terrorism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 449.

³² Staub, *Overcoming Evil*, 450.

³³ Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 172.

The counterpoint to collective memory has been termed social forgetting. Todorov identifies three types of forgetting that societies may experience.³⁴ The first type is a necessary forgetting, an idea that dates back to the Greeks, in that humans must forget in order to preserve psychological health of both individuals and societies. Todorov also defends the right of people to forget in a democracy, arguing that memory should not be forced.³⁵ He cites generational patterns of hatred based on acts of revenge, and argues that this remembering serves as a huge impediment to peace and can even lead to genocide.³⁶ However, he does see uses for recollecting, if the cause is right and can lead to justice, which is a depersonalized form of revenge. A second type of social forgetting is linked with the speed of modern life, and how the velocity of consumption impedes the social unity of a community that gathers to remember. Todorov's third type of social forgetting is institutional, or the deliberate erasure of a past by a dominant group, such as one sees in the destruction of monuments, religious structures, or language.

American historian David Gross argues that the pro-forgetting outlook is more prevalent in the Western world today, due to the psychological benefits of letting go of a difficult past, as well as focusing on the opportunities of the present and future.³⁷ However, he puts forward two major benefits of collective remembering for a society. First, it provides an individual or a society a deeper awareness of where it comes from and can thus kindle more creativity in a society's achievements. Also, it allows us to view our contemporary culture from an outsider's

³⁴ Jorge Mendoza García, "Reconstruyendo La Guerra Sucia en México: Del Olvido Social a la Memoria Colectiva," *Athenea Digital (Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social)* (2005), 5.

³⁵ Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 168.

³⁶ Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 170.

³⁷ David Gross, from "Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 420.

perspective, both temporally and socially, and thereby identify its deficiencies.³⁸ Once we realize that the present is actually much more filled with layers of the noncontemporaneous, we also gain a better sense of evanescence and that which is continually perishing.

Remembrances can also be seen as traces that serve as screens, to both conceal and contain memories.³⁹ They allow us to recover repressed memories as well as pleasant ones; however the danger lies in the creation of a narrative, attempting to bring direction and clarity to mere glimpses of the past. Ethnographer Marc Augé warns of the illusory nature of collective memory in subjects, that too often informers are treated as “the depository of a total and collective memory, encompassing the past, myths, institutions, and the vocabulary of the group.”⁴⁰ He believes that oblivion is necessary to bring us to the present, make our use of time, past, present and future.⁴¹

Ciudad Juárez has experienced social forgetting due to several factors. The influx of new population in the 1980s and 1990s disrupted the cohesion that existed in the previously smaller city, and the focus of the elites was on capital expansion. Yet there were also institutional attempts to erase the history, as many ex-guerrillas were targeted and blacklisted for their activities. Many were forced to migrate if they were unable to find employment. The state was also adept at coopting dissidents and incorporating them into the political machine.⁴² Even during the period of 1965-1980, the local press carried little coverage of the activities of the guerrillas, and when they did, they utilized disparaging language such as “bandits, terrorists, criminals.” There was little recognition in the press of a legitimate ideological struggle, with

³⁸ Gross, “*Lost Time*,” 420.

³⁹ Marc Augé, *Oblivion* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 22.

⁴⁰ Augé, *Oblivion*, 37.

⁴¹ Augé, *Oblivion*, 89.

⁴² Andres F. Hajar, “The Myth of Madera.” master’s thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2004, 10.

several exceptions. One of my informants lauded Juárez radio journalist Fermin Robledo, who covered the student movement extensively and objectively throughout the early 1970s.⁴³

Worldwide, there has been a boom in historical remembrance, perhaps due to identity politics and the spread of psychoanalysis beyond the West. But historian Jay Winter sees this growing market as principally a result of war and violence, and the many memorials, monuments, and museums as a critical exchange between those who suffered and died and those who remain.⁴⁴ There has further been a democratization of suffering, with genocides in the twentieth century that target women and children as well as soldiers. Legal scholar Mark Osiel explains that our idea of what collective memory should be is heavily influenced by trials, which he terms “moments of truth” for societies.⁴⁵ Yet the international community cannot properly construct or influence collective memory in a particular society, so these attempts often fail.⁴⁶

So now as we delve into the main chapters of what was experienced in Juárez, we must at some point return to the question, why is the Dirty War poorly remembered? How has the memory shifted since 2000 with the promise of greater democracy? And is there something structural in the continuity of violence that is seen from the Dirty War to the present day?

⁴³ Héctor Staines, interview by author, El Paso and Mexico City (phone and email), March and April, 2015.

⁴⁴ Jay Winter, from “Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 427.

⁴⁵ Mark Osiel, from “Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 468.

⁴⁶ Osiel, “Mass Atrocity,” 470.

Chapter 3: Voices

“...*que busca? Tal vez busca su destino. Tal vez su destino es buscar.*¹” – Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad*

This chapter presents a polyphony of testimonies that capture some of the motivations and struggles of armed (and nonviolent) socialist revolution. I interviewed the first three men directly; the second part of this chapter derives from other oral histories and testimonies that I have gathered, and includes the stories of several women who were also victims of the Dirty War.

3.1 DR. ROBERTO VÁZQUEZ MUÑOZ, 90

Roberto Vázquez Muñoz was born in 1925 in Durango and studied medicine in Mexico City. He arrived in Ciudad Juárez, in 1952, to complete his required social service following graduation in the nearby area of San Lorenzo. He was the first doctor to arrive in the *ejido* of San Lorenzo, which was not yet a part of greater Ciudad Juárez. He married the following year, and has resided in Juárez ever since.²

Dr. Vázquez began his political interventions gradually. In the 1950s he limited his intellectual pursuits to writing several columns in the newspapers either anonymously or pseudonymously. In 1959 he met Dr. Bernardo Jiménez Pérez, and immediately found an intellectual companion. With the addition of three others, the engineers Antonio Castillo and Jaime Márquez, and the customs agent Salvador López Chávez, they formed a study group. The purpose of the group of five was ambitious; they would initially study the economic, political

¹ “Perhaps he is searching for his destiny ... Perhaps his destiny is to search.” Mexican poet Octavio Paz resigned from his post as Ambassador to India following the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968.

² Roberto Vázquez Muñoz, interview by author, Ciudad Juárez, April, 2015. All material within this section was collected during the oral history.

and social conditions of Ciudad Juárez, then Chihuahua, then Mexico, and finally the rest of the world. They began by reading Marx's Communist Manifesto, and started to generate some of their own publications. The group named itself Cuauhtémoc, after the last *tlatoani* to fight the Spanish in 1521, since he seemed to the group to be the "historically cleanest" hero.

In 1959 the group began to involve itself in other political activities, including the railroad workers' strike led by Demetrio Vallejo. In 1963 the group met with Arturo Gámiz and Pablo Gómez, who were preparing the assault on the military fort at Madera. They invited the group to participate in this action, and it prompted much debate among the members. Grupo Cuauhtémoc initially agreed that there was no other choice except for revolution, but they questioned the strategy of taking the fort. Dr. Vázquez recalls asking what would happen in the event that they were successful? Gámiz and Gómez answered that the other *serranos* in Chihuahua would rise up. They remained in talks until September 8, 1965, just two weeks prior to the unsuccessful assault.

Dr. Vázquez warned them that they would awaken the monster and be martyrs, and he sees this as an unfortunate prediction that materialized. Prior to 1965 the Mexican army was only about 45,000 members, and he and his group had relative freedom to convene and discuss their political ideology openly. Following the assault, troop levels increased to 75,000, and repression immediately increased. Among the ideological reasons Dr. Vázquez and his group abstained from the assault included a recognition that the enemies were many, and not merely in the military. Since the Mexican Revolution, the dominion had shifted from feudal control of lands to capitalism. "...Decíamos nosotros que el enemigo principal eran los banqueros, los

grandes industriales, los comerciantes mexicanos y extranjeros y los altos políticos.³” The military was relatively weak compared to these more powerful actors.

Dr. Vázquez had actually suffered consequences for his political ideology prior to the assault on Madera, when he was suspended from his hospital in 1962. Throughout his career many attempts were made to bribe him or steer him to different posts or cities. As early as 1962 he was offered the directorship of the Social Security Hospital, which he refused out of principle, although he would have accepted if the process was democratic and the physicians elected the director. He considers these tactics part of the “trampas de la burguesía.”⁴ He was finally let go from one of his posts in September of 1964, but fought judicially to be reinstated, and in December of that year a judge ruled in his favor. He has remained in the same hospital, the state’s *Hospital General*, for almost 61 years.

The following year, on March 21, 1965, the *Alianza Cívica Demócrata* (Democratic Civic Alliance) was founded. It consisted of a coalition including the Communist Party, the Popular Socialist Party, the *Grupo Cuauhtémoc*, el *Movimiento Revolucionario de Magisterio*, as well as some Masonic groups. The first problem and goal that the Alliance wanted to tackle was to help workers in the fledgling maquiladora industry. Elections were also held for leadership roles, and this caused some factionalism. The Alliance eventually fractured, with some groups breaking off and wanting to focus on assaults and bank robberies; many of these members ended up detained at the infamous *Campo Militar Número Uno*.

While many of his associates were from the middle class, there were also working class participants who interacted with Dr. Vázquez and his group. He fondly remembers a young man who lived in his house at one point, Javier Gaytán, whose brother Salvador had been killed in the

³ “We told ourselves that the principal enemies were the bankers, the industrialists, the businessmen, foreigners, and those in high political office.”

⁴ “Traps of the bourgeoisie”

assault on Madera. He was taken to the *Campo Militar Número Uno*, along with others from the Frente Unido Zapatista (FUZ). All were tortured, and Gaytán was repeatedly asked about his involvement with the Alliance. He denied even knowing who they were, and he was killed. The others who were spared reported the events back to Dr. Vázquez, who maintains that Gaytán was killed “por la solidez.”⁵ The Alliance maintained relationships with many other groups, including the FUZ, LC23S, and MAR, as well as other international groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru. From the start, their outlook was global in nature, and the group felt they were participating in a worldwide, not just Mexican, revolution.

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s Dr. Vázquez estimates that dozens from Juárez were killed, and many more tortured. Certain groups were targeted over others; he claims that of LC23S approximately 25 people were disappeared from Juárez. The press coverage at this time was almost nonexistent; the press was largely the voice of the state. Dr. Vázquez believes that much of this history has been forgotten. He sees recurring episodes of violence as having the effect of erasing past episodes. For example, as the focus is now on narco-violence of the past eight years, the physical places where murders occurred are now associated with more recent casualties. He believes that many social activists remain targeted:

“Hay multitud de gente de personas entre esos van campesinos, van obreros, que están en la lista digo, están muertos y no están en una lista, es decir están desaparecidos y no están en una lista tampoco, esos quedaron como si no hubieran existido nunca. Pero a la burguesía le interesa eliminar a los opositores...”⁶

⁵ “for his resoluteness”

⁶ “There are many people including peasants, workers, who are on “a list”, or they are killed and they’re not on a list, or they’re disappeared and they’re also not on a list, they remain as if they never existed. But the bourgeoisie is interested in eliminating those who oppose them...”

He saw the membership of his Democratic Alliance scattered over time; some members were bribed to change their views, others were killed, and many went into exile, either elsewhere in Mexico or to the United States.

Dr. Vázquez eventually confronted death threats and discovered that an order had been given to state policeman Federico Chacón to execute him. Maquilas had complained to Governor Oscar Flores Sánchez, who attended a meeting at the newspaper *El Fronterizo* in Juárez along with other elites. Someone at the meeting reported back to Dr. Vázquez that the governor reassured the group, “miren, no se preocupen para cuando yo salga no va a ver Alianza Cívico Demócrata Juarenses, no va a ver periódico *Cuauhtémoc* y no va a ver Dr. Vázquez Muñoz.”⁷ The order given to Federico Chacón presumably came from the governor’s office; however he reported back to a higher-up that he could not carry this out because of “moral debts” that he owed to the doctor. Dr. Vázquez had provided medical care to his whole family. Instead, Federico’s sister warned Dr. Vázquez of the threat, so that he could be aware and lay low. Despite such threats, Dr. Vázquez continued his political activities, and was never physically harmed.

The narrative that Dr. Vázquez creates about his political participation and life stresses heavily the love for his chosen vocation of medicine. He relates how at the beginning the hospital didn’t provide stethoscopes or other equipment to perform surgeries, and he brought them to the hospital and never charged them for the instruments. He also recalls confronting attorneys who had asked him for an “arrangement” post-trial, and he had no problem shaming them in asking why they became attorneys: “Lo hicieron para buscar la justicia o para buscar

⁷ “Look, don’t worry, because when I leave (office), you won’t see the Democratic Civic Alliance, you won’t see the newspaper *Cuauhtémoc*, and you won’t see Dr. Vázquez Muñoz.”

arreglitos?⁸” He and his group were clearly inspired by the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the growing student movement worldwide in the 1960s that made other worlds seem possible. At nearly 90, he clarified to me how what strikes us today as idealistic was not necessarily so at that time. The strong moral compass and his pride in his convictions is a recurring theme in his narrative.

Another theme is the necessity of democratic revolution. While he struggled early on with the possibility of violent revolution, Dr. Vázquez ultimately rejected this path, and maintained that through orderly civic processes and intellectual growth, people’s minds could be changed. From the insistence on a democratic process at his hospital in 1962, he rarely wavered from demanding participation from the masses. He sat out many Mexican elections, instead exhorting readers to “Vote for Chon” (a donkey). But this and other forms of protest he took were peaceful in nature. He remains optimistic about change, not minding that his Alliance is today small, as he believes that tomorrow there will be more.

3.2 ALBERTO “BETO” DOMÍNGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ, 63

Alberto Domínguez Rodríguez, known by most as Beto, was born on August 7, 1952 in the San Darío *rancho* of Tamazula, Durango. He was one of seven siblings, one sister and six brothers. In 1953, his father took the family to Ciudad Juárez in order to seek out a better education for his children, since there were no primary or secondary schools in that hilly region of Durango. While Beto and his siblings started out in elementary school, the family gradually fell into more severe poverty, and most of the boys had to drop out to work small jobs such as

⁸ “Did you do it to look for justice or to look for (underhanded monetary benefits)?”

selling newspapers, in between stints of school. Beto himself dropped out around age seven or eight and spent many long periods working in the streets, selling newspapers and gum, and shining shoes.⁹ While he continued studying when he could, he recalls an early maturity. “Así era... de modo que eso de alguna, propicio una madurez más o menos incipiente, desde muy joven, muy niño, aprender a luchar por la vida y a salir adelante.”¹⁰

In 1965, during Beto’s first year of *secundaria*, poverty again struck the family and so he left to the United States to work the fields with his brother José. As the Bracero program had recently ended, they illegally worked in California and Arizona and crossed frequently back and forth between the fields and Juárez, until the Border Patrol caught them and deported them to Ojinaga. Beto spent three years in this manner before returning to secondary school in 1968.

Beto recalls his father and siblings as always tending towards idealism and possessing leftist sympathies from a young age. “A toda la familia traíamos un poco el gusanito la inquietud, un poco de ideal, un poco proclive a la izquierda, mi papá era adicto a ese tipo de ideas.”¹¹ His house always contained a collection of leftist magazines including *Política de Marcue Pardiñas*, *Sucesos*, and *Siempre*. Thus, when the national student movement in 1968 spread to his school and began strikes, Beto and his brothers were naturally galvanized.

The strikes began peacefully, and included several secondary and preparatory schools, as there was not yet a university in Juárez until 1973. Beto and other students participated in coalitions such as the *Comité Local de Lucha*, then the *Consejo Local de Lucha*, attempting to raise the consciousness of both residents and workers in Juárez. In the few years between 1968

⁹ Alberto Domínguez, interview by author, Ciudad Juárez, April, 2015. All material within this section was collected during the oral history.

¹⁰ “That was how it was, so that this (life) favored an early maturity, that from very young, you learned to fight for life and come out ahead.”

¹¹ All of our family carried a little bit of this gnawing anxiety, a little idealistic, with leftist tendencies, my father was addicted to these types of ideas.”

and 1970, several of his classmates were detained but liberated, and the demonstrations and strikes they held were seen as quasi-legal. Beto doesn't really consider the state response repressive until they arranged a *contramitin* (counter-meeting) during a visit to Juárez by PRI presidential candidate Luis Echeverría in 1970.

With advance notice of a tour that Echeverría would be conducting in Juárez, several organizations convened to prepare counter-action. The Consejo Local de Lucha included other organizations such as the *Alianza Cívico Demócrata Juarense*, the Communist Party, *Maestros Democráticos*, as well as a democratic section of the PAN. The official PRI meeting was to be held on Avenida Juárez and Vicente Guerrero, and the counter-meeting was arranged two blocks away at the Plaza de Armas. There were more than 300 people present, with the mood very cautious. Beto retreated one block away in front of the movie theater facing the plaza, and observed the arrival of several well-known activists, including Dr. Vázquez Muñoz and Raúl Flores Simental. At that point he describes how the police descended upon them like flies. This repressive police action that denied their freedom of expression caused immediate discontent, and there was a spontaneous march that formed, with hundreds of observers heading off to the jail on foot. During the progression, a rumor emerged that in a canal behind the jail there were soldiers waiting to confront the protestors, and so they decided to go back to where the official meeting was being held. As an hour and a half had already passed, the *prístas* were already gone, and someone launched a Molotov cocktail, prompting the arrival of more police and firefighters.

Following this event and the subsequent witnessing of the beatings and kidnappings, Beto and his associates decided to go underground and reorganize themselves. The goal was to spread their voices further, and go farther in means of armed revolution. His brothers were already

participating in such a group down in Mexico City, known as the organization *Lacandones*, and so Beto moved to the capital in 1972 to participate more deeply and to study vocational work at the Politécnico. Around this time the police began detaining small groups of his friends, and he was also picked up in a group of 18 or 20 people around November of 1972. Beto recalls these first detentions as fairly minor; they would be held in a hidden prison for one or two weeks and subjected to what he called “light torture.” The goal was to extract some information. Later, he was taken to the notorious Lecumberri prison, to the main jail, where prisoners were separated according to their level of danger. Beto was labeled medium-risk and put in a wing along with common criminals. He recalls a greater level of repression, and while he was not beaten by guards as before, he was tortured through forced labor and repetitive tasks. Prisoners were forced to work performing menial tasks from dawn to evening, and when work was done, they were made to do exercises. They were also put in stress positions such as squats and if they got tired they had cold water thrown on them or were hit on the head.

Beto realized the comparative advantage of his treatment when he saw his brother Miguel in 1973, who was jailed in a different wing and subjected to more brutal forms of torture. He was taken past the wing Miguel was being held in at one point and saw a totally different man, with broken ribs and a gaunt, haggard expression. Beto and his younger brother José were released after one year in the prison, on bail, and after three days reunited with members of the LC23S and went back underground and conducted armed work for them. The next five years saw a gradual decommissioning of this group, and Beto followed into more legal means of action. They first gave up their weapons, then they stopped any clandestine activities and meetings, then they resumed their real identities and stopped using false papers, and finally they formed the *Corriente Socialista* at a national level. After Beto moved to Monterrey, he became a

delegate for the *Corriente Socialista*. He was also granted amnesty under President López Portillo, along with other ex-guerrillas, once the government determined they were no longer dangerous and had put down their arms. While he spent a great deal of the dirty war in Mexico City, Guerrero, and Monterrey as a guerrilla, he eventually returned to Juárez in 1984.

Beto's three eldest brothers did not survive the Dirty War. Miguel attempted to escape from Lecumberri and did not want to be subjected to any more torture once he was recaptured. He took his life after his recapture on October 8, 1975. Gabriel was killed in a confrontation with the army in the Sierra Tarahumara on November 24, 1974. Plutarco disappeared that same day, and has never been found.¹²

Beto recognizes that much of this history is forgotten. He believes that in the general population today, that people are the product of disinformation by authorities, but that during the period of 1972-1983 that there was much more realization, even if the motives of the guerrillas were misunderstood. He draws parallels between the 1970s and the economic and political situation in today's Mexico. He believes there continues to be much state repression, and that Mexico's purported democracy is a farce. Referring to the recent disappearance of the 43 students in Guerrero, he sees the necessity of group action to systematically organize and combat state repression.

Beto sees a continuity in the state's use of violence. He views the initial massacres of 1968 and 1971 as the clumsiest, and then the state became better at hiding its tactics of repression. He describes the formation of the *Brigada Blanca* and explains how even after the disarmament of guerrilla groups, they continued to target peasant groups in Guerrero. He refers to DFS henchman Miguel Nazar Haro in Juárez and his transition to criminality. He believes

¹² Héctor Pedraza Reyes, "Apuntes Sobre El Movimiento Armado Socialista en México 1971-1974." *Nóesis. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 17.34 (2008), 121.

that many of the techniques that were utilized by the state were taught at the military schools in the U.S., and were similarly deployed in dirty wars throughout Latin America. He believes that peaceful people from the left remain targeted in Mexico.

Several themes emerge in Beto's narrative. One is resilience. Beto is a survivor, who apart from his experiences during the dirty war also suffered a workplace accident and has been a paraplegic since 1979. He frames his childhood experiences as preparation for surviving future hardships. In talking about the extreme climate during his fieldwork in the U.S., he explains how that helped to "harden" him. "De alguna manera nos curtió bastante pues para las penalidades de la vida y la capacidad de sobrevivencia natural, lo cual yo deduzco o sea que cuando estuvimos nos egresamos en los años después a la guerrilla que hubo situaciones muy difíciles de vivencias peligrosas, de alguna manera, esa capacitación natural que teníamos para la sobrevivencia nos ayudó a salir adelante, a sobrellevar a algunos de los peligros que hubo."¹³

Another theme is the importance of collective action. He sees this as a personal obligation of a thinking person, and the only way to fight injustice. He himself shifted from believing in armed struggle as the fastest and most appropriate way to a better world, and now participates in only nonviolent struggle. Today he considers that armed struggle ultimately only serves the state as it can more justifiably respond with repression. But he remains optimistic about the possibility for broad solidarity, imagining a time when enough people in Juárez strike and stop the work of the city, block the airports and the roads, believing that then people can dictate their own terms. "Cuando se logre organizar una buena cantidad de gente del pueblo y en

¹³ "In some way it hardened us quite a bit, from the hardships of life and the natural ability to survive, I imagine that when we left in those years, then during the guerrilla phase, there were very difficult and dangerous situations, and in some way, this natural training that we had to survive helped us to come out ahead, to endure some of the dangers that were there."

formas de lucha directa, de resistencia abierta directa...esa va a ser el instrumento principal que nos puede permitir el cambio.”¹⁴

3.3 HÉCTOR FEDERICO STAINES OROZCO, 67

Héctor Staines Orozco was born in Mexico City in 1948, but lived in Juárez from a young age. His parents rented a modest house in the center of the city, one block from the Valdés family, whose eldest son Germán Valdés became the famous actor and musician Tin Tan. When he was ten, his parents bought a house in the Colonia Los Alamos near the free bridge. He enrolled in a private school after the move, and recalls a happy childhood, walking the two kilometers between his school and house with his other six siblings. His father was working as a journalist at *El Fronterizo* and later *El Diario*. When two of his elder siblings left the house to study, he acted as the eldest child, protecting his younger siblings from bullies. He studied at three different *primarias*, two *secundarias*, and two *preparatorias*, one in Juárez and the other being the Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso. His father enrolled him in the Hermanos Escobar School of Agriculture, which used to be near the Chamizal Park, and he studied to become an agronomist. He also enrolled in night classes at a different *preparatoria* to study, and around this time began to attend the meetings that Dr. Vázquez Muñoz conducted with his Alliance.

This *preparatoria*, like others around the city, was controlled by the state, and the students began to question the director, asking him to account for tuition costs, as well as challenging some of the content of the educational material being taught. Directly influenced by Dr. Vázquez Muñoz and other intellectuals, Héctor and the other students felt a need to spread

¹⁴ “When you are able to organize a bunch of citizens, and in forms of direct confrontation, direct open resistance, this will be the principal instrument that permits change to happen.”

education and raise collective consciousness. After receiving no response from the administrators, even after convening meetings with parents, the students decided to take their demands public and go on strike. Several students occupied the building where the classes were taught, blocking entrance for other students. At the same time, they began to visit the poorest *colonias* in Juárez to teach basic literacy to small children who weren't in school. After the strikes and this action yielded no response, they began to hijack public buses in Juárez. The students would forcibly remove the driver and then drive the bus in the same route it would have otherwise gone. While one student would drive, another would explain to the passengers the reasons behind the strike. The students did not charge any bus fare, but they did carry a collection box in which some passengers donated to their cause.

At the same time a group of teachers and alumni from the *preparatoria* rented a private house and restarted teaching to non-striking students. In February of 1972, the student council elected Héctor to go to Mexico City and recruit more help in the form of money and teachers. He contacted four professors who offered to come to Juárez, and they were the founders of what is known as the *Prepa Popular*, which lasted a brief few months. One Sunday in August of 1972, the municipal police stormed the school, breaking down the front door with an electric pole, and arrested seven, while others escaped. The director accused them of having stolen valuables and money from the school, which Héctor considered calumnious. The students were jailed in Juárez, and garnered more support from other striking students at the Tec de Juárez. After officials were not able to find any evidence of theft, the students were released after about a week. They reconvened and started taking classes outside the Juárez Monument, but noticed different governmental agents monitoring their activities. Héctor began to receive threats urging him to leave the city. He was also negatively influencing the career of his father, who was by

this time working as a private secretary to Manuel Bernardo Aguirre, a senator from Chihuahua who would later become governor. Héctor participated in one final demonstration in Juárez, in which students and others commemorated the massacre in Tlatelolco four years prior. On October 2, 1972, they held a meeting in downtown Juárez in front of about two thousand people, and from a kiosk they openly accused Presidents Echeverría and Díaz Ordaz of massacring the students. Two days later, he left for Mexico City to study economics, where he would earn his degree.

One month after his arrival in Mexico City, Héctor was surrounded by motorcycle cops on Avenida Reforma near the U.S. Embassy, and was taken without any due process to a private jail. He found himself reunited with several people from Juárez, including Héctor Velazquez, Raul Flores Simental, and Héctor Pedraza. Héctor was beat up, given blows to the face, and accused of being a guerrilla. He spent a month in secret detention; meanwhile, his family was frantically looking for him everywhere as there was no evidence of his arrest. He was kept together with another prisoner, but as they didn't trust or know each other, each thought the other might be a policeman. After sharing the stories, this man, Guillermo Sandoval, who was also from Juárez, taught him to play chess, and they spent the month playing chess with paper figures from their cigarette rolls. Each promised the other that they would contact the other's family if they were released. They exchanged families' phone numbers and wrote them in the heel of their shoe. Sandoval was released first, and after making his way home to Juárez, he contacted Héctor's family. His father immediately approached the director of the secret service, who denied having possession of anyone from Juárez. But a day later he was released, and the following day the others from Juárez were set free. While Héctor maintained his ties to friends and family in Juárez, he continued to live in Mexico City. In 1988, he pursued a graduate degree

in Social Anthropology from the National School of Anthropology and History, and pursued a second masters in Educational Technology in 2000.

Héctor's experience and interview focus on the importance of education and the tension that existed between the state and leftists regarding curriculum and transparency. He is a man who values education and lifelong learning, and believes that this should be accessible to all. In his writing and speech, he also seems to enjoy the theater of struggle, in the public nature of protests and denouncements, and in his current activity with MORENA, the newly formed National Regeneration Movement, a cross-party left-wing democratic movement. While not having experience as an armed guerrilla himself, he was allies and friends with people who were. Héctor recognizes the power of the state and knows that much of his luck was due to his middle class status and the political connections his father had at the time. He continues to hold the traditional state in contempt, believing that justice was never given to those who were persecuted. "Según el estado mexicano, (los perseguidos) son escoria de la sociedad y no merecen ningún tipo de derechos humanos."¹⁵

3.4 GUERRILLERAS AND OTHER VOICES

Armed revolutionary struggle was not limited to men. Historian Lucía Rayas analyzed more than 30 guerrilla groups that emerged in about seven key states, and compiled data based on survivors' testimonies and ex-participant events held after 2000. While 43 women are reported to have died or disappeared during the Dirty War, most of the detained and disappeared

¹⁵ "According to the Mexican state, (the persecuted) are the scum of society and don't deserve any type of human rights."

were men.¹⁶ The role that women played often reinforced traditional gender roles, where women acted as girlfriends, *compañeras*, and caregivers. There was little if any feminist agenda within most of the groups' ideology. A unique factor of women's participation was the methods of torture used against them by the state. Rayas suggests that women were especially targeted for humiliation, sexual torture, and crimes perpetrated against their loved ones (children, unborn and born, spouses, and parents), precisely because they were seen as the worst sort of traitor to the nation.¹⁷ If the apparatus of the state could be envisioned as male, the concept of "nation" is always seen as female, along with expectations of decorum and subservient behavior. Rayas argues that women's political participation challenged basic concepts of gender relations in Mexico and often led to harsher treatment of women who were illegally detained.

What were some of the experiences of women from Chihuahua and the north? Most joined as teenagers or youths after a period of study. María de la Luz Aguilar Terrés compiled a large book of testimonies, accounts, letters, and biographies about dozens of women from throughout Mexico who participated in armed struggle. The following sketches provide glimpses of lives and motivations of some women. **Cruz Elena Montoya Ortiz** was a member of LC23S who was injured after a shooting on August 28, 1974. She was arrested along with an accomplice Aurelio Lara Enríquez, who died at the hospital. After nearly two years of imprisonment, Montoya Ortiz was absolved of her crimes and set free. She returned to combat and was killed on September 1, 1977.

¹⁶ Lucía Rayas, "Subjugating the Nation: Women and the Guerrilla Experience," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 173.

¹⁷ Rayas, "Subjugating the Nation," 176.

Minerva Armendariz was the sister of Carlos David Armendariz, who was killed during the assault in Madera in 1965.¹⁸ She was 11 years old, and took to reading her older brother's books including those of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, Simon Bolívar, José Martí, Karl Marx and Lenin. In 1970 she was kidnapped by the DFS along with another young girl, the daughter of a murdered *guerrillero*. She relates how her parents frantically looked for her night and day, and that she believes she was only let go thanks to thousands of residents of Chihuahua who took to the streets demanding the girls' return.¹⁹ Now deceased, Minerva wrote several books but found it very difficult to write about the physical and emotional torture she suffered in confinement. Her testimony underlines her lifelong motives for her activism, as well as that of her brother. She hopes that her story inspires others to denounce "any injustice, committed against anyone, in any part of the world."

Alicia de los Ríos Merino was a member of LC23S, born on September 23, 1952 in rural Chihuahua to a family of teachers. She studied electrical engineering until 1974, when she left to dedicate herself full-time to revolutionary struggle. She helped to organize meetings, sporting events, festivals, and strikes in the technological schools in Chihuahua, Torreón, and Juárez. In Juárez she met Luis Miguel Corral García, another influential guerrillero also known as the *Piojo Blanco*. Along with several other members of LC23S, they planned a robbery of a *gasera* and on February 3, 1974, went out to an outlying neighborhood known as La Carbonífera to test the guns. They were surprised by a patrol car, and one of the members, Rigoberto Ávila, killed two of the policemen and took their weapons. However, their car got stuck in sand, so they had to abandon it and walk back to Juárez, where they hid out. She returned to Mexico City in March of that year, then went to Sinaloa with Luis Miguel Corral. In June of 1974, the Juárez

¹⁸ María de la Luz Aguilar Terrés, *Guerrilleras: Antología de testimonios y textos sobre la participación de las mujeres en los movimientos armados socialistas en México*, (Mexico: 2014), 480.

¹⁹ Aguilar Terrés, *Guerrilleras*, 481.

municipal police arrested the main leaders of that city's chapter of LC23S, and Alicia returned to Chihuahua. Alicia was part of the *Brigada Teresa Hernández Antonio* and also participated in the attempted kidnapping of Margarita López Portillo, the sister of the president-elect José López Portillo Pacheco. She was eventually detained by the DFS on January 6, 1978, and had her statement taken on January 21, 1978. She was seen various times that year in both the Campo Militar No. 1 and at the Cárcel de Mujeres, where she gave birth to a second child towards the end of 1978. Both she and her second child remain missing; her first-born child Alicia is now a professor of history in Chihuahua and researches the Dirty War. Her revolutionary path was typical of many; it was geographically dispersed, and guerrillas were forced to change location frequently to avoid infiltration and detection. Arms were mostly supplied from the north (possibly even El Paso), and the centers of study remained in Mexico City.

María Olga Navarro Fierro and her husband Jorge Hermelindo Varela Varela were arrested by the *Brigada Blanca* in Juárez on November 8, 1977. Their location at a safe house on Pascual Orozco No. 2394 in south-central Juárez was revealed after the arrest of other members of the *Brigada Salvador Corral García*, a unit of LC23S. They were immediately flown to the Campo Militar No. 1, and their names were found on a wall of another clandestine prison. However, they were never seen again.²⁰

Jose Luis Esparza was a member of LC23S originally from Aguascalientes, but who moved at age fifteen with his mother to Juárez in 1969 to escape his father's alcoholism and abuse.²¹ He lived with his grandparents and four siblings, who worked to support him in his further studies. He recalled coming from a very Catholic background and wanting to do good in the world, to save his soul. Juárez was a modern, urban place in contrast to Aguascalientes with

²⁰ Aguilar Terrés, *Guerrilleras*, 215-217.

²¹ José Luis Esparza", interview by Alicia De Los Rios Merino of the Centro de Historia Oral y Pública de la Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Mexico City, July 10, 2012.

its “twenty churches and one school.” He graduated from the *Tecnológico* with a degree in mathematics and gradually embraced a more scientific understanding of the world. While he dressed as a hippie, he remained solitary and did not use drugs or participate in the counter-culture. He was more concerned with social justice, and cited poverty, injustice, and massacres as reasons that he initially went on strike at his school. He recalled the first strike as well-organized and democratic, and was surprised at the order and support that it garnered from the families of students as well. With the decision to take up arms and enter the *Liga*, José Luis was profoundly altered by seeing his companions with guns. A growing hate towards the authorities festered, yet he was conflicted about committing assaults and particularly murder. He stayed in a safe house in Mexico City and instead dedicated himself to study. Reflecting on the difficulty of revolution, he laments how it is so difficult to confront a system, a super-powerful enemy that has 50 years of rule behind it, but that the struggle against the state united all of the members of his group despite their background or their willingness to use violence.

Francisco Javier Aguirre Meraz “El Gallo” was a Juárez revolutionary who provided testimony about his motivations. He cited Lenin’s 1902 political pamphlet “What is to be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement” as a major influence that encouraged a certain professionalism in the task of revolution.²² He recalled the newness and difficulty of dealing with arms, as he came from a middle-class family that taught respect of one’s elders, but that gradually the prospect of violence and revolution brought all values into question. He discussed how most people see the world through rose-colored glasses, and are absorbed in their computer or television or radio. Yet he recalled learning about another world, realizing that the whole state apparatus was in charge of a capitalist system that upheld private property at the expense of

²² Francisco Javier Aguirre Meraz “El Gallo”, interview by Alicia De Los Rios Merino of the Centro de Historia Oral y Pública de la Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, April 20, 2011.

many. He questioned why regional and class differences existed, and even if God existed. He recalled the 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco as an awakening, and remembered with particular clarity a photograph from the magazine *¿Por Qué?* that showed a soldier with a bayonet towering over a student on the ground with his books spread out around him. He recognized at that point that the idea of the Mexican Army was not to defend, or at least not to defend all Mexicans, and that the collusion between the Army and the state was absolute. The state's willingness to commit all sorts of atrocities cemented his disillusionment and his path to revolutionary activity.

Miguel Lerma Camargo was the son of an agricultural worker who owned a small bit of land and farmed it.²³ His father could have received U.S. citizenship as a Tigua member, but rejected it and went to Juárez instead, marrying a *manso* descendent. Miguel abhors the infatuation that Chihuahua has with the Spaniards, glorifying conquistadores over local heroes like Pancho Villa and Abraham González. Miguel recalls in childhood how the sons of workers couldn't realistically aspire to study at the *Tecnológico* as their parents earned so little. Growing up, the principal industries were the whisky distillery, the beer factory, the cottonseed oil and flourmills, and carpentry. Yet he and his brother both studied there and became a part of the growing student movement. He believes that the bulk of money made by the Juárez oligarchs has been illegally made, through expansion and takeovers of businesses and through narco-trafficking. Miguel's testimony includes a discussion of the decision to take up arms and become a revolutionary, and the moral conflict that arose with the decision. He saw it as an inevitable progression, yet at the same time discussed coping mechanisms during operations. Speaking at the height of violence in 2011, he laments the fear that precludes people from

²³ Miguel Lerma Camargo, interview by Alicia De Los Rios Merino of the Centro de Historia Oral y Pública de la Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, April 21, 2011.

protesting or addressing the state. He claims that the violence and impunity has paralyzed society, that they are afraid to name the Governor or the police chief. He ends his testimony with the following:

“...es una confrontación con el Estado, con la mafia y con la policía, ay cabrón, cosas muy fuertes ¿sí? fuerzas que tienen todo el poder y los recursos y la impunidad para hacer lo que se les dé la gana, llámese policía, llámese mafia, llámese Estado, si, las tres partes. ¿Algo más?²⁴

3.5 SUMMARY

The voices in this chapter speak to the urgency of their project of revolution. These people were not common criminals but largely middle-class educated men and women who were disillusioned with the economic and political structure of their society. Motivated by outside readings, discussion groups, and personal discrimination stemming from their political views, they organized different means of resistance. Those who perpetrated violent acts struggled with the rationale, at times adopting Débray's concept of defensive revolution, and those who remained dedicated to peaceful means were prolific authors and educators. This collection of individual memories serves an important purpose in uncovering motivations and allows the reader to recognize the humanity of Dirty War victims.

²⁴ “It's a confrontation with the State, with the mafia and with the police, (expletive), very strong things, no? Forces that have all of the power and resources and impunity to do what they feel like, call it police, call it mafia, call it the state, but these are the three parts. Anything else?”

Chapter 4: Events

“Soldado no dispaes, tú también eres pueblo.”

“Nada con la fuerza, todo con la razón.”

“Obrero, destruye tu sindicato charro.”¹

– Banners from a protest on August 27, 1968

This chapter will examine three events that occurred in the context of the Dirty War, from differing perspectives based on archival research of media outlets. While the first did not take place in Ciudad Juárez, the October 2, 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco was a state response that was profoundly shocking response to Mexicans of diverse political persuasions. The second event I will examine is the visit of presidential candidate Luis Echeverría to Juárez in April of 1970, anticipating his ascent from Interior Secretary to President-Elect. The third event I will explore is the storming of the Prepa Popular on August 27, 1972, during which student squatters were forcibly removed and incarcerated. All three of these of events shed light on the atmosphere of tension and the persistence of dissent that was nevertheless quashed by the state. The final part of this chapter will consider some motivations of the left, as found in the newspaper archive *Cuauhtémoc*, the official voice of the Juárez Democratic Civic Alliance.

4.1 TLATELOLCO, OCTOBER 2, 1968

Many historians consider the massacre at the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* to represent the first indication of a calculated dirty war. Historians Enrique Krauze and Sergio Aguayo both wrote of the event as a momentous blow that concentrated influence in the intelligence services

¹ “Soldier, don’t shoot, you are also of the common people.” “Nothing with force, everything with reason.” “Worker, destroy your corrupt union.” From Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1971).

and further entrenched the power of the government.² The student movement was erroneously seen by the government and by the U.S. as principally a communist threat, due to the distortion of the Cold War lens, when in fact the movement was an example of an open, disorganized and democratic process that was constantly in flux. One U.S. embassy study of the student movement from 1963-1968 analyzed forty incidents of student unrest. Of the forty incidents, more than two-thirds (31) were motivated by legitimate school grievances or a local concern. Only six were directly related to Cuba and Vietnam, and four were concerned with the authoritarianism of the Mexican state.³ The very amorphous nature of the movement created a problem for Díaz Ordaz, who finally in September stated his intentions to “suppress any continued agitation,” a move interpreted by the U.S. as a hint that there would be violence.⁴ The president’s words prompted a large march through Mexico City in mid-September of nearly 200,000 people, with white handkerchiefs covering their mouth in silent protest. Díaz Ordaz escalated the conflict by sending 10,000 soldiers to campuses in Mexico City.

On October 2, 1968, in the early evening, nearly 10,000 people had gathered in the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*. While the army was instructed to arrest leaders and hand them to the DFS, there was another secret police, the Olympic Battalion, which was supposed to prevent others from leaving the Plaza. In 1999, an article from *Proceso* revealed that the chief of the army at the time, Luis Gutiérrez Oropeza, acted on orders from the president, and had ten men with machine guns who were told to shoot indiscriminately into the crowd from the upper floors of the Chihuahua building, facing the Plaza. Gutiérrez Oropeza later gave many interviews and accounts of his role in the massacre, portraying himself as the crucial link between Díaz Ordaz and the future president Echeverría. However, in 2002 Gutiérrez Oropeza was ordered by the

² Morley, *Our Man in Mexico*, 271.

³ Morley, *Our Man in Mexico*, 267.

⁴ Morley, *Our Man in Mexico*, 267.

Secretary of Defense (SEDENA) to no longer speak to the press, nor to discuss Tlatlelolco or any events related to his tenure as Mexico's chief of staff.⁵ What we know though, is that dozens if not hundreds were killed during that night, although details still remain clouded and contradictory, through continued veils of imposed silence. But the official voice placed all culpability for the tragedy on the students.

In Juárez, the media coverage parroted the federal government's viewpoint. The descending headlines of *El Fronterizo* on October 3, 1968 neatly summarized the conspiracy theories that led to Congress authorizing the use of force against students. In large font, the front page shouted, "Objective: To Frustrate the Olympic Games," "Foreign Hands Insistent on Discrediting Mexico," and "Bloody Riot with 20 Dead and Many Injured."⁶ The main article went on to accuse snipers of firing upon soldiers who were reluctantly obligated to defend themselves. It further stated that there were foreign people mixed in with students, and that there was evidence that these outsiders were inciting the students in order to smear Mexico's reputation days before the opening of the Olympic Games. However, the article did not specify what evidence existed. It cited 20 dead and 80 wounded, both civilian and military. The article went on to relate the "facts" of the evening, explaining that the meeting was not authorized or permitted in that area, and that the police had requested help from the army at around 5:30 p.m., approximately an hour before the shooting began. The article ended with the arrest of Luis Tomás Cervantes Cabeza de Vaca, head of the Mexican Communist Party, as being responsible for inciting the rebellion, naming him one of the principal student agitators.

The October 3 edition of *El Fronterizo* also included an open letter to President Díaz Ordaz from various civil associations, unions and sports leagues in Mexico City, condemning the

⁵ "Silencio, exige la Sedena al general Luis Gutiérrez Oropeza," *Proceso*, July 2, 2002. accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=243262>

⁶ "Objetivo: Frustrar la Olimpiada," *El Fronterizo*, October 3, 1968.

student movement as full of “pseudo-students” who were enamored with international communism and had veered off the correct path. It asked the question, “If all these acts of pillaging, if all these insults to society had been committed by simple citizens, would they not have been punished?”⁷ It applauded Díaz Ordaz’s response to use force against student groups and questioned why there could be any scandal about doing so. The letter was signed a day before the events at Tlatelolco. A day later, the October 4 edition of *El Fronterizo* continued in the same vein with two articles, one “Demanding that the Youth Reflect (on their actions)” and a second “Corruption Surfaces in the ‘Student Movement.’” The paper presented evidence of youth who were arrested and “spontaneously confessed” to not being students, but instead soliciting money from pedestrians and drivers for the student movement.⁸

Across the border, the *El Paso Times* covered the “Mexico City Riot” only superficially, reprinting two AP stories that focused on “student rebels” and highlighted the military aspect of the fight that raged most of the night.⁹ The *El Paso Herald Post* printed the UPI coverage of the event, and more prominently displayed a large headline on October 3, 1968, reading “Mexico City Riot Death Toll 27: Student Guns Silenced by Army Tanks.” The UPI correspondent provided a more nuanced version of “antigovernment demonstrators,” along with chilling details such as the “drizzling rain washed away the blood on the square.” This same article did quote government officials as hinting at a Communist plot intended to disrupt the Olympics, saying, “The disturbances have been originated by interests influenced by foreign groups.”¹⁰

As we know today, many more people were killed at the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*, although the number remains uncertain, and all accounts point to the Olympic Battalion and/or

⁷ “Mexico Entero Con Díaz Ordaz,” *El Fronterizo*, October 3, 1968.

⁸ “Aflora la Corrupción del ‘Movimiento Estudiantil,’” *El Fronterizo*, October 4, 1968.

⁹ Associated Press, “Mexico Clash Said Bloodiest,” October 3, 1968, and Associated Press, “Mexico Riot Toll 20-40 as Olympics Scheduled,” October 4, 1968.

¹⁰ United Press International, “Mexico City Riot Death Toll 27,” *El Paso Herald Post*, October 3, 1968.

other government agents opening fire on students who were leaving a peaceful meeting. This massacre successfully ground to a halt the student movement, but was a serious liability for presidential candidate Luis Echeverría, who was Secretary of the Interior at the time of the massacre. Echeverría sought to reconcile with students, by allowing for more dissent and also through coopting several student leaders into the fold of the PRI.¹¹ First portrayals of the true events were published in 1971; Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco* and Luis González de Alba's *Los días y los años* both recount events and include testimonials. This is an example of the state allowing for certain dissent; the costs of silencing some of the top literary or journalistic voices would have been too great.

In Juárez, Héctor Staines Orozco recalls his *Prepa del Parque* going on strike after the massacre in support of the students, but recalls that it was brief and many students didn't participate because they were afraid.¹² The events of 1968 prompted the formation of a militant group known as the *Comando Lacandonas*, which had strong ties to Ciudad Juárez.¹³ With the failure of the student movement, various students began to organize an armed resistance. Historian Fernando Herrera Calderón argues that the *Lacandonas* were the only group that formed as a direct result of the massacre, and that the proliferation of guerrilla groups didn't occur until 1971.¹⁴ Within the *Lacandonas*, some of the members already were convinced that the Communist Party and democratic processes were hindrances to the revolution; others were students who had to be convinced to take up arms. Benjamín Pérez Aragón was one of the founders from Juárez and explained that the formation of the group was threefold: students from

¹¹ Fernando Herrera Calderón, "From Books to Bullets: Youth Radicalism and Urban Guerrillas in Guadalajara" in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 105.

¹² Héctor Staines, interview by author, October 2015.

¹³ Pedraza Reyes, "Apuntes Sobre El Movimiento Armado Socialista en México 1971-1974," 115.

¹⁴ Herrera Calderón, "From Books to Bullets," 108.

the Politécnico, from UNAM, and from the *preparatorias* of Ciudad Juárez. Beto Domínguez's brothers were also principal organizers of the *Lacandones*, along with another *juarense* Carlos Salcedo. Simultaneously, in Juárez the *Consejo Local de Lucha* was formed under the influence of students from both UNAM and Politécnico. The Tlatelolco massacre also prompted the formation of the *Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Forces, FLN), which originated in another northern industrial city, Monterrey, but sought to establish the Guevarist notion of *foquismo* in the Lacandon jungle in Chiapas.

Over the course of almost four years, the *Lacandones* committed “expropriations” or robberies in Mexico City. The group was divided into command units including *Lacandones*, *Arturo Gámiz*, and *Patria o Muerte*. According to Carlos Salcedo, they robbed numerous businesses, including the jewelry store *Minerva*, the shoe store *Tres Hermanos* and the arms store *Armas y Deportes*, resulting in thousands of pesos with which they bought more arms and ammunition from the north.¹⁵ The *Comando Armado Lacandones* was dissolved on March 15, 1973, when the remaining members who were not detained joined in with the newly formed *Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre*.¹⁶ David Jiménez Sarmiento, husband of Leticia Galarza, was a member of the *Patria o Muerte* wing of the *Lacandones*, and was detained on January 15, 1973. He later died next to fellow Chihuahuan Alicia de los Rios Merino when he attempted to kidnap the president's sister Margarita López Portillo on August 11, 1976.

Many of the victims in the Dirty War cite this massacre as being the first major shock leading to a reassessment of strategies; in the border cities of El Paso and Juárez, however, all newspaper coverage quickly turned to glowing reports of Olympic glory.

¹⁵ Pedraza Reyes, “Apuntes Sobre El Movimiento Armado Socialista en México 1971-1974,” 118.

¹⁶ Pedraza Reyes, “Apuntes Sobre El Movimiento Armado Socialista en México 1971-1974,” 113.

4.2 LUIS ECHEVERRÍA'S VISIT, APRIL 26-27, 1970

There was, of course, no doubt that Echeverría would be elected in 1970. His visit to Juárez as a candidate in April of 1970, a little more than two months before the election, therefore resembled more of a pre-coronation festivity. The mainstream media in Juárez covered his visit with predictable glee and flattery. Echeverría himself harkened the Mexican Revolution, as reflected in a headline in *El Fronterizo* that proclaimed “The Great Mexican Battles Were Won Here!” The Sunday, April 26, 1970 edition of *El Fronterizo* devoted the first three pages to photos and stories of the warm reception that Juárez gave the candidate. The crowd was described as “monstrous, enthusiastic, and spontaneous”, and the candidate as optimistic, constructive, and praising the contribution of *juarenses* to historical movements of social justice.¹⁷

In turn, Echeverría praised Juárez as both the “cradle of Mexican Democracy” and the prime locus of industrialization, and advocated the expansion of the maquila industry as the path to future prosperity and the answer to social problems in the city.¹⁸ The entire third page of the newspaper was a biographical encomium excerpted from a book by Carlos J. Sierra, *Luis Echeverría: Raíz y Dinámica de su Pensamiento*. Nowhere in this edition of the visit is there mention of the 1968 massacre, nor of any protestors or political dissent in Juárez during the course of his visit.

A second viewpoint of Echeverría's visit illustrates the tensions and disproportionate response of the state towards protestors. According to an article from the newspaper *Cuauhtémoc*, days before the visit, scheduled for April 26, 1970, over 4,000 army troops as well

¹⁷ “Sentido Mensaje del Candidato,” *El Fronterizo*, April 26, 1970.

¹⁸ “Pide LE Esfuerzo en Pro de la Industrialización en la Frontera,” *El Fronterizo*, April 26, 1970.

as local police lined the streets.¹⁹ The city is described as being in a state of siege, with military patrols throughout the streets as well as searching students at upper-level schools. Anti-Echeverría protestors had organized a counter-meeting at the Plaza de Armas, to immediately follow the official PRI meeting, which was set for noon. At 12:30 p.m., the newspaper describes how the police descended upon the plaza, assaulted various organizers, and proceeded to arbitrarily detain upwards of 80 people. Other sympathizers marched to the jail to demand the release of the detainees, and unable to reach the jail, returned to the plaza, destroying Echeverría's propaganda and flyers in the process, and ultimately burning his portrait. This action unleashed further police reprisals, during which several people were killed and injured. One among the dead was a young man who may have been caught in crossfire, but was killed by the police on Calle de la Paz, and a policeman, Enrique Domínguez Carbajal, was also killed by a local policeman who was later assassinated. The newspaper reported that up to 20 people were injured in the melee and firefight.

The *Cuauhtémoc* article concludes with bullet-point condemnations and exhortations including that (1) the violence was provoked by the visit and the police response, not the protestors; (2) the huge police force was correlated to the rage that Mexicans felt towards their government; it belied the idea that people were happy with the regime; (3) the role of the "Gran Prensa" (local press) is to obfuscate and confuse and is a tool of the exploiters; (4) the popularity of Echeverría was grossly exaggerated; while the claim was that 100,000 were in attendance, the paper reported at most 10,000, including police, paid entertainers, and those who were forced to attend; and (5) this visit should be seen as a sign of things to come in the next *sexenio* (more repression). The article concludes with explaining that the police action was against

¹⁹ "LEA y las Autoridades Juarenses Rompieron el orden Constitucional," *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 60, May 1970.

constitutional order, and exhorts students to ally themselves with workers, small businessmen, and the intellectually honest to form a party to combat the ruling class.

In an interview with foreign correspondents during the Juárez visit, Echeverría shrugged off any suggestion that communism could be a threat to Mexico. In an article published on April 28, 1970 in the Mexico City newspaper *Excelsior* he is quoted as saying “there is not even the tenth [of the demonstrations] that have occurred in the United States. [The problem of communism] is due to the fact that young people between 15 and 20 years old are fundamentally looking for a path. The problem of youth is a worldwide phenomenon.”²⁰ The *El Paso Times* joined in the praise of Echeverría, with a front-page picture of the smiling candidate, flanked by Congressman Richard White (D-El Paso), Congressman Ed Foreman (R-Las Cruces), and Mayor Peter de Wetter.²¹ While briefly referencing a fire set by “youngsters”, the newspaper reported that it was quickly put out before anything larger could develop. The article also cited the Juárez police chief who claimed there were 100,000 roaring people in attendance, entertained by both *mariachis* and an American-style rock-n-roll serenade. The local El Paso politicians delivered a message from Richard Nixon praising Echeverría who was “courageously affronted with great problems”, an allusion to the communist threat. However, in bold print offset from the main story, the article wrote of an “unconfirmed report” that a security guard was shot to death, identified as Capt. Enrique Domínguez Carvajal. No other death or injury was reported, and while the *El Paso Times* attempted to reach the chief of police for comment, they were unsuccessful, and never followed up on the story in subsequent days.

While there were elements of controversy in Luis Echeverría’s election, when he took office in 1970 he did promise reconciliation with student groups, and suggested there would be a

²⁰Angel Trinidad Ferreira, “Relaciones con Cuba, Firmes; con España, sin Cambio: LE (El Comunismo no es Amenaza Para México),” *Excelsior*, April 28, 1970.

²¹Ramon Villalobos, “Cheering Crowds Greet Echeverría in Juárez,” *El Paso Times*, April 27, 1970.

democratic opening. Yet Echeverría's participation in the massacre at Tlatelolco already tarnished him in the eyes of many leftists. Many urban guerrilla groups rejected the possibility of democratic participation in the new government and instead decided to take up armed resistance. Historian Fernando Herrera Calderón explains that "undertaking an endeavor of this magnitude came across as utterly quixotic, absurd, and even pointless, to a majority of Mexican society."²² It was thus during the *sexenio* of Echeverría that the armed revolutionary groups began to proliferate and flourish. It should finally be noted that the abstention rate in the 1970 election was 58%, the highest for any presidential election.²³

4.3 THE STORMING OF THE PREPA POPULAR "EL CHAMIZAL", AUGUST 27, 1972

On Sunday, August 27, 1972, at 12:30 p.m. a group of about 200 parents and municipal police stormed the school, known alternately as *la Escuela Preparatoria "Licenciado Adolfo López Mateos"*, the "*Prepa del Parque*" or the "*Preparatoria o Escuela en El Chamizal*". Five days prior, it had been occupied by striking students and others from the capital who had joined to form a *Preparatoria Popular*, or a school for the people. Parents of past students attempted dialogue with the striking students, and were rejected, and were also frustrated by the inability to get paperwork for recent graduates who were attempting to enroll in universities. After they were refused entrance, they took a large post and rammed down the door. According to accounts from *El Fronterizo*, 27 students were detained, including six women, and jailed. One of the

²² Fernando Herrera Calderón, "From Books to Bullets: Youth Radicalism and Urban Guerrillas in Guadalajara," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 105.

²³ Elaine Carey, "Transcending Violence," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 200.

detained was Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson, who at the time was a teacher at the law school in Chihuahua, and today is a well-known human rights defender.

El Fronterizo presents three conflicting accounts of the events, that of the parents, the students, and Police Inspector Garcia Loya.²⁴ The students claim that the parents attempted no dialogue, and that they ran in fear, and shots were fired overhead. Four students report being beaten. According to the police inspector, after receiving a petition for help from the parents, he ordered four patrol units to guard the premises so that there wouldn't be any disorder. He ordered only the detention of those who were under the influence of marijuana or other drugs. However, a subsequent exam by a Dr. Felipe García Almanza found that none of the students were under the influence of drugs. He reported an account of what happened to the military. In front of the press, the students were described as being orderly and docile, but denounced the action of the police, emphasizing that the building belonged to the state and not private businessmen. The students signaled a "V" for victory.

While the students remained jailed, the school's director, Juan W. Cornejo, accused students of destroying files from past graduates, as well as destroying furniture and causing damage to the physical plant.²⁵ He allowed that the safe was intact and no money was missing. The next two days (Monday and Tuesday) saw more than 200 students, teachers and activists gathered in the Plaza de Armas and in front of the Presidencia Municipal to protest the ongoing detention of the students, including groups from the Comité de Defensa Popular (CDP). On Tuesday, August 29, the CDP rallied many more people to join the cause, and by about 1:00 p.m. *El Fronterizo* estimated the crowd at 500. In front of the city hall, they asked that a Preparatoria Popular be allowed to function in the evenings, using the same building that the federal school

²⁴ "Rescataron la Prepa," *El Fronterizo*, August 28, 1972.

²⁵ "El Caso de los Estudiantes al AMPF," *El Fronterizo*, August 29, 1972.

“Adolfo López Mateos” used during the day. The Preparatoria Popular would not charge any tuition, but would be taught by teachers who were sympathetic to the cause, and supplies and other necessities would be purchased through small industries that the students undertook.

The pressure that the CDP and other protestors exerted upon the municipal government worked; at 10:00 p.m. the evening of August 29, the federal government (*Procuraduría General de Justicia de la Nación* and the *Ministerio Público Federal*) ordered the release of all the students. They promptly returned to the jail to demand the release of two others, and to reiterate their commitment to the cause of popular education, stating they would utilize any means necessary, from dialogue with parents to direct action.²⁶ *El Fronterizo* also gave voice to the 200 or so parents, publishing in full a missive addressed “To the Public Opinion of Ciudad Juárez.” In it, the group of parents relate nine facts and motivations for their actions.²⁷ They claimed that they had previously attempted dialogue with the striking students, only to be rebuffed. They said that the decision to retake the school was unanimous, and upon entering the building, they found people who were not students, as well as articles and items missing from the school. It is signed by *El Comité Pro-Defensa de las Escuelas Preparatorias Federales Diurna y Nocturna de El Chamizal*.

In other mainstream media, the *El Paso Times* briefly covered the students’ ouster with a three-paragraph story on Monday, August 28, 1972, entitled “Parents Oust Strikers from Juárez School.” The article lists the demands of the striking students as “a library, laboratories and a faculty-student advisory committee.”²⁸ It does note that the school used to be the Navarro Elementary School in El Paso, which was given to Mexico under the Chamizal Treaty.²⁹

²⁶ “Salieron Todos los Detenidos en la Prepa,” *El Fronterizo*, August 30, 1972.

²⁷ “A La Opinión Pública de Ciudad Juárez,” *El Fronterizo*, August 28, 1972.

²⁸ “Parents Oust Strikers from Juárez School,” *El Paso Times*, August 28, 1972.

²⁹ Today the school is part of the campus of UACJ.

The coverage of the storming of the Prepa Popular in *Cuauhtémoc* was in contrast full of indignation, taking fully the side of the striking students. The entire front page of the August issue consists of three large photos of crowds demanding the release of the students. In between the photographs, there is block type that explains the release: “The students were not released due to the generosity of the authorities or the diligence of the leaders; the decisive factor was the united and organized action of the *pueblo*.” In hyperbolic language, the article inside the edition spoke of the “merchants and centurions profaning a temple, this time a temple of knowledge, just as it was 2,000 years ago.”³⁰ It called the day of Sunday, August 27, the blackest day in the history of Ciudad Juárez. It criticized the supposed alliance of “teachers”, parents, and policemen, explaining that the parents constituted the large, medium and small bourgeoisie of the city, from its neighborhoods of “El Campestre” and “Los Nogales.” In its final considerations, the article summarizes its argument in seven bullet points, laying out for the reader the principal problems with this action. Namely, that it was premeditated collusion between the parents and the police, who acted outside the law; the use of excessive force; the position that the Constitution did not seem to apply to the authorities; that Mexicans had lost the right to defend the rights of the *pueblo*; and that the government fundamentally opposed the concept of public “popular” education.

4.4 EDITORIALS AND MOTIVATIONS

The monthly newspaper *Cuauhtémoc*, written as an official voice of a civic organization on the left, lends a contemporary reader important insight into the motivations of protests. A front-page editorial from the same issue (May 1970) that detailed the events of Echeverría’s visit

³⁰ “El Agosto de Los Malvados,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 87, August 1972.

to Juárez, proclaims “The Candidate Lies”, and attempted to analyze the fundamental problems with the ideas he expressed during his campaign.³¹ This editorial analyzed four issues that Echeverría raised from a critical perspective. Firstly, the creation of an “internal market” that the president-elect proposed was criticized. The newspaper clarified that the desire to raise the standard of living of most Mexicans was motivated out of fear (of a new revolution), not out of social justice or generosity. Furthermore, it argued that the creation of a Mexican middle class would mostly benefit the ruling elite, as they were trying to create new markets for the products that they produced with the labor of the working class. Secondly, it criticized Echeverría’s defense of the Mexican Revolution and the PRI “dictatorship”. Quoting extensively from Echeverría’s speeches regarding the “gradual implementation and fulfillment” of the ideals of the Revolution, the newspaper rejected and mocked his defense. It asserted that so long as there are different social classes that existed within Mexico, there was a bourgeois dictatorship intent on preserving its power and wealth at the expense of others. Thirdly, it rejected the idea that capitalism was a fundamental outcome of the Mexican Revolution, saying that the ideals of the Revolution about the working class now seemed obsolete and cadaverous. Finally, it refuted Echeverría’s claim that democratic opposition was tolerated. It claimed that throughout his speech, he was obsessed with the *appearance*³² of democracy, while still jailing political prisoners.

Bringing us back to Débray and revolutionary theory, in the February 1971 issue, the newspaper *Cuauhtémoc* ran an important article entitled *América Latina y la Guerra Popular* (Latin America and the Popular War). It was an optimistic outlook about the future of Latin America and the growth of the urban guerrilla movement. In it, the editors admitted that it was

³¹ Editorial, “Miente El Candidato,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 60, May 1970.

³² Emphasis in original.

an error to create a *foco* that is uniquely rural and isolated from cities.³³ Instead, it enumerated the advantages of urban guerrilla movements within the reach of greater populations, which would therefore have greater ability to spread propaganda and recruit new members, and obtain economic resources. It openly stated that “the banks are at hand”, which alluded to the newspaper’s stance on guerrilla robberies as morally permissible. As Débray suggests, this editorial argued that urban and rural groups complement each other and additionally cited the success of the Vietnamese example.

Later editions of *Cuauhtémoc* addressed the creation of the *Brigada Blanca* and its illegality, as well as the rise of the PAN party in Juárez. In its November 1977 issue, the cover inset asked “What is the *Brigada Blanca*?” The paper asserted that it is a paramilitary death squad created by President López Portillo and other high-ranking police officials, and was made up of unemployed workers and minor criminals who have killed before “for pleasure”.³⁴ It lamented the cost of the squad, citing the Mexico City police budget of \$200 million pesos that presumably funded their activities, and pointed out this is 15 times the budget of Ciudad Juárez. It ended by exposing the irony of the state accusing revolutionaries of being delinquents and criminals, when the state was actively employing them to break the law.

In its April 1979 edition, the newspaper made it clear that no mainstream political party deserved the vote.³⁵ It rejected the socialist, communist, and workers parties and instead exhorted voters to cross out the ballot and put in the letters “AP” for *Asamblea Popular*³⁶, the coalition that wants to be the true voice of the people. It conceded that the *panistas* in Juárez were mostly motivated by honesty, and that they shared the idea of rebelling against public

³³ Editorial, “America Latina y la Guerra Popular,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 69, February 1971.

³⁴ Editorial, “Que es la Brigada Blanca?” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 153, November 1977.

³⁵ Editorial, “Que Quieren Los Capitalistas, Por Que Luchan Los Trabajadores,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 170, April 1979.

³⁶ Popular Assembly

corruption. But they clarified that the origin of corruption was not in any given party, but was within the capitalist system, and so long as that system existed, no party could overcome it. Since 1974, *Cuauhtémoc* and the Alliance had urged readers to abstain from voting as a protest, after a break with the Mexican Communist Party, which was at that time allied with other leftist parties to create a coalition. Urged as well by the railroad strikers and the CDP, the Alliance fundamentally rejected the idea of representative government. They considered it impossible for one representative to accurately address the varied concerns of a region, but particularly of the poorest and politically neglected citizens. They explained that “active” abstention, i.e. marking up a ballot with the insignia of the *Asamblea Popular*, was the morally correct way of voting.³⁷

In a separate section of the same issue, the program and demands of the *Asamblea Popular* were listed.³⁸ Among other things, they demanded a 30% across-the-board wage increase of all salaried workers. They denounced the price increases of consumer goods. They demanded a 35-hour work week with paid Saturdays and Sundays to rest. They asked for flexibility in scheduling, and guaranteed protected employment. They wanted greater investment in education and social services, yet they wanted to take away any indirect taxes such as tolls or fees. These demands fell well within a capitalist system that they denounced, with little explanation of how, for example, the bus routes and urban transportation infrastructure could have been improved and more frequent along with a reduction in fares. The only purely political demand was that the army and police, including the *Brigada Blanca* cease their repression of the student, peasant and worker movements.

³⁷ Editorial, “Nuestra Idea Electoral,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 176, September 1979.

³⁸ Editorial, “Programa de la Asamblea Popular,” *Cuauhtémoc*, No. 170, April 1979.

4.5 SUMMARY

The archives examined in this chapter represent the collective viewpoints that Juárez society and the revolutionaries had towards each other. With both the US and Mexico proclaiming a “free” press, media outlets largely did a disservice to covering and analyzing events related to the Dirty War. Many revolutionary groups also had media outlets, and the examination of the archives of *Cuauhtémoc* provides a counterpoint and justly denounces acts of illegal repression. It additionally provides insight into the motivations of *juarenses* who chose to participate in the Popular Assembly. Even at the end of the decade of the 1970s, there was little shift in the rhetoric and demands of the left, despite persecution and disappearances. Nearly half a century after this traumatic decade, we can now consider how and even if the Dirty War ended. Human rights law has evolved over the past decades as well. What has happened since?

Chapter 5: The Aftermath

“...*El Estado es el principal responsable de las perversiones que ha vivido su monopolio legítimo de la violencia... Tlatelolco y Ayotzinapa son parte de la misma historia.*”¹ – Sergio Aguayo, Mexican historian

After more than a decade of armed revolutionary insurrection, President José López Portillo finally passed the Electoral Reforms in 1977, which legalized the democratic left, and in 1978 the Amnesty Law freed the bulk of political prisoners, on the condition that they would participate in the parties and lay down their arms.² It was at this time that former guerrillas such as Beto Domínguez were released and able to join a legal party; in his case, he moved to Monterrey and was part of an organization called the *Corriente Socialista*, for which he served as a delegate.³

The first attempts to bring the political violence in Mexico to international attention was during the 1970s, by groups of Mexican exiles in Rome. Isaías Rojas, a journalist who wrote for the magazine *¿Por Qué?*, formed a group called the *Comité en Solidaridad con el Pueblo Mexicano*.⁴ Rojas was kidnapped by the *Brigada Blanca* in 1976 and forced into exile in Rome. He was joined by Mario Cantú, a Marxist Chicano who had served time at the U.S. federal prison Leavenworth and led a group called “US Solidarity with the People of Mexico – Liga Ricardo Flores Magón”. They attempted to reach across European borders and formed the European Committee in Solidarity with the Chicano People in five European countries, drawing the

¹ “The state is primarily responsible for the perversions its monopoly on violence has caused... Tlatelolco and Ayotzinapa are part of the same history.”

² Verónica Oikión Solano, “In the Vanguard of the Revolution: The Revolutionary Action Movement and the Armed Struggle,” in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 71.

³ Alberto Domínguez, interview by author, Ciudad Juárez, April, 2015.

⁴ Committee in Solidarity with the Mexican People

attention of Amnesty International and other human rights groups towards the suffering of Mexican dissidents.⁵

5.1 FROM POLICING TO ORGANIZED CRIME

Ciudad Juárez grew tremendously during the 1980s and 1990s, drawing in hundreds of thousands in search of jobs. The growth of the maquila industry created countless low-wage jobs yet provided few other benefits to the city's infrastructure. Juárez experienced episodes of drug violence in the 1980s and 1990s, and many activists such as Judith Galarza maintain that this was a continuation of the violence from the Dirty War. Leaders of the DFS such as Rafael Aguilar Guajardo and Miguel Nazar Haro, many of whom were trained at the US Army School of the Americas, were later implicated as leaders of drug cartels.⁶ Nazar Haro was indicted in the U.S. for running an auto theft network.⁷ Trained in many torture techniques that remain common with federal police, "a lengthening roster of dirty war graduates have popped up in connection with auto theft networks, professional kidnapping and bank robbery rings, and of course, drug-smuggling syndicates."⁸

In their history of U.S. complicity in the creation of the Mexican drug wars, Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace describe how major trafficker Rafael Caro Quintero made "fabulous payoffs" to Nazar Haro, who they describe as "a nasty piece of work, infamous for his role in the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre and for the part his "White Brigade death squad played in the dirty

⁵ Alan Elaido Gómez, "Por la reunificación de los Pueblos Libres de América en su Lucha por el Socialismo," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, ed. Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 97-98.

⁶ Greg Bloom, "Mexico's Forgotten Disappeared," *Newspaper Tree*, March 7, 2004, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://archive.newspapertree.com/features/303-mexico-s-forgotten-disappeared>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

war.”⁹ As the *Brigada Blanca* was not created until the latter part of the Dirty War, its purpose was clearly to eliminate any last modicum of dissent. The creation of such “death squads” has been linked to stressful phases of modernization, when states both need plausible deniability but face persistent threats.¹⁰ Luis Astorga in his book *El Siglo de las drogas* also exposes many connections between former security agents and organized crime.¹¹

For those who returned home to Juárez, other forms of control and repression followed them over the decades. One Juárez resident, Graciela de la Rosa, was labeled a terrorist of the state and in 1990 had her passport taken for fifteen years. When she returned to the migratory authorities for a new passport, their computer was full of erroneous information about meetings she had presumably attended in Juárez and in Chihuahua in the 1970s. After she explained that she was living in Mexico City during the time period in question, the agent proceeded to interrogate her about her political views, including her opinion of Karl Marx.¹² With letters of support from three elite *juarenses*, including the Bishop, her passport was finally reissued in 2005. Even after she had regularized her visas to travel to conferences, she continued to experience repression. Then in her fifties, she traveled to various conferences on behalf of her employer, including ones in Tijuana and Jamaica that necessitated travel through the U.S. On the return back to San Diego at the bridge her lane was closed and 20 U.S. customs agents swarmed around her vehicle. In Miami on her way back from Jamaica she was similarly detained and put with Cuban migrants and interrogated about minute details of her life; she almost missed a connecting flight to El Paso. Finally, on Christmas Eve about nine years ago,

⁹ Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace, *A Narco History, How the U.S. Created the Drug War*, (New York and London: OR Books, 2015), 33.

¹⁰ Allison Brysk, “Recovering from State Terror: The morning After in Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* Vol. 38 No. 1 (February 2003), 241.

¹¹ Sierra Guzmán, “Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency,” 183.

¹² Graciela de la Rosa, interview by author, El Paso, April, 2015.

she was invited to a friend's house in Anthony, New Mexico and was handcuffed at the free bridge, detained about seven hours, and had her passport seized for 15 days while agents "investigated" her case. These events demonstrate some aspect of coordination between U.S. migratory authorities and Mexican state officials. Dr. Roberto Vásquez Muñoz additionally had his passport taken away for a period of years for the same reason.

Finally, for all the state's efforts at counterinsurgency during the Dirty War, insurgent uprisings in the mid-1990s in Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca demonstrated the persistence of groups fighting against the state, albeit for different ideological reasons.¹³ The large security apparatus that was created to ward off communism now would be retrofitted to new threats facing the nation. To further the mythology of a "democratic" government responsive to the people, the film *El bulto* was released in Mexico in 1991. The plot follows former dissident Lauro, who awakens from a 20-year coma induced by a beating he took from the *Halcones* in 1971. After his initial shock, he eventually embraces the PRI establishment, with his ex-radical friends now living comfortably and working within the political system. He is redeemed and accepted after his two-decade blackout. Critics such as Elaine Carey instead suggest that this mythology undermines Mexico's ability to recover from authoritarianism, in the continued portrayal of the poor deluded radicals, and instead bolsters support for or at least acquiescence with state violence.¹⁴

5.2 THE END OF PRI RULE

When PAN candidate Vicente Fox was elected President in July of 2000, it marked the end of seventy years of PRI rule. His victory ushered in a brief period of optimism and hope

¹³ Sierra Guzmán, "Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency," 183.

¹⁴ Carey, "Transcending Violence," 199.

among survivors of the Dirty War. The “Black Palace” of Lecumberri, which had been converted in 1982 into the *Archivo General de la Nación* (National Archive or AGN), was now the setting for an announcement on June 18, 2002. President Fox, accompanied by the Interior Secretary, Attorney General, and the head of the Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional, proclaimed that tens of thousands of records would be turned over by the Secretariat of Defense (SEDENA) and now be opened for public scrutiny. The period covered would include the 1960s to the 1980s, and these documents could not only be used for historical purposes, but could be used as evidence in criminal proceedings against past members of the military and police. He was quoted as saying, “No society can tolerate excesses and wrongs committed against human rights. For this reason, we are prepared to accept the ultimate consequences of the clarification of these deeds.”¹⁵ Many family members of the disappeared, such as Judith Galarza, took advantage of this window to gather evidence and piece together the last days of their loved ones.

5.3 PROSECUTING THE DIRTY WAR

Like much of Latin America, the language of “human rights” was not prevalent during the actual events of the Dirty War. Despite this, Mexico contains strong protections of human rights in its 1917 constitution, and was a member of the U.N. when it enacted its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. While Echeverría positioned himself as a protector of human rights in the developing world, he simultaneously violated his country’s own laws through the repressive actions of the state. Following the Dirty War, in 1990 Mexico created the National Commission on Human Rights (CDNH). In the late 1990s and early 2000s it continued to sign and ratify new international treaties, yet often reserved exceptions.

¹⁵ Kate Doyle, “Forgetting Is Not Justice: Mexico Bares Its Secret Past,” *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2003), 61.

The Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons went into effect in 1996, following more than two decades of widespread enforced disappearances in Latin America.¹⁶ This convention contains important provisions such as the abolishment of any statutes of limitations, the requirement that detainees be housed in recognized places of detention and given access to a legal system, and the requirement of special assistance to minors who have been detained or transferred to another state as a result of the disappearance of their guardians. This legislation was crafted in an era of political optimism following the end of the Cold War, and it reads almost as a plea to the region that this practice must stop. Yet Mexico expressed a reservation to Article IX of the Convention, which addresses enforced disappearances during military duties. The convention specifically rejects jurisdictions that are not considered to be “competent jurisdictions of ordinary law”, highlighting the exclusion “particularly” of military jurisdictions. When Mexico finally ratified the Convention in 2002, it also included an interpretation that applied the convention only to acts committed after the Convention went into effect, effectively providing immunity to every president prior to Fox.

Mexico is also a party to the U.N. Convention Against Torture, which it ratified on January 23, 1986. It accepted its competence in May of 2002.¹⁷ Just this past October, in 2015, the U.N. Committee issued a ruling condemning Mexico for torture committed by the army in June of 2009. The case of four men who were unlawfully detained and subject to torture is being heralded as a landmark decision that may help challenge the state’s widespread use of torture.¹⁸

In contrast to the Argentinian and Chilean Dirty Wars, which have played out dramatically on the international stage, such attempts to prosecute state officials in Mexico have

¹⁶ Full text of treaty available here: <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-60.html>

¹⁷ Full text of convention available here: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r046.htm>

¹⁸ World Organization Against Torture, Press Release, October 9, 2015. Accessed: <http://www.omct.org/monitoring-protection-mechanisms/statements/mexico/2015/10/d23413/>

mostly fallen flat. Again with the election of Fox and the promises of a more open government, the CNDH released a 3,000-page report that listed names of army officers, policemen, and other government officials who perpetrated executions, disappearances and torture. They included army Generals Francisco Quiros Herмосillo and Arturo Acosta Chaparro, both of whom were later arrested on drug-trafficking charges related to the Juárez cartel.¹⁹ The report also confirmed that army bases and clandestine jails were used by the DFS. Fox appointed a Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements, Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, who in 2004 issued an arrest warrant for former president Luis Echeverría and 11 others on charges of genocide, stemming from the 1971 Corpus Christi massacre. However, in July of 2004 a judge threw out the prosecution on the grounds that a 30-year statute of limitations had passed. The decision was met with cynicism on the part of many human rights organizations, which saw an ambivalence in the Fox administration about pressing for justice.

Dr. Carrillo Prieto also issued arrest warrants for Miguel Nazar Haro, Luis de la Barreda Moreno, and former Secretary of the Interior Mario Moya Palencia. They were placed under house arrest, and in 2006 a final report was issued at the end of Fox's term, describing 12 massacres, 120 extrajudicial killings, 800 forced disappearances and 2,000 acts of torture.²⁰ Yet shortly thereafter the office of the Special Prosecutor was discontinued under Felipe Calderon, and Nazar Haro and De la Barreda were released from house arrest. In 2009, following appeals of the 2004 decision, Echeverría's case was thrown out. The failure to tie up these loose ends only led to further distrust of the state. De la Barreda died in 2008 at age 84; Nazar Haro died in 2012 at age 87; Echeverría is now in his 90s and continues to live in Mexico City. Yet his past still haunts him, and he was as recently as August forced to defend his actions, with the Mexican

¹⁹ NACLA Report on the Americas, "Mexican Human Rights Commission Releases Report on 1970s "Dirty War" 2002.

²⁰ Carey, "Transcending Violence," 207.

Attorney General demanding the release of more information that could implicate him in human rights crimes.²¹

The Secretary of Defense still claims that they have no information on casualties or students relating to the 1968 massacre, as evidenced in a brief answer submitted on October 19, 2004.²² The Comité 68, a group of survivors of the massacre, continues to hold a march every year in Mexico City on October 2, with some marches being celebratory and others prompting new arrests and repression.²³ A reversal of Fox's opening continues under President Peña Nieto, with recent actions taken by the Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB) that have once again restricted access to "dirty war" archives. In March of 2015, the government abruptly announced that any request for material relating to this topic must first pass through the public information act.²⁴ This reversal was met with much scorn by historians, journalists, and human rights activists. Yet despite many setbacks, the '68 generation has succeeded in influencing the political process in the arena of human rights.

5.4 CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE AND FEARS OF A NEW DIRTY WAR

Back in Juárez, a much larger period of violence exploded suddenly in January of 2008, with President Felipe Calderón's war on drugs and the attempt of the Sinaloa Cartel to seize power from the Juárez cartel. Between 2008 and 2013, 11,417 people were reported killed in the

²¹ <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Mexicos-Secret-Data-May-Incriminate-Past-President-in-Massacre-20150820-0006.html>

²² <http://www.sedena.gob.mx/leytrans/rescomin/2004/oct/70072204.html>

²³ See photos from the 2014 march here. <https://news.vice.com/article/in-photos-no-police-no-violence-at-memorial-march-for-massacre-in-mexico>

²⁴ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2015/03/11/politica/009n2pol>

city, according to the Chihuahua Fiscalía.²⁵ The city also lost population due to many fleeing the violence. It was in this context that the Permanent People's Tribunal came to Juárez in 2012, to conduct a hearing on human rights.

The Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) is a successor to the Russell Tribunal, which had previously convened to indict dictatorships in Latin America during the 1970s.²⁶ Its goal is to provide a public space to bring to light abuses of power against those whose rights have been violated. While not linked to any international legal or criminal justice system, the "opinions" it issues from its international jurors carry weight and influence. Its legitimacy though is only derived from the moral character of the members and jurors, of which there are currently sixty. A Mexican chapter of the PPT was successfully inaugurated in 2011, with the goal of taking the state to trial for crimes against humanity. Of the seven themes the PPT tackled, ranging from femicide to corn and food sovereignty, the first on the list was "dirty war as a form of violence, impunity, and lack of access to justice."²⁷ The jurors issued a *dictamen* or opinion on May 30, 2012, characterizing it as "an act of memory construction."²⁸ Jurors did find evidence of state terrorism, defined as the use of a state's power against its citizens.

Other human rights setbacks have followed as the drug war has intensified. Last year the 1978 Amnesty Law was repealed, as the government said that it had served its purpose, although a more recent Amnesty Law from the Zapatista uprising in 1994 remains in effect. On the floor of the Chamber of Deputies, several lawmakers and other speakers argued against the repeal, including Loretta Ortiz Ahlf (PT), who stated that "today the tendency is to criminalize social

²⁵ As compiled by Molly Molloy at www.fronteralist.org, data is also from El Diario De Juárez.

²⁶ Kathleen Staudt and Zulma Y. Méndez, *Courage, Resistance & Women in Ciudad Juárez: Challenges to Militarization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015) 112.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 115.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 120.

protest, as they want to do with the law against public protests in Mexico City, as well as increasing penalties for terrorism.”²⁹

While the U.S. has allocated over two billion dollars to Mexico through the Merida Initiative, ostensibly aiding the fight against narco-trafficking and organized crime, the first cracks in joint cooperation are beginning to be seen. Fifteen percent of the money that is allocated for military and security forces is subject to a human rights provision, and can be denied if Mexico is not seen as meeting its obligations. In October of 2015, the U.S. for the first time withheld about \$5 million dollars, diverting it instead to Peru. While minimal in actual dollars, it is a clear sign of U.S. frustration according to analysts.³⁰ The State Department report on human rights in Mexico from 2014 emphasizes concerns about Mexican security force involvement in disappearances, torture, and unlawful deprivation of life.³¹

Many fear the return of a new Dirty War that targets activists. Asylum lawyer Carlos Spector claims that since 2006, 23 human rights activists have been murdered in the state of Chihuahua alone, with evidence of state involvement.³² The U.S. has received 21,172 asylum requests from Mexico between 2007-2011, accepting a mere 340. Spector suggests that without a conceptual framework that could explain the violence, the US is reluctant to accept more refugees. Yet it is state violence that is driving displacement of people. It is simply not a credible fear to U.S. authorities that the Mexican state, a key ally, could be responsible.

²⁹ Enrique Méndez and Roberto Garduño, “Derogan Ley de Amnistía de 1978; con ella ocurrieron cientos de vejaciones” *La Jornada*, February 14, 2014, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/02/14/politica/019n1pol>

³⁰ Joshua Partlow, “U.S. Blocks Some Anti-Drug Funds for Mexico Over Human Rights” *Washington Post*, accessed October 23, 2015 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/us-blocks-some-anti-drug-funds-for-mexico-over-human-rights-concerns/2015/10/18/8fa3925e-710b-11e5-ba14-318f8e87a2fc_story.html

³¹ U.S. State Department, Mexico Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 2014 accessed on October 18, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236702>

³² Samuel Schmidt and Carlos Spector, “Crimen autorizado: el enemigo detrás de la violencia en México,” *Forbes México*, October 19, 2015, accessed November 13, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com.mx/crimen-autorizado-el-enemigo-detras-de-la-violencia-en-mexico/>

5.5 MEMORY HALF A CENTURY ON

Today, many of the comments about the violence during the Dirty War are heavily influenced by people's experience of and memory of the recent violence that has rent the city. I constantly heard references to recent violence that was purported to be linked, such as the murder of social activists, or an insistence that this recent violence was so much worse and deserved more study. Former activists feel differently about how the period should be remembered and what the state's obligation is today. Héctor Staines Orozco feels strongly that there should be a tribunal. He also believes that there needs to be an active registry of those missing or disappeared from that timeframe, which he believes the state must possess. In contrast, former Juárez resident Manuel Anzaldo Meneses, who spent four years as a political prisoner along with his wife and young child, stresses the limitations of memory.³³ While he believes that it would be useful to reflect more upon the time period to better understand its causes and circumstances, he thinks that trials or further criminal prosecution will only exacerbate rancor and cause more division. Today Manuel lives in Chiapas and is dedicated to creating alternate sustainable economies, and uses his biology degree to work with forest restoration and conservation of endangered species.

I finally interviewed several elite *juarenses* who declined to be named for this research, including some who fled Juárez due to recent narco-violence. I had three separate people tell me that the communists (and students) should have been killed and that there was no other option, because their views were so extreme and anti-state that they were unable to be rehabilitated and

³³ Manuel Anzaldo Meneses, interview by author, El Paso, September 2015

prosecuted through the criminal justice system. They echoed Díaz Ordaz's 1966 *Informe* that stated "No one has rights against Mexico!"³⁴ I admit to being somewhat shocked by the frankness of speech and by a total rejection of any language of human rights, as well as their persistent fear of communism. A question remains in my mind as to how a society can recover from state violence if there is still popular support for state repression and/or extrajudicial police forces.

Mexico has historically housed very little in terms of institutional places of memory, but over the past decade that has changed. In 2004, the Mexico City Human Rights Commission installed a memorial with the names of 557 "disappeared", written on a glass plaque that spans several walls.³⁵ Several groups that have dedicated themselves to finding the disappeared continue to exist, such as the Comité Eureka, formed by Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, whose son Jesús Piedra Ibarra was taken by the DFS on April 18, 1975 in Monterrey. Along with other mothers, she formed the Comité Pro-Defensa de Presos Perseguidos, Desaparecidos y Exiliados Políticos de México in 1977, and the following year underwent a long hunger strike in front of the National Cathedral in Mexico City that prompted President López Portillo to consider the amnesty law. In 2006, she was elected to the Mexican Senate and is a member of the Partido del Trabajo (PT, Worker's Party). The Comité Eureka maintains files and continues to search for leads on 557 missing people. The organization does not seek vengeance and its website does not weigh in on legal fights. Instead, its motivations are clear, as it states, "We are an organization that doesn't seek vengeance, but instead truth and justice... if the child of one of the repressors was disappeared, we would look for him or her, because disappearance goes against our

³⁴ Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 690.

³⁵ Associated Press, "Memorial to Mexico's Disappeared Unveiled," *CNN*, August 28, 2004, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/human-rights/unveiled.htm>.

principals and the world to which we aspire... we very clearly understand our obligation to act with historical responsibility.”³⁶

In 2012, the first true museum dedicated to the Dirty War opened in the Cuauhtémoc neighborhood of Mexico City. Called La Casa de la Memoria Indómita (The House of Untamed Memory), it sits in a modest space that was previously a fire station and a morgue. Exhibits include documents, photographs, and accounts of forced disappearances and the social movements that prompted them. Its auditorium is a multi-use facility dedicated to human rights.³⁷ Yet in Juárez there is nothing dedicated to the memory of the Dirty War. Perhaps all three of Todorov’s reasons to forget apply: some have forgotten out of necessity and trauma, there may be some deliberate erasure by state authorities, but for most, the velocity of capitalism and consumption impede any true reflection on the city’s history, with most concerned with day-to-day challenges of living and unable to address structural injustices that could have arisen from that history. We are thus missing that deeper awareness that could allow us to better critique the contemporary city of Juárez.

The case of Argentina remains the example of a history most fully memorialized. The ESMA, a central hidden prison that people unknowingly passed by every day, was converted to a museum and place of memory, yet not without controversy. Feitlowitz poses many difficult questions that are equally applicable to Mexico’s case: “Is it possible to exorcise the horror that clings to these places? Or should the horror be memorialized, and the places be preserved? Can atrocities and violations of public and private space be truly healed? And should they be? How,

³⁶ “Historia,” Comité Eureka, accessed October 15, 2015, http://comiteeureka.org.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=27

³⁷ Mexico’s Secretaría de Educación Pública, Sistema de Información Cultural, accessed October 28, 2015, http://sic.gob.mx/ficha.php?table=museo&table_id=1538

and by whom, should the artifacts and memories of divisive history be framed in communal space?”³⁸

5.6 SUMMARY

With the Electoral Reforms and Amnesty Laws in the late 1970s, Mexico began a slow path of recognizing political rights and incorporating ex-guerrillas into the political fold. Some of the agents of the state transitioned into organized crime, blending state violence with the burgeoning drug-trafficking industry. With the end of PRI rule, there was a brief moment of optimism that past instances of state violence would be prosecuted. Instead, smaller steps were made, such as the opening of the Dirty War archives, and the creation of social groups and memorials that were dedicated to the missing. The onset of a brutal wave of narco-related violence in 2008 disrupted the memories of many living in Juárez. While Mexico as a whole has undertaken the project of fighting a “drug war”, human rights activists, journalists, and leftist students still remain at increased risk, and many fear the return of dirty war tactics by the state.

³⁸ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 195-6.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

“The history of man is the history of crimes, and history can repeat. So information is a defense. Through this we can build, we must build, a defense against repetition.” – Simon Wiesenthal

The nature of research on the Dirty War is clouded by the difficulty of obtaining hard numbers, as much is unknown due to the clandestine nature of both guerrilla activity and the repressive response. This work instead relies on a combination of testimonies, articles, and memories to reimagine this time period in Juárez. As Pierre Nora argues, the historian no longer enjoys a monopoly in interpreting the past, but individual memories, judges, legislators, witnesses all have been promoted to help us better understand the collective memory of a time past.¹

However, several broader conclusions can be tentatively drawn based on the work I have begun. The Mexican state, while never a unified actor, did learn from its initial response in Madera and became more repressive over time. In a sense, Chihuahua served as a model for future violence, including the negation of rights and the mass burial of the revolutionaries. This escalation is evidenced by the creation of new groups that set out to target student groups, clandestine revolutionary groups, and even legitimate political parties. A wider net was cast in search of sympathizers and this had the effect of intensifying state violence until the Amnesty Laws in 1977-78. Ciudad Juárez remained an important focal point of this state violence throughout the Dirty War, with active members of the *Brigada Blanca*, and a series of disappearances.

Leftist groups in Juárez suffered from the same fractionalization that the left in Mexico did as a whole. There was suspicion of many parties due to government infiltration, and also the

¹ Pierre Nora, from “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 441.

belief that their members had bought into the farce of representative democracy. During the decade of the 1970s at least, my interviewees largely sought a complete overhaul that erased all current institutions and fit in with the concept of a world revolution of the proletariat. While their actions were forms of resistance to a society they considered corrupt, their sought-after revolution was destined to fail due to the lack of external support, the inability to relate to the broader working class, and the lopsided power of the state.

Finally, considering the ways in this history is remembered brings us to a more hopeful place. The 1968 generation has been at the forefront of change in Mexico, promoting an agenda of democratization, justice, and a greater emphasis on human rights. The language this generation uses today appeals to a much broader population of Mexicans, and concepts about individual and political rights are more frequently cited. There are philosophical challenges in this research, as I use both individual memories (from oral histories) as well as collective memories (from archives). Methodologically, this presents a challenge as they sometimes contradict each other, and both are also distorted by trauma. These events are inherently traumatic ones, both for individuals and societies. I am hopeful though as new research is blossoming that attempts to link Dirty War violence with current violence affecting Mexico, and many more are addressing the problems of memory.

This topic leaves much uncovered though. Future research is warranted in many related areas. A better understanding of the elites in Juárez during this time would be helpful, in the tradition of Wasserman, to explain the economic and political pressures being exerted on the general population from above. More research into the labor and living conditions of the majority of *juarenses* would inform the historical context as to what this intellectual class was upset with, and the chief motivations for their actions. Related to this, there is little

understanding of the cross-class efforts to organize, and what the response from the worker class was. As relates to the Dirty War, there remain many former activists and dirty war participants in Juárez. Some have been co-opted into positions of power, but others remain marginalized. While this generation is still alive, there is a wealth of memories and oral histories waiting to be conducted, in the tradition of Alicia de los Rios and María de la Luz Aguilar Terrés. One of my interviewees is considering the creation of a list that would accurately piece together the names of those from Juárez who were detained, murdered or disappeared.

Other related research should include a discussion of the role of the Catholic Church, as it remained an important political actor that often was allied with the state during this time period. I was unsuccessful in breaching a cloak of secrecy that still pervades the Church once I identified my research interest, and one former priest feared outright retaliation. More research about the gendered aspect of revolutionary movements is needed, although several researchers are finally focusing on women's role. Additionally, researchers have interviewed ex-members of the *Brigada Blanca* and DFS who participated in torture and disappearance.² While it has been estimated that there were as few as 162 members of the *Brigada Blanca* nationwide, there must still be those in Juárez who participated in state violence. There is much that can be learned about the state's perspective from understanding the actions and experiences of those who perpetrated the violence; whether its actors were sadistic tormentors, bureaucratic pawns, or victims themselves. Finally, an understanding of the Dirty War in Juárez would not be complete without the perspective of many elites who today live in both Juárez and El Paso. Exploring any of these avenues would contribute to a better historical understanding of this time period.

It must be noted that there are ongoing revolutionary struggles in Mexico, particularly in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca. Civil society remains seized by the drug war, and

² See Herrera Calderón, *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico*, Chapter 9.

some believe we are witnessing a new Dirty War in the targeting of leftist students, human rights advocates, and journalists. Future research should consider the continuity of revolutionary struggle in Mexico from the Dirty War to the present, as well as the continuity of the violence that the state has used. It remains difficult to critique the Mexican state from the inside, whether as a journalist, human rights advocate, historian or scholar. Yet recent massacres and events, from the massacre of civilians at Tlatlaya in June 2014 to the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa in September 2014 have all presented the Mexican state with a grave crisis of legitimacy. Protests and conferences emphasizing the continuity of violence and disappearances over 50 years are common and now present in Juárez as well. In a recent *Frontera Norte Sur* article, Judith Galarza underlines the endurance of state violence, a disturbing trajectory that stretches from her sister's disappearance to Ayotzinapa. "This is the same connection...when we started our work for the presentation of the disappeared, the first disappearances were in Guerrero."³ Mexican historian Sergio Aguayo has just this year (2015) released a new book entitled *From Tlatelolco to Ayotzinapa*. Perhaps, as historian David Gross imagines, a heightened sensitivity to the many layers of the reality of our contemporary Juárez can give stimulate its citizens to critique, improve, and understand.

Back in Juárez, *Cuauhtémoc* continues its publication, albeit in a digital format. On its 50th anniversary on March 21, 2015, the *Alianza Cívico Demócrata Juarense* issued a statement explaining its history and the continued relevance of its mission.⁴ It began by naming the historic conditions of authoritarianism, poverty, and the annihilation of the working classes as original motivations. It proposed the strong link between unhappiness and exploitation and human health, based on the experiences of Dr. Vázquez Muñoz and Dr. Bernardo Jiménez who

³ Kent Patterson. 2015. Standing Up for the Disappeared in the Paso Del Norte. *Frontera Norte Sur*, October 1.

⁴ Staines, email communication.

daily saw the physiological effects of poverty. The statement further mentions the Alliance's involvement in the search for the missing and disappeared, as well as the fight to form a Prepa Popular in Juárez. It ends by an exhortation to continue study and honesty in order to combat human misery, and lists the many who have contributed to its existence.

A final note updates our case studies. Today Héctor Staines lives in Mexico City, where he takes care of his elderly mother. He visits family in Juárez from time to time, but is mostly focused on his campaign activity with MORENA. Beto Domínguez remains in Juárez and can be seen at various protests and events around town. Dr. Vázquez Muñoz is 90 this year, and continues to dedicate himself to the profession that saved his life, running a bustling medical clinic in central Juárez. Until a few years ago, he saw roughly 60 patients daily and stopped working at midnight; today he averages about 16 patients a day. He has the reputation of being a very good doctor.

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