

NOTHING HAS HAPPENED HERE:

MEMORY AND THE TLATELOLCO MASSACRE, 1968-2008

by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Tlatelolco? I hear it’s always been a place where human sacrifices were offered.”

– Francisco Ávila de Contreras, eighty-year-old resident of the Calle de Neptuno, near the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Bridge¹

History is everywhere in Mexico City. It is in the architecture, which dates to the sixteenth century and even further back. It is in the street and neighborhood names, which reflect the indigenous, colonial, and revolutionary pasts. It is in murals, gardens, magazines, newspapers, and film, as well. Whether one is asking for directions, riding the metro, reading a newspaper, or eating a delicious taco, history is all around, and Mexicans cannot help but to be conscious of its significance: a lot of it gets to the heart of Mexico’s foundation and evolution as a nation. This national narrative is as easily recalled by schoolchildren as the elderly. Yet the national narrative did not evolve without contestation. It is this study’s purpose to discuss how memories are contested and either accepted or rejected.

National identity and nationalism are often seen in terms of differences.² The nation thus sees itself in opposition to one or more “others.” In Mexico’s case, the modern *bête noir* is the United States, which replaced Spain after independence. Fear of the US or Spain forced Mexicans to come together in the national interest, which stressed that “(1) a unique people or nation exists (often in the primordial sense), (2) its interest takes precedence over all others, (3) an independent State is needed to promote and protect those interests, and (4) these

¹ Quoted in Elena Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral*, 2nd ed. (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1999): 124.

² Writing about “the other” in terms of how people see themselves, economist Kenneth Boulding wrote, “It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behavior.” K.E. Boulding, “International Images and International Systems,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2: 120.

principles are universal.”³ Those who construct and contest national identity search for authenticity, something that is seen as really and truly Mexican. Manuel Gamio, for example, found authenticity in indigenous art, which was the focus of his official *indigenismo*.⁴ Other post-revolutionary thinkers found it in the Aztec past, through which they defined real Mexico.⁵ Nationalism, akin to patriotism, and national identity, the depiction of a country as a whole, encompassing its culture, traditions, language, and politics, bring people together. Their purposes are to unite a given geographical area under one banner or philosophy. Yet a large part of *mexicanidad* rests on what Mexicans are not: not Spanish, not French, not American. The differentiation extends to all walks of life, not just politics. For example, Mexico consciously chose an alternative direction in higher education, which emphasized university autonomy.

The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM), the epicenter of Mexico’s intellectual and educational life, took its current form after a 1929 student strike.⁶ Although the 1920s and 1930s were times of political upheaval in Mexico, the students struck not because of national political concerns, but because of the school’s examination policy and the length of its preparatory curriculum.⁷ As a result, President Emilio Portes Gil announced the school’s official conversion from the Universidad Nacional de México to the UNAM on 21 June 1929. Although it was now autonomous, the school actually became closer to the country’s political elite. Despite the president’s proclamation, “the purse strings, the choice of rector, and the admission of students remained

³ Stephen D. Morris, *Gringolandia: Mexican Identity and Perceptions of the United States* (New York: SR/Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005): 9.

⁴ See Manuel Gamio, *Forjando patria* (México, DF: Editorial Porrúa, 1960): 6-8, 12, 129-32, and 183.

⁵ See, for example, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla’s *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, trans. Philip A. Dennis (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996).

⁶ It was previously known as the Universidad Nacional de México.

⁷ Donald J. Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State: Student Conflicts, 1910-1971* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1982): 59.

in the president's power, a far cry from autonomy."⁸ The 1929 strike was important, though, because it established a pattern for future student strikes. Crucially, it also established the argument that "the state was corrupt but . . . 'pure' Mexican youth would fight to save the Mexican Revolution."⁹ Thus involvement in university politics was seen as a good thing. Student politicians used it as a springboard for entry into national politics for most of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. In the 1960s, the New Left actively sought confrontation with conservative president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, ending the era of co-operation.¹⁰

Mexico was not immune to the social and political upheaval that the rest of the world experienced in the 1960s. University autonomy became a widespread issue in Mexico, as various state governments looked to establish firmer control over education. In Colima, four thousand students protested at the Universidad de Colima against perceived violations of their institution's autonomy in 1966.¹¹ That same year, in Veracruz at the Escuela Náutica Mercante Fernando Silíceo, students struck for reasons similar to the 1929 UNAM strike: they wanted a shorter degree program, better teachers, new equipment, and repairs made to the school.¹² In Morelia, Michoacán, a group of students attempted to force state authorities to release five students imprisoned after disturbances in 1966.¹³ Student protests remained mostly localized through 1966 and 1967; there was no widespread support for any of these strikes. That is, neither students from other states nor workers nor the general public supported the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹¹ "Estudiantes de la Universidad de Colima censuran el proyecto de instalación de las oficinas de la FEC en el nuevo edificio del PRI," 9 July 1966, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 456, p. 500.

¹² "Pliego Petitorio del Comité de Huelga de la Escuela Náutica Mercante 'Fernando Silíceo'," 20 July 1966, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 456.

¹³ "Un grupo de preparatorianos de la Universidad Michoacana," 30 January 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 459, p. 91.

movements. The same held true for non-university protests. In 1967, there were several demonstrations in Mexico against the United States's involvement in Vietnam.¹⁴ They, too, received only sparse support. Nevertheless, live television and other sources of information showed Mexicans what was happening around the world.

Images of the Paris May reached Mexico quickly.¹⁵ In theory, Parisian students and Mexico City's students had a lot in common: they had deeply held grievances against the way they were educated, and they moved their protests off university campuses in an attempt to engage workers and the bourgeoisie. In Paris, the students achieved temporary solidarity with workers and the general public, but both groups turned on the students within a month, thus denying the movement a lasting political impact.¹⁶ Historian Michael Seidman concluded that the French government's use of force killed the movement. The Paris May "did not mark a rupture but instead showed the continuity of social and political trends. No crisis of civilization suddenly erupted, and no significant attempt at workers' control emerged. On the contrary, the May-June events demonstrate the power of the centralized state", and foreshadowed what was to happen in Mexico.¹⁷ In Prague, when students agitated for academic reforms, they threw the communist system into chaos. In January 1968, Czechoslovak Communist Party

¹⁴ "Hoy ante el Monumento a los Niños Héroes," 1 March 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 460, p. 252; "La CNED envía estudiantes a la provincia a organizar la semana de solidaridad con el Vietnam," 7 March 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 460, p. 2; "El Comité Mexicano de Solidaridad con Vietnam," 15 July 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 464, p. 278.

¹⁵ For good overviews of 1968, see David Cauter, in *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey Through 1968* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990) and Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004).

¹⁶ Andrew Feenberg, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001): 4.

¹⁷ Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004): 282.

leader Alexander Dubček began his reforms, driven by technology and an ever-freer media.¹⁸ A Bohemian popular culture returned to the city, much to the concern of Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev. The Prague Spring was crushed when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia on the night of 20-21 August 1968. Both the Paris May and the Prague Spring, as well as student disturbances in US, British, Italian, Spanish, and Japanese universities, impacted Mexico. Live television beamed images instantly around the world via newly-launched satellites and revolutionized opinion-making and interpretation of events. Importantly, Mexican students saw that they were not alone. Nor were they the only ones subject to violence. There was, however, a crucial difference in scope. In Paris, the students wanted a total renovation of France's political and university systems. In Prague, Dubček's reforms were an attempt to escape foreign domination. Mexican students advocated university and social reforms and demanded that the government respect the nation's history and national narrative by staying within the bounds of the 1917 Constitution. Comparisons of 1968 movements only go so far. In each case, students responded to a unique set of domestic circumstances. Thus, the Mexican movement was not the same as the French, Czechoslovak, or US movements. In fact, the Mexican movement moved steadily away from foreign influences through the summer of 1968.

The Mexican student movement began in earnest on 22 July 1968. Three incidents, all involving Mexico City's notoriously violent riot police, the *granaderos*, set the movement in motion. In the first, on 22 July, the *granaderos* repressed a minor schoolboy fight. In the second, on 26 July, they broke up a student-led march to commemorate Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution. In the third, on the night of 29-30 July, they used a bazooka to blow apart the

¹⁸ For a good overview of the Prague Spring, see Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

baroque doors of Preparatory School No. 1 (San Ildefonso), behind which students had taken refuge. The *granaderos* accidentally united the city's fractured student groups against the police and the government.¹⁹ Prior to these events, student groups competed with each other for influence, with poles at UNAM and the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute, IPN). Afterwards, they combined forces and produced a list of six simple demands, which became the student movement's bedrock. They were: (1) the release of all political prisoners; (2) the dismissal of the Chief and Assistant Chief of Mexico City's police force as well as the commander of the *granaderos*; (3) the disbanding of the *granaderos*; (4) revocation of Articles 145 and 145a of the Federal Penal Code, both dealing with social disturbances and used to prosecute political opponents; (5) compensation for the victims of *granadero* violence; and (6) prosecution of the members of the security forces responsible for deaths, injuries and damage.²⁰ When the Díaz Ordaz administration refused to accede, or even listen, student leaders demanded that the government address their petition. Over time, this demand for a response was misconstrued into a demand for "democracy." In fact, the students never petitioned for democracy, *per se*, but instead wanted the PRI to govern according to the ideas of the 1917 Constitution and the Mexican Revolution. That is, the students did not demand the PRI's removal or even democratic competition, but instead tacitly accepted the PRI's governance while demanding key political reforms.

The Mexican Revolution is the keystone event in modern Mexican history and was in the background during the student movement. Its shadow is cast over the entire country, not just Mexico City. According to Benedict Anderson, it is not ethnicity, religion, material interest,

¹⁹ See Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State*, 243-45.

²⁰ Raul Álvarez Garín, *La estela de Tlatelolco: Una reconstrucción histórica del Movimiento estudiantil del 68* (México, DF: Editorial Grijalbo, 1998): 286.

language, military necessity, or geography that create a nation out of disparate regions; it is memory, myth, and history, which combine to create an environment of organized remembering and forgetting.²¹ The revolution serves as a unifier, giving the north, the south, the east, the west, and the center something in common. In Mexico City, where people are continually reminded of the revolution and its ideas, it looms especially large. The student movement initially rejected the revolution in favor of international examples. Student activism at Berkeley and Columbia provided essential inspiration, as did the Paris May and the Prague Spring. For instance, the Mexican student movement developed a graphical style, seen on posters, placards, and flyers, that was influenced by the Paris May but also reflected domestic inspirations. The students merged a Parisian Op-art style with the 1968 Olympic logotype.²² (See Figure 1.1) The foreign events were perceived as vibrant and dynamic, especially when compared to the Mexican Revolution. In that vein, the Cuban Revolution was the most important external influence in July 1968. The students contrasted the Cuban Revolution's perceived vitality with the Mexican Revolution's perceived staleness. The students



Figure 1.1: The 1968 Olympic logotype and student use in their fliers. Photographs by the author.

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991): 195. See also Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000) for reflections on the Mexican Revolution's meaning and memory.

²² A good overview of the fliers and other graphics of 1968 can be found in Grupo Mira, ed., *La gráfica del '68: Homenaje al movimiento estudiantil*, 2nd edition (México, DF: Ediciones Zurda/Claves Latinoamericanas/El Juglar, 1988).

admired Castro and Guevara and their willingness to take action. Consequently, they marched with signs with Cuban revolutionary heroes and slogans on them, with the unfortunate consequence that the movement was branded communist. As a result, the students turned to the Mexican Revolution in August 1968. They marched with placards featuring Villa and Zapata and proclaimed allegiance to the 1917 Constitution.²³ They demanded that the ruling Partido de la Revolución Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) act according to the constitution and that the party live up to the revolution's ideals.

There is abundant evidence that the PRI was not very democratic. It has been called, among other things, the perfect dictatorship.²⁴ The party ruled by co-opting dissident groups into its political apparatus and then suppressing their voices. Those groups that remained outside the party structure had a certain degree of autonomy. But outside groups who struck also faced repression, such as the railroad workers in 1959, the teachers from 1958-60, and the doctors in 1964-65. In each case, the government reacted badly to the protests and the challenges they posed. A pattern developed whereby the government sent the Army to break up strikes while arresting and imprisoning the leaders. In that sense, the students took an enormous risk in protesting so vocally and so publicly. On the other hand, they had limited goals that might have been successful. They were not demanding a total renovation of Mexican society, but that the PRI function within the constitution. Thus, blaming Assistant Chief of Police Raúl Mendiola Cerecero and Mexico City regent Alfonso Corona del Rosal seemed relatively

²³ Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power, and Terror in 1968 Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 100.

²⁴ See Dan A. Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico: The 'Perfect Dictatorship'?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994).

harmless. Nevertheless, both were party functionaries, and so the students implicitly condemned President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.²⁵

Díaz Ordaz believed in order, control, and the Partido de la Revolución Institucional's right to rule. The party ruled by dividing its various corporate sectors thus ensuring that it remained the only unifying force. Its favorite tactic was controlling the avenues of mass communication. Díaz Ordaz once said, "Before broadcasting a news item, before emitting a comment, before transmitting a program, think first and always whether it . . . helps to promote harmony amongst Mexicans or to exacerbate their differences and resentments."²⁶

The student movement was an example of the latter. In the PRI's view, since it protested against the government, it went against not only the revolution but the national narrative. The PRI's position was reinforced by a compliant press. Evelyn Stevens surveyed newspapers for the first two weeks of August 1968 and found that 85% of the articles were "aimed at showing how unified the people were and how bad the students were."²⁷ Government officials, including Díaz Ordaz, repeatedly invoked the idea that the students were both anti-Mexico and anti-revolutionary.

Díaz Ordaz became increasingly anxious over the course of the summer. He was concerned that the student movement would adversely affect the upcoming XIX Olympic Games and would cast Mexico in a poor light. Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska wrote years later that "the Olympic games in Mexico would be the gold medal, the culmination of the

²⁵ Both Mendiola and the Chief of Police, General Luis Cueto Ramírez, were explicitly named in student protests. Díaz Ordaz was not, indicating that the president was still seen as a figure above the political fray. See *Voz Obrera*, a Marxist newspaper, dated 12 August 1968 (Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 2924-A, Expediente 6, p. 10) and the student demands (Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 482, p. 125).

²⁶ Gustavo Díaz Ordaz quoted in Evelyn Stevens, *Protest and Response in Mexico* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974): 55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

efforts of Mexico's politicians and of an ascendant economic development, ruled by the PRI, which devour[ed] all."²⁸ In July and August, the government's response to the students alternated between conciliation and crackdown, which Díaz Ordaz believed would end the student movement with enough time to spare before the Olympics. Beginning with his Informe on 1 September, he took a harder line.²⁹ He said that his government would take all actions necessary to uphold law and order and prevent disruptions to national life. More specifically, he warned the students that further action would be suppressed.³⁰ True to his words, the police and army became more brutal and invaded UNAM's campus at Ciudad Universitaria on 18 September 1968.

The students held several demonstrations during the summer of 1968. The most important were on 13 and 27 August and 13 September, during which the students' demands were repeated in chants and on placards and flyers. At all three, the students attempted to frame themselves as the true revolutionaries, as opposed to the ideologically bankrupt PRI. Their six core demands remained unchanged and were buttressed by demands that the PRI govern within the Constitution's and revolution's ideals. They also became more adversarial toward Díaz Ordaz. Students produced posters that mocked Díaz Ordaz's policies, actions, and appearance, which was unprecedented. Prior to 1968, the president was an unassailable figurehead, above the general political fray.

²⁸ Elena Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968" in *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002): 561.

²⁹ The Informe is the president's annual state of the nation address given in the Zócalo on 1 September every year.

³⁰ Secret telegram from US Embassy in Mexico City to US Secretary of State, dated 6 September 1968, National Archives, RG 59, 1967-69, Pol 13-2 Mex, Box 2340. See also the published transcript of the speech in *Cuarto informe que rinde al H. Congreso de la Unión el C. Presidente de la República, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, 1. de septiembre de 1968* (México, DF: Presidencia de la República, Dirección General de Difusión y Relaciones Públicas, 1968).

Díaz Ordaz felt he was losing control of situation which resulted in the aggressive Informe and the invasion of UNAM. He felt he was being disrespected. The relentless puzzle-solver in him searched for the missing piece, but he failed to find it. At the end of the September, the Consejo Nacional de Huelga (National Strike Council, CNH) announced a second rally at the historically important Plaza de las Tres Culturas.³¹ The Plaza de las Tres Culturas is so named because it contains architecture from the three eras of Mexican history: pre-Columbian, colonial, and modern. In the pre-Columbian era, the plaza was at the center of a city-state called Tlatelolco, which evolved into a market for Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital city. Over time, the Aztecs converted the plaza into a ceremonial sacrificial center, the purpose Francisco Ávila de Contreras recalled.³² The Templo de Santiago was built to assert Spanish religious and political dominance in 1527. To further those ends a school, the Colegio de la Santa Cruz, was constructed to educate children of the Aztec nobility. Twentieth-century urban renewal transformed Tlatelolco into a mixed residential-commercial area with gleaming apartment towers. The Mexican government established a presence through the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores building, which stands to this day. Tlatelolco is a place where different eras of Mexican history converge, sometimes awkwardly. It is a microcosm of Mexican history, demonstrating both struggles and successes. It is, in short, an embodiment of both national narrative and collective memory.

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed the notion of collective memory in an effort to distinguish it from individual memory. Collective memory is

³¹ The first took place, without incident, on 27 September 1968. The announcement for the 2 October 1968 protest can be found in the Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 2924-B, Expediente 1, p. 6.

³² Áviles Contreras was an elderly man who lived in Tlatelolco. Quoted in Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco*, 124.

shared, passed on, and constructed by a particular group.³³ As Arthur Neal expressed, “In telling and retelling the stories of our past, the events in question become stereotyped and selectively distorted as they become embedded in our collective memory.”³⁴ Significance lies in an event’s meaning rather than in its accuracy. Tlatelolco, as a place, had a significant meaning for the students. Not only was it a market, a ceremonial center, and a symbol of modernization, but it was also the last Aztec stronghold to fall to the Spanish. It was a symbol of resistance. The rally at Tlatelolco attempted to connect these events to the present and reinforce the student movement’s revolutionary authenticity. Díaz Ordaz had a different interpretation. The rally’s historically important location was an affront to the PRI’s legitimacy. It could not afford to lose control with the Olympics scheduled to start only ten days later. Díaz Ordaz could not allow the movement to gain more momentum, so he acted decisively.³⁵

The rally was scheduled for 5PM, by which time there were approximately 5,000 people in the plaza, most of whom were students. Others looked on from their apartment windows, which surrounded the square. The CNH plan was simple: hold a small, non-violent rally and give speeches reinforcing its demands. At the beginning, everything seemed fine. The speeches proved popular, and within an hour the students were chanting *México – Libertad – México – Libertad*. The mood changed between 6:10 and 6:15PM, when *granaderos* arrived in tanks and armored vehicles, and blocked the major exits. The army put into effect Operation Galeano at the same time, sending the Olympic Battalion in plain clothes to arrest the CNH representatives

³³ See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁴ Arthur Neal (1862-1933) was a British politician. He is quoted in Kathleen Malley-Morrison, ed., *State Violence and the Right to Peace: An International Survey of the Views of Ordinary People* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009): 81.

³⁵ Herbert Braun, “Protests of Engagement: Dignity, False Love, and Self-Love in Mexico during 1968,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 3 (July 1997): 532.

giving speeches. They wore one white glove to distinguish one another from the civilians.³⁶ The signal for the *guantes blancos* to act was a flare dropped from a hovering police helicopter. When that happened, chaos erupted. The flare panicked both the police and those attending the rally. Shots were fired, and students, soldiers, and innocent bystanders fell.³⁷ Recalling the plaza's ancient use, Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz calls the massacre a sacrifice.³⁸ The death toll and the massacre's meaning both remain disputed, especially in terms of the national and revolutionary narratives.³⁹ Over the course of the afternoon and evening of 2 October, Díaz Ordaz killed the student movement. That much is indisputable. What is questioned is the massacre's place in Mexican history and its collective memory. That the massacre happened is not questioned; how it should be remembered is.

II. Memory theory and the traditional historiography

Memories are subjective. They are highly personal in that each memory is unique to the one who is remembering. Memories change and fade over time; two people can have different memories of the same event. In contrast, history strives to be objective. Historians gather data and reach conclusions that will be subject to scrutiny and analysis, yet those conclusions are

³⁶ See Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1459 for more on the operation and the Olympic Battalion.

³⁷ There are numerous accounts of the massacre. I have relied on three in particular: Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado, *Informe Histórico a la Sociedad Mexicana 2006* (México, DF: Procuraduría General de la República, 2006): 44-149; Pablo Gómez, *1968: La historia también está hecha de derrotas* (México, DF: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2008); and the Archivo General de la Nación's Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, which includes sources from the Dirección Federal de Seguridad.

³⁸ Octavio Paz, *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York, NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1972): 78. Sacrifice is an important theme in Paz's works regarding the massacre. See Chapter 1 for more.

³⁹ The PRI claimed first 8, then 29, finally 49 dead over the course of the evening of 2 October. Most scholars agree that the number is in the low hundreds, perhaps 200-300. The number has not, and probably never will, be confirmed. See "29 Muertos y más de 80 Heridos en Ambos Bandos; 1,000 Detenidos," *El Universal*, 3 October 1968, p. 1; "Subió a Treinta el Número de los Muertos de Antier," *El Heraldo de México*, 3 October 1968; "El Ejército Mantiene la Tranquilidad y se Informa Oficialmente de 29 Muertos," *Novedades*, 4 October 1968, p. 1. See also Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices*, 139.

still dependant on the scholar's views. In time, a consensus is reached, creating both collective memories of national events and a national narrative. History is a public activity while remembering is a private activity, though neither is wholly one or the other. In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, historian David Lowenthal argues that collective memories supplement personal memories, meaning that historical analysis helps fill in gaps in a person's memories. "Sharing and validating memories sharpens them and promotes their recall; events we alone know about are less certainly, less easily evoked. In the process of knitting our own discontinuous recollections into narratives, we revise personal components to fit the collectively remembered past, and gradually cease to distinguish between them."⁴⁰ Certainty, then, is the product of both public history and private memories. Histories are written with a measure of certainty that either validates or invalidates personally held memories. In the process, private memories combine with and reinforce public histories.

According to Halbwachs, memory is a social activity. Groups keep collective memories alive. It is not, of course, the group that remembers things but its individual members; the group simply provides the context. "Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time."⁴¹ Mexicans, as a group, do not know how to place the massacre within the revolutionary narrative. In fact, Mexicans have been actively prevented from doing so by two smaller groups: the PRI pole of remembrance and the intellectual pole of remembrance. Both tried to shape the massacre's collective memory through media. For the PRI, that meant using its control of the print media to minimize the massacre's importance. For intellectuals, that meant publishing books, films, plays, poems, and internet sites that

⁴⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 196.

⁴¹ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 22.

reinforced the idea of the fourth break. The intellectual position revolved around its assertion that the massacre was a nation-changing event on par with the Conquest, the wars of independence, and the Mexican Revolution. The problem with both interpretations remained the revolutionary narrative. The general public, the PRI, and intellectuals appeared unwilling to challenge the revolutionary narrative, because new evidence could oppose the conventional wisdom that the revolution, and everything that came from the revolution, were positive. Mexicans, including the PRI and intellectuals, appeared unwilling to be self-analytical and, if necessary, self-critical.⁴²

An institutionalized history is an accepted version of history to which most people agree. French historian Henry Rousso, in *The Vichy Syndrome*, calls this the dominant memory, which he defines as a “a collective interpretation of the past that may even come to have official status”.⁴³ For Mexicans, there are three dominant memories: the Conquest, the Wars of Independence, and the Mexican Revolution. They break up the nation’s history into three distinct eras, and help define *mexicanidad*. In the twentieth century, the revolution became the center of Mexican identity, giving the disparate political and economic regions something to bind them together.⁴⁴ Revolutionary memories were shared, reinforced, and disseminated through literature, plays, film, and other media. By 1968, a commonly agreed upon narrative of the revolution and its impact emerged with the PRI at its center. The party successfully established itself as the official interpreter of the revolutionary narrative with the support of a

⁴² In *The Other Mexico*, Octavio Paz wrote that “without criticism, above all without self-criticism, there is no possibility of change.” (p. 22) He was continuing a line of thought from his other seminal work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York, NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), in which he laments Mexican isolation.

⁴³ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991): 4.

⁴⁴ See Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 14-23.

large number of Mexicans.⁴⁵ Its conservative and patriarchal interpretation brooked no challenges.

Was the Tlatelolco Massacre as important as the Mexican Revolution? If one relies on the PRI's interpretation, the answer is a resounding no. The PRI's minimization tactics attempted to create a collective memory that saw the massacre in terms of the party's revolutionary interpretation. As the revolutionary guardian, the PRI acted decisively to protect itself from anti-revolutionary students. In public, the PRI, and the compliant media, consistently portrayed the students as anti-revolutionary, even using the time-honored tradition of blaming foreign agitators for the movement.⁴⁶ In private, the most senior PRI officials went even further, considering the students a threat to no less than national sovereignty and Mexican civilization.⁴⁷ The PRI's minimization tactic was a product of its ideological flexibility. After the controlling Díaz Ordaz, Luis Echeverría attempted to promote more liberal policies. Echeverría's *apertura democrática* became an effective vehicle for co-opting, and thus suppressing, dissident intellectual voices.⁴⁸ The massacre receded from the national consciousness in the late 1970s and 1980s, because the PRI cast itself as the only party that could solve the nation's economic problems. People believed the PRI, because after all, it had presided over the Mexican Economic Miracle from 1940-1970. The massacre, then, was not the catalyst for change that the traditional historiography believes it was.

The traditional historiography of the Tlatelolco Massacre, produced by the intellectual pole, emphasizes positive changes from horrific events. For intellectuals, the massacre was

⁴⁵ Dale Story, *The Mexican Ruling Party: Stability and Authority* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1986): 1 & 41-44.

⁴⁶ "Manos Extrañas en los Disturbios Estudiantiles, Asegura la S.E.P." *Excélsior*, 25 July 1968.

⁴⁷ Archivo General de la Nación, Presidencias, Díaz Ordaz, vol. 161 (501), 1968, 2 September 1968.

⁴⁸ Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power, A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*, trans. Hank Heifetz (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1997): 742-44.

nothing less than a call for a new revolution; it was the fourth break in Mexican history, because it proved that the revolution was stale. Journalist Carlos Monsiváis, at the magazine *La Cultura en México*, criticized the PRI's minimization policy and wrote that, in the party's eyes, "aquí no ha pasado nada."⁴⁹ According to Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska, one of the pillars of the intellectual pole, the student movement was "the political awakening of the young."⁵⁰ Although the massacre crippled the student movement, it also de-legitimized the PRI and the office of the president, and resulted in Mexican "democracy".⁵¹ In the historiography, analysis is static, in that it is confined to 1968, or is demonstrative of a corrupt, decrepit government on its last legs.⁵² The memory of Tlatelolco, in the traditional historiography, has been constructed to emphasize the purposefulness of the student movement and to credit it with "democracy" in Mexico. By emphasizing positive change, the traditional historiography imposed its notion of what *should have happened* rather than what *did happen*.

I theorize that the massacre's meaning, or lack thereof, reflects Mexico's political and cultural development since 1968. There has been a trend for broader opposition representation in government, yet that has not resulted in broad opposition power. Economically, the trend has been toward neoliberalism, but that has not resulted in an improved economy. For forty years, the massacre was seen as the beginning of Mexican democracy. Yet the PRI retained power for thirty-two of those forty years. Paradoxically, the intellectual pole has helped the PRI,

⁴⁹ "Nothing has happened here." Though Monsiváis was responding to the Army's occupation of UNAM in September 1968, the sentiment applies to the PRI's post-massacre views. Carlos Monsiváis, "Puntos de vista sobre el Movimiento Estudiantil: Las exigencias del retorno," *La cultura en México* 347 (9 October 1968): xvi.

⁵⁰ Elena Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," 561.

⁵¹ Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices*, 191; Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon, *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Girouz, 2004): 84-85.

⁵² See, for example, Sergio Aguayo Quezada, *1968: Los archivos de la violencia* (México, DF: Editorial Grijalbo, 1998): 292; Ramón Ramírez, *El movimiento estudiantil de México: julio/diciembre de 1968* (2 vols., México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1969): 90; and Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson, eds., *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

because it has failed to demonstrate *why* the massacre was the fourth break. Intellectuals refused to update their analyses to take advantage of new evidence. Instead, they relied on the same memories, the same outrage, and the same theories for four decades. Intellectuals insisted on viewing the massacre in isolation, and refused to connect it to the past. Intellectuals turned the massacre into a mythological event that existed outside of the rest of Mexican history. Thus, the massacre has never been placed within the revolutionary or the national narrative, despite the numerous political and economic changes since 1968. The intellectual echo chamber created an environment where an impartial evaluation of the massacre's importance and legacy was impossible.

According to United States historian Emily S. Rosenberg's *A Date Which Will Live*, memories are constantly contested which necessitates a dynamic historical analysis. In her view, history and memories separate, converge, and change each other and the past's interpretation. Rosenberg's work explains how "professional and popular histories, monuments, public proclamations, the Internet, films, journalism, and other media" have influenced versions of the past; in short, the proliferation of new media determines which explanations and events are accepted or rejected.⁵³ Intellectuals, like the PRI, dislike new evidence because it forced them to change their position. Intellectuals wanted the general public to accept, unconditionally, its interpretation of the massacre. Thus they must share some of the blame for the massacre's continued existence outside the revolutionary narrative. In looking at how memories have evolved, commingled, and been contested since 1968, I do so because I am "interested not only in ascertaining the facts about such events but also in

⁵³ Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 3-4. Rosenberg examines Pearl Harbor as an "icon in historical memory, commemoration, and spectacle."

comprehending their persistence.”⁵⁴ The Tlatelolco Massacre, as an event, has persisted for more than forty years, suggesting that it is important. Its memories and interpretation have been contested, also demonstrating its importance. It is my position that Mexicans, as a group larger than either the intellectual pole or the PRI pole of remembrance, have failed to construct an acceptable collective memory. As a result, the massacre exists outside the revolutionary narrative. Was it a revolutionary event or was it a clean break from the revolution, marking the beginning of a new era in Mexican history? In taking into account both the PRI pole of remembrance and the intellectual pole of remembrance, this study will show how the massacre’s memories are still evolving and how Mexicans have yet to fully reconcile them with the revolutionary narrative. The national narrative, based on three major breaks, and memory studies will serve as theoretical guidelines.

III. Outline

My study is organized in chronological order, and will show how the responses to and memories of the massacre have changed since 1968. I will also examine several common themes, including the formation of collective memories, the development of a dominant memory, and how those are related to the revolutionary narrative. The evidence will show how the traditional historiographical view has remained dominant, and how it is incorrect. I will show that the massacre is not as important as intellectuals think nor is it as unimportant as the PRI thinks but that both sides have impeded an honest assessment.

Chapter 2, focusing on 1968 to 1976, argues that because everything returned to normal on 3 October, Mexicans did not have a chance to grieve or to understand properly what had

⁵⁴ Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, 3.

happened. There are two crucially important reasons for this denial: the PRI's desire for control over the events and the upcoming Olympic Games. As a result, Mexicans never learned how to deal with and accept the massacre despite the highly emotional response on the part of intellectuals. Indeed, intellectuals were the only group that responded vociferously to the massacre, and Octavio Paz, Elena Poniatowska, Ramón Ramírez, and Julio Scherer García provide excellent examples. Two ideological camps were thus established: one that demanded recognition and commemoration and one that tried to minimize the massacre's importance. The former depicted the massacre as a turning point in the country's history while the latter stressed that the massacre was but one small event in the larger post-revolutionary experience. The intellectual pole of remembrance, led by Poniatowska, Scherer, Carlos Monsiváis, and others, forms the core of the traditional historiography to this day. Its initial emotional response demanded outrage and denied mourning. The intellectual pole established the framework of how the massacre would be remembered and refused to accept other interpretations, creating an echo chamber at the same time. The intellectual pole has not produced an honest assessment of the massacre because it has not evolved. It sees the massacre in isolation, as the fourth break, and connects it to neither the revolutionary narrative nor to the average Mexican's personal memories.

Chapter 3 will focus on the formation of memories and how the massacre faded from view from 1976 to 1985. I argue that the ideological divisions intensified, as intellectuals published more and more demands for recognition and commemoration, but met strong resistance from the PRI pole of remembrance. The debt crises in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the 1985 earthquakes in Mexico City acted as catalysts for forgetting, and consequently,

memories of the massacre faded, reinforcing my point that the massacre was not the beginning of a political opening. In short, the PRI's minimization policy was reasonably successful. The PRI hoped the intellectual pole's general unwillingness to change its argument would subvert the massacre's memories. In creating an echo chamber, intellectuals still prevented mourning, even when confronted by community groups, artists, and playwrights. The intellectual pole refused to acknowledge those three groups because they challenged its conception of the massacre as the fourth break. Chapter 3 demonstrates that public memories are fluid and thus open to constant re-interpretation. It will discuss how memory and history are intertwined and how forgetting is a key part of both.

Chapter 4 examines the years 1985 to 1990 as a hinge in terms of remembrance. I argue that those six years are crucial to how the massacre is remembered because there were important political and cultural breakthroughs. Did those breakthroughs change who was shaping the memories? How were those memories contested during those years? Why did the biggest changes occur here? In terms of politics, there were two important breakthroughs. The first was the PRI's internal split in 1987. The party's liberal wing, led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Pedro Muñoz Ledo, broke away citing a lack of democracy both within and outside the party. To differentiate itself from the PRI, Cárdenas's group focused on inclusion, in the sense that the PRI had abandoned a large percentage of Mexicans in its quest for power. In particular, Cárdenas appealed to community groups that grew out of the PRI's clumsy response to the 1985 earthquakes. The second breakthrough was the clearly fraudulent election in 1988, which demonstrated the lengths to which the PRI was willing to go in order to maintain power. It also led to a permanent split with the liberal wing, which had important consequences in the next

decade. At the time, Tlatelolco remained forgotten, except by the intellectual pole., which renewed its arguments through direct confrontation. Mexican director Jorge Fons released *Rojo amanecer* in 1990, a cultural milestone because it was the first mainstream film to deal explicitly with the massacre. For Fons and other intellectuals, confrontation remained the key; the film was, in effect, a blunt instrument. The intellectual pole demanded that ordinary Mexicans reject the PRI's explanation out of hand. Playwrights, again, stood out and tried to find a middle ground. They preached inclusion, like Cárdenas, but were drowned out by other intellectual demands for confrontation. Chapter 4 suggests that the intellectual pole failed to lead Mexicans because it was too reliant on arguments that never changed. The failure to lead had disastrous consequences in terms of memories and the revolutionary narrative.

Chapter 5 argues that the memorial hinge continued to swing open from 1991 to 2002. President Carlos Salinas's attempt to re-write Mexican history in 1992, by issuing new primary school textbooks, cracked the PRI's solid corporate support. In short, he initiated a blame game while re-interpreting the Mexican Revolution to suit his administration's goals, namely the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The political fallout included Mexico City mayor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's declaration of a day of mourning on 2 October 1998 and Vicente Fox's election to the presidency in 2000. The real breakthrough, politically and culturally, came in 2002 when Fox appointed Ignacio Carrillo Prieto to the *Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado* (Office of Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements in the Past, FEMOSPP). Carrillo Prieto's investigation exposed both the PRI and the intellectual pole's arguments before and after 1968. The massacre was not an isolated incident but was, instead, part of a pattern of state-sponsored human rights violations. The traditional

historiography rejected Carrillo Prieto's report and continued to publish its typical arguments. Playwrights were the outliers and suggested that personal memories needed to be reconciled with the massacre's facts in order to assess the latter's place in the revolutionary narrative. Although both the FEMOSPP and playwrights de-mythologized the massacre, the minority positions hardened, which reinforced the echo chamber.

Chapter 6 argues that the massacre has become something else, an episode that seems far away from current events. It no longer carries the emotional cachet it once did, except for those who attended Tlatelolco, a group of intellectuals who advocate the authority of their experience. The massacre's meaning is expanded to include any anti-government protest, always framed by the slogan "no se olvide". Chapter 6 asks if the massacre still matters. Carrillo Prieto's report is the era's main political document. It de-mythologized the massacre and connected it to previous political repressions. Carrillo Prieto's report should have been a turning point, but it was rejected by both the PRI pole and the intellectual pole. In fact, the intellectual pole continued to ignore the general Mexican public and publish works for itself. Using two representative analyses, it becomes apparent that the intellectual pole continued to exist in an echo chamber and continued to insist that the massacre was the fourth break. The intellectual pole's failure to engage Mexicans and to demonstrate the massacre's importance can be seen in the fortieth anniversary commemorations, on 2 October 2008. Newspaper, magazine, and television specials leading up to the commemorations showed that the *idea* of Tlatelolco remained important. Intellectual commentators continued to suggest that it was the fourth break. Post-commemoration coverage revealed that the *act* of commemoration is, in and of itself, unimportant. Tlatelolco became a buzzword, an umbrella concept under which

every anti-government protest existed, thus diluting its meaning. The intellectual pole was directly responsible for this dilution. Its unwillingness to lead, to change, and to accept other points-of-view, prevented an impartial assessment. Even forty years later, the massacre was not part of the revolutionary narrative.

CHAPTER 2: MOURNING DENIED, 1968-1976

“Do not go looking in the archives for there is nothing in official documents.”

– Rosario Castellanos, “Memorial de Tlatelolco”¹

I. Introduction

Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz’s first literary reaction to the Tlatelolco Massacre was a poem called “México: Olimpiada de 1968” (“Mexico: The 1968 Olympics”). Originally commissioned months earlier by the Coordinators of the Cultural Program of the Olympics to exalt the Olympic spirit, Paz declined the invitation at the time because he did not “think [he] was the person best suited to contribute to [the] international gathering [of poets] and, above all, to write a poem on [that] theme.”² After the massacre, he reconsidered and sent the committee a poem he had written on 3 October. It was not what the committee expected. The poem’s style is such that the past and present connect, moving history and memory forward and backward. He labeled the Plaza de la las Tres Culturas the “Plaza de Sacrificios,” bringing its ancient use into the present. The national narrative, hinted at throughout, is referenced when he equates washing the stones of blood with cleansing the historical record. It laments that students were killed “Before having said anything / Worthwhile”.³ Paz’s poem shocked the commissioners, who would not allow it to be part of the official Olympic celebration, which was to be the ruling Partido de la Revolución Institucional’s (PRI) crowning moment. Paz encouraged remembrance and grieving by connecting the massacre to previous events in Mexico’s history. Unfortunately, neither the PRI

¹ For the full text of Castellanos’s work, “Memorial de Tlatelolco,” see Appendix B.

² Letter dated 7 October 1968 from Paz to the Coordinators of the Cultural Program. From Dolly J. Young, “Tlatelolco Literature” (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1980): 112.

³ Octavio Paz, “México: Olimpiada de 1968,” in Young, “Tlatelolco Literature,” 112-13, lines 22-23. See Appendix C for the full text of the poem.

pole of remembrance nor the intellectual pole of remembrance followed up on his ideas in the next forty years.⁴

In the massacre's aftermath, memories formed instantaneously. Almost as quickly, the battle to define and control those memories began. The PRI moved to establish its control, first by confiscating materials from foreign and domestic journalists, then by cleaning up the blood. It tried to control how and what information was released on television, on the radio, and in newspapers. From the beginning, it minimized the massacre's importance and urged a return to normal day-to-day life. The context for the PRI's actions were the XIX Olympic Games, due to begin on 12 October 1968. The Olympics were crucial for the PRI's sense of self, because they would prove to the world that Mexico was a modern nation and that it represented the Olympic ideals.⁵ Mexico under the PRI was promoted as "a land beyond racial and domestic conflict, a 'harmonization' transcendent of internal divisions. In a world increasingly characterized by political and social divisions, Mexico was marketed as an embodiment of the highest ideals of Olympic harmony."⁶ The Olympics, and what they represented, were incompatible with the Tlatelolco Massacre. Thus the PRI worked hard to minimize the latter while emphasizing the former. Its minimization policy mandated not only that memories be controlled but that mourning be denied.

Although the PRI sought to control how the massacre was remembered, almost immediately that task became impossible. Paz's poem was published in *The Times of London*,

⁴ Paz also sent the poem to the British newspaper *The Times of London*, where it was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 17 October 1968. For more, see Claire Brewster, "The Mexican Student Movement of 1968 and the Mexican Press: The Cases of *Excelsior* and *Siempre!*" *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 21, no. 2 (2002): 171-90.

⁵ See Kevin B. Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

⁶ Eric Zolov, "Showcasing the 'Land of Tomorrow': Mexico and the 1968 Olympics," *The Americas* 61, no. 2 (2004): 163.

and other intellectuals took some of their cues from him. Their response became highly emotional, moving away from Paz's more academic approach, although it too, failed to encourage mourning. Instead, the intellectual pole of remembrance focused on the political ramifications and called the massacre the fourth break. Intellectuals saw 1968 as an equivalent year to 1521, 1810, and 1910. It was, in the intellectual interpretation, a cataclysmic rupture with the PRI's revolutionary ideology and a call for a second Mexican Revolution, one that would correct the mistakes of the first. Using Paz's *México: Olimpiada de 1968* as inspiration, authors, filmmakers, and playwrights attempted to shape the memories of the massacre to reflect their interpretation. Yet, even while dramatizing the stories of those who died during the massacre, they allowed no time to mourn. The general public thus remained aloof from their ideas. Control informed how the poles of remembrance acted, but neither took into account the ordinary person's lived experience. Mourning was denied.

II. PRI minimization

In the early 1960s, president Adolfo López Mateos decided Mexico needed to show off its modernity.⁷ López Mateos was a well-liked politician, and he used his popularity, along with his considerable oratorical skills, to organize and promote a bid for the 1968 Olympic Games. Mexico was an underdog – Detroit was the favorite, according to most observers – but it put together an impressive presentation for the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The campaign revolved around a unique Mexican identity; advertisements focused on the country's

⁷ On López Mateos, see Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 625. For an account of the Olympic bid process, see Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*, 31.

“modern and exotic” aspects.⁸ More importantly, the organizing committee explicitly distanced Mexico from the United States and Europe by contrasting “simplicity versus grandeur; public versus corporate; genuine versus fake; humble versus arrogant.”⁹ A key aspect of the bid was the promise of a Cultural Olympics, in which Mexico would show off its art and history, with a special focus on the pre-Columbian era.¹⁰ The formal presentation to the IOC in Baden-Baden, Germany on 18 October 1963 and the behind the scenes politicking were effective, and Mexico City won the right to host the Olympics on the first ballot.¹¹ For the next five years, preparation for the Olympics was the PRI’s priority. The party became obsessed, and tied the Games to its political identity and revolutionary legacy. Only the PRI could bring the Olympics to Mexico, just like only the PRI could guide the revolution. The Games became a tool with two purposes: to prop up the PRI’s revolutionary identity and to show off in front of the international community.

From 18 October 1963 to 12 October 1968, the date of the Opening Ceremonies, the Olympics framed everything the PRI did. When López Mateos left office in 1964, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz became president. Díaz Ordaz was, in many ways, López Mateos’s opposite. While López Mateos was outgoing and a gifted speaker, Díaz Ordaz was private and stumbling. While López Mateos promoted generally pro-labor, leftist policies, Díaz Ordaz was perhaps the most conservative president of the twentieth century.¹² The pendulum theory, in which the PRI

⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ The Cultural Olympics were crucial, in part, because Mexico did not expect to win many medals. Thus the Cultural Olympics would be a way for Mexico to make up for its predicted lack of athletic success. For more on the Cultural Olympics, see Zolov, “Showcasing the ‘Land of Tomorrow’: Mexico and the 1968 Olympics,” and Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, “El Otro 68: Política y estilo en la organización de los juegos olímpicos de la Ciudad de México,” *Relaciones* 76, vol. XIX (1998).

¹¹ Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*, 46.

¹² See Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 625-62 & 665-731.

chose a successor on the opposite side of the political spectrum, was in full effect.¹³ Although Mexico presented an image of “a land beyond racial and domestic conflict,” the country seethed below the surface.¹⁴ López Mateos dealt with railroad and teacher strikes in the late 1950s, none of which were satisfactorily resolved. In the 1960s, students began agitating for smaller classes and better teachers in places like Durango and Veracruz.¹⁵ The Cuban Revolution held immense appeal for those who thought the Mexican Revolution stale, especially in an economic sense.¹⁶ “As it became more evident that economic growth was creating new elites little interested in social justice, protests mounted. By the late 1960s, the New Left, based within the nation’s universities, was actively seeking confrontation with the conservative government of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.”¹⁷ Student discontent, building on previous strikes and seeking widespread support, exploded in the summer of 1968, a monumentally inconvenient time for the PRI, with the Olympics due to start in October.

Throughout the summer, the PRI minimized the student movement’s importance. In July and August 1968, Díaz Ordaz was content to crack down with his *granaderos* and then relieve the pressure by allowing some leeway regarding protests. He hoped that by giving the protesters some latitude, the movement would peter out before the Olympics.¹⁸ At the same time, he continued to insist that the protesters were not “real” Mexicans. He and the media

¹³ Story, *The Mexican Ruling Party*, 30-31.

¹⁴ Zolov, “Showcasing the ‘Land of Tomorrow’,” 163.

¹⁵ “Asamblea mitin en la Plaza de Armas organizada por estudiantes universitarios” and “Pliego Petitorio del Comité de Huelga de la Escuela Náutica Mercante ‘Fernando Silíceo’,” 20 July 1966, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 456.

¹⁶ Miguel Ramírez, *Mexico’s Economic Crisis: Its Origins and Consequences* (New York, NY: Praeger/Greenwood Press, 1989): 45.

¹⁷ Mabry, *Mexican University and the State*, 214.

¹⁸ The US Embassy in Mexico City concluded that the PRI alternated crackdowns and conciliations for two reasons: “1) It permitted government to create a public image of extreme restraint and tolerance in dealing with students, and 2) It provided [an] opportunity for students and pseudo students to move to greater and great excesses in [the] community and to create image of increasing intransigence.” US Embassy in Mexico City secret telegram, 6 September 1968, National Archives, RG 59, 1967-69 Pol 13-2 Mex, Box 2340.

blamed the movement on foreign agitators, likely communists. Thus a “real” Mexican was docile and accepted the president’s authority without question. (See Figure 2.1) On 1 August 1968, he gave his famous raised hand speech:

Mexicans will decide whether that hand will remain extended in the air, or whether, in the Mexican tradition, in the real, the genuine, the authentic tradition of Mexico, that hand will see itself accompanied by millions of others, who together wish to reestablish the peace and tranquility of our conscience.¹⁹

A veiled threat, the speech was paternalism at its finest. Díaz Ordaz thought he was encouraging Mexicans to cooperate with him by graciously offering to raise them to his level; in fact, he was talking down to them. The speech reflected the PRI’s broad belief that it knew what was best for the country. As such, the dialogue remained one-way; the PRI did not want the students to voice a different opinion in any way. The students used the PRI’s paternalism and the *granadero* violence against Díaz Ordaz. A student flyer in Santiago Ixouintla, Nayarit released on 31 August 1968 tied anti-student violence to the movement, and declared that “Our student martyrs, whose rebellious examples light the way, will never be forgotten”.²⁰ Another, released in the northwestern city of Tijuana, made the call for armed revolution explicit: “Now is the time to fight, with guns in our hands, for a better future unburdened by a ‘Revolutionary’ past.”²¹ The students claimed that by fighting for the revolution, they were not disobedient children, but were “real” Mexicans. Furthermore, by stressing the organic, Mexican nature of their movement, they hoped to prevent any suggestions that they were led by

¹⁹ Díaz Ordaz quoted in Braun, “Protests of Engagement,” 543.

²⁰ “Al pueblo de México,” 31 August 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 523, Expediente 1: 457-58.

²¹ “Ya,” 10 October 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 531, Expediente 3: 367-68.

foreigners.²² Díaz Ordaz's raised hand speech undermined his minimization tactics, a mistake he repeated a month later.

Díaz Ordaz's Informe on 1 September 1968 was, according to the United States Embassy in Mexico, "a model of the carrot and stick technique."²³ He took the position that, as the president, he would look in to each of the student demands while promising to maintain order and protect all Mexican citizens. In short, he put "national honor and the prestige of the presidency on the line."²⁴ He reaffirmed his belief in university autonomy and stated that he did not believe the army had violated it. He instructed the Attorney General to review pending cases in search of political prisoners and asked the Chamber of Deputies to hold hearings on Article 145.²⁵ Not surprisingly, the speech received high praise from the media. The Mexico City daily in *El Día* published an editorial declaring that "What Matters is Mexico!"²⁶ In its analysis, the students were selfish and put their needs and wants ahead of the country's. Díaz Ordaz portrayed himself, and newspapers agreed, as the benevolent revolutionary leader, hoping to undermine the students' claim that they were the real revolutionaries. He sought a national consensus that he was moving in the right direction.

The Informe was typical of the PRI's paternalistic style. The president, as the nation's father, offered the students a way out, but only if they compromised. At the same time, Díaz

²² Indeed, the PRI claimed, throughout the summer, that "the students were planning sabotage against the Olympics, the students were planning demonstrations against the Olympics, the students were planning to wreck the Olympics and give the whole country a black eye." See John Spitzer and Harvey Cohen, "Shades of Berlin in Mexico, 68," *Ramparts* 7, no. 6: 43.

²³ "Review of Mexico City Student Disturbances," dated 12 October 1968, National Archives, RG 59, 1967-69, Pol 13-2 Mex, Box 2340.

²⁴ Secret telegram from US Embassy in Mexico City to US Secretary of State, dated 6 September 1968, National Archives, RG 59, 1967-69, Pol 13-2 Mex, Box 2340.

²⁵ Article 145 of the Mexican Penal Code dealt with social disturbances and was used to prosecute the PRI's political opponents. For more, see the description of the six student demands in the Introduction.

²⁶ "¡Lo que Cuenta es México!", Editorial, *El Día*, 2 September 1968.

Ordaz denied any knowledge of wrongdoing, thus preserving his office's sanctity and reinforcing his position as arbiter. That image of the president at the head of a family – making all Mexicans his children – has been drawn out in scholarly works.²⁷ Herbert Braun argued that “[t]he protestors were not unlike children who heap aggressive words upon their parents as they sense that they are growing older, as the relationship changes and they are not recognized for the mature individuals they have become. Their verbal violence was thus deeply meaningful.”²⁸ Braun suggests that the student movement was not just a political rebellion, but also a cultural rebellion, with irreverence drawn from the US and French examples. To deny some external influence would be foolish. New technology, like live television, permitted images to be instantly transmitted around the globe.²⁹ Not only that, but some of the student movement's posters copied the French style, while oratorical cues were taken from the US student movement. With all that said, the Mexican student movement remained unique because it did not seek total renovation but liberalization within the 1917 Constitution's frame. Its six demands were relatively easy for the government to give. Modernity clashed with tradition, specifically the PRI's revolutionary tradition. Although the PRI saw itself as the nation's father, university students exercised their own interpretation of the revolution and the constitution. Thus the revolution's narrative was not a straight line but “an uneven sedimentation of memory, myth, and history.”³⁰ Other groups contested the PRI's interpretation, such as railroad and teacher strikers, and their ideas were added to the revolutionary narrative. The students followed a kind of tradition, and demanded that the PRI

²⁷ See David G. LaFrance, “Mexico Since Cárdenas,” in *Twentieth-Century Mexico*, eds. W. Dirk Raat and William H. Beezley (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986): 208-09; Benjamin, “La Revolución,” Chapters 3 and 6.

²⁸ Braun, “Protests of Engagement,” 539.

²⁹ See Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004): 52.

³⁰ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 20.

respond to them. But the PRI could not do that because it was designed to rule from above rather than respond to requests from below. In the PRI view, such suggestions were not legitimate.

By a sort of pseudo-apostolic succession, the president was also the direct heir of the martyrs of the Revolution, having received the presidential sash from the hands of his predecessor, who had received his from his, in a line which goes back to at least Obregón. The party and the president thus incarnated legitimacy in Mexico.³¹

Díaz Ordaz fell back on the traditional patriarchal position in the face of the student movement; his legitimacy depended on it. Rather than listen, he mobilized the PRI's controlling mechanisms. In addition to the *granaderos*, he enlisted the media's support.

The PRI's minimization of the student movement took two forms in print media. In the first, student leaders were accused of being "fake" Mexicans or of taking their cues from foreign agitators. In the second, students were blamed for whatever happened, especially in the massacre's aftermath. For example, on 2 August 1968 *El Universal*, a Mexico City daily, ran a story entitled "Students drift toward madness" by Antonio Uroz. He followed the PRI line of thought, writing, "What is the cause [for the student movement]? It is communism, professional agitators, both foreign and domestic, and the Russian, Cuban, and Maoist embassies, which have a vested interest in preventing Mexico from enjoying peace and want to subvert law and order."³² Editorial



Figure 2.1: "Estudiante," in *El Universal*, 29 July 1968. From Aurora Cano Andaluz, 1968: *Antología periodística* (México, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1998).

³¹ Martin Needler, *Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict* (2nd Edition; Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995): 69.

³² Antonio Uroz, "Locura estudiantil hacia la deriva," *El Universal*, 2 August 1968, p. 2 & 14, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Ludlow Collection, Caja 1, Expediente 5.

cartoons and other articles reached similar conclusions: the real Mexican students were those who dressed properly and studied.³³ Only those who were neither real students nor real Mexicans agitated for reforms. The subtext in this argument is that the student movement was a personal affront not only to the president, but also to families and to ordinary Mexicans, groups who appreciated what they had.

In her study of the Mexican media, Evelyn Stevens surveyed newspaper space for the first two weeks of August and found that 85% was “aimed at showing how unified the people were and how bad the students were.”³⁴ She suggests that the government strategy was visible, if not persuasive. Similarly, beginning on 3 October 1968, the day after the massacre, Mexico City newspapers followed the government line to the letter. *El Día*, a Mexico City daily, published an unsigned article headlined “The Troops Were Shot at by Snipers, said García Barragán.”³⁵ In it, the newspaper reiterated the army’s claim that snipers shot first. In *El Sol de México*, Luis Cueto Ramírez, the chief of police in Mexico City, appeared unrepentant on 4 October. “He also invited students and young people in general to reflect on the actual situation ‘which benefits no one.’ ‘I speak to you,’ he explained, ‘as a father and as a civil servant.’”³⁶ The next day, on 5 October, the same newspaper published the Secretary of National Defense’s justification of the army’s action in Tlatelolco uncritically.³⁷ The PRI attempted to create a narrative that buttressed its revolutionary heritage; the violence thus

³³ See the cartoon “Estudiantes,” in *El Universal* (29 July 1968) in Aurora Cano Andaluz, *1968: Antología periodística* (México, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1998): 14.

³⁴ Stevens, *Protest and Response*, 214.

³⁵ “La Trope fue Recibida a Balazos por Francotiradores, Dijo García Barragán,” *El Día*, 3 October 1968. See also Cano Andaluz, *1968: Antología Periodística*, 237.

³⁶ Luis Cueto Ramírez quoted in “Reitera Cueto: Energía Para Evitar Motines,” *El Sol de México*, 4 October 1968, p. 1.

³⁷ Cano Andaluz, *1968: Antología Periodística*, 237, 246, and 249. See also Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Ludlow Collection, Caja 2, Expediente 3, which contains numerous examples, all of which are dated 3 October 1968.

came from defending the revolution and its ideals. Its vision clashed with that of Paz and other intellectuals, and demonstrated that the massacre's memories would be contested. The Olympics contextualized the disagreement. The PRI needed the Games to reinforce its revolutionary legitimacy, to show that the government had fulfilled the revolution's promises. The students never demanded wholesale changes. Rather, they wanted the government's focus to shift from economics and the Olympics to issues revolving around social justice, such as education and living conditions. In short, the students contested the PRI's view that it had governed according to the revolution's principles. The PRI viewed a compromise as an admission that it had been wrong, an unacceptable position for both the party and Díaz Ordaz. As a result, the party continued to use newspapers, most of which were dependant on the government-owned Productora e Importada de Papel, S.A. (PIPSA), to promote its minimization of the massacre.³⁸ The PRI's desire for control stretched to other forms of literature, in which proxies argued against the student movement.

Luis Spota's novel *La plaza* was published in 1972.³⁹ On the surface it is a revenge drama in which parents of children killed at Tlatelolco kidnap, judge, and execute the culprit, a never-named high public official. It is implied that the victim is Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. While Spota effectively communicated the massacre's horror, especially through inner monologue, a pro-government angle is so apparent that the novel is rumored to have been commissioned by the PRI.⁴⁰ In the final chapter, the novel's pro-PRI angle becomes clear just as the parents are torturing and killing the official. The official asks how leftist political prisoners can be

³⁸ Chappell H. Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002): 33.

³⁹ Luis Spota, *La plaza* (México, DF: Grijalbo, 1972).

⁴⁰ John S. Brushwood, *La novela mexicana (1967-1982)* (México, DF: Editorial Grijalbo, 1984): 40; Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 91.

imprisoned yet still have their thoughts published. Were they not imprisoned for their political ideals?⁴¹ He questions how a student organization, like the Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Tecnológicos (National Federation of Technical Students, FNET), could be taken under the government's wing – the PRI's corporatist umbrella at work – yet still protest against police brutality.⁴² He tries to point out evidence that the student protests were never intended to be peaceful and questions how the government could benefit from mass murder so close to the Olympics.⁴³ *La plaza's* popularity – it was a best-seller in Mexico – showed, at least in part, that the PRI's explanation appealed to some. It can be argued that some people bought the novel simply because Spota, a famous author, wrote it. Yet the novel's politics cannot be ignored, nor can the rumors of a PRI commission.

Luis Echeverría Álvarez became president in 1970. The Secretario de Gobernación under Díaz Ordaz, he was alleged to have played a key role in the Tlatelolco Massacre, a stain that followed him into the presidential office.⁴⁴ Thus his term began under a cloud of suspicion. Suspicion turned to outright hostility after a group of protesting students were killed by the *Halcones*, a paramilitary group associated with the Mexican Army, on 10 June 1971. Two weeks later, on 24 June, *¿Por que?*, a leftist newsmagazine, published a special issue in which it denounced the use of force and drew explicit connections to the Tlatelolco Massacre.⁴⁵ A flood of memories came back, which Echeverría moved quickly to dam. His solution was an *apertura democrática* (democratic opening).

⁴¹ Spota, *La plaza*, 271-72.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 264.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 263 & 291.

⁴⁴ Jefferson Morley, *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008): 269.

⁴⁵ *¿Por que?*, No. 156 (24 June 1971, Extra Edition), Archivo General de la Nación, Galería 7, Ludlow Collection, Caja VIII.

While Díaz Ordaz was conservative, Echeverría made a show of moving to the left, once again reinforcing the PRI's flexibility and desire to appeal to the greatest number of people. He supported Chilean socialism, released students from prisons, added funding to educational programs, and loosened restrictions on artistic, though not political, expression.⁴⁶ Politically, he announced his *apertura democrática* in late 1971, in which he lowered the age qualification to hold congressional office and co-opted student leaders into government posts. Echeverría's minimization of the massacre was motivated by self-preservation: he correctly realized that the main threat to the PRI's position came from intellectuals constantly connecting him to the massacre as Díaz Ordaz's right-hand man.⁴⁷ His insistence on minimization, even after the 10 June massacre, shows just how committed he was to the PRI pole of remembrance. His minimization, unlike Paz's initial reaction, which connected the massacre to Mexican history, characterized how the PRI would act for over forty years.

The PRI's reaction to the massacre reflected how it saw itself. It was both the guardian of the revolution and the father of the nation and, in those two roles, sought to minimize the student movement's relevance and impact. Two ideas informed its attitude. The first was that the movement was an act of youthful rebellion; the second was the desire to forget the massacre, using the Olympics as the year's central event.

The first should be seen within the context of the PRI's patriarchal attitude. Far from being just a governing figure, the president was the nation's father. As such, he was, until 1968,

⁴⁶ See Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998): 99; Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State*, 13.

⁴⁷ Eusebio Flores Ochoa, "Respeto a la Autonomía y Libertad en las Aulas," *La Prensa*, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1848-B, Expediente 6. See also Jacqueline E. Bixler, "Re-membering the Past: Memory-Theatre and Tlatelolco," *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 2 (2002): 122.

an untouchable figure, immune to criticism in the media.⁴⁸ Reflecting the Mexican family unit, the president-father remained above the fray; other government officials could descend into bureaucratic fights, but he could not. He was the judge who kept order. Mexican fathers had a similar role. They were expected to be stoic and, if necessary, hard on their children, for their own benefit. The students, then, were rebellious children and, like any good parent, Díaz Ordaz was willing to tolerate them to a certain degree. He expected this rebellion to be short, and then the students would return to school and finish their studies. When the student protests dragged on for more than three months, and two Díaz Ordaz speeches, the president grew weary. Punishment was necessary. Thus, the massacre was read as a father disciplining his children before the guests arrived. The PRI's patriarchal attitude justified what it saw as a slap on the wrist while the nation's newspapers, like dutiful wives, agreed that what their husband had done was the right thing, even if it hurt. Echeverría's minimization took a different form. Through his *apertura democrática* he suffocated the movement's memories from within the party. Echeverría tried to convince intellectuals that family arguments should stay out of the public eye.

Patriarchy dovetails with the desire to forget. Because Díaz Ordaz saw the punishment as a slap on the wrist, he wanted to move on and focus on the Olympics, in which he would entertain the above-mentioned metaphorical guests. The massacre was an unfortunate event caused by rebellious and violent students. It was not, in the PRI's eyes, a nation-changing event. It was, instead, an act consistent with the PRI's defense of the revolution. The PRI pole of remembrance initially focused on minimization. When Echeverría ascended to the presidency,

⁴⁸ See, for example, Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State*, 280 and Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices*, 191, among others.

an element of conciliation was added through the *apertura democrática*. The latter attempted to shape the collective memory by co-opting intellectuals to ensure that both the massacre and the student movement would be nothing more than revolutionary footnotes. The Olympics came and went without any problems, save John Carlos and Tommy Smith's Black Power salute, and the massacre was effectively minimized, not only during Echeverría's term but also at the end of Díaz Ordaz's term. To the PRI, the massacre was just another event in Mexico's long, twentieth-century revolution.

III. Intellectual outrage

The intellectual pole of remembrance is defined by emotion. Octavio Paz's "México: Olimpiada de 1968" connected the massacre to Mexican history. As his initial reaction, there were some emotional elements because he was distraught over the PRI's actions. Four years later, he set his anger aside and looked at the massacre in a more analytical manner in *The Other Mexico* (1972). Paz's analytical progression was important, though the majority of the intellectual pole turned away from his example in time. A similarly scholarly analysis is found in Carlos Fuentes's essay "La disyuntiva mexicana" (1971).⁴⁹ Fuentes cast himself as the intellectual viewing society with a critical eye. As such, he passed judgment on Mexico's political development and the reasons behind the student movement. Analytically, he provided a bridge between Paz and the intellectual pole's emotional wing, centered on Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska. Her response in *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1975; published in English as *Massacre in Mexico* in 1992) is both the most incendiary and the most representative of the intellectual pole of remembrance. Her anger never diminished, and she continued to promote

⁴⁹ Carlos Fuentes, "La disyuntiva mexicana," in *Tiempo mexicano* (México, DF: Joaquín Mortiz, 1971).

the massacre as a call to arms through the 1990s. *La noche de Tlatelolco* used a documentary narrative in which first-person accounts re-created both the student movement and the massacre. She rejected the academic analysis seen in Paz's and Fuentes's works. These three giants of Mexican literature are representative of different interpretations of the massacre. Where Paz is introspective and encouraged remembrance, Poniatowska is bombastic and emotional. Fuentes lies somewhere in between. The time lag, or lack thereof, between the massacre and the dates of publication is important.⁵⁰ These works highlight the intellectual pole's emotional outrage and set the tone for films and plays of the same era. Memories were constructed around sacrifice, in that students were sacrificed by the army and were thus martyrs for their cause, loosely defined as democracy. Loss was never mentioned by the intellectual pole, thus mourning was denied. The intellectual pole analyzed the massacre in isolation. Its theory of the fourth break divided 1968 from the rest of Mexican history. The intellectual interpretation became the only acceptable version, and Poniatowska's work was its philosophical base.

For Paz, the theme of sacrifice runs throughout his post-massacre works. The poem touches on the ritual sacrifice of youth while suggesting that the historical record cannot be scrubbed clean. In *The Other Mexico*, Paz delves deeper into this theme. He examines the connection between place and identity, which he then uses to discuss history and memory.⁵¹ The Plaza de las Tres Culturas is identified as a sacrificial center. Paz connects the pre-Columbian Aztec ritual sacrifices that took place there with the modern Mexican army's

⁵⁰ Poniatowska's was not published until eight years after the massacre, owing to the political climate.

⁵¹ Paz, *The Other Mexico*. According to French historian Pierre Nora, "[m]emory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events." See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire" (*Representations* 26 (Spring 1989)): 22.

massacre of unarmed students, which he labels a ritual sacrifice in *The Other Mexico*.⁵² In the plaza, the national narrative is not about overcoming adversity but about sacrifice and martyrdom. As a historical space, the plaza connects the three eras of Mexican history and, to a degree, reflects concepts of *mexicanidad*.⁵³ Mexicans have a duality, one that is both the sacrificer and the sacrificed. For Paz, the national narrative illustrates a certain continuity from pre-Columbian to modern times in the way government has ruled: a continuity of authoritarianism. For Paz, the massacre was not a break with the past, as some scholars argue it was, but, rather, it was an event that confirmed patterns of the national narrative. Neither sacrifice nor authoritarianism, he argued, were new. Paz's poem "México: Olimpiada de 1968" used visceral imagery to connect the past with the present. He established the ideas upon which he expanded in *The Other Mexico*. The latter disappointed some on the intellectual side, not only because of its broad ideas but because of its difficult text, which was couched in national myths and abstract thought. Thus his meaning is not always clear, but he felt the only way to understand the massacre was through abstractions. He refused to change, even though leftist protesters wanted him to develop more concrete concepts and become a straight political writer.

Fuentes's essay is far more concrete. Rather than present a Paz-style abstract analysis that jumps back and forth through time, Fuentes connects the student movement and the massacre to the 1910 revolution. He asserts that the youth in 1968 had experienced economic development through the Mexican Economic Miracle but never social justice or political liberty. As a result, he believed it was only right that the students took to the streets to demand those

⁵² Paz, *The Other Mexico*, 78.

⁵³ On *mexicanidad*, see David A. Brading, "Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75-89; and Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo*.

things.⁵⁴ Yet Fuentes still saw the massacre as an event within the revolutionary narrative. The revolution, he believed, owed the students, and Mexicans, social justice if it was to be successful and re-invigorated.⁵⁵ For Fuentes, the massacre's memories needed to be confronted. They needed to be analyzed and dealt with. In that respect, he wanted the memories reconciled with the revolutionary narrative and the PRI's governance. He believed that the PRI's very institutionalization was the problem. The revolution had become stale, and the PRI had lost the agility necessary to govern the country.⁵⁶ In that view, the student movement benefitted the PRI because it showed the party how to reinvigorate itself. He did not call for a new revolution, but wanted the Mexican Revolution revitalized through the student movement. By extension, the revolution's memories had also become stale; therefore, a new revolution was needed. Fuentes denied mourning in his analysis. He had no time to ponder the dead, as Paz did, when there were political changes to be made. His essay is a good representation of the intellectual pole's theories and builds on his other literary works, which deal with national identity and the revolution's failure.⁵⁷ Fuentes positioned himself as the middle ground. He was the intellectual voice of reason that was neither abstract, like Paz, nor bombastic, like Poniatowska.

Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska argues that 1968 is a dividing line in Mexican history, much like the 1910 Revolution and the 1810 Wars of Independence.⁵⁸ Rather than continuity, she sees break. Her book's emotional remembrance, presented in direct opposition

⁵⁴ Fuentes, "La disyuntiva mexicana," 147-50.

⁵⁵ Fuentes was a true believer in the Cuban Revolution, which makes his later co-optation by the PRI all the more surprising. See Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 640-44.

⁵⁶ See Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 56-57 for more on Fuentes.

⁵⁷ Fuentes later joined the PRI and was deemed a sell-out by other intellectuals of his generation. See Roderic A. Camp, *Politics in Mexico: The Decline of Authoritarianism* (3rd Edition; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 30.

⁵⁸ Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco*.

to the PRI's imposed forgetting, reinforces that view.⁵⁹ She advocates no less than the total renovation of the Mexican political system, because the Tlatelolco Massacre was entirely intentional, an example of PRI corruption and arrogance. In her analysis, only the PRI system could have produced the massacre, given that the party was inherently paranoid. Thus her work demonstrated her belief that the PRI no longer spoke for the revolution. For Poniatowska, Díaz Ordaz played the same role previously embodied by Porfirio Díaz, Ferdinand VII, and Hernán Cortés: villains in Mexican history that had to be deposed.⁶⁰ Poniatowska, then, argues that Mexicans must make a clean break with the PRI, as it is representative of a broken system.

Poniatowska's view is voiced through those she quotes. The tone is set at the beginning; Luis González de Alba, a member of the Consejo Nacional de Huelga (National Strike Council, CNH), asserts that "[t]here was one Mexico before the Student Movement, and a different one after 1968. Tlatelolco is a dividing point between these two Mexicos."⁶¹ Many others, typically CNH members, support his view in the text. Poniatowska's work is hardly comprehensive; indeed, it only presents one side. But that is the point. Poniatowska's outrage at the PRI's actions prompted her to write the book. She, rather than Paz or Fuentes, is representative of the intellectual outrage of the 1960s and 1970s. It is on her work that the intellectual pole of remembrance is built. From her example, others emerged to demand social and political reforms. Her documentary narrative style urges hyper-remembrance and direct confrontation.⁶² It became the genre of choice for angry intellectuals, spawning Ramón

⁵⁹ Diana Sorensen, "Tlatelolco 1968: Paz and Poniatowska on Law and Violence," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 18, no. 2 (2002): 319-21.

⁶⁰ David William Foster, "Latin American Documentary Narrative," *PMLA* 99, no.1 (1984): 46.

⁶¹ Luis González de Alba quoted in Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco*, 6.

⁶² Dolly J. Young defines documentary narrative as "works based on documented events or documents and may be purely descriptive of may embody political, social, cultural, or historical analysis." For more, see Dolly J. Young, "Mexican Literary Reactions to Tlatelolco 1968," *Latin American Research Review* 20, no. 2 (1985): 76.

Ramírez's *El movimiento estudiantil de México* (1969), Salvador Hernández's *El PRI y el movimiento estudiantil de 1968* (1971), Carlos Martínez's *Tres instantáneas* (1972), and Juan Miguel de Mora's *Tlatelolco 1968: por fin toda la verdad* (1973), among others.⁶³ An offshoot of documentary narrative is the "cronovela", the first of which was María Luisa Mendoza's *Con él, conmigo, con nosotros tres* (1971).⁶⁴ Mendoza's journalistic instincts shone through her first novel, especially in her graphic recreation of the massacre.⁶⁵

How have those works influenced the development of a collective memory for the massacre? In selectively using real events to prove their points, the authors present a perspective that contrasts with the sanitized government version. For those authors, Mexicans should have rioted in the streets. Writing two decades later, Poniatowska was amazed at the response: "After the massacre, the same October 2, taxis, cyclists, and pedestrians passed by the Plaza of the Three Cultures as if nothing had happened. Life returned to an insulting normality. ... What in another country would have unleashed a civil war disturbed only a few Mexicans."⁶⁶ In a nutshell, that is the intellectual argument. They were outraged not only because the PRI killed innocent Mexicans, but because most Mexicans did not seem to care. The intellectual pole of remembrance attempted to shape the massacre's collective memory in such a way that Mexicans would see it as the fourth break. The problem, as Poniatowska herself noted, was apathy. Or was it? The intellectual pole concentrated on the political outcome and

⁶³ Ramírez, *El movimiento estudiantil de México*; Salvador Hernández, *El PRI y el movimiento estudiantil de 1968* (México, DF: Ediciones El Caballito, 1971); Carlos Martínez, *Tlatelolco: tres instantáneas: violencia azteca, violencia al nacer la Colonia, violencia en pleno siglo XX* (México, DF: Editorial Jus, 1972); Juan Miguel De Mora, *Tlatelolco 68: ¡Por fin toda la verdad!*, 19th ed. México, DF: Edamex, 1984.

⁶⁴ María Luisa Mendoza, *Con él, conmigo, con nosotros tres* (México, DF: Joaquín Mortiz 1971). A "cronovela" is a combination of a chronicle and a novel; evidently, "cronovela" is the term preferred by Mendoza to describe her work. See Brushwood, *La novela mexicana*, 64-65.

⁶⁵ See Young, "Tlatelolco Literature" and Brushwood, *La novela mexicana* for more in-depth analyses of Martínez and Mendoza's works.

⁶⁶ Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," 565-66.

removed the human element. Not even Poniatowska's work, which relied on man-on-the-street style interviews for its material, gave Mexicans a place to mourn. In short, intellectuals denied that mourning was necessary to move on. Instead, they proposed the fourth break and suggested that Mexicans riot in the streets without honestly assessing what had happened on 2 October 1968.

Writers of what became known as Tlatelolco literature, a genre encompassing everything from documentary narrative to newspaper journalism to fiction, included intellectuals, students, CNH members, university officials, historians, journalists, politicians, poets, and novelists.⁶⁷ Not all were pro-student, something Dolly J. Young noted when she listed their reasons for writing: "(a) to give testimony to the event; (b) to denounce and criticize the government and/or government action; (c) to sell books by sensationalizing the events; (d) to analyze and interpret the movement, historically, politically or socially; (e) to legitimate government action; (f) to perpetuate the memory of Tlatelolco."⁶⁸ Notably absent is mourning. Tlatelolco literature exists, for the most part, to reinforce the intellectual pole's concept of the fourth break. Spota's *La plaza* was a best-selling exception. René Avilés Fabila's 1971 novel *El gran solitario del palacio* is representative of the intellectual pole's ideas.⁶⁹ On one level, it analyzes the tragedy of the Tlatelolco Massacre and emphasizes that it must be remembered. On another level, it is a vicious satire of the PRI's system of government. He suggests that the party refuses to abide by the 1917 Constitution's requirement that the president only serve one term, because each PRI president is the same person, altered by cosmetic surgery. The

⁶⁷ Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 47. The Consejo Nacional de Huelga (National Strike Council, CNH) was the student movement's leadership group.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁹ René Avilés Fabila, *El gran solitario del palacio* (México, DF: Patria Editorial, 2001 [1971]).

inevitable result is paranoia at the highest levels which leads to insecurity and, finally, the massacre.⁷⁰ His novel supported the student contention that it was they, the students, who were the true revolutionaries; the PRI had overstepped its bounds and ignored the spirit of both the constitution and the revolution. Avilés Fabila reinforces Poniatowska's call for a new revolution. He sees the massacre in purely political terms and ignores the necessity of grieving. The political aspects appealed to other intellectuals, but the novel failed to explain to ordinary Mexicans why the massacre was a purely political act. From the beginning, then, Tlatelolco literature prevented mourning. As a genre, it prevented understanding and assessment, because it assumed that Mexicans agreed with its interpretation. Poniatowska, Avilés Fabila, and other authors tried to control memories rather than allow mourning. Thus, for intellectuals, like the PRI, control was paramount.

Playwrights, too, produced Tlatelolco literature. Indeed, many plays saw 1968 as a crucial dividing line in Mexican history. Playwrights' initial responses were social protest dramas set in realistic environments with dialogue that contained both overt and covert examinations of Tlatelolco. The generation gap was a crucial element in these plays as most were written from the perspective of the young and railed against mistreatment from parents, teachers, the government, and the larger society.⁷¹ Like documentary narratives, plays brought to the fore the emotional responses authors felt toward Tlatelolco. At the same time, they reinforced the false notion that those emotions would incite the majority of Mexicans to demand change.

⁷⁰ See Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 95; see also Luis Leal, "Native and Foreign Influences in Contemporary Mexican Fiction: A Search for Identity," in *Tradition and Renewal: Essays on Twentieth-Century Latin American Literature and Culture*, ed. Merlin Forster (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975): 126; Paz notes the same idea, in *The Other Mexico*, 103. It is worth noting that Avilés Fabila's novel was published in Argentina, and only a few copies reached Mexico.

⁷¹ See Richard D. Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico, 1967-1985* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991): 6-7 & 30-31.

While plays offer more immediacy than newspapers or books, because the stage demands an urgent, possibly emotional, response, they still could not convince the majority of Mexicans that the massacre was a call for a new revolution.

The first film about Tlatelolco was a documentary directed by Leobardo López Aretche called *El grito* (1968).⁷² Tracing the student movement's evolution and culminating in the Tlatelolco Massacre, López reinforces the intellectual pole's highly emotional response. The movement, as portrayed in the film, reached across socioeconomic classes and was evolutionary, by which I mean the students' demands changed from the original six demands to something along the lines of democracy. In an interview, an injured teacher suggests just such an evolution from his hospital bed.⁷³ Oddly, he tries to shape memories with his portrayal of the movement as a good time, rather than the movement as an important democratic event. Student protesters sing and dance at their rallies while the police or the army look on impassively. This human element is reduced as the film proceeds, replaced by political ideas in tune with the intellectual pole's theories. It is almost as if López made two different films and combined them. Where *El grito* excels is in demonstrating the movement's spectacle. López tries to show that the movement had a wide base of support by including the crowds in the film, though the crowds were alternatively supportive, antagonistic, or simply curious. He suggests that the PRI's heavy-handed response had something to do with the spaces the students were occupying. The army forced the students out of the Zócalo, occupied UNAM, and was particularly quick to remove them from the first Tlatelolco protest, on 27 September 1968. Spaces, especially those associated with significant historical events, were important for the

⁷² *El Grito*, directed by Leobardo López Aretche (1968, México, DF: Filmoteca UNAM, 2008), DVD.

⁷³ "Escena 5," *El grito*, DVD. Directed by Leobardo López Aretche.

PRI. They helped establish a dominant narrative. If the students presented an alternative view within those spaces, the PRI perceived a threat. The film focuses mainly on the movement's leaders, contributing to the CNH's hagiography, and ends abruptly after the massacre. López implies that showing the movement and the massacre are crucial while reactions and grieving are not. The film remains moving, even forty years later, but it, too, denies Mexicans a chance to mourn.

The intellectual conception of the massacre's memory stands in direct opposition to the PRI's conception. The most obvious difference is that intellectuals wanted the massacre remembered and commemorated. They appealed to people's emotions in an effort to gain support for the idea that the massacre was the fourth great dividing line in Mexican history, after the 1910 Revolution, the Wars of Independence (1810-21), and the 1521 conquest of Tenochtitlán. In the intellectual analysis, the massacre existed in isolation, thus they wanted collective memories developed around anger at the PRI, at the political system, and at the lack of social justice. They took hold of the students' notion that it was they, rather than the PRI, who were the true defenders of revolutionary ideals. Newspapers, novels, poems, plays, and films all took that angle from 1968 to 1976. The intellectual pole tried to co-opt collective memories, narratives, and physical spaces to reinforce its ideas while viewing the massacre in isolation. Poniatowska, Avilés Fabila, and López all suggested that the movement and the massacre were *the* crucial events in modern Mexican history. Neither the movement nor the massacre were situated within either the revolutionary narrative or the national narrative, or revolutionary memories, because the intellectual pole saw both as a dividing line. Everything before 1968 was immaterial to the current idea that the movement and the massacre created a

new Mexico. Only Paz connected the massacre to Mexico's past through the themes of sacrifice and authoritarianism. The intellectual pole's emotional response focused on politics and denied mourning.

IV. Conclusion

Neither collective memories nor the national narrative are subject to one or another group's whims. Instead, both evolve out of cooperation or, in this case, contestation. The massacre's memories were contested in such a way that only two small minorities cared deeply about them. The politics of memory are almost always about access: to records, to information, to some degree of truth. The PRI's policy of minimization denied access at every point and, under Echeverría, tried to co-opt intellectuals through his *apertura democrática*. Echeverría continued Díaz Ordaz's policies because the PRI knew no other way. For Díaz Ordaz, admitting a mistake was anathema; instead, he assumed the role of father whose might was right. The PRI thus denied mourning and denied the massacre's place in Mexican history. To be sure, the massacre was an important event, but the PRI's minimization combined with the intellectual pole's emotionality to create an environment where grieving was not permitted.

What happened was that the memories of the massacre became politicized, and mourning was denied. The student movement grew not from popular unrest but from government overreaction to entirely reasonable student demands. The massacre itself was the outsized consequence of government overreaction. The intellectual pole of remembrance, infused by emotion, presented the students as the real revolutionaries. Historian Arthur Liebman wrote hopefully in 1971 that "opposition to the PRI, no longer protected by

revolutionary and democratic myths, became a realistic possibility.”⁷⁴ Yet the party survived, and even thrived, in the 1970s, riding a wave of economic success. Echeverría moved quickly to co-opt dissident intellectuals into the PRI’s corporate structure, thus silencing their voices. The PRI could not deny the massacre, but it could attempt to control its interpretation. It tried to frame the massacre as a defense of Mexican Revolutionary ideals. The students were counter-revolutionaries out to destroy Mexico. Neither the PRI pole nor the intellectual pole changed its position. For intellectuals, “1968 has gone down as a scar, a deeply disruptive break in the apparently smooth landscape of Mexican political life.”⁷⁵ It was a dividing line from the revolution, a call for a *new* revolution. For forty years, the intellectual pole used the same rallying cry, “no se olvide,” but only in a political sense. It encouraged neither honest assessment nor proper mourning. In that sense, the intellectual pole and the PRI pole worked toward the same goal and ignored ordinary Mexicans. The tragedy was that two minorities battled to define the movement and the massacre while ignoring those in the middle.

Memories are a form of power. Both poles of remembrance were in search of that power. Intellectuals sought to shape the memories in such a way that 1968 would be a second Mexican Revolution. The reality is that the student movement never had popular support; therefore, any calls for revolution fell on deaf ears.⁷⁶ It was, of course, an important event in

⁷⁴ Arthur Liebman, “Student Activism in Mexico,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 395 (May 1971): 170.

⁷⁵ Sorensen, “Tlatelolco 1968,” 300.

⁷⁶ The myth of popular support is nothing if not persistent. As of 2008, intellectuals still believed that workers and the general public supported the student movement. An examination of the archives proves otherwise. Although the students were prolific in releasing fliers and holding rallies, there is no evidence that either the workers or the general public supported them. See, for example, “La población reprueba la actitud subversiva adoptada por el estudiantado del D.F.” 29 August 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 521, Expediente 1, p. 533; “Reunión de los miembros de la CTM,” 7 October 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 530, Expediente 1. In fact, they were, in general, viewed as something akin to disobedient children.

terms of the national narrative; in that regard, intellectuals were correct. It was a disruption of the PRI's idyllic image of Mexico under its stewardship. It served notice that some people were very unhappy. But in equating it with the Mexican Revolution, the intellectual pole was incorrect. Therefore, from the beginning, intellectuals overestimated the massacre's importance, both to the national narrative and to the collective memory. The intellectual pole's biggest failure was to view the massacre in isolation. In following Poniatowska's lead, the intellectual pole reacted emotionally and isolated the movement and the massacre from the rest of Mexican history. Unlike Paz, she never connected it to a pattern, nor did she want to. Authors, playwrights, and filmmakers of the intellectual pole wanted to demonstrate how the massacre was the fourth break. They were not interested in reconciling the massacre with the revolutionary or national narratives. The PRI's tactic was one of minimization. It attempted to shape the memories in terms of tragedy with the students at fault. The students forced the government's hand, and the outcome fit with the party's defense of the revolution. Unfortunately, that interpretation, too, is incorrect. Both poles of remembrance failed to realize that they could not shape the collective memory on their own, because neither allowed those involved to mourn.

Grief was overlooked during these first eight years. The intellectual pole sensationalized the massacre in newspapers, literature, plays, and film. The PRI pole minimized it. Those who lived the experience and lost family or friends were not allowed to mourn because of the competition between the poles of remembrance. Control of history and memories was too important to allow grieving; witness the immediate clean-up in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. The PRI needed control to maintain its public image, not only for Mexicans but for the world.

The intellectual pole found no time to mourn in its outrage. Grief, in the main, is private, beyond control by either pole. But it is also public, especially when the reason for grief is so apparent. The PRI literally denied that the massacre had happened by cleaning the blood up and refusing access to the Plaza to mourn. The intellectual pole denied mourners a space, as well, by co-opting the Plaza for political purposes. Consequently, public memories of the massacre faded over time and eventually were all but completely forgotten in the 1970s. That is the subject of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: THE MASSACRE FADES, 1976-1985

“Mexico will be the same before and after Tlatelolco and perhaps will go on being the same – in what is most important – because of Tlatelolco.”

– President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-70)¹

I. Introduction

In the massacre’s immediate aftermath, from 1968-76, two poles of remembrance established themselves. They were diametrically opposed but were, in reality, reflective of the massacre’s impact. As the Díaz Ordaz administration ended and the Echeverría administration began, both poles hoped their interpretation would gain the upper hand. In fact, the PRI pole of remembrance’s minimization policy succeeded in the sense that the massacre was largely forgotten by the general public, eclipsed by other, more pressing concerns. The intellectual pole’s thesis that it was the fourth great break in Mexican history never convinced the public. The battle between the two poles reinforced the idea that remembering and forgetting were two sides of the same coin.²

From 1968 to 1976, Mexico experienced a period of hyper-remembrance when it came to the massacre. The intellectual pole produced an incredible amount of literature, film, and other art and media, all of which encouraged reminiscence and tribute. Yet the massacre was minimized during the Echeverría administration to the point that it was virtually consigned to oblivion from 1976 to 1985. How did that happen? It certainly did not happen because of Echeverría’s *apertura democrática*, which was a failure.³ And it certainly did not happen for lack of effort. Indeed, a good number of books, plays, films, and other media were produced,

¹ From Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s unpublished memoirs. Cited in Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 736.

² Thomas Carlyle, “On History Again” [1833], quoted in Aleida Assmann, “Texts, Traces, and Trash: The Changing Media of Cultural Memory,” *Representations* 56 (1996): 131.

³ See Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 742-44 for an analysis on the relative merits of Echeverría’s policies.

even through 1985. No, the massacre faded from memory for one simple reason: it was not as important to the general public as it was to the two competing poles of remembrance. For the general public, the crucial issue from 1976 to 1985 was economics, not political reform.

The PRI pole of remembrance used the party's corporate apparatus to assert control and to subvert the massacre's memories. José López Portillo (1976-82) and Miguel De la Madrid (1982-88) continued Echeverría's co-optation policy, hoping to muzzle intellectual criticism through the corporate structure. To a large degree, the presidents were successful. Combined with the co-optation policy, the PRI argued the hoped-for economic benefits of the petroleum discoveries, specifically the Reforma fields. Economics, the presidents hoped, would distract Mexicans from the massacre's memory. They were right. The twin policies of co-optation and petroleum-based domestic spending contained the massacre's collective memory. Containment proved to be temporary, because neither policy reconciled the massacre's memory with either the national narrative or the revolutionary narrative. The PRI policy, then, was incomplete because, by failing to place the massacre in the nation's historical context, it left an opening to be exploited in the future. The 1985 earthquakes brought into focus the PRI's ineptitude and renewed calls for political reform. The PRI's flexibility was on display once again as it deftly prevented community groups from achieving any real political power.

At the same time, the intellectual pole continued its policy of hyper-remembrance. Books, poems, plays, and films all recalled the massacre's narrative and reinforced the idea of the fourth break. But the public did not respond. Collective memories not only formed around the massacre but also each successive historical cue: the petroleum discovery, the economic recession, and the earthquakes. Each became a memorial landmark, and the sheer number was

overwhelming.⁴ The problem with the intellectual pole was its failure to show how the fourth break affected the 1970s and 1980s. It saw the massacre in isolation and set it apart from not only the revolution but also events that preceded and followed. Intellectuals failed to update their arguments, preferring to publish the same ideas over and over again, which created a kind of echo chamber. Thus, they never explained why Tlatelolco mattered as Mexico changed, ten and fifteen years later. They relied on the general moral outrage established from 1968-76, which failed to resonate in hard economic times. In what became a pattern, the intellectual pole failed to lead. Playwrights were an exception. As a group, they addressed memories and their impact on the Mexican psyche, a pattern that continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s. In examining the massacre in isolation, the intellectual pole connected it to neither the national narrative nor the revolutionary narrative. Thus intellectuals, in their own way, also undermined the massacre's memory.

II. Presidencies and forgetting

Large segments of the population forgot the massacre from 1976 to 1985 for a variety of reasons. First, the PRI consistently framed the massacre as a revolutionary defense and pursued a policy of non-remembrance. It was not the fourth break; instead, the party viewed the massacre as an unfortunate event in the revolutionary narrative. The PRI's policy of non-remembrance was helped by its refusal to acknowledge what had happened. Second, from 1968 to 1976 the intellectual pole had the most emotional ammunition: Díaz Ordaz, as president, and Echeverría, as the Secretario de Gobernación, had indirectly participated in, and thus were directly connected to, the massacre. When López Portillo won the presidency in

⁴ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 175.

1976, that connection was severed. The third, and perhaps most important, circumstance was economics. From 1976 to 1982, Mexico experienced a petroleum boom and bust that led directly to a prolonged recession lasting for nearly a decade. Although the intellectual pole of remembrance attempted to commemorate and remember the massacre throughout the decade, most Mexicans were concerned with the economy. The PRI's actual policy of forgetting was enhanced by the country's economic conditions.

In 1975, José López Portillo was tapped by Echeverría as the PRI's official candidate, because he appealed to sectors of the party's corporate structure that had been alienated from 1970-76. The PRI was flexible during its time in power, choosing presidential candidates who responded to the nation's changing moods.⁵ Díaz Ordaz, the most conservative president of the twentieth century, was chosen to counter Adolfo López Mateos's liberal policies. Echeverría, following Díaz Ordaz, swung to the left. López Portillo, then, was expected to move to the right and embrace those sectors, mainly large commercial interests, alienated by Echeverría's populist bent.⁶ The most important event, from 1976 to 1982, and one López Portillo attempted to hang his hat on, was the discovery of the Reforma petroleum fields in northern Chiapas and Tabasco. Additional untapped petroleum reserves were discovered in Veracruz and Tamaulipas, but it was the gigantic Reforma field that captured the public's, and the PRI's, imagination.⁷ It is now known that not even state-run corporate entities, like PEMEX, trusted Echeverría by the end of his term; its board of directors voted not to tell Echeverría

⁵ Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico*, 89-126.

⁶ Dale Story, "Policy Cycles in Mexican Presidential Politics," *Latin American Research Review* 20, no. 3 (1985): 149.

⁷ See George A. Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quarentiello, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Oakland, CA: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994): 106 and Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land, A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1989): 230.

about the discovery and instead waited for his successor. López Portillo received the honor of informing the nation about the Reforma fields in 1977.⁸

The fields promised an economic boom similar to the Mexican Economic Miracle. They also promised a way out of the focus on political and social turmoil. The boom harkened back to the PRI's core belief that economics paved the way to the future and that political and social reform would follow.⁹ Unfortunately, López Portillo mismanaged the windfall. Disregarding PEMEX officials' advice that refining take place at the slowest possible rate, the president instead demanded production at a much higher pace. As a result, he spent Mexico into debt and triggered rapid, crushing inflation. (See Table 3.1) Mexico went from a net importer to a net exporter of petroleum, because production rose from 900,000 barrels per day in 1977 to 2.25 million barrels per day in 1980.¹⁰ López Portillo's profligate spending and declining petroleum prices caused an economic slump by the turn of the decade; the slump deteriorated into a full-blown recession by the time his term ended in 1982.¹¹ López Portillo made the idea of a petroleum-fueled second Mexican Economic Miracle the centerpiece of his administration; no other policy came close in terms of relative importance. López Portillo deliberately shaped the collective memory of his administration around the Reforma fields, which combined with the party's association with the revolution to create an image of stability and prosperity. The massacre's importance was reduced within this context and that of the petroleum bust.

⁸ Story, "Policy Cycles," 149.

⁹ Partido de la Revolución Institucional, *El Camino de la Revolución Mexicana* (México, DF: Partido de la Revolución Institucional, 1965): 9.

¹⁰ Cothran, *Political Stability*, 119.

¹¹ See Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico*, 119-20; Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 253; Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 757-60; Judith Gentleman, *Mexican Oil and Dependent Development* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984): 217-36.

Table 3.1: Some Economic Indicators, 1977-82¹²

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Real GDP	3.4%	8.2%	9.2%	8.3%	7.9%	-0.5%
Population	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8
Per capita GDP	0.2	5.1	6.2	5.3	5.0	-3.3
Inflation	30.0	17.0	20.0	29.0	27.0	98.0

The state tried to control memories and histories through co-optation. López Portillo continued to bring dissident intellectuals into the party. He did so because he wanted to control the concrete landmarks of memory, those spaces, gestures, images, and objects that defined the intellectual pole's position.¹³ Building on Echeverría's *apertura democrática*, which resulted in movements like *cine del autor*, López Portillo co-opted intellectuals in an effort to simultaneously invite and silence criticism.¹⁴ He promised incorporated intellectuals, the most prominent of whom was Carlos Fuentes, a voice in government and an avenue for change from within.¹⁵ Intellectuals, and other groups, joined the PRI for two reasons: the opportunity to change things from within and increased personal prestige.¹⁶ Labor unions, like intellectuals and other subordinated groups, were silenced once they were integrated into the party's corporatist structure.¹⁷ Decades of lessons learned by assimilating labor unions influenced the PRI's decision to co-opt intellectuals. By integrating intellectuals, the PRI silenced their criticism

¹² Ramírez, *Mexico's Economic Crisis*, 86.

¹³ Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Pierre Nora, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996): 3.

¹⁴ See Sergio Zermeño, "Intellectuals and the State in the 'Lost Decade'," in *Mexico: Dilemmas of Transition* (Edited by Neil Harvey; London: Institute of Latin American Studies-University of London, 1993): 281-82 & 284; see also Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985): 101.

¹⁵ Roderic A. Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985): 219.

¹⁶ Sergio Zermeño, "Intellectuals and the State in the 'Lost Decade'", 282.

¹⁷ See, for example: "Mitin de los miembros de la Unión de Usuarios de Servicios Públicos Labor," 26 August 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 519, Expediente 4, p. 330; "Reunión de los miembros de la CTM," 7 October 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 530, Expediente 1; "Exhortación a los padres de familia," *Últimas Noticias*, 3 October 1968, p. 1 & 5.

and prevented their agitation while sowing dissent within the intellectual pole. Those who remained outside the PRI accused Fuentes and others of being false revolutionaries.¹⁸ The PRI relied on its image as revolutionary protector and its corporate structure to focus on economics, rather than the massacre.

Co-optation had the effect of reinforcing the PRI pole of remembrance. Cleverly, the state “made room for the militants and the intellectual elite to turn their interpretation into the official history of the movement.”¹⁹ In accepting the party’s invitation to write and analyze from within, intellectuals cut their pole of remembrance off at the knees. Fuentes was one example. Another was Héctor Aguilar Camín, who gave the newsmagazine *Nexos* over to the PRI regime, especially during the Salinas administration (1988-94). During the 1992 textbook fight, Aguilar Camín and historian Enrique Florescano battled allegations that they were writing a pro-Salinas version of Mexican history.²⁰ Thus, rather than embracing their roles as social critics, intellectuals built up the state from within, actually reinforcing the PRI point-of-view.²¹ Other intellectuals, notably Jorge G. Castañeda, Enrique Krauze, Octavio Paz, and Sergio Zermeño, remained outside the PRI’s corporate umbrella and criticized the state, fulfilling the role Krauze envisioned for Mexican intellectuals. The party had shielded itself by allowing intellectuals to attack it, thus creating the perception that the memory of the massacre had been dealt with.

¹⁸ Camp, *Politics in Mexico*, 30. Recall that the student movement framed itself as revolutionary while the PRI was perceived as stale. See the Introduction for a more thorough explanation.

¹⁹ Braun, “Protests of Engagement,” 546.

²⁰ See Chapter 5 for more on the 1992 textbook fight.

²¹ Enrique Krauze worried that Mexican intellectuals would abandon their public roles by taking the economic security offered by the PRI. See Enrique Krauze, “Los templos de la cultura,” in *Los intelectuales y el poder en México: Memorias de la VI Conferencia de Historiadores Mexicanos y Estadounidenses*, eds. Roderic A. Camp, Charles A. Hale, and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (México, DF: El Colegio de México, 1991): 595-605.

López Portillo reinforced the notion that he was listening to the intellectual pole of remembrance by approving an actual political opening. In 1977, he continued one of Echeverría's policies by increasing opposition presence in the Chamber of Deputies through a reduction of the required percentage of the national vote received from 2.5% to 1.5%. He also increased the number of seats from three-hundred to four-hundred, with the extra one-hundred seats reserved for the opposition.²² López Portillo acted in response to continued calls for political opening; he hoped an augmented opposition presence would quiet those calls. Expanded financial support and media exposure resulted in greater opposition recognition. Politics and economics converged in his last year in office. In 1982, he devalued the peso, nationalized banks, and enforced new rules on exchange controls, much to the dismay of the private sector.²³ The consequences were immediate. In the 1982 presidential election, the PRI received just 70% of the vote, its lowest total since 1929, in part because López Portillo's reforms allowed people to express their dissatisfaction.²⁴ It is important to note that the northern businessmen were the unhappiest group, resulting in large gains for the PAN. The distressingly low result, from the PRI's perspective, demonstrated the reform's effectiveness far beyond what either López Portillo or the party wanted.²⁵

²² Silvia Gómez Tagle, "Electoral Reform and the Party System, 1977-90," in *Mexico: Dilemmas of Transition*, ed. Neil Harvey (London: Institute of Latin American Studies-University of London, 1993): 64-90. See also Cothran, *Political Stability*, Chapter 4. Joseph L. Klesner wrote that the PRI made the electoral reforms because the left was not perceived as a threat. What the party failed to realize was the threat from the right. See Joseph L. Klesner, "Modernization, Economic Crisis, and Electoral Alignment in Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 193. The PRI was not nearly as tolerant when it came to newspapers and magazines. To be sure, the party tolerated some freedom of the press because it provided an "important safety valve for intellectuals and dissidents who might otherwise pursue more genuinely revolutionary alternatives". When the government got nervous, it did not hesitate to use repression, as in the cases of *Por Qué?* in 1974 and *Excélsior* in 1976. See Dale Story, *The Mexican Ruling Party*, 105-16.

²³ Story, "Policy Cycles", 150.

²⁴ Cothran, *Political Stability*, 118.

²⁵ It was distressingly low because the PRI typically received 80% to 90% of the vote in presidential elections.

Elaine Carey suggests that the massacre ensured “that politicized Mexican students continued to agitate for changes at the university, in politics, and in society.”²⁶ In the first two cases, she is probably overstating the students’ importance. Universities have long been hotbeds of political activity, but the vast majority left their radical politics behind at graduation.²⁷ Politically, most of the political prisoners released during the Echeverría administration advocated gradual change through elections. Most of them gravitated to fringe parties like the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) and the Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (PMT). Some formed non-violent but clandestine and Maoist social movements, such as the Política Popular and the Organización Regional Compañero. She does not take into account those intellectuals, like Carlos Fuentes, who joined the PRI and whose voices were subsumed by the PRI pole of remembrance.²⁸ Others, such as Krauze, Castañeda, and Zermeño, constituted the traditional historiography’s true revolutionaries. Still others began an armed rebellion, suppressed by the dirty war during the 1970s.²⁹ The dirty war, which has barely been acknowledged, was a product of a “restive society and an increasingly anachronistic and repressive ruling system.”³⁰ A good number of armed radical movements appeared in the 1970s after the massacre, including the Movimiento Acción Revolucionario (MAR), the Comandos Lacandones, the Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre, and the Frente Urbano Zapatista (FUZ). Like shooting stars, they appeared briefly and were largely gone by 1976, extinguished by

²⁶ Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices*, 175.

²⁷ See Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State*.

²⁸ See Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, 66-94.

²⁹ Zermeño, “Intellectuals and the State in the ‘Lost Decade’,” 279-80. See also Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, 101-02.

³⁰ Alberto Ulloa Bornemann, *Surviving Mexico’s Dirty War: A Political Prisoner’s Memoir*, eds. and trans. Arthur Schmidt and Aurora Camacho de Schmidt (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007): 4. It is worth noting that the words used to describe the conditions are very similar to those used for the Tlatelolco Massacre.

government repression and their own suicidal tactics.³¹ Neither armed rebellion nor continued political agitation resulted in any significant changes during the López Portillo administration. The massacre receded from view and was nearly totally forgotten during the rapid petroleum boom and bust.

López Portillo's successor, Miguel De la Madrid, became the president of Mexico during an extraordinary economic crisis. Just prior to leaving office, López Portillo devalued the peso, adding one more problem to rising inflation, huge foreign debt, and a shrinking economy.³² It is no wonder that Tlatelolco faded from the popular imagination. To be sure, the small hard core of ex-activists still published and commemorated the massacre and still demanded political changes; but their calls fell on deaf ears as De la Madrid first dealt with the collapsing economy and then, in 1985, a series of devastating earthquakes in Mexico City.

De la Madrid's economic policies focused on austerity. Using his honeymoon period to its full effect, he promised to meet debt obligations, reduce public spending, and sell off some state firms, policies that were accepted surprisingly well throughout the country.³³ His priority was the economy, yet he still found time for vanity projects. The PRI realized, correctly, that its appeal to the general public was fading. Hoping to reverse the trend, it created new agencies, such as one to deal with extreme poverty, amid great fanfare. It was headed by prominent politicians and intellectuals in another example of how the PRI co-opted groups into its organization. Additionally, while health and social security budgets were slashed by 30%, the anti-poverty agency had only 1% of its budget cut.³⁴ Selective cuts also served a political

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9-10 & 204.

³² Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico*, 120; see also Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 762-69.

³³ Story, "Policy Cycles", 144.

³⁴ Zermeño, "Intellectuals and the State in the 'Lost Decade'," 286.

purpose. De la Madrid ensured that the party's left wing was not forgotten, continuing a policy thread from Echeverría and López Portillo. In so doing, he temporarily prevented the kind of split that eventually happened in 1988.³⁵

De la Madrid's austerity program could not reign in the rampant inflation, averaging nearly 100% per year from 1983. (See Table 3.2) Inflation, combined with rising interest rates, an overvalued peso, deteriorating balance of payments, and collapsing petroleum prices caused massive capital flight. De la Madrid's policies were ineffective, and recovery was slow. People noticed, and their opinion of the PRI changed. As early as 1983 people voted in significant numbers for other parties. The conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) was the initial beneficiary. In 1983, the PAN claimed important electoral victories in Chihuahua, its home state. The PRI's inept response to the Mexico City earthquakes only increased the PAN's appeal; in 1986, polls showed that the PAN was favored by a three-to-one margin and well on its way to winning the governorship of Chihuahua. The PRI believed that such a result would cause irreparable damage and used its "electoral alchemy" to ensure its candidate won.³⁶ It is important to note that it was not the student movement that caused widespread dissatisfaction – it was economics. The student movement cannot be considered the trigger for all post-1968 anti-PRI movements, because there were other factors at work, which the traditional historiography sometimes forgets.

³⁵ Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy*, 126. Cothran argues that by keeping the left engaged with the party's general policies, De la Madrid prevented it from splintering off. He also argues that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's split in 1987-88 is a direct result of left-wing discontent over the party's direction.

³⁶ Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 764-66. The term "electoral alchemy" is a euphemism for electoral fraud.

Table 3.2: Dollar Value of the Peso and Mexico’s Inflation Rate³⁷

	Average Peso to Dollar	Devaluation (%)	Average Yearly CPI Increase (Inflation, %)
1980	22.95	0.6	26.4
1981	24.51	6.4	27.9
1982	56.40	56.5	58.9
1983	150.30	65.5	101.8
1984	185.19	18.8	65.5
1985	310.17	40.3	57.7
1986	637.38	51.4	86.2
1987	1405.80	54.7	131.8
1988	2290.00	38.1	114.4

On 19 and 20 September 1985, Mexico City was rocked by a series of devastating earthquakes in its southern zone. Registering magnitude 8.1 on the Richter Scale, the earthquakes caused over 10,000 deaths and damaged nearly three thousand buildings.³⁸

President De la Madrid did not make a public appearance until late on 20 September, when he declared a mourning period of three days. His hesitancy to appear in public, and his well-groomed appearance when he finally did, reinforced the notion that he was out of touch with Mexican reality; his actions were a massive symbolic failure.³⁹ PRI arrogance compounded his missteps when the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) declared that it would not accept foreign aid, especially from the United States.

Some scholars see the earthquake as a catalyst for the organization of community groups. Paul L. Haber writes that “new movement organizations emerged and grew at rates

³⁷ James W. Wilkie, ed., *Society and Economy in Mexico* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1990): 12.

³⁸ The newspaper *El Universal* reported 300,000 people were left homeless and over 2,000 dead in its 22 and 23 September 1985 editions.

³⁹ Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy*, 219; Paul L. Haber, *Power From Experience: Urban Popular Movements in late Twentieth-century Mexico* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006): 74.

that amazed everyone” including the organizers and the PRI.⁴⁰ Community leaders worked around the clock to clean up affected areas while the PRI offered only platitudes, urging people to stay in their houses via the media. The contrast between the PRI’s inaction and the community’s action could not be more plain.⁴¹ The end result was the Coordinadora Unica de Damnificados (United Coordinating Committee of Earthquake Victims, CUD), which formed in October 1985 with the participation of twenty-seven organizations and twenty affiliates.⁴² What began as an organization focused on earthquake victims evolved into the Asamblea de Barrios (AB) in April 1987, which advocated more generally on behalf of the poor.⁴³ How effective were those organizations? Certainly they were responsible for some changes, such as De la Madrid’s expropriation of over 4,000 houses in October 1985.⁴⁴ In October 1985, the Comisión de Reconstrucción del Distrito Federal decided, in conjunction with community groups, to expropriate 4,332 houses in three central delegations, Cuauhtémoc, Venustiano Carranza, and Gustavo A. Madero, in order to ensure that those who had lived there before the earthquakes did not lose their property. It was a triumph of the popular classes over the political classes.⁴⁵ The AB also played a role in De la Madrid’s ambitious National Housing Program of 1987, which was to benefit 1.7 million people in the capital.⁴⁶ The AB succeeded

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴¹ “El presidente: una imagen distante,” *Unomásuno*, 19 September 1985, p. 6. See also Heberto Castillo, “El terremoto pone en exhibición las virtudes y vicios de la vida nacional,” *Proceso* 465 (30 September 1985): 16-25. Castillo’s article outlines both the good and the bad things that happened, highlighting neighborhood co-operation and the PRI’s failures.

⁴² Jaime Tamayo, “Neoliberalism Encounters Neocardenismo,” in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, eds. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990): 122; Haber, *Power from Experience*, 75.

⁴³ Haber, *Power from Experience*, 192, n. 18. The AB still exists and participated in the 2008 commemoration.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁵ Alicia Ziccardi, “Política de vivienda para un espacio destruido,” *Revista mexicana de sociología* 48, no. 2 (1986): 172-74.

⁴⁶ Haber, *Power from Experience*, 193. The program was somewhat successful – by 1994, the AB claimed to have overseen the construction of 46,000 housing units in and around Mexico City – but AB leaders accused the PRI of

because it applied pressure to reformists within the PRI and because it stayed outside the PRI's corporate umbrella. It also succeeded because it had limited goals, which included advocating on behalf of the urban poor. It never aspired to hold political office thus the PRI never saw it as a threat. Consequently, Mexico City's regent, a man appointed by the president, felt he could appease the AB to certain degrees without any significant loss of political power or influence. De la Madrid's post-earthquake policies were a catalyst for the CUD's and the AB's emergence. There is little evidence to prove that the Tlatelolco Massacre was a stimulus for or an influence on the CUD and the AB.⁴⁷

Historian Eric Zolov suggests that "[i]f 1968 had severely damaged the PRI's political credibility, 1982 (when Mexican Finance Secretary Silva Herzog informed the US Treasury Department that there was no money left to continue payment on the national debt) dealt an important blow to the PRI's economic credibility."⁴⁸ In drawing a straight line from 1968 to 1985, Zolov ignores all the other events and, most importantly, the forgetting, that happened. The PRI spent decades building up its political, social, and economic credibility in an effort to prove that it had the right to rule in the revolution's name. In the traditional historiography's view, the massacre was the event that started the decline – which was possible – and the massacre was the event which served as the rallying cry for all future protests, which was impossible. As demonstrated by the CUD and the AB, protests took on more immediate

mishandling some of the funds destined for the program. Haber also notes that the program's budget was nearly always too low. See also Haber, *Power from Experience*, 193-94 & 246-49.

⁴⁷ In an unsigned article in *Proceso* in 1985, the sub-headline "Otra noche de Tlatelolco" suggests a connection between the earthquakes and the massacre. The author relied on common memories, established in Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco*, to connect the two events rather than substance. In the section, the author wrote that residents suffered again because their homes were destroyed. In the end, the author did not explicitly connect the two, but did try to connect them on a subconscious level. See "La primera noche, tras el temblor, en zonas donde la tragedia fue mayor," *Proceso* 464 (23 September 1985): 13.

⁴⁸ Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 253.

concerns. Neither the CUD nor the AB connected their movements with Tlatelolco; instead, they focused on what had happened during the 1980s: a severe economic decline, rapid inflation, and homelessness caused by the earthquakes.

The Tlatelolco Massacre slipped from the national consciousness from 1976-85. Echeverría attempted to placate activists by giving them a place within the PRI to express their point-of-view. Both López Portillo and De la Madrid focused on pressing economic issues. Neither could bridge the gap between the left and right wings of the party, a gap that culminated with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's split in 1987. Even then, neither side of the PRI really pushed for remembrance of the massacre.⁴⁹ Instead, they argued for and against economic policies, especially in the aftermath of the petroleum boom and bust, and for and against the party's internal democratization.⁵⁰ Social justice, as a political platform, emerged only after the 1985 earthquakes, despite the best efforts of some intellectuals for the nearly two decades prior.⁵¹ Still, the connection to Tlatelolco only existed in the minds of those producing the traditional historiography. They felt that their warnings had been vindicated and that social justice would be the primary concern for the PRI and for Mexicans in general. In truth, the 1985 movement was far different from the 1968 movement, not only in actors but in causes.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 4.

⁵⁰ I chose the term social justice because that is how the intellectual pole of remembrance saw the student struggle. It believed that the students were fighting for both democratic reforms and social improvements, defined most often as social justice. I have used the term because I feel it provides a succinct contrast to the economic-based policies that the PRI promoted during the 1980s.

⁵¹ Sócrates Campos Lemus, a veteran of the 1968 movement, argued that commemorations of the 1968 massacre and the 1971 shooting had to focus on social justice. "La única fuente de riqueza es el trabajo, sera éste el que limite la inflación y que el que garantice que el pueblo alcance las metas de la JUSTICIA SOCIAL y por tanto que su conciencia desarrollo para que con su participación realmente garantice que en México continúe la DEMOCRACIA. Hacer otra cosa es abrir el camino AL GOLPE MILITAR Y A LA REPRESIÓN." *Diario de México*, 8 June 1977, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1828-A, Expediente 4.

III. Formation of memories

I have argued that both poles of remembrance care about the massacre, but for different reasons. The PRI pole of remembrance cared enough to go to great lengths to urge that the massacre be forgotten. The intellectual pole, on the other hand, went to great lengths to ensure it was remembered; it had to, because to reject or forget the massacre was to reject or forget the fourth major break in Mexican history. Thus, throughout the López Portillo and De la Madrid presidencies, the massacre remained important to a small group advocating its remembrance and its place in the national narrative. Intellectuals published books and poems, released films, wrote newspaper articles, and put on plays in an effort to keep the massacre in the public eye. Public commemoration, too, became crucial. Demonstrations took place every 2 October in the hope that the public would reinforce the intellectual pole with physical support. But, aside from a small group of intellectuals, the commemorations were sparsely attended and unimportant. In the face of economic upheaval, the massacre faded from memory.

After the initial flurry of Tlatelolco literature, production dropped off in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Part of the reason is because Echeverría and López Portillo co-opted intellectuals into the PRI's corporate structure after they correctly realized that the constant reminders of the massacre could hurt them politically.⁵² Second-wave novels, those of the late 1970s, stepped back from the initial emotional response to take on larger themes of political opening and social justice. They were marked by less emotion, which Young argues would have been hard to recapture a decade later, and had less impact.⁵³ Tlatelolco literature did not have

⁵² Bixler, "Re-membering the Past," 122.

⁵³ Young, "Mexican Literary Reactions to Tlatelolco 1968," 79.

the impact its authors hoped. In fact, after 1979, Tlatelolco becomes downright rare in literature. As a result, that avenue of remembrance was short.

Three novels published in the late 1970s are instructive. The first, Fernando Del Paso's *Palinuro de México* (1977), connects the Mexican Revolution to the 1968 student movement.⁵⁴ The novel is a total novel and actively attempts to "summarize the entire western [literary] tradition."⁵⁵ Palinuro, the protagonist, is a twenty-year-old medical student from Mexico City, but other than that details remain vague. His exact appearance is never described, perhaps because what he looks like is not important. What is important is that he "stands for Mexican youth as a conjunctural moment in the nation's history."⁵⁶ Palinuro and his friends are obsessed with the human body and politics. His first love, his cousin Estefanía, is part of his corporeal obsession. The obsession with politics opens the door to a discussion of Tlatelolco and, eventually, to Palinuro's death at the hands of the army on the night of 27-28 August 1968. Palinuro's involvement in the student movement allows Del Paso to reinforce the intellectual position that the massacre was the fourth break in Mexican history. A crucial difference between Del Paso and other authors is that he turned the massacre into a black comedy because Palinuro always seemed somewhat inept. Although that trope works most of the time, its effectiveness is reduced when the students' actions are called heroic.⁵⁷ It is a jarring change, from grotesque comedy to heroic actions, as if Del Paso lost his nerve. Del Paso gives the student movement too much importance, which is why the novel did not resonate with the

⁵⁴ Fernando Del Paso, *Palinuro de México* (México, DF: Plaza y Janes, 1977).

⁵⁵ Robin W. Fiddian, *The Novels of Fernando del Paso* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000): 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁷ For a useful gendered analysis of the novel, see Cynthia Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel, 1968-1988: Beyond the Pyramid* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993): 76. She writes: "The scenes in which Palinuro and the other characters brave the tanks as bullfighters are less affecting than they might be. Perhaps this is partially because it is here that Del Paso extols the students' heroism, conceived in traditional terms of male valor that seems anachronistic to readers at the beginning of the 1990s".

general public. Del Paso's support of the intellectual pole attempted to turn personal memories into collective memories, an off-putting stance to most Mexicans. The novel represents an intellectual attempt to define not only the massacre's space but its memories. Yet the novel allowed neither memories nor mourning and, as a result, it was ignored.

The second, Gonzalo Martré's *Los símbolos transparentes* (1978), revolves entirely around the massacre, using it as a fulcrum to examine its roots and its consequences.⁵⁸ In his novel, the students are a heterogeneous group brought together by revolutionary and democratic ideals; in the end, some of them die for those ideals. His detailed descriptions of the violence are almost as unsettling as his description of the PRI's corruption. In a parallel narrative thread, Marté followed the ruthless machinations of a presidential hopeful before Díaz Ordaz is elected. As the narrative jumps back and forth through time, it becomes clear that the state has rotted like a dead tree. The students are not immune. The PRI co-opts some survivors into the party while others become selfish and hedonistic.⁵⁹ Forgetting is a crucial theme. The students forget the movement's ideals, and so does the general public. Not even the novel's status as a best seller (13,000 copies) could change that.⁶⁰ Like Del Paso, Martré valorizes the student movement, but unlike Del Paso, he realizes it was short-lived. Its impact was not felt in a straight line, because in the massacre's aftermath the participants went in different political and social directions. Martré's work occupies the same space as Fuentes's "La disyuntiva mexicana" in that it is a middle ground. It shows the movement's idealism and how its ideals were crushed.

⁵⁸ Gonzalo Martré, *Los símbolos transparentes* (México, DF: V Siglos, 1978).

⁵⁹ Brushwood, *La novela mexicana*, 82 and Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 92.

⁶⁰ Young, "Mexican Literary Reactions," 79.

The third, *Si muero lejos de ti* (1979) by Jorge Aguilar Mora, is the first novel to look at the other side: the *granaderos* who brutally repressed the students throughout the summer of 1968.⁶¹ Aguilar Mora weaves together two narrative strands. The first involves Yoris, Tosca, and Rasqui, three friends dealing with life in Mexico City. It is a plot firmly grounded in normality, as it revolves around the ups and downs of romantic love. The second concerns Yoris's involvement with a group of men who serve a corrupt government official, a thinly disguised metaphor for the *granaderos*. They are portrayed as a childlike, exceptionally loyal group even when they are cruelly mistreated. They are, in Aguilar Mora's hands, a vehicle for understanding the state's ideology. In effect, the massacre is the root of the ideological crisis that the state could not negotiate; it prevented the state from establishing a consensus regarding the "definition and trajectory of the Mexican national community."⁶² In a way, the *granaderos* and their actions reflect a certain conception of *mexicanidad*, in that Mexicans are expected to be passive. The systematic abuse of power, chronicled through the official's actions, triggered both the movement and the massacre. It also prevented the formation of a national community. Yoris is on a perpetual search for others like him and, through him, Aguilar Mora discusses *mexicanidad*. Yoris discovers that there is no truth, only an "unpredictable, destructive, determinant force" that seeks its own reproduction.⁶³ In short, the PRI acted the way it did out of self-preservation. It cannot be a unifying force, something that will develop community or *mexicanidad*, because it does not care to. Instead, it relies upon certain ideas, such as the Mexican Revolution or the Mexican Economic Miracle, to show why the party

⁶¹ Jorge Aguilar Mora, *Si muero lejos de ti* (México, DF: Joaquín Mortiz, 1979).

⁶² Ryan F. Long, *Fictions of Totality: The Mexican Novel, 1968, and the National-Popular State* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008): 120 and 127.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 141.

deserved to rule. In a certain sense, Aguilar Mora echoes Paz by denouncing the PRI's governance. In another, he reinforces the intellectual pole by defining 1968 as a break in Mexican history. In contrast to Del Paso and Martré, Aguilar Mora does not cast the students as heroes; instead they are actors in a larger play. Aguilar Mora's work demonstrates that all affected groups, not just students, deserve recognition as true Mexicans. His idea of *mexicanidad* is inclusive rather than exclusive. Despite their best attempts to ensure that the massacre was remembered, novelists failed, and the Tlatelolco novel disappeared in the 1980s. Although all three were critically praised, only Martré's work sold on the level of Luis Spota's *La plaza*.⁶⁴ In the end, the public simply did not respond to Tlatelolco novels, even if intellectuals did.

Still, numerous intellectuals continued to see Tlatelolco as not only important for Mexico as a whole but also for Mexican literature. Carlos Monsiváis summarized the intellectual position, and the reason for Tlatelolco's isolation, when he wrote that "nothing could weaken the fact that 2 October acquired another meaning. A repressive act revealed the truth of the situation ... 1968 ... was a crucial year."⁶⁵ Why did he see it that way? Simply put, because he wanted to believe that the students had died for something profound, something as profound as the Mexican Revolution. Novels, such as *Palinuro de México* and *Los símbolos transparentes*, attempted to show that the student movement was important in Mexico's national narrative. While the former venerated the student movement, the latter showed how the students reacted to the PRI's policy of minimization. Even then, the general public did not embrace the intellectual pole. The suggestion, by intellectuals, that Tlatelolco was very important to a large

⁶⁴ Of all the era's Tlatelolco novels, only Martré's was a best-seller (13,000 copies). See Young, "Mexican Literary Reactions," 79.

⁶⁵ Carlos Monsiváis, *Días de guardar* (México, DF: Ediciones Asociados, 1970): 17. Emphasis mine.

number of people and that Mexicans wanted or needed to be continuously reminded of it was erroneous.⁶⁶ Social justice returned in the form of re-building houses and advocating for the poor in the aftermath of the 1985 earthquakes; the massacre correspondingly faded from view. Only Tlatelolco veterans drew a straight line from 1968 to 1985.

Magazines offer another form of Tlatelolco literature. In the September 1978 edition of *Nexos*, a Mexican magazine similar to *Time* in the United States, the editors invited commentary about the student movement's and the massacre's importance.⁶⁷ Three well-known authors contributed essays that reinforced the intellectual point-of-view. Gilberto Guevara Niebla, Sergio Zermeño, and Carlos Monsiváis approached the movement and the massacre from different angles. Of the three, only Zermeño connected the massacre to the past in the Paz tradition. Both Guevara Niebla and Monsiváis took a more Poniatowska-esque approach and viewed the massacre in isolation and as a call to arms.

Guevara Niebla focused on what he called "la primera autonomía", reflected in the demonstration on 5 August 1968.⁶⁸ He declared that

That gathering was decisive for the consolidation of the student movement of 1968. With it, students proved their ability to organize themselves and demanded acknowledgment as an autonomous political force, as at the same time they tested the political limits of the regime. As a matter of fact, on 5 August, with the brief walk from Zacatenco to the Casco [de Santo Tomás], students achieved the political victory that would determine the democratic journey for the following weeks.⁶⁹

There were no changes in his assumptions about the movement even ten years later; the student movement continued to be romanticized by one of its participants. Guevara Niebla's recollections show that, rather than dealing with the reality of the situation, he wanted the

⁶⁶ Young, "Mexican Literary Reactions to Tlatelolco 1968," 79 and Brushwood, *La novela mexicana*, 28.

⁶⁷ *Nexos* eventually became a full-throated PRI organ.

⁶⁸ "La primera autonomía" is "The first autonomy."

⁶⁹ Gilberto Guevara Niebla, "La primera autonomía: 5 de agosto de 1968," *Nexos* 1, No. 9 (September 1978): 10.

students to be perceived as both revolutionaries and martyrs. Zermeño makes a similar argument. He frames the student movement within the context of the 1917 Constitution, which contained the Mexican Revolution's ideals, thus attaching the movement to the revolution. He suggests that the students demonstrated within the Constitution's bounds and created a pole of opposition that coalesced around the professional middle class.⁷⁰ There is, however, abundant evidence that the students' overtures to other groups were constantly rejected.⁷¹ In elevating the massacre to something it was not, the authors reinforced the intellectual pole's attempts to build the massacre into something it never was. Inadvertently, they turned people off from commemorating it by preaching about its importance.

Interviews became a common method to shape the collective memory of the massacre in the later 1970s. In the above-mentioned issue of *Nexos*, Carlos Monsiváis returned to his journalist roots and interviewed a number of people involved with both sides of the student movement. Not surprisingly, there were no new insights as each played his or her role. The unnamed government official was still anti-student, and the former activist was unrepentant, viewing the movement as a key historical moment. Monsiváis's conclusion is in line with the intellectual vision of Tlatelolco: it was the fourth major break in Mexico's history. Similarly, Héctor Aguilar Camín's article "1968, un testimonio gráfico" uses interviews to show how participants either joined the establishment – beginning with Echeverría's *apertura*

⁷⁰ Sergio Zermeño, "1968: Los demócratas primitivos," *Nexos* 1, No. 9 (September 1978): 16-19.

⁷¹ A student flyer dated 12 August 1968 shows the students asking for outside support (Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 531, Expediente 1, p. 181-82). The students were denied support by various groups, as demonstrated in "Asamblea del PAN," 9 October 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 530, Expediente 3; "Ratificaron los líderes de la FSTSE su apoyo a la política del gobierno," *Excélsior*, 21 September 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Ludlow Collection, Caja XI, Expediente 17.

democrática – or rejected it to work closely with common people.⁷² The memories of those involved, then, were still irreconcilable. Each pole of remembrance believed its own story and could not reconcile the opposing view, preventing the majority of Mexicans from confronting and dealing with their own memories of the massacre. Interestingly, the only person Monsiváis interviewed who was willing to move on was the mother of a protester killed at Tlatelolco, but she received no help from either of the poles of remembrance.⁷³

Perhaps novels and magazines were not the best vehicles for analysis. Far more popular were comic books with a monthly circulation of just over two million in 1980. In contrast, the average novel sold just 3,000 copies, and print runs of 10,000 were extraordinary.⁷⁴ Comic books had several advantages over novels: they were cheap, illustrated, available everywhere, and portable. Like newspapers, comic books were bought and passed on, sometimes up to a dozen times. Newspapers, with a total circulation of 8.66 million in 1980, appear to be the only print media to outsell comic books; but even newspapers were read less when pass-along rates are taken into account.⁷⁵ Although comic books were less censored, publishing companies were subject to the same carrot-and-stick approach used against newspapers.⁷⁶ Consequently, there was really no safe way to criticize the state, even for famous writers like Eduardo del Río García, better known by his *nom de plume*, Rius.⁷⁷ Born in Michoacán, Rius began drawing caricatures for the humor magazine *Ja-já* in 1955. Since then, he has been published in

⁷² Héctor Aguilar Camín, “1968, un testimonio gráfico,” *La cultura en México* (supplement of *Siempre!*) 876 (13 December 1978): vi.

⁷³ Unnamed mother interviewed by Carlos Monsiváis, “1968: Perfiles, claves, silencios, alteraciones,” *Nexos* 1, no. 9 (September 1978): 3.

⁷⁴ That Martré’s work sold 13,000 copies in six months is remarkable.

⁷⁵ Harold E. Hinds and Charles M. Tatum, *Not Just for Children: The Mexican Comic Book in the Late 1960s and 1970s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992): 6.

⁷⁶ Most newspapers and magazines were dependent on the government-owned Productora e Importada de Papel, S.A. (PIPSA) for newsprint and paper. See Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate* for more.

⁷⁷ Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies*, 157.

Siempre!, *Proceso*, *El Universal*, *La Jornada*, and many more magazines and newspapers. An unabashed socialist, he subtly but openly criticized the government, its neoliberal policies, and the Catholic Church in his most famous comic, *Los supermachos*. When he was forced to end the story in 1967, he began *Los agachados* which, during its life from 1968 to 1991, discussed everything from politics to religion to music to philosophy to soccer all while maintaining high artistic standards. He was also “critical of the false heroics of radical students who prefer dramatic assaults on banks to careful political organizing.”⁷⁸ Thus he criticized not only those students who turned to violence during the dirty war but also those of the 1968 movement. Rius set himself apart from other Tlatelolco literature with that criticism. In contrast to Del Paso and Martré, he did not venerate the students or their movement, though he did lament the massacre in a special edition of *Los agachados*.⁷⁹ He presented a challenge to the traditional historiographical interpretation.

Tlatelolco literature took on a very preachy tone which conflicted with how Mexicans preferred to see themselves and their country. Mexicans preferred the image of a modern nation dealing with modern problems: the petroleum boom and bust, the re-construction of the capital city, and the persistent debt crisis, among others. Both the collective memory and the national narrative were evolving, much to the chagrin of those who wanted Tlatelolco remembered at all costs.⁸⁰ Not even comic books or newspapers, passed around dozens of times and read aloud thus reaching an audience novels could only dream of, positively affected the intellectual pole of remembrance.

⁷⁸ Hinds and Tatum, *Not Just for Children*, 74-80.

⁷⁹ Rius, *Los agachados de Rius: Número especial de los cocolazos*, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 2924-A, Expediente 1, p. 11-28.

⁸⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 172-73.

Filmmakers, too, saw 1968 as a dividing line in Mexican history. Some attempted to connect the student movement to other large-scale strikes, like the railroad workers strike in 1958 and the doctors' strike in 1965. Others saw the movement and the massacre in isolation, as a fracture in the national narrative. All attempted to formulate the massacre's memories. Beginning in 1973 and lasting through most of the 1980s, the dominant form of remembrance on film was "*cine del autor*." In *cine del autor*, the director is the creative force, taking on multiple roles, including directing, writing, and filming. The resulting films tend to be very personal and highly experimental, as directors took advantage of new creative freedom.⁸¹ Examples of *cine del autor* include *Canoa* (1976) and *Chin chin el teporocho* (1976), both of which are Tlatelolco films.⁸² The intellectual pole used *cine del autor*, and Echeverría's *apertura democrática*, to promote its vision of the massacre as the fourth break. The 1980s offered a different political environment. Under López Portillo and De la Madrid "censorship was not only applied to the script, but was utilized in the most villainous way when the production was already finished. [The films were] was not exhibited in appropriate theaters, so the public could not watch them; the PRI applied an unofficial, disguised censorship."⁸³ The PRI attempted to form the collective memories by preventing public showings of other versions of the massacre. While both sides are incorrect, the competition continued. The massacre continued to be important only to a select few people and unimportant to the majority of Mexicans.

Playwrights experienced the same unofficial censorship as filmmakers. The first responses to the massacre, such as Enrique Ballesté's *Vida y obra de Dalomismo* (1969), Pilar

⁸¹ Olga Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano* (Puebla, Puebla: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2000): 97-98.

⁸² *Canoa*, DVD, directed by Felipe Cazals (México, DF: Conacite Uno, 1976). *Chin chin el teporocho*, DVD, directed by Gabriel Retes (México, DF: Corporación Nacional Cinematográfica, 1976).

⁸³ Gabriel Retes, in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 98

Campesino's *Octubre terminó hace mucho tiempo* (1970), and Jesús González Dávila's *La fábrica de los juguetes* (1970), were refused access to theatres.⁸⁴ During what Richard Burgess called the second wave of Tlatelolco plays, which lasted roughly from 1979-85, they were permitted to be staged.⁸⁵ Perhaps Tlatelolco plays became more accepted as they moved away from discussing explicitly social and political issues and toward Mexican history, culture, and folklore. Rather than discussing the student movement and the massacre overtly, playwrights disguised it by framing it within other similar events in Mexican history. After the first wave of plays were unofficially censored, playwrights adapted and discussed the massacre and its effects tangentially. For example, in Claudio Patricio's *Día de graduación* a theatre doctor lets loose years of suppressed violence when the company's star, with whom he is in love, is fired. The sudden burst of violence had been building inside the doctor for years, since he saw the Tlatelolco Massacre when he was a medical student.⁸⁶ In Patricio's play, the doctor represents how Mexicans have suppressed their memories of the massacre. For playwrights, the massacre took a massive mental toll that needed to be addressed. Failure to assess honestly and completely the massacre's impact on ordinary Mexicans meant that the massacre would continue to exist in a place between myth and reality. Both the PRI pole and the intellectual pole prevented Mexicans from mourning properly. Playwrights used subtlety to look at how the massacre affected individuals, unlike authors and politicians. As such, playwrights were less

⁸⁴ All three plays can be found in Felipe Galván, ed., *Teatro del 68: Antología* (Puebla, Puebla: Tablado Iberoamericano, 1999). For Ballesté's *Vida y obra de Dalomismo*, see p. 13-52. For Campesino's *Octubre terminó hace mucho tiempo*, see p. 73-96. For González Dávila's *La fábrica de los juguetes*, see p. 53-72. See also Bixler, "Re-remembering the Past," 121 for more.

⁸⁵ Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico*, 9.

⁸⁶ For more on that play, see Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico*, 128-29.

concerned with the larger political questions and more concerned with private issues of sanity and emotional recovery.

Commemorations are a crucial and very public form of remembrance. They are also a battleground for the politics of memory and identity. What is commemorated, how it is commemorated, and who commemorates it helps define the national identity.

Commemorations help define the national narrative and identity through the creation of holidays or celebrations. Commemorations change over time, meaning that both identity and narrative are constructed and re-constructed.⁸⁷ The global student movement had some impact on the Mexican student movement, raising a question: how does the Mexican case fit into Mexico's national narrative? The students rejected French and American examples and attempted to associate themselves with both the 1917 Constitution and the Mexican Revolution. In the ten years following the massacre, intellectuals picked up on and reinforced that idea while the government attempted to minimize the movement's importance to both the national identity and the national narrative. Commemorations helped intellectuals prove their point. Except the majority of Mexicans were unwilling to follow the intellectuals' logic.

The annual commemoration did not retain its focus on the massacre for very long. Nor did the general public support the intellectual view that it *had* to be ritually, and nearly religiously, commemorated. The five-year anniversary of the massacre generated a series of sparsely-attended remembrances. At the Escuela Superior de Economía of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), a number of speakers had an audience of about fifty supporters.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983: 1-14.

⁸⁸ "El mitin programada en le ESE del IPN," 2 October 1973, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1620-A, Expediente 3: 309-11; "Con relación al acto programado para el

Other schools also commemorated the massacre with small, orderly protests. A general apathy had already set in by 1973 which undermined the intellectual contention that the massacre was the fourth major break in Mexican history. Two years later, new groups used the massacre as a sort of umbrella for their issues. A student flyer released in UNAM's Faculty of Political Science exploited the student movement's memory to argue in favor of higher enrollment for the poorest people in universities. A second urged remembrance of both the 2 October 1968 massacre and the events of 10 June 1971 while declaring the student movement's support for among other groups, the STEUNAM and the Spaniards suffering under the dictator Francisco Franco.⁸⁹ A localized movement in 1968 had become a symbol for all forms of resistance by 1975.

A series of commemorations arranged for 26 July 1978, to commemorate the beginning of the 1968 student movement fell flat. One demonstration in Ciudad Universitaria, the home of UNAM, attracted only fifty people.⁹⁰ Students at the Oriente campus of the Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades used music to try to attract more people; still only 500 students attended.⁹¹ It is important to note that the attendees were students and not regular people, demonstrating that the commemoration really only appealed to a small group. Thus, it can be inferred that intellectual pole of remembrance's message was not reaching beyond the one group that would naturally support it, the students.

día de hoy," 2 October 1973, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1620-A, Expediente 3: 317-18.

⁸⁹ "Fueron distribuidos hoy dos volantes en la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas," 1 October 1975, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 1848-B, Expediente 3.

⁹⁰ "A las 17:00 horas dio principio al mitin en la explanada de la CU," 26 July 1978, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 2268-B, Expediente 1: 209-10.

⁹¹ "Hoy en el CCH Oriente, se llevó a cabo un festival de música folklórica para conmemorar la Revolución Cubana y los hechos del año 68," 26 July 1978, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 2268-B, Expediente 1: 211-12.

IV. Conclusion

Two threads were examined here: the PRI's intentional forgetting and the ineffectiveness of the intellectuals' remembering. The PRI's strategy was passive, in that it hoped the massacre would naturally fade from memories as new events occurred, such as the petroleum boom and bust and the earthquakes, to take its place. It was also focused on recent events, and by extension, the retention of power. Both López Portillo and De la Madrid continued Echeverría's policy of co-optation while attempting to manage a collapsing economy and prevent the party from splitting. In contrast, the intellectual strategy was one of carpet bombing the landscape with reasons why to remember the massacre and how to go about properly commemorating it. Literature and plays attempted to capture the massacre's emotion and immediacy, elements integral to the initial outpouring. They failed in both cases. A sense of repetition developed as the same people wrote the same things over and over again. Carlos Monsiváis became as omnipresent as Octavio Paz in books, magazines, and newspapers, and those he impacted followed his line of reasoning. As a result, Mexicans were blitzed by interviews, pictures, and scenes in plays demonstrating how important remembrance was; it made them numb. On the other hand, commemorations, which could have been spontaneous and new, were pre-packaged and stale. Very few people attended the commemorations, and even as early as 1973, they served as vehicles for other protest movements, a trend that grew throughout the 1980s. Even though the intellectual pole of remembrance received more attention, it was just as ineffective as the PRI pole of remembrance.

Community groups rising out of the 1985 earthquakes, artists like Rius, and playwrights challenged the intellectual point-of-view. Each of the above looked for some form of social

justice, in the sense of wanting the most benefits for the most people. Rius lamented the massacre, as did playwrights, but he also wanted people to grieve. Neither pole of remembrance permitted Mexicans to mourn, continuing policies established from 1968 to 1976. Community groups, Rius, and playwrights signaled a shift. They wanted Mexicans to look at their own personal memories and move forward based on those recollections. Only that, they believed, could fight the induced forgetting that benefited both the PRI and the intellectual poles. If people forgot, then the poles would be free to create memories that served their own interests. The massacre never took its place in the national narrative, either as an act of revolutionary proportions or as the fourth break in Mexican history or as something in between. A collective memory, which coalesces around certain agreed-upon facts, never truly developed.

CHAPTER 4: THE HINGE (PART 1), 1985-1990

“If democracy were built on words, Mexico would have the best in the world.”

– Bishop Manuel Talmás of Ciudad Juárez on Carlos Salinas de Gortari’s promise of clean elections¹

I. Introduction

For nearly twenty years, the Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) attempted to forget the Tlatelolco Massacre by minimizing its importance in Mexican political and cultural life. The PRI pole of remembrance was based on the assumption that the student movement was fundamentally anti-revolutionary and thus unworthy of recognition. In contrast, the intellectual pole of remembrance argued that the Tlatelolco Massacre was the fourth major break in Mexican history, the signal of a new political and social era. It drew a straight line from 1968 through the dirty war of the 1970s to the debt crisis of the 1980s to the PRI’s inept response to the 1985 earthquakes. The capstone was the obviously fraudulent 1988 presidential election, which intellectuals believed was the political breakthrough that would fulfill the perceived political and democratic promise of the 1968 student movement.

Throughout the twentieth century the 1910 Mexican Revolution loomed large over every aspect of society. The PRI capitalized on the nationalism that was embedded in the revolutionary political tradition and used it to shape Mexican identity and memory and keep the government stable, but the inherent divisions between Mexicans could not be paved over so easily.² Instead, revolutionary memories fractured and created competing versions; the groups that benefitted from the PRI’s rule, including politicians, large businessmen, and the

¹ Quoted in Andrew Reding, “Mexico at a Crossroads: The 1988 Election and Beyond,” *World Policy Journal* 5 (1988): 636.

² Vincent L. Padgett, *The Mexican Political System*, 2nd Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976): 59-60.

middle class to a certain degree, extolled the revolution's greatness while those who were left behind, virtually everyone else in the country, wondered what had happened to their revolution. In the end, the revolutionary tradition was "intended first and foremost to reinforce elite and thus national political unity, [and] to establish a solid historical foundation upon which to unify all revolutionary factions past and present."³ Fact and perception diverged as the PRI promoted a unifying image of the revolution. The collective memory, based on that perception, guided how Mexicans saw themselves through the twentieth century.⁴ For intellectuals, the Tlatelolco Massacre provided incontrovertible proof that the PRI no longer spoke for the revolution. Using 1968 as a base, intellectuals contested the PRI's revolutionary narrative, and gave the student movement and the massacre supreme importance. In short, they made it the fourth break. The PRI passively contested the intellectual pole's position, using its dominant political position to undermine, co-opt, or ignore intellectuals. By 1987, the PRI itself was wracked with division, as factions consolidated around those who wanted a new approach and those who favored the status quo. In March of that year, the PRI split, with disastrous results.

The split determined how ordinary Mexicans approached the 1988 presidential election. The three candidates, Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the PRI, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of a leftist coalition, and Manuel Clouthier of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), campaigned, for the first time, mainly on economic issues. But the specter of the revolution loomed large, not only because the PRI's revolutionary tradition was questioned, but because it was the fiftieth anniversary of Lázaro Cárdenas's petroleum expropriation. The 1988 election, which, for the

³ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 20-21.

⁴ See Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102, No. 5 (December 1997): 1389-90.

first time focused on economic policy, still made no mention of the student movement or the massacre. In fact, the only time social unrest was acknowledged was when the community groups that had evolved out of the PRI's inept response to the 1985 earthquakes in Mexico City stated their case publically. Cárdenas was the key player. Using his last name, he connected his campaign to his father's expropriation and the broader idea of revolutionary inclusiveness. Unlike the PRI and intellectuals, Cárdenas embraced the revolution's unifying aspects and, although it would take another ten years, connected Tlatelolco to the revolutionary narrative.⁵

For intellectuals, the split proved that the PRI had finally cracked. The intellectual pole of remembrance used film, literature, and plays to show how the 1968 student movement was the crack's source. Each new production reinforced its belief in the fourth break and argued against the revolution's collective memory, which emphasized Mexican unity and progress. Intellectuals assumed their works would bring Mexicans together around a common interpretation. They wanted to create the massacre's collective memory while leading a re-evaluation of both the revolutionary and the national narratives. The first step was Jorge Fons's 1989 film *Rojo amanecer*.⁶ Filmed on the cheap and in a good deal of secrecy, it was the first time the massacre was presented overtly on-screen.⁷ Fons augmented the intellectual point-of-view and contested the revolutionary narrative. He suggested that the student movement was a new call for revolution thus breaking with the Mexican Revolution's collective memory. Fons, in contrast to Cárdenas, called for a clean break with the old revolutionary narrative and the beginning of a new one, centered on the fourth break.

⁵ See Chapter 5 for Cárdenas's 2 October 1998 declaration of a day of mourning and its impact on Tlatelolco remembrance.

⁶ *Rojo amanecer*, directed by Jorge Fons (1990; México, DF: Quality Films, 2007), DVD.

⁷ See Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 82-92 for details about how the film was made.

Literature occupied a more ambiguous position after the PRI rupture. Through the 1980s, authors moved steadily away from politics and toward experimental fiction as Tlatelolco literature became less popular.⁸ On the surface, *La onda* (The Wave) was representative of literary alienation as it rebelled against both the PRI's revolutionary nationalism and the intellectual pole's student exceptionalism. Underneath, *onda* literature reinforced the notion of the fourth break. In the late 1980s, playwrights rejected the intellectual pole's theory of the fourth break while confronting memories of Tlatelolco. Playwrights separated themselves from other intellectuals, even *onda* writers, because they challenged the intellectual pole's domination of Tlatelolco memories. Gabriela Yncán's *Nomás que salgamos* (1988) is representative of the challenge posed by playwrights and contrasts nicely with Emilio Carballido's *Conmemorantes* (1981). While the latter features characters notable for their passivity and helplessness in the wake of Tlatelolco, the former suggests that the intellectual pole's rejection of personal memories was short-sighted and a failure to lead. When the intellectual pole denied Mexicans a chance to mourn, it also prevented the massacre from taking its place in the revolutionary narrative. Yncán symbolized how playwrights evolved to challenge both the PRI and the intellectual poles of remembrance.⁹

The six years from 1985 to 1990 were a turning point in how the massacre was remembered. Political events combined with social changes to create a historical hinge. In Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the political left found a symbol that satisfied the revolutionary narrative and a new beginning. Playwrights, the most aggressive and progressive group of intellectuals, urged Mexicans to use their personal memories to re-define the collective

⁸ See Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel*.

⁹ Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico*, 12-13.

memory. Together, they symbolized the hinge and pushed the massacre, albeit tentatively, back into the public eye.

II. The PRI's internal split

By 1988, the PRI's left-wing had broken from the main body over a lack of internal reforms and a feeling that its point-of-view was being ignored. As early as 1976, under López Portillo, the PRI's leftists felt marginalized; it was to both López Portillo's and De la Madrid's credit that the split did not occur earlier. In particular, De la Madrid's selective, politically-oriented budget cuts helped maintain party unity.¹⁰ A series of events leading up to the fraudulent 1988 presidential election convinced the PRI left that it was the right time to make its voice heard. Supported by the community groups that emerged in the aftermath of the 1985 earthquakes, the Corriente Democrática (Democratic Current, CD), led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, made a strong showing in the presidential election. For intellectuals, the CD heralded the development of a true opposition party. But it was not to be. While the CD and its supporting groups provided stiff opposition in 1988, it has been unable to capitalize on PRI mistakes in the 1990s and 2000s. Even in the 1988 campaign, Cárdenas focused on economic issues and the PRI's inept governance rather than Tlatelolco. His campaign focused on the revolution's unifying aspects rather than division, of which Tlatelolco was a symbol.

The shadow of 1968 did appear during the 1988 election. The community groups that originated in the PRI's weak response to the 1985 earthquakes were led, in some cases, either

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 for more on both presidents.

by veterans of or by those who were influenced by the 1968 student movement.¹¹ Thus there was, on some level, a kind of continuity twenty years later. It must be remembered that the community groups failed to exercise actual political power, because they were never organized enough or powerful enough to take the PRI on and seat their candidates in office. What the groups did have was persuasive power. In April 1987, the Asamblea de Barrios (Assembly of Neighborhoods, AB), an umbrella group of community organizations formed to represent the maximum number of people, began lobbying the PRI for change. The AB represented such a large number of people that local PRI delegates, and even the president, had to listen to its concerns. Twenty years after confronting the government through protest marches and student strikes, the AB's leaders, Marco Rascón, Francisco Alvarado, Javier Hidalgo, and Francisco Saucedo, together known as the Gang of Four, had learned to harness popular power and use it in negotiations.¹² Rather than focus on one nebulous issue, the government's despotism, AB leaders attempted to improve the lives of those they represented by returning basic services, such as running water. The university protest culture, which rallied in a scattershot fashion against anything and everything, had given way to fighting for specific causes.¹³ In the aftermath of the earthquakes, it became obvious that the PRI could not help its constituents

¹¹ See Haber, *Power From Experience*, 32-33 for an analysis of the leadership of community groups. Marco Rascón is one of the more important activists. He was involved in Punto Crítico and the Coordinadora Única de Damnificados (CUD), a community organization that emerged in the aftermath of the earthquakes. The CUD later merged with the AB. It is also worth noting that Rascón is the creator of Super Barrio Gómez, a masked superhero who campaigns on behalf of the poor in Mexico City.

¹² Haber, *Power From Experience*, 188 & 218. The Gang of Four shared power at the top of the AB's hierarchy and remained decentralized, which allowed the movement to grow while preventing any one person's political ambitions from derailing the program. In that way, the AB avoided a fate similar to the Comité de Defensa Popular (CDP), which disintegrated after political ambition and in-fighting caused a leadership vacuum. See Haber, *Power From Experience*, Chapter 4 and Dan La Botz, *Democracy in Mexico: Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1995): 83-99.

¹³ Gilberto Guevara Niebla, *La democracia en la calle: crónica del movimiento estudiantil mexicano* (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1988): 166-67.

because it commanded so few resources. According to one author, the party's performance legitimacy suffered irreparable damage.¹⁴

In one sense, then, the 1968 student movement had a profound impact two decades after it was brutally crushed. Former leaders and their acolytes had learned that negotiation outside the official party apparatus could yield tangible gains.¹⁵ One could even argue that the 1985-86 movement was an indirect result of 1968.¹⁶ Except it was completely different. Even the most fervent believer in the 1968 student movement has to acknowledge that it was, for the most part, limited to students. Neither industrial workers nor agrarian laborers nor the general public rose up in support of the students and their demands; it was, in fact, a closed interest group. In contrast, the devastating 1985 earthquakes affected not only more but a broader cross-section of people. Community group leaders had public opinion on their side, which meshed with the revolution's collective memory. The revolution's perceived goal was to better the lot of all Mexicans.¹⁷ Consequently, any government ruling in its name was obliged to help those in need. Contrasting the revolution's collective memory with that of the 1968 student movement is instructive. In the latter, students were perceived as over-privileged youth acting out against the political system for no good reason, indicating a negative collective memory.¹⁸ In 1985, the community groups were seen as part of the revolution and therefore eligible for the revolution's benefits. The students were perceived as anti-revolutionary, for

¹⁴ Vincent T. Gawronski, "The Revolution is Dead. ¡Viva la revolución! The Place of the Mexican Revolution in the Era of Globalization," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 18 (no. 2): 373.

¹⁵ Nora Hamilton suggests that the PRI's need to negotiate is one of the limits of state autonomy. Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982): 280.

¹⁶ Guevara Niebla, *La democracia en la calle*, 177-78.

¹⁷ See, for example, Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy*, Chapters 2 and 3 and Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo*, 108-28.

¹⁸ Pedro Magaña Acuña, a restaurant owner, said, "University students are the future solid middle class of the Mexican republic. So what reason do they have for doing this?" Quoted in Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco*, 81.

whatever reason, and thus ineligible for sympathy. Therein lies one purpose of the intellectual interpretation: to frame the student movement as a second revolutionary movement and thus the fourth break in Mexican history. The twenty years between 1968 and 1988 show that the general public simply did not see the student movement that way.

Was there a democratic opening at the grassroots level after 1985? In short, no. As noted, a number of popular organizations, with no direct ties to the state or the PRI, evolved after the earthquakes to press their agendas, demonstrating a degree of toleration on the government's part. It must be noted that the PRI also used those organizations to strengthen its hold on local politics. At that level, new layers of bureaucracy were created in response to popular organizations' desire for political clout. The PRI obliged but ensured that they had no real power by restricting their budgets. Thus, all of the newly-elected officials had to ask the PRI for money to accomplish their goals. That democratization did not effectively empower the poor because they, as a group, had no self-determination.¹⁹ Even though there was, in theory, a democratic opening, in practice no such thing existed because the PRI controlled all of the money. Once again, the PRI used perception to retain power. The perception of regime weakness, founded on the 1985 earthquakes and Mexico's poor economic shape through the 1980s, led to agitation for change. On the surface, the PRI responded by giving in to community groups. A closer look reveals that, by controlling the purse-strings, the PRI actually extended its grip on power.²⁰ And it did so without co-opting the groups, as it had done in the 1970s and before.

¹⁹ Susan Eckstein, "Formal Versus Substantive Democracy: Poor People's Politics in Mexico City," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 222-24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

The PRI made no large institutional changes after the Tlatelolco Massacre, partly because it believed in its own legitimacy and partly because Echeverría moved quickly to co-opt student leaders into the party, but it did make changes after the 1985 earthquakes. De la Madrid correctly deduced that because the PRI's performance legitimacy was called into doubt, its electoral legitimacy was also in danger.²¹ So he hedged against those future questions by approving an update to the Federal Electoral Code in 1986. Aside from dramatically increasing the president's control over the administration of elections, there were four crucial changes. First, the concept of governability was added to the constitution, which guaranteed an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies to the party with the highest percentage of the popular vote, even if it fell below 51%. Thus the Chamber, in its role as the Electoral College, could always certify an election. Second, the number of deputies gained by proportional representation was increased from 100 to 200, and the PRI was included in that distribution for the first time.²² Third, the new law stated that "when the results of the *actas* [vote records] do not correspond to the votes, or when the *actas* are missing, the vote count will be carried out again by the district committee."²³ Consequently the Minister of the Interior, who appointed all district presidents, indirectly controlled recounts. Fourth, conditional registration was abolished in order to stop new parties from competing in elections.²⁴ The update to the Federal Electoral Code probably exacerbated the PRI's internal split by further marginalizing

²¹ For definitions of performance and electoral legitimacy, see Gawronski, "The Revolution is Dead. ¡Viva la revolución!" 372-74.

²² See Chapter 3 for the original 1977 changes. For a more detailed explanation, see Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico*, 89-126.

²³ Quoted in Gómez Tagle, "Electoral Reform and the Party System, 1977-90," 80. An *acta* is an official record of the votes.

²⁴ To be fair, the left did a very good job undermining itself. Labor leaders vocally protested the negative impact of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-mandated austerity programs but constantly came around to the PRI's point-of-view, contradicting themselves and weakening their position of influence. See Gómez Tagle, "Electoral Reform and the Party System," 78-81.

those on the left. To many, it appeared that De la Madrid was actively excluding them and their point-of-view.²⁵ Thinking he could handle those under the PRI's corporatist umbrella, De la Madrid turned to the CD.

The Corriente Democrática, the unhappy leftist faction within the PRI, was led by Pedro Muñoz Ledo and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the latter the son of Lázaro Cárdenas and a revolutionary prince. Cuauhtémoc was in a unique position in 1987 in that he represented perhaps the most revered time in post-revolutionary Mexico. As such, he carried a unique political burden and had a unique opportunity. Cuauhtémoc's voice carried a weight the intellectual pole's did not, especially outside of Mexico City. His political and emotional association with the revolution made him an inclusionary figure. Throughout 1986 and into 1987, he and Muñoz worked hard at reforming the PRI's internal electoral policies; that is, how the party selected both its own president and its candidates in federal, state, and municipal elections. The internal strife came to a head at the March 1987 party assembly. After series of contentious meetings, the CD split from the main party, angering De la Madrid. The president's spite took the form of selecting Carlos Salinas de Gortari as the official PRI candidate in 1988, because, as a hard-line *priísta*, he would be less inclined to negotiate with the dissidents.²⁶ Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas moved forward with his program and was selected by the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution, PARM), a state-run party created in the 1950s and nominally associated with the PRI, as its candidate for

²⁵ See Judith Adler Hellman, "Social Control and the Mexican Political System," in *Twentieth Century Mexico*, eds. W. Dirk Raat and William H. Beazley (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1986): 244.

²⁶ Jorge G. Castañeda, *Perpetuating Power: How Mexican Presidents Were Chosen*, trans. Padraic Arthur Smithies (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000): 72. He notes that even after the election in July 1988, De la Madrid could not bring himself to negotiate with the separatists.

president. His selection triggered a series of challenges for De la Madrid, Salinas, and the rest of the PRI.²⁷

What mattered most in the 1980s was not the left and the right but the included and the excluded. The 1985 earthquakes, the 1987 split, and the Salinas-backed IMF austerity program demonstrated who was included and who was excluded.²⁸ Cárdenas and the CD confirmed their excluded status and abandoned the PRI. Cárdenas's electoral message, supported by the PARM and a group of smaller parties, including the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS) and the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST), was one of inclusion with the unifying revolutionary narrative. As such, it resonated with the community groups, led by the AB, which formed in the aftermath of the earthquakes. The idea of inclusion harkened back to the revolution's original message and played on its collective memories, while adding a dash of Lázaro Cárdenas-style populism for good measure. In effect, Cuauhtémoc was appealing to conceptions of the revolutionary narrative and collective memories. He did not run from his father's legacy; rather, he tried to build on it. His first name recalled Aztec defiance while his last name provoked remembrance of the ultimate expression Mexican national sovereignty, the 1938 petroleum expropriation, both things on which his campaign capitalized.²⁹ Adolfo Gilly suggested that Cuauhtémoc's candidacy was the beginning of a new political era in Mexico:

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's break appears as the fissure that opens the door to resistance and social pressure within the PRI. ... There can be no genuine democratic change in

²⁷ See Gómez Tagle, "Electoral Reform and the Party System," 74-76.

²⁸ Regarding the latter, Sergio Zermeno wrote that it "only served to deepen the party's legitimacy crisis". See Zermeno, "Intellectuals and the State in the 'Lost Decade'," 284.

²⁹ Even though Cuauhtémoc was defeated quite handily, he is remembered as a hero. He illustrates the importance of national myths. See Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 46 & 147-57 and R.C. Padden, *The Hummingbird and the Hawk: Conquest and Sovereignty in the Valley of Mexico, 1503-1541* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1967): 221-22 & 255-56. For the petroleum expropriation, see Alan Knight, "The Politics of the Expropriation," in *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jonathan C. Brown and Alan Knight (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992).

Mexico without a crisis and a break in the PRI domination, that is, without democratization of the PRI itself. The Democratic Current is resuming the historical path of radical democratic currents that always existed within the PRI.³⁰

Neocardenismo changed the populist formula: instead of relying on rural voters, as was the Latin American tradition, Cuauhtémoc relied on city-dwellers and, by extension, community groups, especially those that formed in the wake of the 1985 earthquakes.³¹ *Neocardenismo* offered a leader that was not only personally appealing but who was inclusive and honest, a stark contrast to the PRI. Others, of course, saw only *caudillismo* in Cuauhtémoc's candidacy.³²

Cárdenas's campaign criss-crossed the country like his father's a half-century before. He encouraged personal relationships at every stop because Mexicans "tend not to value the liberal, representative dimension of democracy but, rather, the participatory, substantive aspect which is given by unmediated relations with executive power."³³ Although the crowds cheered wildly, the candidate himself remained calm, explaining his positions over and over again until 6 July 1988, election day. As the first results trickled in, it became obvious that Cárdenas was doing very well in the Distrito Federal, the State of Mexico, Morelos, and Michoacán. The PRI was worried and went into crisis control mode. Around 5 PM, a PAN technician attempted to open the preliminary results file on his computer; unsatisfied with what he found, he used a PRI password to gain access to a more complete file with raw data. What he saw was that the first file had been manipulated. He printed the second file, which he had accessed surreptitiously, and demanded answers from the PRI representatives. The PAN

³⁰ Adolfo Gilly, "La crisis del PRI/IV," *La Jornada*, 9 November 1987.

³¹ "New forms of organization and struggle are expressed in the politicization of these movements, in their capacity to insert themselves into the electoral arena, to establish clear political alliances and, as a consequence, in their potential for broad, cross-sectoral articulation. These changes tend to lead in turn to growth of civil society and to the limitation of the state." Tamayo, "Neoliberalism Encounters *Neocardenismo*," 122.

³² *Ibid.*, 124-30.

³³ Zermeño, "Intellectuals and the State in the 'Lost Decade'", 283.

technician was forcibly removed, and after the Secretario de Gobernación (Ministry of the Interior) in Mexico City had been informed, the entire computer network crashed around 7:50 PM. Protests began immediately, and chaos reigned at the Ministry of the Interior.³⁴ Results continued to arrive, and it became clear that although Salinas had campaigned as the modernization candidate, nearly all of his support came, ironically, from rural areas, where he received between 80% and 100% of the vote. It is widely accepted that Salinas became president on the basis of fraud, enabled by the 1986 changes to the Federal Electoral Code.³⁵ Cárdenas never accepted Salinas's victory, calling him "the usurper," Señor Salinas or, simply, Salinas but never "the president."³⁶ Just after the election, Cárdenas formed the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD) to represent the left. But Salinas was not worried; he felt that the left was a minor problem despite Cárdenas's strong showing in the election. He was far more worried about the right, embodied by the PAN, and establishing a sense of credibility since, as Enrique Krauze noted, legitimacy was beyond his grasp.³⁷

Although it is widely accepted that the PRI won the 1988 elections by fraudulent means, a thornier issue is how the 1988 elections relate to the 1968 student movement. Intellectuals saw the elections as "the cumulative result of twenty years of popular mobilization".³⁸ That

³⁴ Castañeda, *Perpetuating Power*, 82-83.

³⁵ See, for example, commentators as diverse as: Cynthia Steele; Jorge Castañeda; Enrique Krauze; and Jaime Tamayo. Salinas used the PRI's status as the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies to obtain an absolute majority and to certify the fraudulent election results. Several studies, including Jorge Castañeda's *Perpetuating Power*, have suggested that the PRI held nowhere near enough seats for an absolute majority. At the same time, it is highly unlikely, according to Castañeda, that either Cárdenas or Clouthier would have had enough votes to actually win. Castañeda, *Perpetuating Power*, 231-39.

³⁶ Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 774.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 772.

³⁸ Joe Foweraker, "Introduction," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990): 18.

assertion cannot be true because, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, the massacre was all but forgotten during the 1970s and early 1980s, and there were few, if any, popular movements until the 1985 earthquakes. Analysts, including Carlos Monsiváis, contended that Mexican society increasingly coalesced around popular organizations, all of which could be traced back to 1968, be it in theory or in leadership.³⁹ Some even used the dates to point out similarities: the first big conflict between students and police occurred on 26 July 1968, and the election took place on 6 July 1988.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is an incomplete link. The student movement's importance and impact on Mexican society have consistently been overestimated by intellectuals who want the movement to be the fourth major break in Mexican history, unlike Cárdenas and the AB. The movement's collective memory was incompatible with the revolution's collective memory. As a result, the movement could not be reconciled with the revolution, a problem for most Mexicans.

Although Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's campaign utilized the revolutionary narrative's sense of inclusion, the student movement and the massacre were conspicuously absent.

Neocardenismo was attractive, because it explicitly reinforced popular notions of what the revolution meant: broad democratic participation and inclusion. Cárdenas's rhetoric focused on the PRI's political failures and broken electoral promises, not its abuses of power. He never connected 1988 to 1968 even though intellectuals, many of whom supported his candidacy, did. The latter's post-election analysis was entirely dependent on the idea that the student movement was a "historical watershed".⁴¹ In the intellectual analysis, the 1968 student

³⁹ See Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre (crónicas de una sociedad que se organiza)* (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1987).

⁴⁰ Foweraker, "Introduction," 18.

⁴¹ Francisco Pérez Arce, "The Enduring Struggle for Legality and Democracy," in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, eds. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990): 105.

movement was the first crack in the PRI's legitimacy, and that crack spread over the two decades between 1968 and 1988. The student movement, it concluded, was the fourth great break in Mexican history. That analysis discounts the PRI's agility. Between 1968 and 1976 the PRI simultaneously waged a dirty war against armed revolutionary groups (some of which had connections to the student movement) and co-opted former student leaders into the party. Those in the latter group were perceived by all involved as sell-outs, people who had exchanged a regular paycheck and personal prestige for life as an activist.⁴² The election nevertheless offers the hinge's first creaking movement, because the PRI was forced to resort to overt fraud. For the first time, Mexicans could see the fraud which, I propose, led to more questions. In that sense, the intellectual pole's position has some merit.

But the main problem with the intellectual analysis is its complete discounting of the national narrative and collective memory. Cárdenas was on target when he campaigned for inclusion. Contrast that with the intellectual interpretation which suggests that a small group of students led the way to a second Mexican revolution, an interpretation that relies on exclusion and division. It also assumed that the nation's collective memories were similar to those of the student leaders; Poniatowska's work shows that there were a considerable number of people who disagreed with the students.⁴³ The Archivo General de la Nación's material also shows that the student movement never moved beyond the Distrito Federal in any meaningful way.⁴⁴ A

⁴² A good number of plays, including José Vázquez Torres's *Idos de octubre* (1993), use this dynamic to explore the student movement; see Chapter 3 and later in this chapter for more. See also Camp, *Intellectuals and the State* for how student leaders were co-opted into the PRI regime.

⁴³ Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco*, 74, 77-78, 81-82.

⁴⁴ The Archivo General de la Nación has a lot of material on events within the Distrito Federal but very little on sympathy strikes in other states. The traditional historiography has consistently underplayed this fact and portrayed the student movement as a national movement when, in fact, it was not. See, for example, a strike in Irapuato, Guanajuato, which supported Czechoslovakia against the Soviet invasion but explicitly denied support to the Mexico City student movement. "Mitin [en la Plaza Miguel Hidalgo con 200 personas] de los miembros de la

contrast with Cárdenas's campaign is once again useful. Cárdenas toured the country and talked about economics, politics, and inclusion. In 1968, the student leaders relied on leftist rhetoric and never left their safe haven in Ciudad Universitaria (University City, CU). As a result, they never had much popular support. The intellectual suggestion that the workers supported the students in the Distrito Federal is simply wrong.

The intellectual interpretation draws a thick, straight line from 1968 to 1988, but in reality, the line was thin and jagged. For 1968 to be the fourth major break, its influence needed to extend across decades and include more than just intellectuals. It needed to become a rallying cry for unity, but it never did. Although the AB's leaders were influenced by 1968, they could not rely on the student movement for guidance, precisely because it was exclusionary. As a result, they looked to the revolution, perceived as inclusionary. The AB's constituents were more concerned with immediate goals, be they the restoration of running water or the re-construction of houses and schools, than with grand political ideas. It is important to note that 1968 was not the focal point of their beliefs; they did not even give lip service to the student movement. Instead, they focused on the present. Thus, the intellectual interpretation of the massacre must be re-evaluated.

Writing to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the massacre, Soledad Loaeza traces the arc of the revolutionary political tradition from Lázaro Cárdenas to the 1968 student movement. In her eyes, "[t]he cardenista experience [in the 1930s] was the lens through which protest groups understood the dynamics of power until the brutal shock of 1968 expelled it

Unión de Usuarios de Servicios Públicos," 26 August 1968, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 519, Expediente 4, p. 330.

from the collective memory.”⁴⁵ The president, previously a symbol of benign good, became an adversary after 1968. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’s campaign brought back memories and recalled the revolutionary narrative begun by his father. Cuauhtémoc was perceived as trustworthy, a feeling reinforced after the fraud was made public late in the day on 6 July 1988. People felt betrayed by the PRI, so they demanded answers and became more willing to vote the PRI out of lower offices. The election re-created the splits between urban and rural Mexicans and between economic classes. Although the revolutionary tradition was questioned, people still believed in the over-arching revolutionary tenets; the revolution still brought Mexicans together.⁴⁶ Cuauhtémoc’s association with the earlier era, collectively remembered as the finest expression of *mexicanidad* in the twentieth century, worked in his favor. After the 1988 election, ordinary Mexicans demanded openness. The Mexican voters made their voice heard through the choices they made. The intellectual pole of remembrance would like the trigger for such change to be the Tlatelolco Massacre, but it is far simpler than that: the PRI had mismanaged the economy and the election to such an extent that people no longer trusted it to speak for the revolution.

History turns on small hinges. Both the AB and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas rose from the PRI’s mismanagement of the 1985 earthquakes. Although intellectuals tried to connect both to the 1968 student movement, their message of disunity was outdated. Both the AB and Cárdenas sought unity and used the revolution’s collective memories to achieve it. The AB’s focus on immediate goals gave it legitimacy in the eyes of those affected by the earthquakes. Cárdenas’s message of political inclusion resonated nation-wide. The intellectual pole still

⁴⁵ Soledad Loaeza, “La memoria protectora,” *Nexos* 121 (January 1988): 51.

⁴⁶ See Gawronski, “The Revolution is Dead. ¡Viva la revolución!”

focused on student exceptionalism and was divisive. A pattern emerged. Intellectuals refused to adapt their argument to changing times; they refused to explain why Mexicans should care and why the massacre was the fourth break. Instead, they promoted the same ideas time and again, even twenty years later. In short, they refused to lead.

III. Jorge Fons's *Rojo amanecer*

Twenty-one years passed between *El grito* (1968), the first major film about the Tlatelolco Massacre, and *Rojo amanecer* (1989), the first film to dramatize the massacre's impact. While the former was a documentary, the latter was a work of fiction designed to reinforce the intellectual pole of remembrance and capitalize on the PRI's internal split. Fons consciously tried to shape the massacre's collective memory so that it agreed with the intellectual pole; in that respect, the film is nearly perfect. Fons reinforced the intellectual pole's contention that the massacre was the fourth breakthrough character development. Over the narrative's course, the film's characters, even those dead-set against the student movement, come around to believe not only that the students' cause was just but that memories are key. Yet it continued the same problems the intellectual pole had in the political arena: the massacre continued to be divisive and was not connected to the revolution.

Rojo amanecer deals with many of the themes found in Tlatelolco literature, including the generation gap, the idealism of the student protesters, and the conflict between the students and the government. The plot revolves around one family's experience on 2 October 1968. The father, Humberto, is a bureaucrat in the Mexico City government and, as such, believes in the PRI and its revolutionary legitimacy. His two university-aged sons, Jorge and

Sergio, engage him in a debate over the student movement's relative merits during breakfast which ends when Humberto storms out.⁴⁷ In one scene, the family dynamics and the generation gap are established. Both Humberto and his father-in-law, Don Roque, a retired army captain who participated in the 1910 revolution, come to if not support the students, at least concede that they have a point. Various scenes reinforce Humberto's evolution: his attempts to warn his wife, Alicia, not to allow Jorge and Sergio to take part in the protest; his frustrating journey home to his family; his monologue about his experience over a late dinner; and the family sitting down to watch the news, which follows the government's line. A group of students takes shelter in the family's apartment after the massacre begins and provides the intellectual counter-point to the PRI's policy of minimization. The students define the movement as a revolution and provide visceral examples of the party's abuse of power. One student has been shot, while others have been beaten.⁴⁸ The students' arrival shakes Humberto's, and possibly more significantly Don Roque's, belief in the PRI. Much like a play, the film's characters are representative of views that either change or are reinforced over the narrative's course. In all cases, the intellectual pole is strengthened.

Memories are important in *Rojo amanecer*. Don Roque looks back on his military service during the revolution with pride. His personal memories have combined with and reinforced the revolution's collective memory, because it is no longer the facts or the bloodshed that are important, but the outcome, which was positive. He firmly believes in the revolution's justness but suggests that the student movement is simply children acting out, a point-of-view he makes

⁴⁷ "2 de octubre." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons. 1990, México, DF: Quality Films, 2007.

⁴⁸ "El refugio" and "La milicia." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons.

clear in support of his son-in-law.⁴⁹ At the same time, Jorge and Sergio use the collective memory of the Cuban Revolution to advance their cause. They compare the Cuban Revolution's freshness to the Mexican Revolution's staleness.⁵⁰ Memories help set up a generation gap that Fons uses to examine how the massacre meant different things to different people. In so doing, he urges the audience to abandon their own personal memories and to accept the intellectual pole's point-of-view.

His straightforward approach did not endear him to the PRI. As early as 1985, even with the culture of *cine del autor*, the Secretario de Gobernación warned that filming anything related to 1968 was forbidden, a rare case of the PRI's policy of minimization becoming active rather than passive. Until 1985, the party had denied the intellectual interpretation by preventing access to documents and other materials, such as theatres and newsprint. Both Xavier Robles, the screenwriter, and Jorge Fons were told by a friend who worked for the Supervisión de Guiones in the Secretaría de Gobernación that their script would not pass the censors.⁵¹ As a result, *Rojo amanecer* was filmed clandestinely. It helped that the film could be shot in one location, the family's apartment, and that most of the violence and the rally itself took place off-screen. But when the film was finished, the Salinas government blocked its release. According to Robles, two things factored into its eventual release. The first was a public advertising campaign in which intellectuals voiced their support. The second, and perhaps more important, was Mexico's endemic film piracy. Soon after Fons had finished editing, the film appeared for sale on Mexico City's notorious black market. Anecdotally, it sold well. The Salinas government allowed an official release in 1990 after the filmmakers decided to cut two

⁴⁹ "La lucha continúa." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons.

⁵⁰ "La lucha continúa" & "El refugio." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons.

⁵¹ Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 90.

minutes, mainly dealing with the army and its role in the massacre, from the final print. Interestingly, the script was later published uncensored.⁵²

Visually, *Rojo amanecer* shares some characteristics with plays that have dealt with 1968. The characteristics include one set (the family's apartment) and numerous monologues in which characters recount their experiences; both produce a claustrophobic effect. The characters experience a personal evolution, in which those opposed to the student movement eventually come to believe it has a point. Fons uses natural light to show time passing during the day, an effective technique after the power fails during the massacre. When the apartment's lights finally return, the audience is jarred awake, and previously incomplete images come together, such as Alicia's worried face and the injured student's blood. Although it is a melodrama, Fons does a good job creating an uncertain atmosphere, which makes the ending all the more compelling.

Fons deliberately keeps the rally, the CNH speeches, and the ensuing violence off-screen, though they have a strong presence throughout the film. The audience hears the speeches in the background and sees one student who has been shot during the massacre take refuge in the family's apartment. His painful moans echo through the rooms until he passes out from shock. The family's conversations, in which they attempt to process what happened, are interrupted by a woman's plaintive wails as she goes from door to door searching for her son and by occasional gunfire. Gradually, Fons brings more violence on-screen, as if to urge the viewer to accept the intellectual pole's point-of-view that the PRI had abandoned its revolutionary legitimacy. In the final scenes, plainclothes police officers demand entry into the apartment. Disregarding Humberto's status as a minor PRI functionary, they accuse Jorge and

⁵² *Ibid.*, 81-83.

Sergio of participating in crimes against the state. The situation rapidly spirals out of control, and the entire family, save the youngest, Carlos, is murdered on-screen. Fons's final shot, of Carlos leaving the apartment and going out of the building where a man cleans up the mess, reinforces the intellectual pole, which stresses government-sponsored brutality and remembering the massacre.⁵³ Under Fons's direction, the family's experience is a microcosm of the student movement and the massacre. Both the atmosphere and plot underline the similarities between the film and plays; thus it is not surprising that the film was later turned into a play, called *Bengalas en el cielo*.⁵⁴

The script was based on actual accounts, which makes it the film equivalent to Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco*. The filmmakers drew a straight line from 1968 to 1988 using the collective and personal memories. Indeed, Don Roque explicitly decries the students' call for revolution saying that they do not know what constitutes a real revolution.⁵⁵ A real revolution, according to Don Roque, involves armies marching through the countryside, for causes bigger than any of the students' six demands. In his mind, the students had no reason to rebel, echoing the sentiments of the older generation documented by Poniatowska. To contrast this position, the film uses Jorge and Sergio to voice reasons for the student movement. They justify their use of the word "revolution" by connecting their movement to 1910, noting that bad government was the cause in both cases.⁵⁶ The 1910 revolution held an important cultural and political place in both 1968 and 1989, but Fons failed to demonstrate how the student

⁵³ "Rojo Amanecer." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, "Bengalas en el cielo" was the original name for the film. Fons was convinced to change it to something more commercial before it was released. See Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 82.

⁵⁵ "El mitin." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons. 1990, México, DF: Quality Films, 2007.

⁵⁶ "La lucha continúa" & "La milicia." *Rojo amanecer*, DVD. Directed by Jorge Fons. 1990, México, DF: Quality Films, 2007.

movement fit with the revolution's narrative. More specifically, he did not make the student movement an inclusionary movement. Instead, he reinforced the idea of the fourth break as an exclusionary concept.

Although *Rojo amanecer* is set exclusively on 2 October 1968, Robles believes its significance stretches further back into the student movement, which was a “youthful explosion of struggle, of joy, of camaraderie, of singing in the streets”.⁵⁷ Robles idealizes the student movement, an opinion buttressed by Fons's direction, while connecting the massacre and the movement to the revolution. Yet Fons is not inclusive, like the AB or Cárdenas were. Instead, he suggests that the students were vanguardish revolutionaries showing Mexicans how the PRI was corrupt. The three policemen who murder the family, one of whom is wearing the white glove of the Olympic Battalion, do so without remorse and without considering the ramifications of their actions. They represent how the state had become irresponsible and no longer spoke for the revolution. Robles and Fons do not hide the fact that they think 1968 is the fourth break in Mexican history. It is, as Robles called it, a “parting of the seas in the nation's history; there was one Mexico before 68 and another after.”⁵⁸ Therein lies *Rojo amanecer's* importance. The filmmakers' goal was to support the intellectual pole of remembrance and force ordinary Mexicans to accept its interpretation of both the massacre and the student movement. The characters Humberto and Don Roque were not only representative of those who had worked for the government but also of those who chose to think ill of the student movement by default; in short, they represented ordinary Mexicans at the end of the 1980s.

⁵⁷ Xavier Robles quoted in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 88.

⁵⁸ Robles quoted in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 88. Jorge Fons continues that line of thought: “la gente que se necesitaría para hablar del 2 de octubre o para cualquiera de las manifestaciones que se desarrollaron en aquellos meses o los mítines en el Zócalo, en CU o en las diferentes escuelas, en fin, era un proyecto costoso por donde quiera que se le viera.” Fons quoted in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 89.

The biggest impact of *Rojo amanecer*, according to film critic Leonardo García Tsao, was to “approach history in a commercial film, with well-known actors, [and create] a fictional account of 2 October.”⁵⁹ Yet the film faded from view soon after its release. It fell victim to a collective amnesia regarding Tlatelolco, perhaps because the intellectual pole continued to rely on division. *Rojo amanecer* represented an intellectual attempt to set the student movement and the massacre apart from the revolutionary narrative. Fons argued that the massacre was the fourth break and that the Mexican Revolution was bankrupt. Both the AB and Cárdenas took the opposite view. They wanted inclusion, which they connected to the revolution’s collective memory, rather than exclusion. The intellectual pole believed in the massacre’s singular uniqueness and suggested that the students were a vanguard. Fons brought that idea into the film and reinforced it. But while the AB and Cárdenas adapted to new situations and led with new ideas, the intellectual pole relied on the same old ideas. Not only did *Rojo amanecer* fall into that echo chamber, but so did literature in the late 1980s.

IV. *La onda* (The Wave)

By 1990, Mexican literature had moved away from explicitly political works and toward experimental fiction. Tlatelolco literature had evolved from testimonial and documentary narrative to the total novel to neo-realism and, finally, to *onda* narrative as part of “an ongoing search on the part of Mexican youth and society for a new understanding, a new relationship, and perhaps a new ideology.”⁶⁰ Novelists had such difficulty dealing with Tlatelolco and its impact on Mexican society that some leftist writers de-politicized their work, which was

⁵⁹ Leonardo García Tsao quoted in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 108.

⁶⁰ Young, “Mexican Literary Reactions to Tlatelolco 1968,” 82.

anathema for the intellectual pole.⁶¹ Withdrawing from politics in search of a catholic meaning is part of *La onda* (The Wave). In the broadest sense, *La onda* was a Mexican countercultural movement “grounded in a fusion of native and foreign rock music, literature, language, and fashion.”⁶² For my purposes, *La onda* was a literary movement that capitalized on the effects of the 1987 PRI split and the fraudulent 1988 election. It rejected both the PRI’s revolutionary nationalism and the traditional Mexican left’s populist nationalism.⁶³ In other words, it tried to find a third way to deal with how Mexican society was changing. It abandoned documentary narrative and the total novel while embracing experimental fiction.⁶⁴ It approached the massacre in abstract ways, but accepted the intellectual contention that the massacre was the fourth break. It proposed a break from Mexican revolutionary literature, one of the great genres, and from previous Tlatelolco literature but, in the end, found itself a part of the intellectual echo chamber. In a way, it both accepted and rejected the intellectual pole’s contention that 1968 was the fourth break in Mexican history.

José Agustín is representative of *onda* literature’s contradictions. He was an outspoken advocate for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’s candidacy for president in 1988, suggesting an un-*onda*-like politicization. Agustín had a history of radical left-wing thought and actions, including socialist ideals and participation in Cuba’s literacy campaign. Thus it would appear that he was born to support the intellectual pole of remembrance. But his works do not confirm that theory, tending to be psychological examinations that debate the meaning of *mexicanidad*.

⁶¹ Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel*, 19.

⁶² Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 114.

⁶³ Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel*, 113.

⁶⁴ The total novel is “a fictional work that aspires to reconstruct a day – as in the paradigmatic example of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) – an event, or even a nation in its totality.” See Long, *Fictions of Totality*, 1-5.

Take, for example, *Cerca del fuego* (1986).⁶⁵ Agustín imagines a world where the United States invades Mexico, yet nothing really changes. Even under the US-supervised elections, the PRI candidate wins, and the party remains in power. The invasion narrative is mirrored by that of the protagonist Lucio's psychological journey. Waking up after a six-year coma, Lucio's most recent memory is before the invasion. Agustín situates the novel in the middle of the lost economic decade, the 1980s, and uses the plot to comment on patriarchy. An important novel, it focuses on contemporary issues, much like the AB did. It does not, however, mention Tlatelolco nor does it seek to reconcile the concept of the fourth break with the revolution. Instead, Agustín embraces experimental fiction to find a way through Mexico's ongoing crisis. In that way, Lucio represents modern Mexico, with similar bouts of amnesia and similar difficulty reconciling modern life and the revolution. The 1988 presidential election, with its myriad crises and overt fraud, provides a sort of capstone for the themes Agustín discussed two years earlier.⁶⁶

Published five years after Agustín's *Cerca del fuego*, Héctor Águilar Camín's *La guerra de Galio* (1991) continues the critique in two ways.⁶⁷ First, it promotes journalism, in the form of *La República*, a thinly-disguised reference to *Excélsior*, as a key to freedom of expression and, ultimately, democracy. The unspoken basis for that position is the student movement and its journalistic opening.⁶⁸ Second, it criticizes the governing party, the PRI, for sending journalists into internal exile simply because it disagrees with them. In the post-massacre world, according to the intellectual pole of remembrance, such actions should be unacceptable, but the plot

⁶⁵ José Agustín, *Cerca de fuego* (México, DF: Debolsillo, 2007 [1986]).

⁶⁶ See Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel*, Chapter 5 for more details and analysis of Agustín's work.

⁶⁷ Héctor Águilar Camín, *La guerra de Galio* (México, DF: Cal y Arena, 1991).

⁶⁸ See Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate* for a good examination of how the press has evolved in Mexico.

reveals how it happens. The central character, Carlos García Vigil, is a journalist determined to root out corruption in the Mexican political system after the Tlatelolco Massacre. His work for *La República* brings him into contact with Galio Bermúdez, a secret service agent who shows him that real politics take place in the shadows.⁶⁹ In the end, Vigil is tainted by the power he criticizes and his relationship with Galio leads to the former's death. The novel, then, reinforces the idea of a monolithic state corrupting, and eventually destroying, all opposition. Águilar Camín subtly reinforces the intellectual pole's position and shows that its ideas remained unchanged, even in 1991.

Similarly, Jorge Águilar Mora's *Cadáver lleno de mundo* (1991) challenges the Mexican revolutionary narrative and the memories that come from it.⁷⁰ The protagonist, Ricardo, has two main storylines. In the first, he attempts to seduce Silvia, who represents the Mexican middle class; the seduction symbolizes his desire to join higher economic and social classes. In the second, he journeys to Guatemala to claim his friend's body, who was presumably killed by the government there. Throughout the novel, reports of state-sponsored violence circulate in the background, with references to Vietnam and Tlatelolco, demonstrating the state's desire to control both the past and the present.⁷¹ The Mexican revolutionary narrative is contemplated indirectly while memories are evaded. Exile, a theme also found in Águilar Mora's *Si muero lejos de ti* (1979), and the desire for resolution are also present throughout the text.⁷² Ricardo must leave the country to retrieve his friend's body. Only then is he beyond the state's capacity for

⁶⁹ Águilar Camín, *La guerra de Galio*, 157.

⁷⁰ Jorge Águilar Mora, *Cadáver lleno de mundo* (México, DF: CONACULTA, 1991).

⁷¹ Specific references to Tlatelolco in *Cadáver lleno de mundo* are on pages 160, 230, and 237.

⁷² Ryan F. Long, "Tlatelolco's Persistent Legacy: A Comparative Analysis of Three Mexican Novels," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 24, no. 4 (2005): 520. For the theme of exile, see Águilar Mora, *Si muero lejos de ti*. See Chapter 3 for more on *Si muero lejos de ti*.

violence. Águilar Mora suggests that the PRI maintains power because it controls the official history and memory. Truth, then, is not part of the PRI's *modus operandi*. Instead, the party wants to obscure truth. Only the intellectual point-of-view, in his analysis, can set the truth free. Mexicans, then, must accept the intellectual interpretation if the massacre's place in the national narrative is to be established.

Onda literature tried to push boundaries and took liberties with narrative structure. When dealing with Tlatelolco, *onda* literature generally reinforced the intellectual pole of remembrance. Although there are exceptions, all three authors mentioned above believe that Tlatelolco Massacre was the fourth break in Mexican history. All three indirectly suggest that it was the beginning of Mexican democracy while simultaneously noting that remembrance is the key. *Onda* authors, like the initial group from 1968-76, suggest that outrage is the proper emotion. They want people to confront the massacre and deal with their memories. Thus while they assert that the massacre is the fourth break, they also want to put the massacre into the revolutionary narrative, thus forming a collective memory based on the intellectual pole's position. *Onda* literature failed to connect the intellectual pole to the average Mexican. In supporting the intellectual position, *onda* literature simply took part in the same echo chamber that had been created by other Tlatelolco literature.

There is relatively little political censorship of plays in Mexico, perhaps because Mexican playwrights typically lack a radical political agenda.⁷³ There are exceptions, though, as both José Agustín's *Círculo vicioso* (1974) and Pilar Campesino's *Octubre terminó hace mucho tiempo*

⁷³ Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico*, 12-13.

(1970) were banned because of their content.⁷⁴ Throughout the 1980s, plays became the preferred medium for analyzing and remembering the student movement and the massacre, which can, perhaps, be attributed to the theatre's "eternal present, its social immediacy, and its direct link with the audience."⁷⁵ The constant give-and-take between playwright and audience provided the most effective medium to confront Tlatelolco memories. Additionally, the social immediacy embodied *La onda's* ideas of confrontation, but only from one side. Most plays written about Tlatelolco attempted to reinforce the intellectual pole of remembrance and a good number took on a preachy tone, which distracted from their point. Despite the desire to assess the massacre's legacy, plays were, oftentimes, prisoners to the intellectual point-of-view, reinforcing isolation and division. Playwrights, from the 1970s through the 1980s, were unable to use the revolution, as Cárdenas did, to prove their point.

Playwrights became increasingly bold in tackling the student movement and the massacre through the 1980s. Emilio Carballido's *Conmemorantes* (1981), an early example of *teatro sesentaiochero*, has a tone of sad, passive longing.⁷⁶ Memories play a central role in Carballido's work. The nameless mother, an archetypal *madre sufrida*, returns to Tlatelolco to commemorate the massacre and her son's death. For Carballido, the family was the center of his work and, by extension, the center of his memories. The audience is privy to the mother's memories of silently waiting for answers outside jails, morgues, and government buildings in a long opening monologue. Her return and her helplessness in the face of government bureaucracy establish the idea that her mourning is incomplete. Carballido suggests that the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13. The text of José Agustín's play can be found in José Agustín, *Círculo vicioso* (México, DF: Joaquín Mortiz, 1974). The text of Pilar Campesino's play is in Galván, *Teatro del 68*, 73-96.

⁷⁵ Bixler, "Re-remembering the Past," 124.

⁷⁶ The full text of Carballido's play is in Galván, *Teatro del 68*, 101-05.

massacre's collective memory has not been established, because the event itself exists in both the past and the present. For example, while at Tlatelolco, the mother becomes confused and mistakes other characters for her son and his friends, demonstrating how the massacre has not receded into the past. Carballido reinforces and subverts the intellectual pole in two ways. First, he suggests that the massacre was the fourth break. Second, he says that the mother's isolation is part of the problem. Carballido, like the few other Tlatelolco dramatists, implies that Mexicans need to examine their personal memories to allow the massacre to assume its place in the past.⁷⁷ As the 1980s continued, and as literature became more obtuse, playwrights became more aggressive, and even opposed the intellectual pole of remembrance.

Gabriela Ynclán's debut play, *Nomás que salgamos* (1988), focuses on three students and a professor hiding in the basement of an unnamed building in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas on 2 October 1968.⁷⁸ The scene shifts forward and backward through time over the course of the play's one act showing potential alternate futures for the characters. Each character is preoccupied with the future as much as the present, leading Ynclán to discuss how history and memory are malleable. In her play, different actions have different consequences and lead to a normal life or a violent interrogation. In each case, the official history and the characters' memories change. In Ynclán's view, the state has abused its power, not only on 2 October but over the course of the following two decades by refusing to acknowledge what happened. Like *Rojo amanecer*, *Nomás que salgamos* is a near-perfect articulation of the intellectual pole of remembrance's ideology. The massacre is presented as the fourth break, but Ynclán urges her audience to examine it within the context of their personal memories and, by extension, help

⁷⁷ Burgess, *The New Dramatists of Mexico*, 12-13.

⁷⁸ The full text of Ynclán's play is in Galván, *Teatro del 68*, 147-61.

create the collective memory. In her view, forgetting is worse than even the state's abuse. Thus she urges collective remembrance, an inclusive idea. Alejandro, one of the protagonists, thinks aloud: "I wonder what will become of us within ten or twenty years. Will we be the same in 1988? Will we have made a Revolution for the year 2000? Or will we have forgotten tonight's dead?"⁷⁹ Two possible outcomes are seen in Alejandro's future: a new revolution with the massacre as its beginning, or systematic forgetting. Ynclán's play is one of many that took advantage of the new political climate to urge remembrance of Tlatelolco. It was staged in 1988 as a direct result of the PRI split and the 1988 election. Taking cues from the AB, Ynclán and other playwrights urged direct confrontation, and personal remembrance, as a way forward, believing it would lead to an honest assessment of the massacre.

The two groups discussed here, literary authors and playwrights, approached Tlatelolco and its memories in very different ways in the hinge era. *Onda* literature attempted to find a third way by rejecting the PRI and the intellectual poles, at least on the surface. Underneath, though, *onda* writers advanced the same ideas found in the 1970s and, in fact, reinforced the intellectual point-of-view. Unlike Cárdenas and the AB, authors could not tie themselves to the revolution, because they promoted exclusion. Playwrights, on the other hand, attempted to assess personal memories, rather than institutional memories, during the hinge era. Ynclán's play suggests that remembrance leads to inclusion, tentatively broaching ideas promoted by Cárdenas and the AB. Her play effectively created a small bridge between the fourth break and inclusion, something the intellectual pole never accomplished.

⁷⁹ Ynclán, "Nomás que salgamos," 159.

V. Conclusions

There is, as French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs said, no memory without perception.⁸⁰ In the six crucial years from 1985 to 1990, the perception of the Tlatelolco Massacre changed along with the perception of the PRI and, perhaps, the Mexican political system; the hinge creaked open. Memories were a key part of that changing perception. The twentieth century's defining moment was the Mexican Revolution, which is perceived as a unifying event in the national narrative. Consequently, neither the Tlatelolco Massacre nor the PRI was exempt from that arc. The changes from 1988 to 1990 were also seen within the context of revolutionary memories. It is clear, then, that even seventy-five years later, the revolution still held enormous political, social, and rhetorical value.⁸¹

The year 1988 was important for the PRI. Not only was it a presidential election year, but it was also the fiftieth anniversary of Lázaro Cárdenas's petroleum expropriation and the twentieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre. In the political arena, the fraudulent presidential election quickly called into question the PRI's political legitimacy while Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's presidential campaign reminded people of his father's. Both Cárdenas and the AB focused on inclusion and associating themselves with the revolutionary narrative. Tlatelolco was another story. The PRI pole of remembrance continued its decades-old policy of forgetting and did not acknowledge the anniversary.

Intellectuals promoted an adversarial approach, as seen in *Rojo amanecer*. Director Jorge Fons prodded Mexicans to reject the PRI's explanation of the massacre and embrace the intellectual point-of-view. For Fons, and other intellectuals, there could be no middle ground. In

⁸⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 169.

⁸¹ Gawronski, "The Revolution is Dead. ¡Viva la revolución!" 389.

suggesting that the massacre was the fourth break, Fons continued to divide Mexicans, in contrast to Cárdenas and the AB. Inclusion was set aside as Fons exalted the students and viewed them as a kind of revolutionary vanguard. On the surface, *onda* literature rejected both the PRI and intellectual poles, but below the surface it reinforced the latter. Authors continued to suggest that the massacre was the fourth break. Only playwrights added the element of inclusion, saying that isolation solved nothing. Indeed, Ynclán's play attempted to straddle a line between the PRI and intellectual poles. Yet neither playwrights nor Cárdenas connected the massacre to the past, like Paz did. In that sense, both helped the intellectual pole by seeing the massacre as a jumping-off point.

Even after 1968 and through the 1970s and 1980s, the PRI cast itself as the party of the revolution, reinforcing the revolution's importance in political and cultural life. It was, as one scholar noted, the ideological and symbolic adhesive that kept the country together.⁸² The revolution, then, was the justification for every regime; it was the unassailable proof of the PRI's right to rule. Until 1985. The PRI's inept response to the earthquakes, followed by the fraud used to win the 1988 presidential election changed perceptions. Novels and *Rojo amanecer* reinforced the intellectual pole while plays branched out, looking for a resolution. In the first two instances, the intellectual pole's position was reinforced, and Mexicans were urged to accept it without question. Only playwrights suggested that personal memories be added to the collective memory, to help shape it and define the massacre's place in the national narrative. The hinge began to open from 1985 to 1990, and that process continued in 1991.

⁸² Gawronski, "The Revolution is Dead. ¡Viva la revolución!" 389.

CHAPTER 5: THE HINGE (PART 2), 1990-2006

“1968 is a tapestry, a mosaic, [and] each person has their own version. There are different experiences that are intertwined.”

- Marcela Fernández Violante¹

I. Introduction

The memorial hinge swung ajar with *onda* literature, open-ended plays, and *Rojo amanecer* (1989) in the late 1980s. For the intellectual pole, the era presented an opportunity to capitalize on the democratic opening it prophesied for more than twenty years. Discussion of the massacre’s meaning was, in the main, discouraged and Mexicans were urged to accept, unquestioningly, the intellectual pole’s interpretation. Intellectuals published books and articles that kept the massacre in the public eye; thus it never really became part of the past. In many ways the hinge confirmed that the student movement and the massacre existed in both the past and the present. Lamentably, these books and articles failed to update their analysis. Thus, while intellectuals demanded Tlatelolco be recognized as the fourth break, they never articulated why it deserved such status. As a group, intellectuals remained focused on what *should have* happened after the massacre, rather than what *did* happen.

From 1991 to 2006, the Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) subtly changed its minimization tactic. Beginning in 1992, President Carlos Salinas literally re-wrote Mexican history to suit his administration’s goals of First World integration and broader economic engagement in new elementary school textbooks. He made a conscious decision to blame the army and reduce *Rojo amanecer*’s impact in terms of the Tlatelolco Massacre. The new textbooks were recalled before the school year began, but they stand as examples of the PRI’s

¹ Quoted in Rodríguez Cruz, *El 68 en el cine mexicano*, 21.

minimization policy. In the late 1990s, the PRI lost control of the political hinge because of two decisive acts: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's 2 October 1998 declaration of a day of mourning and Vicente Fox's 2000 electoral victory. The former was the first official recognition of the Tlatelolco Massacre, and the first to officially allow it to be remembered in a nationally important space, while the latter ended more than seven decades of PRI electoral domination. Fox built on those acts by appointing Special Prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo Prieto to investigate human rights abuses; his 2006 report explicitly connected the massacre to PRI repressions before and after 1968. Carrillo Prieto effectively challenged the massacre's memories and reinforced the notion that the movement and the massacre were part of the past and the present.

The intellectual hinge failed to take advantage of the political changes because it refused to revise its analytical position in light of new evidence and developments. Even after Cárdenas issued his declaration and Carrillo Prieto published his report, intellectuals repeated the same argument they made for thirty years. Raúl Álvarez Garín and Raúl Jardón, among others, argued that Tlatelolco was the fourth break and a call for both democracy and revolution. For intellectuals, represented by Álvarez Garín and Jardón, the massacre represented a break from the PRI-dominated interpretation of the Mexican Revolution and demonstrated the party's ideological bankruptcy. In short, the intellectual pole reinforced its own position and continued to disregard the average Mexican's personal memories. Only the intellectual pole's memories, born of direct experience, were valid additions to the massacre's collective memories. Thus the intellectual pole's argument failed to evolve, save adding the

new dimension of human rights violation. Yet interpreting the massacre as a human rights violation still meant it was both a democratic opening and the fourth break in Mexican history.

It was only in the late 1990s that one group of intellectuals took a different analytical tack. Building on plays from the late 1980s, Mexican playwrights showed how personal memories haunted ordinary Mexicans and how the admonition “no se olvide” became a burden. While urging remembrance, playwrights also showed how memories separated intellectuals from the general public. The intellectual pole’s analysis existed in isolation and failed to evolve, undercutting its self-appointed leadership role. Playwrights suggested that memories could not exist in isolation and to do so was to invite calamity. Instead, a better way forward was through open discussion of events and collective memories that accepted different points-of-view, both of which bring people together.

The six years from 1985 to 1990 seemed to open a door for Mexicans to assess their memories of the student movement and the massacre. The PRI’s ineffective response to the earthquakes, its fraud in the 1988 presidential election, and the cultural touchstones of *onda* literature, plays, and *Rojo amanecer* provided a series of small hinges upon which historical appraisal swung. Events in the 1990s seemingly confirmed that an analytical breakthrough was near. Yet despite the 1992 textbook controversy, Cárdenas’s 1998 declaration, Fox’s 2000 electoral victory, and Carrillo Prieto’s 2006 report, an honest assessment of the massacre’s place in Mexican history did not occur. The 1990s and the early 2000s held promise as an era that would confront the massacre to define its place within the various narratives, collective memories, and personal memories. The first to attempt a moderately open re-evaluation was Carlos Salinas.

II. The textbook fight

In August 1992, President Carlos Salinas and his Secretary of Education, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, announced new editions of elementary school history textbooks. These texts updated a series called the Free Text Program for the first time since the 1970s, and would be compulsory for all fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in the country.² In the wake of the surprisingly successful 1991 mid-term elections, Salinas had a significant amount of political capital.³ He used it to literally re-write Mexican history, with two goals in mind. First, he wanted to eliminate some of the more disagreeable aspects in modern Mexican history. Second, he used the new texts to promote First World integration. The texts celebrated the US economic boom after World War II. They praised its dynamism and its openness, and suggested that “Mexico benefitted” from its northern neighbor’s growth.⁴ Thus the texts reinforced the idea that Salinas’s neo-liberal policies were better than those of the 1970s and 1980s. That is, Mexico’s future prosperity would come from copying the US economic model. It was a massive project in which both Salinas and Zedillo remained personally involved. The actual authors, the historians Héctor Aguilar Camín and Enrique Florescano, were close, personally and professionally, to the president and his minister.⁵ The text’s revisions were concentrated on the era after the Reform, beginning with a new interpretation of Porfirio Díaz’s dictatorship. Salinas, Zedillo, Aguilar Camín, and Florescano consciously attempted to re-shape the revolutionary narrative

² In Spanish, *Libros de Texto Gratuitos*.

³ The PRI made a surprisingly strong rebound from the 1988 election debacle, taking a majority in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. See Section III of this chapter for more.

⁴ Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Mi libro de historia de México: Sexto grado* (1992): 138-59.

⁵ Both Aguilar Camín and Florescano can be considered somewhat co-opted because of their participation in the official government project. With that said, both published works reinforcing the intellectual pole of remembrance’s point-of-view after the textbook project was over. Aguilar Camín famously wrote his novel *La guerra de Galio* (1991) while Florescano edited a volume called *Mitos mexicanos* (México, DF: Nuevo Siglo Aguilar, 1995). They are personifications of the complex relationship Mexican intellectuals have with the state.

and the collective memory to show two things: first, that the PRI deserved its position as revolutionary guardian; and second, that foreign investment had always brought Mexico benefits.

In the past, presidents could expect widespread endorsement for policy objectives, at least within the party's political apparatus. Something as seemingly innocuous as updating history texts would have been, prior to 1988, unanimously approved by the PRI's corporate sectors. But the post-1988 political splintering affected Mexico's political culture. Opposition to the texts came from all sides of the political spectrum. The Chamber of Deputies, newspapers, the Catholic Church, parent groups, business organizations and the army are just some of the groups that opposed the new texts to varying degrees.⁶ Why would they do that? How could the PRI have made such a gross miscalculation? The answer lies in the texts themselves.

Comparisons between the 1992 texts and previous editions published by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) reveal a surprising thematic departure. Three things, in particular, stand out. First is the reluctance to mention anything like social stratification, economic exploitation, or class conflict. Second is the overwhelming devotion to foreign investment and integration with the United States economy. Third is the concern regarding 'modernization,' which impacts the first two themes.⁷ Salinas deliberately changed Mexico's history to show that his priorities were consistent with those of previous presidents. He tried to show that his policies had historical foundations and had, in fact, always benefited Mexico's people and economy. Opposition arose not because of changes, *per se*: history evolves and interpretations change based on new evidence all the time. Rather, opposition centered on Salinas's clumsy

⁶ Dennis Gilbert, "Rewriting History: Salinas, Zedillo and the 1992 Textbook Controversy," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 13 (no. 2): 271.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 294.

attempt to justify the PRI's ideologically inconsistent policies as compatible with the Mexican Revolution. The revolutionary narrative, then, was the key. Salinas had to place his policies within the revolution's ideals to ensure broad acceptance. The problems came when he re-wrote the revolution's ideals to emphasize First World integration and beneficial foreign investment.

In 1993, when asked about the textbooks, Carlos Monsiváis said, "The Government and groups of power believe that what is in the textbooks is in the hearts and minds of the next generation. For that reason they are intent on abolishing any subversive or politically incorrect thinking in the books."⁸ Since the Free Text Program provided books that were, in some poorer areas, the only ones in the house, they would have a captive audience. Monsiváis was concerned that a new official history was created not only to justify the PRI's actions since the revolution but to show that there was historical precedent for the party's long rule. Take the texts' treatment of Porfirio Díaz's presidency. Prior to 1992, Mexican fourth graders were taught that Díaz "was very bad for the life of Mexico, because the people were not given the chance to elect their leaders."⁹ Furthermore, in both the 1960 and the 1976 versions of the history texts, all of the progress achieved during the Díaz dictatorship was qualified by describing social inequalities.¹⁰ In 1992, the analytical slant changed. Díaz's image was rehabilitated, and class conflicts were ignored. Critics accused Aguilar Camín and Florescano of "polishing the Porfirian mirror in order to improve Salinas's own image."¹¹ The revisions show

⁸ Monsiváis quoted in Anthony DePalma, "New Battles Flare Over Mexico's Past," *New York Times*, 30 August 1993, A9.

⁹ Quoted in Tim Golden, "Mexicans Look Askance at Textbooks' New Slant," *New York Times*, 21 September 1992, A3.

¹⁰ Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 275-77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 275.

an understanding of memory studies, which have consistently demonstrated that people remember things that fit previously defined narrative structures.¹² By framing the Porfiriato as an era of benign economic growth, the authors hoped the same ideas would transfer to the Salinas presidency. As Monsiváis mentioned, the PRI attempted to shape the next generation's ideas with the texts.

Although the PRI was never ideologically rigid, its shift toward the myth of First World insertion and away from the revolution was alarming. For six decades, to 1992, the PRI had ruled based on the idea that it was the revolution's guardian. It alone could uphold and enforce the revolution's ideals. If 1988 suggested the PRI was more about winning elections than revolutionary ideals, the 1992 textbook controversy, and the associated re-writing of official history, drove that point home. The interpretive themes mentioned above must be contextualized by the lost economic decade (the 1980s) and the desire to join the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. Thus the 1992 texts showed that history, and with it the national narrative and collective memory, were malleable, though changes were sometimes resisted. The collective memory of the Díaz regime was altered; the era became known for its economic success rather than its political or social problems. In so doing, the authors subverted the revolution's ideals, removing it as an element of social cohesion, and, with that, the basis of the PRI's political legitimacy. The revolutionary narrative was crucial to the PRI's sense of self and political legitimacy; it was the dominant narrative that had emerged after years of contesting memories. When Salinas undercut its ideals in the texts, a number of groups in the party turned against him.¹³ The revolution was crucial, because it was one of the

¹² Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*, 12.

¹³ Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 295-96.

few things that united Mexicans.¹⁴ Rushing headlong into NAFTA undermined the political stability that had been taken for granted.¹⁵ Support disappeared, and the lack of a national project, combined with the December 1994 financial crisis, led to Vicente Fox's electoral victory in 2000.

Where did that leave the Tlatelolco Massacre? Surprisingly, the 1992 texts dealt with both the student movement and the massacre in a relatively open manner, in direct contrast to more than twenty years of minimization. For the first time in over two decades, Tlatelolco was an important concern for people beyond the intellectual and PRI poles of remembrance. In essence, the 1992 texts absolve the PRI while shifting the entirety of the blame to the army, as if it acted on its own. The Mexican Army resented this depiction and registered its outrage publically and privately.¹⁶ It surely did not help that the SEP sub-secretary in charge of the Free Text Program was Gilberto Guevara Niebla, a once-prominent student leader and Tlatelolco activist.¹⁷ The army's first response was a public statement that it had performed on 2 October 1968, as always, under civilian orders. Its second response was more personal and effective. Both General Antonio Riviello Bazán, the Secretary of Defense, and General Alfonso Corona del Rosal, Regent of Mexico City in 1968, visited Zedillo to ask him to consider revisions. In the Chamber of Deputies, members of the PRI delegation worried that children would take a negative view of the army away from the texts. Bowing to the pressure, Salinas recalled the

¹⁴ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 21 & 158-59.

¹⁵ James F. Rochlin, *Redefining Mexican "Security": Society, State, and Region Under NAFTA* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997): 178.

¹⁶ Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 292-93. See also Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Mi libro de historia de México: Sexto grado* (1992): 143.

¹⁷ I use, and critique, a number of his works throughout my dissertation. Dennis Gilbert calls his involvement in the textbook project a "coincidence [that] added to the military's sense of grievance." See Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 292, n. 21.

textbooks.¹⁸ The openness of the opposition to Salinas's revisions is notable. It reflects how the textbooks undermined the PRI's solid base of support and it shows that, perhaps, Tlatelolco still mattered. Although official history was malleable and the collective memory was contested, personal memories affected how people and groups reacted. The army and the PRI were defensive over how the massacre was presented. I am unsure why Salinas and Zedillo allowed Tlatelolco to be addressed so openly. Perhaps it was a reflection of Aguilar Camín, Florescano, or Guevara Niebla's biases, for all had written extensively on the massacre from the intellectual point-of-view.¹⁹ Perhaps it was a calculated risk to place the massacre within the revolutionary narrative as a one-time event of tragic consequence. In no way could it be considered an honest analysis.

The 1992 textbook fight crystallized the opposing memorial poles' positions in the hinge era. Re-writing Mexico's history was a deliberate attempt to reinforce Salinas's political and economic priorities. In terms of the Tlatelolco Massacre, the authors, Aguilar Camín and Florescano, undermined the intellectual pole, perhaps because they were "regime ideologues" interested only in finger-pointing rather than analysis.²⁰ If literature and *Rojo amanecer* pushed the intellectual interpretation without reservations, the 1992 textbooks attempted to simultaneously acknowledge and minimize the massacre. The texts were, in a sense, an updated version of Echeverría's co-optation policies, this time enhanced by intellectual authorship. The texts did not offer compromise. That is, they wanted Mexicans to accept only

¹⁸ The texts were recalled in late 1992. A new competition began in January 1993, and winners were selected and rewarded (with the equivalent of about \$165,000 USD). But in August 1993, just before school started, the texts were withdrawn. See Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 272.

¹⁹ See, for example: Aguilar Camín's novel *La guerra de Galio* (México, DF: Cal y Arena, 1991), Florescano's *Mitos mexicanos* (México, DF: Nuevo Siglo Aguilar, 1995), and Guevara Niebla's *La democracia en la calle: crónica del movimiento estudiantil mexicano* (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1988).

²⁰ Gilbert notes that Aguilar Camín was "regarded by political cognoscenti as a regime ideologue" thus it stands to reason that Florescano was seen in the same light. See Gilbert, "Rewriting History," 273.

one point-of-view, that of the state. Thus, the average Mexican's personal memories were discounted by both the intellectual pole and the PRI pole in the hinge era. Salinas's mistake was not pushing the PRI pole of remembrance, but blaming the Mexican Army. The ensuing firestorm of protest weakened the president's political position and showed just how dependent he was on the party's various corporate sectors.²¹ The new textbooks alienated some groups and eroded the political progress made in the 1991 mid-term elections. Thus, in some ways, Salinas and his texts illustrated the massacre's continued importance. How could an insignificant event ignite such a massive protest? The texts show that some groups, mainly those directly involved, had a vested interest in how the massacre was remembered. The Mexican Army, for example, did not want to be blamed for the murder of unarmed civilians. Salinas thought he could control the PRI's corporate sectors, and re-interpret the entire revolutionary narrative, because of his position. In the end, he could not. The 1992 textbooks were an aborted attempt to re-write Mexico's history to control both the collective memories and the revolutionary narrative. Salinas felt that by creating one narrative of Mexico's history, he could reinforce his political goals. The textbook fight illustrated the president's limited grip on power. In the next few years, the political hinged turned on decisive acts by emboldened opposition leaders.

²¹ See Manuel Pastor, Jr. and Carol Wise, "The Lost *Sexenio*: Vicente Fox and the New Politics of Economic Reform in Mexico," *Latin American Politics and Society* 47, no. 4 (2005): 135-60. In the article, the authors discuss how the president was actually less powerful than previously imagined. Fox's *sexenio* showed that the president, even PRI presidents, was very dependent on a compliant Chamber of Deputies.

III. The political hinge

Two acts defined the political hinge and led to the breakthrough of 2006. The first was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's declaration of 2 October 1998 as an official day of mourning for those who died in the Tlatelolco Massacre. Although it proved to be a half-hearted effort, it was an important hinge on which history swung. The second, a product of the first, was Vicente Fox's victory in the 2000 presidential election. Campaigning on a reformist platform, Fox promised economic, political, and social change. For Mexicans, the Salinas and Zedillo presidencies offered some economic progress but not enough political or social progress. Fox took advantage and promised more political openness and inquiries into past human rights abuses. Both Cárdenas's statement and Fox's victory led to the Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado's (Office of the Special Prosecutor for Political and Social Movements of the Past, FEMOSPP) report in 2006. Although not exactly what the intellectual pole wanted, and subjected to sometimes heavy criticism, the report contextualized and demythologized the massacre and, most importantly, placed it within a narrative of similar repressions.

In the aftermath of the 1988 presidential election, President Carlos Salinas moved to consolidate his position, tenuous given the common assumption of fraud. It did not help that, at the height of his presidency, he ordered all physical remnants of the election's results, which had been stored in the basement of the Chamber of Deputies, to be burned.²² The PRI, it would seem, learned nothing from the election. Salinas pushed forward with his modernization program, the goal of which was Mexico's entry into the First World. To help, he turned to ambitious young economists who had graduated from prestigious US universities. Under Pedro

²² Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 770.

Aspe Amella's direction, the Finance Ministry balanced the budget and, by 1991, had achieved a surplus. Along the way, the economy grew at a rate of 3% annually while inflation fell to 15.5%. (See Table 5.1) He reduced tariffs and enforced tax laws, both of which raised revenues. The increased revenues recharged the economy, raised nominal wages, and, perhaps, increased the PRI's political support. At the same time, Salinas continued de la Madrid's privatization program so that by the end of his *sexenio*, 85% of Mexican public enterprises had been sold, closed, or allowed to go bankrupt.²³ Salinas's broad vision was a redefinition of *mexicanidad*. He tried to remove the United States as the source of Mexico's problems and instead recast the northern giant as the solution. Nationalism took a backseat to economic and cultural integration. Privatization allowed US firms to enter Mexico, an action framed as economically beneficial. He altered the *Ley de Fomento para la Protección de la Propiedad Intelectual* to "pave the way for the proliferation of U.S. franchises. He eased restrictions on foreign participation in radio and television and passed reforms that broadened the role of the Church, the private sector, and even foreigners in education."²⁴ Similarly, in the cultural realm, Salinas removed the clause in the *Ley de la Industria Cinematográfica* that required theatres to devote 50% of screen time to Mexican films.²⁵

Salinas leveraged an improved economy and a budget surplus, among other economic factors into a surprisingly sweeping victory in the 1991 mid-term elections.²⁶ The PRI won an absolute majority in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. A rather large percentage of

²³ *Ibid.*, 773.

²⁴ Morris, *Gringolandia*, 14-15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁶ According to the official results, compiled by the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), the PRI received 14,256,447 votes (58.66%). The PAN placed second with 4,100,287 votes (16.87%), and the PRD placed a disappointing fifth with just 878,115 votes (3.61%). IFE, "Elección de senadores de la república: Estadísticas de las elecciones federales de 1991" (Retrieved from http://www.ife.org.mx/documentos/RESELEC/nuevo_1991/sen_91/nac_edo/nac_sen_91.html on 10 July 2009).

Mexicans were not convinced that the PRI had abandoned its electoral alchemy entirely, but the result was nevertheless impressive.²⁷ The mid-term elections reversed a trend, that of progressively lower support for the PRI, that had been evident since the 1960s. But the 1991 election proved illusory. Salinas’s decision to update the Free Text Program turned a large segment of the population against him. On 1 January 1994, Salinas’s crowning achievement, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), went into effect. It was the final step toward First World integration. Paradoxically, the Ejército Zapatista de la Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN), a peasant movement based in Chiapas, began its armed rebellion the same day.

Table 5.1: Some Economic Indicators, 1988-92²⁸

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Real GDP Growth (%)	1.2	3.2	4.4	3.7	2.6
Inflation (%)	114.0	20.0	27.0	23.0	15.5
Exports (\$bn)	21.0	23.0	27.0	43.0	46.0
Imports (\$bn)	19.0	23.0	31.0	50.0	62.0
Current Account (\$bn)	-2.4	-4.0	-7.1	-13.8	-22.8

Led by the magnetic Subcomandante Marcos, 3,000 members of the EZLN captured seven towns in Chiapas. Salinas and the army responded quickly, killing 145 people within twenty-four hours. Both sides agreed to a ceasefire on 12 January with settlement negotiations beginning in February; they have continued on and off since then with no real progress.²⁹ The EZLN’s uprising forced Mexicans to confront their notions of “the nature of the country’s

²⁷ The magazine *Nexos* polled 5,000 Mexicans after the results were announced; 19.5% believed the results were falsified in some way. Of that 19.5%, 36.5% gave “fraud” as their reason while 15.8% believed the numbers were not reliable. See “Encuestalia NEXOS con la opinion pública. El fraude y los votantes,” *Nexos* 166 (October 1991).

²⁸ Cothran, *Political Stability and Democracy in Mexico*, 213.

²⁹ For more on the EZLN and its movement, see Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land, A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1989) and John Womack, Jr., *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (New York: The New Press, Inc., 1999).

indigenous past, the indigenous component of *mestizaje*, and the idea of national unity.”³⁰ The Zapatistas challenged the PRI’s definition of *mexicanidad* by asserting their citizenship and questioning the party’s revolutionary credentials. The Zapatistas were visible proof that some Mexicans had not benefited from its revolutionary project. Politically, the EZLN tied the PRI’s hands because Salinas’s modernization program, especially NAFTA, prevented the violent response of the kind the PRI used in the past. Put simply, the PRI could not afford the bad international press repression would cause. The end result was the PAN’s electoral victory in 2000.³¹ The contrast between a peasant uprising and Salinas’s myth of First World integration embarrassed the president. In all likelihood, it influenced his choice of successor, as he used his *dedazo* privilege, the ability to appoint his successor, on the charismatic Luis Donaldo Colosio. On the campaign trail, Colosio sounded like an old-style populist, making promises to all groups and wading into crowds without bodyguards. On 23 March 1994, he was assassinated by a lone gunman in Tijuana, Baja California.³² Salinas turned to Ernesto Zedillo, an old friend and collaborator on the aborted textbook revisions, to run for president. The technocratic Zedillo was in many respects the exact opposite of Colosio: a Yale-educated economist, he was a true believer in Salinas’s economic programs and a boring public speaker who read his speeches.³³ Nevertheless, he had the full support of the PRI’s electoral machine as he ran against Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the leftist Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and Diego Fernández de Cevallos of the rightist Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

³⁰ Morris, *Gringolandia*, 280.

³¹ Gerardo Otero, “Mexico’s Economic and Political Futures,” in *Neoliberalism Revisited: Economic Restructuring and Mexico’s Political Future*, ed. Gerardo Otero (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996): 239-42.

³² Castañeda, *Perpetuating Power*, 111-13. Castañeda argues that Colosio’s death signaled the end of the *dedazo* tradition; after his assassination, no longer would presidents be able to tap their successor on the shoulder and have automatic success. The assassination, he argues, undermined the tradition.

³³ Castañeda believes there is no evidence that Salinas engineered Colosio’s assassination, and I agree. See Castañeda, *Perpetuating Power*, 115-17.

For his part, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas kept the 1988 election in the public eye but never advocated violence, perhaps sparing Mexico a civil war.³⁴ On 5 May 1989, along with his old partner Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and several others, Cárdenas founded the Partido de la Revolución Democrática to give those on the left a national political voice. The PRD hoped to capitalize on Cárdenas's name and his success in the 1988 elections. Between 1988 and 1994, Mexico's political climate changed, affecting the PRD for the worse, for two main reasons. First, the popular organizations that emerged after the earthquakes actively supported Cárdenas in 1988, but not in later elections. By 1994, it became clear that the PRD's supporters were limited to the capital city and the surrounding areas. In 1988, volunteers associated with community organizations observed the elections in the Distrito Federal and close-by states. Their actions ensured a degree of cleanliness unseen in other states. Cárdenas and the PRD counted on a similar volunteer effort in 1994, but it failed to materialize in the same numbers. At the same time, the other discontented group, the EZLN, appeared to be natural PRD supporters. Instead, the EZLN opted to boycott the election in its entirety. As a result, the PRD could only rely on Mexico City's votes with any certainty, which doomed the party to failure. The second factor was Salinas's economic success. The economy was rebounding from the lost decade, and the PRD had little to promise on the campaign trail aside from being different from the PRI. In the end, Cárdenas "failed to devise a coherent critique of the Salinas economic policies and a plausible alternative economic strategy."³⁵ In truth, the PRD never worried Salinas; he was far more concerned with the Partido Acción Nacional, because he believed that most Mexicans

³⁴ Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 772.

³⁵ Needler, *Mexican Politics*, 30.

would abandon the PRI for the right, not the left.³⁶ Salinas proved to have a canny understanding of the Mexican people, born out by the 1994 election. Zedillo won the election with 48.69% of the votes while the PAN placed second, and the PRD placed third.³⁷

In all the twists and turns from 1991 to 1994, Tlatelolco played only a small role for a short time. After the sudden and important re-emergence in the late 1980s, it disappeared in the early 1990s, subsumed by political and economic concerns. The Tlatelolco Massacre existed on the margins of Mexican political society. Aside from the military's outrage in 1992, it played no role in the average Mexican's life. It was not connected to the era's signature social movement – that of the EZLN – in any way. The Zapatista movement was an expression of peasant nationalism and, as such, it resonated with many parts of the country. In contrast, the Tlatelolco Massacre was confined to Mexico City and never had national appeal. Its collective memory was only important to those in Mexico City. In other areas, memories of repression centered on railroad or teacher strikes or even the Cristero Rebellion of the 1920s. Tlatelolco, then, was not a nationally unifying event like the Mexican Revolution or Lázaro Cárdenas's petroleum expropriation. It was something that was crucially important to a few people who lived in Mexico City. Beginning with De la Madrid, the PRI attempted to change the revolutionary narrative and replace it with one of First World insertion, destroying one of the nation's unifying myths and calling *mexicanidad*, as defined by the revolution, into question. "Revolutionary nationalism does not provide legitimacy for the current rulers because Zedillo,

³⁶ Eckstein, "Formal Versus Substantive Democracy," 230.

³⁷ According to the IFE, the PRI received 17,181,651 votes (48.69%). The PAN received 9,146,841 votes (25.92%), and the PRD received 5,852,134 votes (16.59%). The PRI won every state and the Distrito Federal. IFE, "Elección de Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos: Estadísticas de las elecciones federales de 1994. Resultados nacionales y por entidad federativa" (Retrieved from http://www.ife.org.mx/documentos/RESELEC/nuevo_1994/pres_94/nac_edo/nac_pre_94.html on 10 July 2009).

Salinas before him, and de la Madrid even earlier have actively sought to tear down the policies that buttress revolutionary nationalism.”³⁸ Zedillo’s policies did not heal the wounds opened by the Zaptista uprising, nor did they resolve the lingering issue of Tlatelolco. Although the massacre had faded, it had not been forgotten, a product of the nation’s inability to place it within the revolutionary narrative. For four more years, the massacre lay dormant, until 2 October 1998.

In 1997, President Zedillo fulfilled one of his campaign promises and eliminated the office of regent of Mexico City and replaced it with a democratically elected Jefe de Gobierno.³⁹ Prior to 1997, the Distrito Federal was administered by a regent appointed by the president, allowing the latter to retain direct control over the capital. On 6 July 1997, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas won the first election for the post of Jefe de Gobierno of the Distrito Federal with 47.7% of the vote. For the first time since he left the PRI, Cárdenas harnessed his considerable popularity and achieved electoral victory. His campaign focused on broad issues, like poverty, corruption, crime, and pollution; once again, he focused on inclusion. His victory was seen as a rebuke to the PRI and a legitimate democratic opening.⁴⁰

Although Cárdenas worked hard to separate his administration from the PRI, he has to wait more than a year to do so. On 2 October 1998, Cárdenas declared an official day of mourning and ordered Mexican flags to be flown at half-mast to remember those who died in

³⁸ Joseph L. Klesner, “Political Change in Mexico: Institutions and Identity,” *Latin American Research Review* 32 (1997): 198.

³⁹ Although the title is usually translated to “mayor” in English, in truth, the position lies somewhere between mayor and governor. For simplicity’s sake, I have used, and will continue to use, “mayor” in this study. The Jefe de Gobierno serves a six-year term that coincides with the president’s.

⁴⁰ Julia Preston, “Opposition Leader Declares Victory in Mexico Election,” *New York Times*, 7 July 1997, 1.

the Tlatelolco Massacre.⁴¹ His declaration marked the first time that the massacre had been recognized at any level, and that angered the PRI. In one fell swoop, Cárdenas undid thirty years of minimization by bringing the massacre back to the fore. The intellectual pole of remembrance was ecstatic. Carlos Monsiváis said that the day of mourning was “a triumph of free expression over authoritarianism, *of the Mexican people’s version of history over the Government’s version.*”⁴² Monsiváis implicitly acknowledged that history and memory are contested but overstated the declaration’s importance. Cárdenas acknowledged and commemorated the massacre in time for the thirtieth anniversary, but he did not fully embrace the intellectual point-of-view. Instead, he carefully staked out a territory as a moderate and declared that the day of mourning would acknowledge *all* who died, even the soldiers.⁴³ For Cárdenas, the act of remembering was the most important part. Far from embracing one pole or the other, he defined the collective memory as one of national tragedy. The importance lay not in who did what to whom or who was at fault, but in the declaration. Yet, instead of finding himself as a mediator, Cárdenas found himself in the middle of a crossfire between the poles of remembrance. The army fought vigorously to defend its actions in 1992 and, six years later, still resented being associated with the students. Intellectuals blamed the army for the death of Tlatelolco. Very few intellectuals followed former student leader Luis Tomás Cervantes Cabeza de Vaca’s response, which was more even-handed and recognized the positive step that the

⁴¹ Sam Dillon, “The World In Mexico, Changing Times Mean Changing History,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1998, 16.

⁴² Quoted in Dillon, “The World In Mexico, Changing Times Mean Changing History,” 16. Italics are mine. As of the completion of my study (December 2010), the PRD is the only party to win the office of Jefe de Gobierno.

⁴³ See Gómez, *1968: La historia* for a list of those who died on 2 October 1968. See also the Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado, *Informe Histórico*.

declaration represented.⁴⁴ Accumulated grievances colored their interpretations and prevented an honest assessment, which Cárdenas had hoped to provoke.

In the traditional intellectual historiography, Cárdenas's declaration was seen as a watershed moment. It gave the commemorations a sense of authority. It was concrete evidence that the hinge had swung wide open and that Mexicans were prepared to confront their memories. Yet the declaration failed to move the PRI or the Mexican Army; both institutions continued their policy of minimization. Thus while Cárdenas's declaration was important, it failed to live up to its promise because, on reflection, it was half-hearted. Cárdenas attempted to define the collective memory in terms of inclusion. He saw himself as a moderating influence on the two poles of remembrance. He wanted them to include the average Mexican and discuss the massacre in the national context, rather than in isolation. Both the PRI pole and the intellectual pole built their analyses based on exclusion. Although there was a sense of relief at the announcement, Cárdenas's goal, challenging memories of the massacre, seemed impossible. Perhaps the announcement was too sudden for Mexicans. After thirty years of forgetting, the massacre was thrust into their lives. The 1998 commemoration was a middling success, but the vast majority remained unwilling to confront the massacre.⁴⁵ Take, for example, a series of plays performed to commemorate the massacre's thirtieth anniversary in October 1998. The four plays shared the themes of remembrance and openness,

⁴⁴ "Causan polémica declaraciones de Cárdenas sobre el Ejército en 68," *La Jornada*, 23 September 1998. Retrieved from <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1998/09/23/polemica.html> on 15 August 2009. Cabeza de Vaca participated in the 1968 student movement as one of the leaders of the CNH.

⁴⁵ According to an article in the Mexico City daily *La Jornada* entitled "Contra el olvido," (3 October 1998) the participants reckoned that 120,000 people commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre. The Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, on the other hand, issued an official number of 25,000 people. The disparity illustrates two things: first, the continued unreliability of numbers when it comes to Tlatelolco in any form; and second, that the two poles of remembrance were alive and well in 1998. Retrieved from <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1998/10/03/olvido.html> on 15 August 2009.

that is, discussing the massacre's impact on ordinary people, and built on Cárdenas's announcement. Yet they were ignored by both the government and the media. Why? Miguel Ángel Tenorio, who helped organize the Tlatelolco Cycle, offered his opinion:

I think the authorities, including those from the Distrito Federal, [some of whom] are from the left and [some of whose] members were activists during 1968, are afraid [of what will happen if] 1968 is talked about. Why? I don't know yet. These [plays] were scheduled in places difficult for the public to access, [and with] little promotion. ... What is not so clear is the media's role. Why? I do not know. I have continuously sent them information about what I'm doing in schools, but they have not even considered [reporting] it. I remain with many questions, attitudes that I cannot understand.⁴⁶

Tenorio's explanation revealed the intellectual pole's unwillingness to evolve. He felt the plays were important enough to be covered by the media and acknowledged by the government, especially after Cárdenas's announcement, simply because of their content. Yet the plays were ignored. The broader reasons for this were twofold: first, the PRI's policy of minimization was still enforced; and second, the massacre was not as important as the intellectual pole believed. The plays were incidental. The real problem was the intellectual pole's broad refusal to evolve its analysis. Although the Tlatelolco Cycle offered some new analyses, based on acceptance of personal memories, the public perception of the intellectual pole's traditional argument prevented its success. The intellectual pole had accidentally created an environment of fear around the massacre, something the PRI gladly exploited. Cárdenas's declaration was not enough to sweep the fear away. Thus neither the declaration nor the cycle of plays allowed Mexicans to confront the massacre.

In 1999, Cárdenas resigned from his post as Jefe de Gobierno of the Distrito Federal in order to run for president in 2000. He hoped that his time as the mayor would give him more

⁴⁶ Miguel Ángel Tenorio quoted in Bixler, "Re-membering the Past," 121. The text is from a personal email from Tenorio to Bixler and dated 19 April 2001.

electoral credibility. The 2000 presidential election pitted Cárdenas against the PAN's Vicente Fox Quesada and the PRI's Francisco Labastida. Both Cárdenas and Fox ran on reformist platforms promising a clean break with the PRI. In the end, Fox proved more convincing to voters, and won with 45.12% of the votes.⁴⁷ The 2000 election was another historical watershed: Fox's PAN ended seventy-one years of PRI domination and, incidentally, proved Salinas correct that Mexicans would turn to the PAN before the PRD. For those to whom Tlatelolco was of great importance, the victory marked an important turning point.

In 2002, Fox appointed Dr. Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, a legal scholar, to lead the *Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado* (Office of Special Prosecutor for Political and Social Movements of the Past, FEMOSPP) and charged him with investigating human rights abuses in Mexico's recent past. To PRI supporters, the FEMOSPP smacked of both political opportunism and vengeance.⁴⁸ They could not stop it entirely, so they adopted stonewall tactics, hoping to delay the investigation indefinitely. They underestimated Carrillo Prieto's tenacity. His investigation lasted for four years, until 2006, when he issued his final report. The report was devastating, alleging that human rights abuses were not the work of rogue generals but were, in fact, official policy under Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), Echeverría (1970-1976) and López Portillo (1976-1982).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ According to the IFE, the PAN received 15,989,636 votes (42.52%). The PRI received 13,579,718 votes (36.11%), and the PRD received 6,256,780 votes (16.64%). Fox won 19 states plus the Distrito Federal, Labastida won 11 states, and Cárdenas won only one, his home state of Michoacán. IFE, "Elección de Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos: Estadística de las elecciones federales de 2000. Resultados nacionales y por entidad federativa" (Retrieved from http://www.ife.org.mx/documentos/RESELEC/esta2000/comp_test/reportes/centrales/Presidente.html on 9 December 2007).

⁴⁸ Sergio Aguayo Quezada, Javier Treviño Rangel, and Maria Pallais, "Neither Truth Nor Justice: Mexico's De Facto Amnesty," *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 2 (2006).

⁴⁹ *Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado, Informe Histórico*, Chapters 8 and 10.

Carrillo Prieto spared none. The report was, in many ways, more important than Cárdenas's declaration, though they were often seen in tandem. In truth, the report probably could not have happened without Cárdenas, even though Fox won the 2000 election. Included in the human rights abuses were the railroad strikes of the 1950s, the Tlatelolco Massacre, the 1971 Corpus Christi massacre, and the dirty war of the 1970s.⁵⁰ By 2002, the intellectual pole had been pushing the idea that the massacre was the fourth break for thirty-five years. In the process, it became a mythical event, in the sense that it had been elevated to the historical pantheon, in the intellectual analysis. By showing a pattern of abuse, Carrillo Prieto re-established the student movement and the massacre in the realm of the real. In short, he contextualized and de-mythologized both, situating them within the national narrative and collective memory. The report's investigation and meticulous documentation could have been an example for the intellectual pole. Instead, it failed to use the report's conclusion to the fullest extent and its analysis failed to evolve.⁵¹ In his own way, Carrillo Prieto encouraged remembrance, especially of personal memories, taking a cue from playwrights. Through acknowledgement and assessment of memories and narratives, Mexicans could finish mourning their dead. In effect, the report breathed new life into Tlatelolco remembrance.

Criticism of the report appeared almost immediately. Five investigators, José Sotelo Marbán, Razhy González Rodríguez, José Martínez Cruz, Rosa María Ortega Corona, and Pablo Martín Tasso Carvajal, all of whom worked for the Fiscal, claimed that Carrillo Prieto's account did not go far enough and allowed the state to avoid full responsibility for human rights abuses. They also accused Carrillo Prieto of removing some important sections and of not providing

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-43.

⁵¹ See Chapter 6 for a more in-depth explanation of the intellectual pole's failure to lead.

enough context.⁵² The investigators have a point, to a degree: they wanted the most complete report possible. Yet that is what Carrillo Prieto produced. To be sure, not all information was released, but the FEMOSPP's report was a landmark in Tlatelolco's collective memory. The report represents "an important step toward reversing Mexico's legacy of impunity," according to Kate Doyle, director of the Mexico Project at George Washington University's National Security Archive.⁵³ Where Carrillo Prieto did fail, and Doyle notes this, was in his attempt to prosecute those responsible.⁵⁴ On 22 May 2005, he arrested and indicted former president Luis Echeverría on charges of genocide stemming from the 1971 Corpus Christi massacre. Four days later, a federal judge quashed the indictment citing the thirty year statute of limitations. While the report is crucial for understanding what happened, it did not put those responsible in prison. Thus, according to three Mexican authors, Fox's government, and by extension the FEMOSPP, "heralded ... the transition to democracy [but] has failed to erase Mexico's reputation for impunity and cover-up."⁵⁵

The political hinge began as Salinas's attempt to convince Mexicans of the efficacy of First World integration. He did so by manipulating the national narrative and the collective memory, both of which are stubbornly resistant to overt control. The 1992 textbook fight, in which he and Zedillo attempted to re-write Mexican history to suit their political goals, triggered memories of the massacre. The Mexican Army attempted to minimize its role, much

⁵² "El informe del Fiscal omite temas fundamentales incluidos en el Informe ¡Que no vuelva a suceder!, que se le entregó el 15 de diciembre de 2005," National Security Archive at George Washington University, 21 November 2006 (Retrieved from http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB209/Reaccion_al_Informe_del_Fiscal.pdf on 9 December 2007).

⁵³ Kate Doyle quoted in "Official Report Released on Mexico's Dirty War," National Security Archive at George Washington University, 2 October 2008 (Retrieved from <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB209/index.htm> on 9 December 2008).

⁵⁴ Kate Doyle, "'Forgetting is Not Justice': Mexico Bares its Secret Past," *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 2 (2003): 70-71.

⁵⁵ Aguayo Quezada, et al., "Neither Truth Nor Justice," 57.

like the PRI had done for three decades. But the massacre appeared in the textbooks, indicating that it had at least some significance. First World integration, for Salinas, Zedillo, and the PRI, saw contact with the US as beneficial. Others suggested that NAFTA eroded Mexican culture, identity, and economic and political sovereignty. Groups as diverse as the EZLN and the PAN suggested that the values of *mexicanidad* were eroding.⁵⁶ *Mexicanidad*, and conceptions thereof, dominated the post-revolutionary state. The PRI attempted to define *mexicanidad* to suit its own ends. Look, for example, at how the party defined student protesters as “false” Mexicans or how it framed the EZLN uprising as insignificant.⁵⁷ In moving Mexico towards post-nationalism, Zedillo and Salinas tore down the policies that buttressed revolutionary nationalism.⁵⁸ The 1992 textbook fight is symbolic of their desire for renovation. The revolution’s interpretation, one of the few things that brought all Mexicans together, and the revolutionary narrative, were at least somewhat flexible.

In many ways, the PRI’s new openness in the 1990s brought the massacre into the revolutionary narrative. Cárdenas’s 1998 declaration of a day of mourning was as much for political gain as belief in the massacre’s importance. Cárdenas’s hedging regarding *who* would be mourned overshadowed *what* was being mourned: the massacre itself, for the first time, in any official capacity. Cárdenas tried to establish a middle ground between the two poles but they proved irreconcilable. Instead of provoking an opening or remembrance, the two poles hardened their positions. He was reflective of the idea that *mexicanidad* demanded assessment and recognition of the massacre’s impact. Yet his declaration was a political act, undertaken

⁵⁶ Morris, *Gringolandia*, 16-17.

⁵⁷ For “false” Mexicans, see Chapters 2 and 3. On the EZLN, see Benjamin, *A Rich Land, A Poor People* and Womack, *Rebellion in Chiapas*.

⁵⁸ Klesner, “Political Change in Mexico,” 198.

with one eye on the 2000 election. Since it did not help, nor was Tlatelolco a major campaign issue, he, too, overestimated the massacre's importance. Fox's reformist platform and Carrillo Prieto's report were also, in the main, political acts. Fox's policies and Carrillo Prieto's report focused on human rights and de-mythologizing the massacre. Both Cárdenas and Fox had much to gain, politically-speaking, from the PRI's embarrassment. Yet Carrillo Prieto's report became something Fox did not anticipate: it established the massacre as part of a pattern, thus making it more important than previously acknowledged. Carrillo Prieto thus situated the massacre within the national narrative, something intellectuals had not done despite their constant remembrance. The political hinge took, to a certain degree, the leadership position that the intellectual hinge abandoned. Although intellectuals capitalized on the idea of human rights, they did not provide the leadership necessary for that view to achieve widespread acceptance.

IV. The intellectual hinge

In the 1990s, the intellectual hinge broke into two broad groups. The first, represented by Raúl Álvarez Garín and Raúl Jardón, demonstrated the intellectual pole's continued unwillingness to evolve. Their analyses rely on their experience for authority and reject the FEMOSPP report as inadequate. For them, Tlatelolco's wake extends through the 1970s and 1980s and into the 1990s. Where this first group did change was in its acceptance of Tlatelolco as a human rights violation and in an effort to reclaim the movement's sacred spaces. The second group were playwrights. On the whole, they were far more progressive in their outlook than the Álvarez Garín/Jardón group. Adam Guevara and José Vásquez Torres used their plays, both of which appeared in Tenorio's 1998 Tlatelolco Cycle, to suggest that the massacre's

impact was far more confusing and complex than the intellectual pole hoped. Memories were the key. Personal memories could not be isolated from collective memories and had to be assessed honestly. For both Guevara and Vásquez Torres, forgetting was as important as remembering.

From 1968 to 1998, the intellectual pole's analysis did not change despite the economic, political, and social upheaval. Its static interpretation did not lend itself to honest assessment or inclusion, two things Cárdenas wanted. Raúl Álvarez Garín's *La estela de Tlatelolco: Una reconstrucción histórica del Movimiento estudiantil del 68* (1998) is one example of the refusal to change. Like other intellectuals, he romanticized the student movement, seeing it as an important source for later social movements.⁵⁹ Álvarez Garín credits the student movement with producing the "leading activists of political struggles in Mexico for the last thirty years," and suggests that it was their determination that changed the country's political environment.⁶⁰ He elevates both the movement and the leaders to a heroic pantheon in suggesting that the massacre was the fourth break. Simultaneously, he argues that Tlatelolco's wake is responsible for every social movement through the 1990s, explicitly connecting the student movement to both Cárdenas and the EZLN.⁶¹ Raúl Jardón makes a similar argument, writing that "1968 fertilized the democratic seed."⁶² In many ways, Álvarez Garín's and Jardón's works are companion pieces, relying on experience and a thirty-year old intellectual argument to show why Tlatelolco was important. Yet the 1968 generation achieved no tangible results, in terms of changing policies from inside the PRI, since Echeverría implemented the co-optation policy in

⁵⁹ Álvarez Garín, *La estela de Tlatelolco*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶² Raúl Jardón, *1968: El fuego de la esperanza* (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1998): 146.

the early 1970s. Álvarez Garín and Jardón made the same mistake as others: they saw the student movement and the massacre as the fourth break in Mexican history. The massacre was subsumed by other issues, notably economics, during the 1980s and, although some of the leaders of the community groups emerging from the 1985 earthquakes were influenced by Tlatelolco, they focused on immediate issues, such as housing.⁶³ In the 1988 presidential election, the dominant issue was economics, not remembrance. The massacre did not resurface with any staying power until Cárdenas called 2 October 1998 a day of mourning and Fox commissioned the FEMOSPP. Álvarez Garín's personal memories influenced, and inflated, his sense of the massacre's importance. His participation colored his judgment, and he, like other authors, elevated the movement to the level of a revolution. For the intellectual pole, the only valid personal memories were those of student leaders. And the only valid interpretation stemmed from those memories. Thus the average Mexican was not part of the intellectual pole's conception of the massacre's collective memory.

Where the intellectual pole did change was in its renewed desire to claim the sacred spaces of the student movement and the massacre. French historian Pierre Nora wrote that a sacred space's purpose is

to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial – just as if gold were the only memory of money – all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* [sites of memory] only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.⁶⁴

The 1968 student movement revolved around a few key spaces, such as UNAM, the Zócalo, the Paseo de la Reforma, and the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. A logical outgrowth from the

⁶³ See Chapter 4. For more on community organizations, see Haber, *Power From Experience*.

⁶⁴ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.

intellectual pole's assertion that the massacre was the fourth break was its belief that these spaces played important roles in the movement and the massacre. In so doing, they asserted the massacre's primacy as the fourth break against other events that took place in each space. Monuments and commemorations were the vehicles for the intellectual pole's assertions. In 1993, a small monument to those who died in the Tlatelolco Massacre was erected to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary. (See Figure 5.2) The monument claimed a share of the space, already dominated by the Aztec temple, the colonial church, and the modern buildings that dot the Plaza. In a broader sense, it attempted to control how the general public saw and perceived the space. Nevertheless, the plaza remained a place where Mexican history converged, despite the monument's presence. Thus the intellectual pole's argument failed to convince ordinary Mexicans that the plaza should be seen in terms of the massacre. If intellectuals failed in the Plaza, they had no hope of co-opting the Zócalo, Mexico City's memorial, historical, and spiritual center. Although the annual commemoration terminates there, other protesters have used that space since at least 1692.⁶⁵ Intellectuals, then, failed to take the movement's sacred spaces for themselves. Part of the problem is the essentially uncontrollable nature of sites of memories.⁶⁶ Even though the monument kept the concrete experience of the massacre alive, both the site and the memory change over time.



Figure 5.2: The Memorial at Tlatelolco (1993). Photograph by the author.

⁶⁵ See R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994): 136-44 for a discussion of the meaning of the 1692 riot in Mexico City.

⁶⁶ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 12 & 18-19.

Memories remained contested territory, and throughout the 1990s plays became a way for both actors and audiences to “work-out” buried or suppressed memories thus becoming a kind of therapy for those who had been advocating remembrance for thirty years.⁶⁷ Playwrights attacked the intellectual pole’s assertion that only it could determine the massacre’s collective memories. Playwrights contested the intellectual pole’s position because it led to uncertainty; Mexicans could not, even thirty years later, put Tlatelolco into the national and revolutionary narratives. Playwrights scoffed at remembering Tlatelolco in isolation and, in effect, argued for a more communal remembrance. Attending a play was the first step; it was, itself, an act of community. Thus playwrights contested official history and asked their audience to do the same. Adam Guevara’s *Me enseñaste a querer* (1988) and José Vásquez Torres’s *Idos de octubre* (1993) are instructive.⁶⁸

Guevara’s play presents a family dynamic similar to *Rojo amanecer*’s in that the family is a microcosm of the Mexican state. The father represents the government, the son represents the protesters, and the mother is the typical Mexican *madre sufrida*. Instead of dealing with the massacre as it happened, as in *Rojo amanecer*, *Me enseñaste a querer* deals with memories and, more specifically, amnesia. The family, despite being implored not to, had forgotten its son, Santiago, who died at Tlatelolco. Guevara’s play revels in uncertainty, but by the end, the meaning becomes clear: modern Mexicans are still, even decades later, uncertain how Tlatelolco fits into the national and revolutionary narratives. Guevara addressed uncertainty through constant time-shifting, flashing back to the railroad strikes of the 1950s and to the

⁶⁷ Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama: The Relation of Literature and Reality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975): 21.

⁶⁸ For the full text of both plays, see Galván, *Teatro del 68*. Guevara’s play is p. 107-46 while Vásquez Torres’s is p. 193-210. Both were performed as part of the Tlatelolco Cycle in 1998.

present state of narco-terrorism. He suggested that Tlatelolco was part of the larger theme of state-sponsored repression, realizing that there was a pattern and that the massacre was not unique. In that sense, Guevara follows the Paz example rather than that of Poniatowska. Tangentially, Guevara addresses the notion of human rights. The family's human rights were violated, leaving them as the walking dead. They are hollow, spiritually-speaking, and unable to move on, because their memories remain unresolved and the massacre has remains an open psychological wound. Memories haunt, especially in isolation. Memories of Tlatelolco isolate the family from ordinary Mexicans and, rather than celebrating isolation like the intellectual pole, the family becomes depressed. Perhaps because there was no reconciliation with the state's actions, the family's memories continue to exist in a state of purgatory. Guevara's play subverted the intellectual pole's position and invited the average Mexican to contribute his or her memories of Tlatelolco to the collective memory. In his view, his play created a small community that connected the present to the past through people's memories.

Vásquez Torres's play took a different tack. Rather than focus on a family, he tracked the political career of a young man, Víctor, who vowed to change the political system from the inside after witnessing the Tlatelolco Massacre. When he is passed over for president for another candidate, perhaps a subtle critique of the *dedazo* tradition, Víctor realizes all of his work has been in vain and that he will not be able to change things. He takes the final action: sending what appear to be incriminating photographs of the sitting president's role in the Tlatelolco Massacre to Mexico City newspapers. Vásquez Torres showed the futility of working for change from the inside. The PRI machine was designed to silence opposition and prevent any opposition from reaching important positions in the government. Camp's work reinforced

Vásquez Torres's ideas because he found that opposition was effectively muted after it joined the PRI for the same reasons as the idealistic Víctor.⁶⁹ Vásquez Torres shows how Víctor's idealism is crushed and how memories haunt him for years. The ghost of a girl who died at Tlatelolco literally haunts Víctor, appearing in his office and questioning his motives. Víctor dedicates his entire political career to correcting the mistakes made on 2 October 1968. But despite his privileged position, he is unable to confront those responsible and bring them to justice, nor can he understand why it happened. In short, his memories and his experience force him into the same isolation experienced by Guevara's family. The difference is that Víctor's isolation is psychological yet, outwardly, he remains a normal politician. Vásquez Torres wants to show the futility of working within the established system, thus critiquing both the intellectual and the PRI poles. Both are designed to perpetuate themselves and their ideas, as seen in their failure to evolve. Vásquez Torres, like Guevara, wants Tlatelolco to be a communal experience. He wants people to know what happened from many perspectives, thus through Víctor, he urges Mexican officials to open archives. For Vásquez Torres, knowledge is the way forward and the key to placing the massacre within the revolutionary narrative.

Both Guevara and Vásquez Torres accidentally proved that those for whom Tlatelolco was the fourth break in Mexican history were in the minority. Guevara's family and Vásquez Torres's Víctor are members of an exclusive group, and they made no effort to connect to those outside the group. In both cases, the experience of the movement and the massacre left them apart, reflecting the intellectual pole's veneration of experience. In the end, the plays argue, the intellectual pole failed to connect with ordinary Mexicans. Its community is limited to those who took part – CNH members and student activists, for example – and excludes everyone else.

⁶⁹ Camp, *Intellectuals and the State*. See also Chapter 3.

The intellectual pole sees isolation as a badge of honor while the plays see it as mentally exhausting. Memories haunt the protagonists in both plays. In Guevara's play, memories of inaction are unavoidable and contradict the revolution's ideals. In Vásquez Torres's play, Víctor cannot escape the massacre. Personal memories are metaphors for collective memories and they must be shared if they are to be resolved. Memories, then, are the keystone for both playwrights. The problem is how to deal with them.

The hinge era's second half produced two divergent intellectual positions. The first was the intellectual hinge that did not change. Represented by Raúl Álvarez Garín and Raúl Jardón, it showed how the intellectual analysis failed to evolve. For Álvarez Garín and Jardón, the Tlatelolco Massacre was the fourth break and its effects were seen in every social and political protest through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Both authors demonstrated a disconnect between the intellectual pole and the average Mexican. Playwrights represented the second position. Both Adam Guevara and José Vásquez Torres deconstructed the intellectual argument and suggested that the collective memory needed to be more inclusive if Tlatelolco's place in the revolutionary narrative was to be established. Playwrights humanized the massacre by demonstrating how memories affected people. This second position is far more effective and represented a reconciliation between the intellectual pole and the average Mexican. Their works reinforced the broad trend of analyzing the massacre as a human rights violation.

V. Conclusions

Carlos Salinas struggled for political legitimacy because of the circumstances of the 1988 election. An illusory economic recovery gave him enough political capital to update the Free

Text Program in 1992 in which he stressed the desire for First World integration. In re-writing Mexican history to show that the Mexican Revolution actually advocated foreign investment and should culminate with NAFTA, he undermined the PRI's solid base of support, an impressive feat given how forgiving voters were in 1991. The essential problem was that Salinas replaced the revolutionary myth with the myth of First World insertion, thus replacing one of the few ideas that held Mexico's disparate regions together. As a result, Mexicans had nothing to bond them.

The political hinge swung open when Salinas, Cárdenas, and Fox allowed it. Salinas's push was accidental, but Cárdenas and Fox used the massacre's memories, in part, for political gain. Cárdenas's declaration, half-hearted though it was, led to Fox's appointment of Carrillo Prieto and his final report. Carrillo Prieto's report was more important than all but a few intellectual works. His analysis, which saw the massacre as part of a long line of human rights violations, much like Paz, de-mythologized the massacre and placed it, tentatively, in the national narrative. He accomplished in four years what intellectuals could not in thirty.

As much as it accused the PRI of being stale, the intellectual pole's argument, centered on the idea of the fourth break, never evolved. For the intellectual pole, the massacre was the beginning of true Mexican democracy, even though the PRI did not lose the presidency until 2000, a full thirty-two years later. By then, it should have been clear that the massacre did not have the historical cachet the revolution did. Thus it was not the fourth break, but an event within the revolution's context. The Zócalo remained a revolutionary space while the Plaza de las Tres Culturas continued to be a place where Mexican history converged. Neither was defined by the massacre, nor were memories.

Memories were the key that intellectuals never found. Studies published in the late 1990s suggested that the student movement and the massacre caused the 1994 EZLN uprising, thus continuing a pattern of linking every protest to Tlatelolco. What the intellectual pole failed to do was allow Mexicans to formulate their own memories. Three decades on, the intellectual pole still dictated how the massacre should be remembered; it was still the PRI pole's opposite. Playwrights, on the other hand, realized that the memories needed to be addressed before the massacre's place in history could be defined. In the plays discussed here, memories are haunting and paralyzing. The characters in the plays are isolated because of their memories. Both Guevara and Vásquez Torres suggested that collective memories be formed through communal experiences. Thus the intellectual pole cannot have a monopoly on the massacre's memory. Instead, the massacre belonged to all Mexicans, for better or worse.

Mexico's memorial hinge swung wide open from 1991 to 2002 and culminated with the FEMOSPP's report. Both the political and intellectual poles forced changes in Mexican society. The FEMOSPP report contextualized the massacre and re-cast as a human rights violation. Even then, the intellectual pole and the PRI pole battled on. Neither position evolved to take into account new evidence and new ideas. Perhaps, in that context, it was inevitable that Tlatelolco would become a buzzword rather than a serious subject in the years that followed.

CHAPTER 6: THE GATES OF HISTORY, 2000-2008

“Why open old wounds? It is better to forget.”

- Partido de la Revolución Institucional partisan¹

I. Introduction

Sometimes, as the saying goes, the gates of history swing on small hinges. Through the 1980s and 1990s, a series of events combined to prevent the Tlatelolco Massacre from fading into the ether of Mexican history. The debt crisis, the Partido de la Revolución Institucional’s (PRI) 1987 split into two factions, the fraudulent 1988 presidential election, and Vicente Fox Quesada’s victory for the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) in 2000, when taken together, fostered political disenchantment with the ruling PRI. Mexicans also challenged the PRI from below in search of social justice. The community groups that emerged in the wake of the 1985 earthquakes contested the PRI’s version of democracy at the local level and, with that, its revolutionary legitimacy. At the same time, both the intellectual pole of remembrance and the PRI pole of remembrance refused to incorporate new viewpoints. The 1980s and 1990s were marked by repetition of ideas. Neither the intellectual pole nor the PRI pole evolved to take into account new evidence that emerged in those decades. For both, Tlatelolco remained a static event that existed in isolation, until the PRI’s electoral defeat in 2000.

Vicente Fox’s victory in 2000 paved the way for Ignacio Carrillo Prieto’s appointment to the Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado (Office of the Special Prosecutor for Political and Social Movements of the Past, FEMOSPP). Carrillo Prieto was charged with investigating social movements and state repression from the late 1940s through

¹ Cited in Gilberto Guevara Niebla, *1968: Largo camino a la democracia* (México, DF: Cal y Arena, 2008): 85.

the 1970s. To be sure, at least some of Fox's motivation was to embarrass his political opponents in the PRI. Yet there was also a conscious effort to contextualize past social movements within the framework of the revolutionary narrative. Previous chapters illustrated the revolution's importance to Mexico's conception of itself. Thus, for Carrillo Prieto, it was crucial that his report place the massacre in the revolutionary context. Carrillo Prieto's report is a political document, for better or worse, yet it still represents a sea change. It stands in contrast to the intellectual interpretation, not only from 2000-2008 but also from the previous thirty years.

Several authors of the intellectual pole published new studies of the massacre in the months and years leading up to the fortieth anniversary. In their books, they re-stated the intellectual pole's position while they embraced the relatively new notion that the massacre was a human rights violation, as outlined in Chapter 5. Although they were redundant in a historiographical and thematic sense, they were important because they show that the intellectual pole's argument never changed. Even on the eve of the fortieth anniversary, like the thirtieth, the twentieth, and the tenth, the intellectual pole failed to offer any new reasons why the massacre defined modern Mexican history. Nor did the intellectual pole analyze Carrillo Prieto's contribution to the historiography. In short, the intellectual pole's analysis never evolved. The authors' lived experience, on which they relied for authority, trumped any other factor in determining the collective memory, including rigorous research. Newspapers and magazines followed the same line; in special sections and commemorative issues, Tlatelolco veterans wrote in somber tones, but failed in two crucial areas: to present new arguments and to provide leadership in terms of commemoration and remembrance.

The intellectual pole's failure to lead resulted in the unimpressive 2008 commemoration. The intellectual pole employed its slogan ("no se olvide") and marched to commemorate not only those who had died but the movement's purpose, vaguely defined as "democracy," as it had in 1998, 1988, and 1978. By 2008, the commemoration mutated and became a general forum to air grievances against the government. As memory scholars have noted, commemorations rarely retain the purpose defined by their organizers. The intellectual pole wanted the commemoration to be treated like Holocaust or D-Day remembrances.² That is, intellectuals wanted Tlatelolco remembrance to be a national event that symbolized the fourth break. It was not to be. By the 2008 commemoration, "Tlatelolco" had become a buzzword, used to buttress anti-government protests of all shapes and sizes. As a consequence of the intellectual pole's failure to lead, the commemorations moved beyond its control.

In this chapter, I will examine how the FEMOSPP's report and the intellectual pole's failure to lead contributed to the massacre's re-interpretation in the years leading up to the fortieth anniversary commemoration. The intellectual pole's beliefs rested on Tlatelolco as the fourth break in Mexican history, which triggered Mexican democracy. Thus, it had to be remembered and commemorated. The intellectual pole's argument did not evolve over the course of forty years, but it still tried to annex the 1985 community groups and claimed responsibility for Cárdenas's good showing in the 1988 election. Consequently, the intellectual pole accidentally de-valued the massacre as an idea, which led to "Tlatelolco" and "no se olvide" becoming catch-phrases. Into this environment Vicente Fox's Fiscal, Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, released his 2006 report. Contextualizing the student movement and the massacre and

² See, for example, James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

focusing on human rights, he provided a counter-point to the intellectual pole. His report should have triggered a re-evaluation of the movement and the massacre, but the intellectual pole ignored it. Once again, memories and narratives of Tlatelolco were contested.

II. The FEMOSPP's impact, 2002-2008

For the intellectual pole, the history of contemporary Mexico began with the student movement and the Tlatelolco Massacre. It constructed myths around 1968, framed by the utopian ideas of democratic opening and widespread support.³ It was, in short, a revolutionary movement and it was, in part, defined by what the intellectual pole *wanted* to happen, as opposed to what *did* happen. Historian David Lowenthal noted that “[t]he past as we know it is partly a product of the present; we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, [and] refashion relics.”⁴ Intellectuals saw Tlatelolco’s influence in the dirty war of the 1970s, the earthquakes of 1985, the fraud of 1988, and Cárdenas’s declaration in 1998. The intellectual pole never allowed the massacre to slip into the past; instead, its memories were constantly re-shaped and re-applied to the present circumstances. As a result, the massacre became both past and present, where memories and history collided, and its place in the revolutionary narrative was never established. The intellectual pole prevented others from entering its sacred space by dominating remembrances and commemorations. Yet the intellectual pole’s failure to evolve, to incorporate new evidence or other memories, led directly to a failure of leadership and opened the way for Carrillo Prieto’s report.

³ Michael Soldatenko, “Mexico ’68: Power to the Imagination!” *Latin American Perspectives* 52, no. 4 (2005): 113.

⁴ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 26.

Neither the intellectual nor the PRI poles reacted well to Vicente Fox's appointment of legal scholar Dr. Ignacio Carrillo Prieto as a Special Prosecutor in 2002. Carrillo Prieto, a professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México's (UNAM) Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, was appointed after a convoluted process in which Fox first considered a truth commission modeled on examples from South Africa and Argentina. Fox and his advisors settled on a Special Prosecutor, because they were concerned the PRI, which had a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, would obstruct the truth commission's efforts.⁵ The Office had three main tasks. First, it was to find and gather evidence against the perpetrators of Mexico's most infamous human rights violations, including Tlatelolco. Second, it was "charged with clarifying the past" by issuing reports and studies of what happened. Third, it was to establish an official policy on reparations for those who suffered most during the violence.⁶ Doubts remained. Human rights activists questioned how the Fiscal would succeed where a truth commission could not. Moreover, the overtly political decisions behind its creation were disconcerting. To his credit, Carrillo Prieto, a "well-intentioned man, earnest and vigorous", moved forward.⁷ He sent a team of researchers to the Archivo General de la Nación and established satellite offices in Guerrero and Sinaloa. He subpoenaed prominent former officials. Although PRI partisans obstructed, and suggested that the past was better left forgotten, they never called the process illegitimate, which, according to some observers, gave the final report credibility.⁸

⁵ Aguayo Quezada, et al., "Neither Truth Nor Justice," 60-61.

⁶ Doyle, "'Forgetting Is Not Justice,'" 69. The third goal was never achieved, in part because the report focused on placing the massacre within the revolutionary narrative.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

Carrillo Prieto deliberately sought to anchor the student movement in the past. He did so in order to contextualize the massacre within previous events and to show the PRI's policy of repression. To create concrete start and end dates, he decided that the movement lasted from July 1968 until December 1968, when the Consejo Nacional de Huelga (National Strike Council, CNH) dissolved itself.⁹ His report challenged both the intellectual pole, which saw the massacre as a call to revolution, and the PRI pole, which saw the massacre as a minor incident in Mexico's long revolution. He confronted the massacre without fear and with two lines of inquiry: "the legal and the historical. Both correspond and interact, because, although the legal aspect focuses on the administration of justice, both require the construction of a historical truth, with respect to the facts."¹⁰ Carrillo Prieto attempted to place the massacre, and everything that followed, within the context of other social and political movements in twentieth century Mexico. He connected the massacre to the railroad workers' strikes of 1948 led by Valentín Campa, Othón Salazar's Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio beginning in 1956, and various workers' strikes during the 1960s. In so doing, he contextualized the massacre as an event that was not inevitable but was probable, because the PRI had developed an official policy of repression. Carrillo Prieto's report rejected the intellectual notion of an ongoing student movement and rejected the PRI's minimization policy. Carrillo Prieto put the movement in the past and connected it to Mexico's history, much like Paz had done.

Carrillo Prieto begins his analysis with other student movements as far back as 1942. Most of those are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the traditional Tlatelolco historiography. He also shifts the focus from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) to the Instituto

⁹ See also Ramírez, *El movimiento estudiantil de México*.

¹⁰ Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 7.

Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute, IPN). It was the IPN, not the UNAM, that had been protesting for two decades before 1968. In contrast, in the Tlatelolco historiography, UNAM is nearly always seen as the epicenter of student protest.¹¹ Eventually, leadership ceased to matter as the individual student groups united after the *bazukazo*. Additionally, Carrillo Prieto highlights the protests that occurred outside the capital, all mainly for school-related reasons, beginning in at least 1960.¹²

Carrillo Prieto breaks the 1968 movement into four stages, which gives it a specific beginning and end. In contrast to the intellectual pole, he does not see the movement as an ongoing phenomenon. Instead, he places it firmly within the revolutionary narrative and suggests that it had limited goals. In the first stage, from 21 August to 31 August 1968, the government, embodied by Mexico City regent Alfonso Corona del Rosal and Secretario de Gobernación Luis Echeverría, began to employ harsher tactics. Prior to 21 August, the government policy was to ignore the students, but after that date, Díaz Ordaz grew increasingly nervous about the upcoming Olympic Games.¹³ The second period, from 1 September to 15 September, began with Díaz Ordaz's Informe, in which he declared that he would look into each of the six demands issued by the CNH. The second period ends with the most successful demonstration in support of the students, the 13 September silent march, in which more than 100,000 people

¹¹ In fairness, UNAM was the epicenter of the 1968 movement; however, it is implied throughout the historiography that UNAM always had been. Perhaps that is due to the university's central place in Mexico's political, economic, and social culture. See Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State* for more. To my knowledge, a similar study of the IPN does not exist.

¹² Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 48-62. For more on student disturbances, see "Los estudiantes de la Preparatoria Juárez, efectuaron un mitin," 9 January 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 459, p. 979; "Problemas de la Federación Estudiantil Veracruzana," 28 January 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 459, p. 218-19; and "Los estudiantes de la Escuela Superior de Ciencias Marinas, realizaron paros de protesta," 20 September 1967, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Caja 467, p. 559-63. See also reports in the Dirección Federal de Seguridad.

¹³ See Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 87-88.

participated. Óscar Meléndez, a student activist and filmmaker, suggested that, at this point, the student movement gained widespread approval. If that were the case, though, the public support evaporated quickly.¹⁴ The third period, from 18 September to 30 September, showed the PRI taking a more aggressive approach. Díaz Ordaz gave the army permission to invade UNAM's campus, which was a clear violation of institutional autonomy. The army remained on the campus for twelve days. Carrillo Prieto links the invasion to the 2 October massacre, which is the fourth period. In an exhaustive timeline, he demonstrates how the army planned and carried out the massacre, with the support of those at the highest levels of government: Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría. Yet, oddly, after the massacre, things went back to normal. "The movement was disarticulated in an atmosphere of fear. The Consejo Nacional de Huelga was dissolved. The students returned to classes in a climate of apparent normality."¹⁵ The movement appeared to be a short, sharp criticism of the PRI's revolutionary legitimacy. At no point did the students demand that the PRI be removed from office; instead, they wanted the PRI to govern within the context of the 1917 Constitution and the revolution's ideals.¹⁶ Looking back at the six student demands, there was no mention of democracy. It was a limited movement with limited goals. Only after the massacre did the intellectual pole graft "democracy" onto the demands.

Carrillo Prieto connected the Tlatelolco Massacre and the dirty war of the 1970s through violence rather than political theory. That is, the two were joined by the PRI's willingness to use

¹⁴ *Historia de un Documento*, directed by Pierre Schaeffer and Óscar Menéndez (1971; México, DF: La Otra Tele/La Rana del Sur, 2003). Retrieved from <http://en.sevenload.com/videos/Hv7Mtai-Historia-de-un-documento> on 27 September 2008. The film, a clandestinely filmed documentary, declared the 13 September silent march the day that the student movement became a popular movement.

¹⁵ Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 146.

¹⁶ Braun, "Protests of Engagement," 547-48.

armed repression to maintain its political position. After Tlatelolco, people moved on almost instantly, aside from the intellectual pole. It appears that the violence in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas had its intended numbing effect. It was a show of force designed to send a message that “the state’s resource to violence could be limitless, and [that] authoritarianism was business as usual”.¹⁷ The state proved this point again on 10 June 1971, when a number of students were killed by a government-sponsored paramilitary group called the Halcones. Carrillo Prieto sees the Corpus Christi Massacre as another example of PRI-directed violence in the revolution’s name. A second massacre in three years made more people willing to take up arms against the government.¹⁸ Leftist groups turned violent and retreated from the cities to the countryside. Their ideas found receptive ears in areas where the government supported local caciques against the population. Carrillo Prieto sees the shift to the countryside as the beginning of the dirty war that would plague Mexico for nearly a decade.¹⁹ The dirty war demonstrated that nothing really changed after the massacre. Rather than show any degree of toleration, the PRI allowed the army to disappear numerous agitators, a more aggressive tactic than simply jailing the leaders, as had happened in 1968.²⁰ As such, the dirty war fits in with Carrillo Prieto’s overarching theory that the massacre was part of an official government policy of repression for more than three decades, and was not a democratic opening.

¹⁷ Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 150.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 150-239. On 10 June 1971, students in Mexico City struck in support of students at the Autonomous University of Nuevo León (UANL). The UANL students began their strike on 1 June because the conservative state congress changed the university’s bylaws, and reduced its autonomy. At 5PM on 10 June, dozens of young men poured out of buses and trucks and attacked the Mexico City protestors. These were the Halcones, hired thugs trained by the Distrito Federal’s security forces to carry out the dirty work suppressing the student movement. An unknown number of protestors were killed during the fights. For more, see Kate Doyle, “The Corpus Christi Massacre: Mexico’s Attack on its Student Movement, June 10, 1971,” National Security Archive, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB91/>. Retrieved 2 March 2009.

¹⁹ For a survivor’s account of the dirty war, see Ulloa Bornemann, *Surviving Mexico’s Dirty War*.

²⁰ Fiscalía Especial, *Informe Histórico*, 419-28.

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, politicians struggled to frame the massacre. Carlos Salinas attempted to re-write twentieth-century Mexican history to replace the revolutionary myth with one of First World insertion. Ernesto Zedillo's term continued Salinas's economic and social policies while struggling to frame the massacre. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's declaration of an official day of mourning on 2 October 1998 marked the first official commemoration. Although the declaration can be seen as a turning point, it did not have the impact of Carrillo Prieto's report. In 2000, Vicente Fox capitalized, in part, on Cárdenas's declaration by promising sweeping reforms, especially with regard to human rights.²¹ In the end, he failed to deliver on his promises, save Carrillo Prieto's report.²² In many ways the report was the culmination of nearly twenty years of political upheaval, beginning with the 1987 PRI split. It provided a hinge that opened the door. People could walk through; they only needed the desire to do so. Establishing the massacre as part of an official policy of repression gave individual and collective memories traction; that is, the massacre was placed within the context of other concrete events rather than simply being remembered as the vague beginning of Mexican democracy. The FEMOSPP report was a turning point with two significant consequences. First, it prompted the de-mythologization of the massacre. Carrillo Prieto situated it within events from the 1940s through the 1970s, something the intellectual pole never had never done, thus placing it within the revolutionary narrative. In Carrillo Prieto's analysis, the massacre was neither the fourth break nor a call to revolution. Second, the report looked at the massacre without fear. The PRI's

²¹ See Carlos Navarro, "President Vicente Fox Pledges to Eradicate Torture," *SourceMex/Latin American Database*, 7 March 2001 and Kevin Sullivan, "Critics Say Mexico's Fox Broke Human Rights Vows," *Washington Post*, 31 August 2003: A16. See also Chapter 5 for more on Fox and the 2000 election.

²² See Reed Johnson, "Shining a spotlight on Mexico's covered-up massacre of 1968," *The Irish Times*, 26 February 2008: 14 and Leticia Pineda, "40 years on, Mexico student killers remain unpunished," *Agence France Presse*, 1 October 2008.

policy of minimization reinforced fear of the massacre by preventing inquiries into everything about it, from the Olympic Battalion to who gave orders to the death toll. Honesty took a backseat to political expediency. Carrillo Prieto's report changed that and eliminated some of this fear.

Why, then, did it take nearly forty years for someone to confront, and thus de-mythologize, the massacre? Perhaps the reason lay not just with the PRI pole of remembrance but also with the intellectual pole. For the latter, the massacre was a sacred event, defined not only by its gravity but by its singular experience. If the massacre was tied to other repressions, it would lose its sacred status. Thus the intellectual pole also had something to gain from fear. Analyses of the massacre – that it was unimportant or that it was sacred – were driven by fear. Carrillo Prieto looked at the massacre without fear in an attempt to examine its causes and effects within the context of modern Mexican history. True, he was stonewalled at various points and subjected to a good deal of political pressure, but he established it as another hinge on the gates of Mexican history.

Memories and interpretation of the massacre changed and evolved over the course of forty years. At the same time, the experience of Tlatelolco faded from memories as the participants got older. In some analyses, the student movement represented a utopian vision of a democratic Mexico, which was buried by fear in the massacre's aftermath.²³ The intellectual pole, though, remained stubbornly resistant to change. Even after Carrillo Prieto's report, its arguments did not evolve, and it still relied on the authority of experience.

²³ Soldatenko, "Mexico '68," 126.

III. Literature at the fortieth anniversary

By 2000, most of the student movement's participants had withdrawn from political activism. A vocal minority remained, though, and continued to insist that the massacre was the fourth break in Mexican history through their writings. Most of these authors, who tended to be ex-student leaders, relied on the authority of their experience when discussing Tlatelolco and its legacy. It was a tactic that effectively elevated their interpretation over everyone else's, including Carrillo Prieto's. Most intellectual analysts stepped back from straight political writing and focused on "existential and psychological questions, generally divorced from their larger social context."²⁴ Intellectuals continued to view the massacre in isolation, and as a result, the intellectual pole's analysis changed little between 1968 and 2008. Intellectuals repeated the same ideas, especially those regarding the movement's mass nature and its demands for democracy, despite abundant evidence to the contrary. Intellectuals continued to view Tlatelolco in isolation, surrounding the movement and the massacre with myths and giving both attributes they never had. Worse, they seemed intent on writing for each other. Their scholarly analyses read like letters from one participant to another in which they confirmed each other's ideas over and over again. Roderic A. Camp noted that this echo chamber-ish approach prevented a connection to the masses.²⁵ Their books, then, were not really written for public consumption but to reinforce the intellectual pole's own ideas.

Gilberto Guevara Niebla's *1968: Largo camino a la democracia* (2008) is a good example of how student movement veterans rehashed their argument every ten years or so.²⁶ Guevara Niebla, a once-prominent student leader and one of the de facto leaders of the CNH, was also

²⁴ Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel*, 18.

²⁵ Camp, *Intellectuals and the State*, 206.

²⁶ Guevara Niebla, *1968: Largo camino*.

the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) sub-secretary during the 1992 textbook crisis. He has written about Tlatelolco, from the intellectual perspective, since the 1970s. Thus, he was one of the intellectual pole's pillars and was representative of the intellectual echo chamber. The book's title indicates that, four decades later, Guevara Niebla conserved the intellectual pole's position and viewed the movement and the massacre as the beginning of Mexican democracy. He skated around the fact that it took thirty-two years for the PRI to be voted out of the country's highest office by calling it a "long road." As many scholars have noted, the PRI excelled at self-preservation and was probably only voted out of office because the list of complaints against it became too long to ignore. In the end, as I have indicated in previous chapters, the PRI lost favor for economic reasons, not because of Tlatelolco.

Guevara Niebla got around that evidence by proposing that the massacre was the fracture that *began* the process. It was no longer the key moment but the first of several key moments; as such, the movement and the massacre deserved recognition as events that set the process of democratization in motion. Both launched a crisis of authority that reduced the PRI's political standing in the eyes of the 1968 generation.²⁷ The generation gap played a large role in Guevara Niebla's analysis.²⁸ He contrasted the current generation, that of 2008, with his generation, that of 1968, and found the former pridefully apolitical.²⁹ University students were not as politically active as his generation, in part because there was no great cause. Even as 2008's students commemorated Tlatelolco or supported Andrés Manuel López Obrador against

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸ His analysis recalls playwrights of the 1970s, whose works focused on the generation gap as a reason for the massacre. See Chapters 2 and 3 for more.

²⁹ Guevara Niebla, *1968: Largo camino*, 41.

the PRI and the PAN in 2006, he saw a difference.³⁰ The intellectual pole, represented here by Guevara Niebla, was incapable of ascribing the same importance to the 2000-2008 protests. The 1968 protests were inherently different because of the intellectual pole's participation. It was a narcissistic view of 1968 and the intellectual pole's role. At the same time, the Tlatelolco generation claimed responsibility for all modern protests; each succeeding protest added to the 1968 student movement's long tail.³¹ In the intellectual pole's analysis, López Obrador's presidential campaign could not have happened without the 1968 student movement. Neither, for that matter, could the Asamblea de Barrios have existed after the 1985 earthquakes without the student movement. Guevara Niebla and the intellectual pole used the authority of their experience to reinforce the notion of the fourth break.

Guevara Niebla examined Tlatelolco's meaning within the context of youth. The student movement was "a phenomenon of youthful expansion, an anti-authoritarian expression, a revolutionary seed, a political fight of democratic character, a youthful celebration"³² The 1968 movement could only have been led by the young, because those in charge at the time – Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría, Corona del Rosal – were out of touch. For Guevara Niebla, youthful exuberance was the key.

The 1968 protest was an authentic political and social expression, articulated with precise goals. The movement allowed young people to develop a consciousness that their aspirations, including political liberty, respect for the rule of law, cessation of harassment against dissidents, [and] an end to oppression, corruption and other

³⁰ For more on the López Obrador campaign, see James C. McKinley, Jr., "Leftist's Blockade Divides Mexico City, and His Supporters," *New York Times*, 5 August 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/05/world/americas/05mexico.html> on 1 December 2009.

³¹ Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired* 12, no. 10 (October 2004). Retrieved from <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html> on 17 April 2010. Applied here, the Long Tail means that the student movement was an on-going, influential event.

³² Guevara Niebla, *1968: Largo camino*, 40.

inequalities before the law were just. In synthesis: the students demanded the country's democratization.³³

Authenticity and youth combined to create democracy in Guevara Niebla's analysis. Like other participants, Guevara Niebla suggested that the student movement was somehow a pure expression of liberty and democracy. For proof, he pointed to the CNH, which had between one hundred and two hundred members and debated endlessly about its next move. While some saw the debates as headlessness, he saw them as democracy in action and as something that could only have happened in the universities.

Myth and memory were Guevara Niebla's primary concerns throughout this work. Memory and forgetting were intertwined, and it was his job, as a participant and an intellectual, to ensure that the massacre was never forgotten. He suggests that the massacre's memory has not become a part of history because it has not been internalized. "To construct memory, to intensify memory, is not easy in a society where the values of democracy and critical thought are fragile. Will is not enough. Oral transmission is not enough. It is necessary to fight and to integrate the 1968 movement into Mexico's history. If Mexicans aspire to democracy, they cannot forget that tragic year."³⁴ In this way, he continued to fight for the intellectual pole against the PRI pole of remembrance and saw his work as a way to keep the memories alive. "Unpunished murder, such as the Tlatelolco Massacre, divided Mexico deeply; it erased any feeling of community, [and] it created a climate of belligerence, hatred and distrust [that] persists in our days."³⁵ Connecting 1968 and 2008 through Tlatelolco, Guevara Niebla falls into the intellectual pole's trap: he exaggerates the massacre's meaning. The movement and the

³³ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 105-06.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

massacre, in his analysis, were the fourth break in Mexican history, separating the current Mexico from the one before 1968. Despite his suggestion that the massacre needed to be remembered properly, he built on the myth and prevented a clear-eyed analysis. Myth and memory were still contested territory even forty years later.

Pablo Gómez's *1968: La historia también está hecha de derrotas* (2008) also deals with the myths and memories of the student movement and the massacre.³⁶ Gómez participated in the 1968 student movement and, after the massacre, was imprisoned until 1971. Upon his release, he joined an activist group that took part in the demonstration that was repressed by the Halcones in June of that year. He later aligned with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), rising to the post of party president, and wrote several books. Like Guevara Niebla, Gómez proposes that the histories of the movement and the massacre have been replaced, or at least supplemented, by convenient myths. He himself looks at the idea of defeat and suggests that the very fact that the student movement ended so suddenly and violently ensured that its impact would last beyond 1968 and into the future.³⁷ His analysis gives lip service to the ideas of utopian thought and cross-class co-operation but focuses on the big picture: that the massacre was the fourth break and the beginning of Mexican democracy. "The student movement of 1968 was a precursor of the democratic changes that have taken place since, and one cannot argue otherwise."³⁸ Gómez remains convinced that the intellectual pole's theory of the fourth break is correct. He rejects other interpretations and new evidence and clings to Poniatowska-style emotional outrage. He ignores both Paz's and Carrillo Prieto's

³⁶ Gómez, *1968: La historia*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

ideas and evidence that Tlatelolco was part of a larger pattern of repression. In short, he embodies the intellectual pole's inability to lead.

In many ways, Gómez's analysis is reminiscent of the intellectual pole's ideas in the 1970s. He blames both Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría for the massacre because they over-reacted. Díaz Ordaz had one priority, the Olympic Games, and would not let anything prevent their success. On the other hand, the students were at the head of a massive political and cultural movement that would change the country for the better. Like Guevara Niebla, he sees the movement continuing through the years, all the way to 2008, even though it was physically destroyed on 2 October 1968.³⁹ Gómez suggests that the student movement's spirit remained and influenced later protests; in that sense, the massacre was a glorious defeat and deserved to be preserved in the nation's memories, but only as the fourth break. Gómez's work is a story of defeats, but he wants the reader to see how the movement lived on, through other protests in the next four decades. His narrative stops at December 1968, and his conclusion connects the massacre to the present-day only through the most tenuous of threads. "Like a political movement, the student movement of 1968 was defeated, but it also initiated the struggle in favor of political democracy in post-revolutionary Mexico."⁴⁰ Tlatelolco, then, was the fourth break, but he made no effort to track its importance through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. His analysis does not show how the massacre's memories were re-interpreted over time, nor does he take into account new evidence or Carrillo Prieto's report. In short, Gómez promoted a static view of the massacre's ideology and impact, which reinforced the intellectual pole but ignored ordinary Mexicans.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 431-42.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 449.

Both Guevara Niebla and Gómez invoke the authority of experience to show why their interpretations should be trusted. Both participated in the student movement, and both were at Tlatelolco on 2 October 1968. Both used their experience to suggest that their interpretation, and by extension the intellectual pole's interpretation, should not be questioned. The collective memory created by the intellectual pole, centered on the fourth break, was the correct interpretation in their estimation. Experience was their main reason; other authors and historians were not there, so they could not possibly know what really happened. That is, of course, a fallacious argument, because there is ample evidence to reconstruct the movement, the massacre, and its aftermath. Invoking their experience suggested that their memories remained the key. As a group, the intellectual pole tended to rely on memories of its experience while discounting other evidence, such as Carrillo Prieto's report. The intellectual pole's reliance on its own memories created an echo chamber, because the intellectual pole was unwilling to accept dissenting views.

Memories, though, change over time. In saying that their recollections were true, both authors asked the public to accept, unquestioningly, one interpretation of the movement and the massacre. In substituting memory for history, that is, in suggesting that recollections were more important than empirical evidence, both authors worked against history. Pierre Nora wrote, "History's procurement, in the last century, of scientific methodology has only intensified the effort to establish critically a 'true' memory. Every great historical revision has sought to enlarge the basis for collective memory."⁴¹ Both Guevara Niebla and Gómez attempted the opposite: they wanted to establish a collective memory based on memory alone rather than history. It was remarkable how similar their memories were, and how similarly they

⁴¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 9.

viewed the massacre and its impact. Both saw the movement and the massacre as the beginning of Mexican democracy, and both connected 2008 to 1968. Both believed that the authority of their experience set their analyses above others, yet neither acknowledged how their memories had changed in four decades. Neither did they acknowledge that the massacre's collective memories had changed as well. The intellectual pole's failure to reconcile the massacre with the revolutionary narrative was apparent in its refusal to evolve. It continued to advocate the fourth break, and continued to view the massacre in isolation. It rejected Carrillo Prieto's report because the report put the massacre into a historical context, much like Paz had done. The intellectual pole's failure to lead manifested itself in the 2008 commemoration, which became less about Tlatelolco and more about individual grievances.

IV. The 2008 commemoration

Beginning in 1978, each decennial commemoration of the massacre took on a different tone than the yearly commemorations. Each decade was a mile marker on the journey for the two poles of remembrance. For intellectuals, it marked another ten years since the fourth break in Mexican history. For the PRI, it became a sort of metric of progress, in that the massacre's significance was regularly diminished. The 2008 commemoration, in honor of the massacre's fortieth anniversary, was no different, but the environment was. The intellectual pole failed to respond to the FEMOSPP report and refused to update its analysis, and thus it provoked apathy. In short, the intellectual pole rejected its own self-appointed leadership position.

The protest route was the same as always. From the Casco de Santo Tomás down the Paseo de la Reforma to the Zócalo, where a rally was held. Along the way, the protestors

chanted slogans and carried signs vowing that they would not forget. (See Figure 6.1) Similarly, in the days leading up to the protest, newspapers and magazines were filled with evaluations and re-evaluations of the massacre's meaning, while special commemorative shows were broadcast on a few television networks. Yet, instead of using the fortieth



Figure 6.1: Marchers in 2008 carry a sign that says, "I was not there, but I will not forget." Photograph by the author.

anniversary to break new ground, many of the commemorations and evaluations simply re-stated the facts of 1968 while reinforcing the intellectual view that the massacre was the beginning of Mexican democracy and thus worthy of recognition as the fourth break. It was, in short, an epic failure on the part of the intellectual pole to lead the way, especially in the wake of Carrillo Prieto's report.

The Mexico City daily *El Universal*, for example, published a special report entitled "68: el año que cambió al mundo."⁴² It included pictures and analysis of the 1968 student movement and reflections on where Mexico had been and where it was going. The special report, developed in part to promote a book of photographs called *1968, un archivo inédito*, also highlighted the intellectual pole's on-going attempt to shape the massacre as the fourth break in Mexican history.⁴³ Jesús Fonseca Juárez, a contributor to the book and an *El Universal* photographer, recounted his story of 2 October 1968.⁴⁴ Fonseca ably demonstrates the chaos in the square, during which he claims to remember a feeling that something big was going to happen. His personal memories reinforced the intellectual pole's argument. Fonseca's article

⁴² "68: el año que cambió al mundo," *El Universal*, Sociedad Section, 2 October 2008. In English, "68: The year that changed the world."

⁴³ Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, *1968, un archivo inédito* (México, DF: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/El Universal, 2008).

⁴⁴ Jesús Fonseca Juárez, "¡Ponte algo blanco en la mano...!" *El Universal*, 2 October 2008, p. F6.

and photographs glorified his memories of the student movement and the massacre. Like Guevara Niebla and Gómez, he relied on the authority of his experience to give his analysis meaning. His memories were valid because he was there.

Other journalists and analysts contributed their memories of the movement and the massacre in the days before the fortieth anniversary. Fernando Serrano Migallón, writing in *Excélsior*, resurrected the old suggestion that there was one Mexico before Tlatelolco and one Mexico afterward. “En 68 comenzó el largo y doloroso parto de la ciudadanía mexicana.”⁴⁵ It was an interesting word choice, *ciudadanización*. Implying that the student movement and the massacre were part of the process of *mexicanidad*, he suggested that, Mexicans could, and should, commemorate and remember the massacre. It is useful to contrast his conception of experience with that of Tlatelolco veterans. In the latter’s conception, experience meant that a person was there and, as a result, gained unique knowledge of the situation; it was an exclusionary idea. In Serrano Migallón’s conception, the experience belonged to the country. Furthermore, Mexico was still learning the lessons of 1968 even forty years later; thus, the movement and the massacre could not be anything but inclusive. In his own way, he wanted people to confront the massacre and its impact on Mexican political and social life. He wrote:

Nevertheless, there is a risk to open memory: the excessive transmission of words, sounds and images brings with it the memory’s marginalization. Suddenly, especially for new generations, 2 October is as distant as the Niños Héroes, martyrs remembered in carved stone and used to promote a moral. The important thing is to remember that in those days we Mexicans occupied the streets, . . . indeed [the movement] does not belong to anyone in particular.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Fernando Serrano Migallón, “Un 2 de octubre,” *Excélsior*, 2 October 2008, p. 21. In English, “In 1968, the long and painful birth of Mexican *ciudadanización* began.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

Too much commemoration leads to apathy; the annual commemorations tended to be small and unremarkable. The general public seemingly had no appetite for them. Its lack of participation demonstrated apathy, in part because the intellectual pole never adequately explained the massacre's importance. In many ways, Serrano Migallón broke with the orthodox intellectual interpretation. While he idealized the massacre and its participants, he thought the massacre, as an event, belonged to the entire country and should be analyzed that way. Serrano Migallón, like Paz, Cárdenas, and Carrillo Prieto before him, advocated inclusion when it came to Tlatelolco.

For Lorenzo Meyer, the massacre remained exclusionary. In his view, the students were sacrificed at the altar of a bigger cause, that of democracy. It follows that their sacrifice had to be constantly commemorated. "Those sacrificed in 1968 have not been totally vindicated, which is exactly why we can only here and now give a positive sense to the vileness that was committed forty years ago by the State."⁴⁷ Meyer actually reinforced Serrano Migallón's idea that too much commemoration leads to apathy, and his article was an excellent example of the moralizing intellectual pole. He analyzed the massacre in isolation, suggesting that it was the sole reason there had been a political opening in the forty years since then.⁴⁸ In so doing, he completely discounted the PRI split in 1987, the fraudulent 1988 election, and, most importantly, Carrillo Prieto's report. Far from suggesting that the massacre belonged to all Mexicans and should be a part of the national narrative, he wanted the massacre and its participants elevated to a higher plane. In talking down to his readers, in lecturing them on the massacre's importance, he actually did the opposite: he reinforced apathy.

⁴⁷ Lorenzo Meyer, "Cuarenta años," *Reforma*, 2 October 2008, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

In the days leading up to the commemoration, while newspapers published a number of columns discussing Tlatelolco and its importance, *Proceso*, an influential newsmagazine, published Special Edition 23. In Special Edition 23, the editors reinforced the intellectual pole of remembrance almost perfectly over 82 pages. The magazine begins with a section entitled “The Facts.” The student movement and the massacre are re-hashed in as much detail as permitted by space. The second section is entitled “The Silence,” and critiques the PRI pole of remembrance as well as other groups, such as the church, which were complicit in maintaining official silence. In “The Investigation,” the third section, the editors discuss former president Vicente Fox’s inability to bring anyone to justice for the massacre. The article demonizes Fox’s efforts and the FEMOSPP’s conclusions before calling on Felipe Calderón, who was elected president in 2006, to “clarify the serious human rights violations by the authoritarian PRI.”⁴⁹ Fox had a “moral imperative” to investigate and confront Tlatelolco, but Carrillo Prieto’s report was not enough.⁵⁰ It was disappointing and not nearly as effective as a truth commission. For Javier Treviño Rangel, the article’s author, the massacre retained a special place in history as the fourth break, an idea that shines through the special edition. Other authors, including Meyer, insisted that Tlatelolco was the beginning of Mexican democracy.⁵¹ In *Proceso*, the anger and emotion evident in the immediate aftermath of the massacre, from 1968 to 1976, had not faded. The authors of Special Edition 23 were clearly of the Poniatowska school of remembrance.

Special Edition 23 was an outlier because, for the most part, analyses leading up to the 2008 commemoration avoided the anger and emotion of those from the 1970s. Some authors

⁴⁹ Javier Treviño Rangel, “Control de la historia,” *Proceso: Edición Especial 23* (October 2008): 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵¹ See Rosalía Vergara, “La orfandad, el extravío...” *Proceso: Edición Especial 23* (October 2008): 67-69.

retained their emotional outrage, notably Elena Poniatowska and Gilberto Guevara Niebla, but for most, the anger had subsided. Part of this reduction was due to temporal distance; forty years is a long time. Part of it was due to events in the intervening years, such as the 1985 earthquakes and the PRI's desperate attempts to retain power. But mostly it was due to the fact the more people looked back with clear eyes. Yet the intellectual pole remained analytically insulated. It refused to acknowledge Carrillo Prieto's report, because it went against the intellectual pole's fundamental idea that Tlatelolco was uniquely awful. Carrillo Prieto's report refuted the myths that the intellectual pole carefully constructed over the course of four decades.⁵²

Ceremonies, like the fortieth anniversary commemoration, rarely achieve exactly what their organizers want. They have a way of spinning out of control and turning into something they were never intended to be. For the most part, the 2008 protestors were relatively peaceful marching from the Casco de Santo Tomás to the Zócalo. While there were a good number of protestors that remembered Tlatelolco, the majority, sponsored by groups such as the Asamblea de Barrios and the Movimiento Proletario Independiente, promoted their own causes. Some UNAM students even declared that "TV Azteca and Televisa [were the] real terrorists." (See Figure 6.2) In 2008, the commemoration thus reflected the intellectual pole's conception of the massacre as the fourth break, at least on the surface. At the same time, other groups relied on the Tlatelolco myth to promote their own agendas. These groups subtly subverted the intellectual pole's ideas, turning Tlatelolco into a catch-all term for protest. In the context of the commemoration, remembrance becomes a complex stew of personal,

⁵² See Chapter 5 for an analysis of the critiques of Carrillo Prieto's report.

communal, and political memories.⁵³ Remembrance of the massacre had become politicized, and the term became a useful tool. In short, Tlatelolco's symbolism became more important than its facts.

René Avilés Fabila wrote, on 5 October 2008: "Today, we went out to protest without having a clear idea of what happened during those fantastic months. [Today's protest] included vandalism, which, by the way, never happened in 1968."⁵⁴ (See Figure 6.3) It was a succinct summation of what the commemoration



Figure 6.2: "Televisa [and] TV Azteca are the real terrorists. Photograph by the author.

meant to most people on 2 October 2008, and a damning indictment of the intellectual pole.

Avilés Fabila's article demonstrated the intellectual pole's leadership failure. Intellectuals never explained to the Mexican public why the massacre was so important. Instead, the intellectual pole simply assumed that people agreed with its interpretation. Neither Guevara Niebla's nor Gómez's works, published just prior to the commemoration, explained Tlatelolco's broader importance, nor did the journalists who analyzed



Figure 6.3: "The Other 2 October." Reprinted with permission from Osvaldo Monos.

⁵³ See Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 225. His study discusses World War I and how it is commemorated but I see parallels with Tlatelolco remembrance. In both cases, the victims are remembered as a kind of "lost generation" and seen as a group that fell in defense of something greater, namely democracy. The politicization of remembrance is also instructive.

⁵⁴ René Avilés Fabila, "El 68 sin el 2 de octubre," *Excélsior*, 5 October 2008, p. 21.

Tlatelolco's meaning in the days leading up to the commemoration. Instead, intellectuals focused on their experience and the notion of the fourth break. Thus the *idea* of commemoration, in which the intellectual pole lectured the public on the massacre's importance and symbolism, was more important than the *act* of commemoration. The intellectual pole published its analyses for itself. Each book and article became a source of self-congratulation. Intellectuals never took Carrillo Prieto's report into account, nor did they incorporate ideas developed by playwrights. As a result, Tlatelolco became a caricature, a buzzword designed to provoke a specific set of feelings. The intellectual pole made no effort to put the massacre in the national or revolutionary narratives. The fortieth anniversary commemoration was a failure on the part of the intellectual pole.

V. Conclusion

By 2008, the student movement and the massacre were in the process of being re-evaluated. Vicente Fox's election in 2000 resulted in Ignacio Carrillo Prieto's appointment as a Special Prosecutor to Investigate Political and Social Movements of the Past in 2002. Four years later, Carrillo Prieto's report was published and connected the massacre not only to the dirty war of the 1970s but to movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Its publication was a watershed moment. Prior to 2006, the intellectual pole of remembrance analyzed the movement and the massacre in isolation, devoid of context. Carrillo Prieto suggested that it was part of an accepted policy of repression. His report, even though it was criticized, showed how the intellectual pole's ideas had not evolved.

The two analytical works discussed here, Gilberto Guevara Niebla's *1968: Largo camino a la democracia* and Pablo Gómez's *1968: La historia también está hecha de derrotas* were both published in 2008, after Carrillo Prieto's report.⁵⁵ Both authors supported the intellectual pole, reinforcing the idea of the fourth break while proclaiming the authority of their experience. Guevara Niebla and Gómez mythologized the massacre through selective use of their own memories and broader intellectual myths. Neither took into account Carrillo Prieto's report, but continued to view the massacre in isolation. Thus, analytically-speaking, neither author offered new ideas, nor did they explain to Mexicans why Tlatelolco remained important forty years later. In short, Guevara Niebla and Gómez symbolized the intellectual pole's failure to lead. The intellectual pole drew a straight line from 1968 to 2008, and claimed responsibility for all social and political movements in that era. Yet it continuously set itself apart from those movements and suggested that Tlatelolco was a unique event in Mexico's history. Its argument never evolved, something that became clear on 2 October 2008.

The 2008 commemoration was not really about the massacre or the student movement; it was about a failure to lead and the development of "Tlatelolco" as a buzzword. For a small minority, the commemoration was also an excuse to commit acts of violence. The disconnect between the commemoration and what was published in newspapers was remarkable. In the days leading up to the commemoration, newspapers published thoughts and remembrances of the massacre and discussed its impact. Many came to conclusions that agreed with the intellectual pole: because of the student movement and the massacre, there was much more political freedom in Mexico in 2008. Yet the commemoration did not reflect that idea. It was

⁵⁵ Gómez's work may have begun in 2002.

more about generic protests and using the terms “Tlatelolco” and “no se olvide” for other ends. Memories were still evolving, and interpretations were changing.

The intellectual pole gave up its self-appointed leadership position from 2000-2008. It refused to acknowledge the FEMOSPP’s report and, at the same time, refused to explain why Tlatelolco was the fourth break. Tlatelolco had no presence in the 2006 presidential election, and it became a catch-phrase during the 2008 commemoration. The intellectual pole’s unwillingness to lead directly resulted in Tlatelolco becoming a buzzword, and simultaneously, prevented the gates of history from opening.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

“The past is a foreign country whose features are shaped by today’s predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges.”

- David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985)¹

There is a perception that the 1960s were a crucial time in social, cultural, and political formation around the world. To be sure, a number of major events happened, but no more than any other decade. What, then, sets the 1960s apart? In short, the baby boomer generation. The cohort’s size, combined with a number of events all over the world, give the decade a disproportionate importance in its members’ eyes. That the baby boomers experienced the 1960s increases their fondness for the decade. Through the memory-altering distance of time, they have given the 1960s a utopian tinge, and that interpretation cannot be challenged. Anniversaries of events in the 1960s are commemorated with a seriousness generally reserved for nation-changing acts. A similar analysis holds true for the Tlatelolco Massacre. The Tlatelolco generation wants the massacre to be a nation-defining experience. Both the baby boomers and the Tlatelolco generation rely on their perceptions of the past to influence how they act in the present. They have preserved from the past what is necessary for their interpretation in the present.

The fortieth anniversary commemoration of the Tlatelolco Massacre reflected how memories were contested and either rejected or accepted. It became clear, in the days leading up to the anniversary, that the *idea* of Tlatelolco was still important. Commentators recalled 1968 with a clarity of purpose that belied the student movement’s messiness and applied its lessons, or at least their perception of its lessons, to 2008. Tlatelolco was perceived as a turning

¹ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, xvii.

point in Mexican history and a keystone in the Mexican national identity. In short, the massacre was intertwined with conceptions of *mexicanidad*. The basis for its connection to *mexicanidad* were memories, specifically those of the student leaders present during the movement and/or the massacre. Yet the student movement was not about democracy; it was, instead, about governing within the 1917 Constitution's framework. The Tlatelolco generation projected democracy onto the movement, thus rejecting the PRI's belief in a limited impact. Instead, ex-student leaders applied their memories to later events, like the petroleum boom and bust, the earthquakes, and the Partido de la Revolución Institucional's (PRI) electoral alchemy, to buttress their view that Tlatelolco was the fourth break. The ex-student leaders reinforced each other's memories, creating both a collective memory and an echo chamber. Unfortunately for them, and for the average Mexican, they have so far refused to accept any other viewpoint.

Two poles of remembrance, equal and opposite forces in accordance with Newton's laws, emerged in the massacre's aftermath. Not only were they influenced by the massacre itself but by the student movement of the previous 120 days. The first, the PRI pole of remembrance, minimized the massacre's importance. It engaged in a passive policy of denial and co-optation as the party tried to cut the other pole's position off at the knees. For the PRI pole, the massacre was a minor event in the revolutionary narrative. It was just one of a series of repressions undertaken to protect the Mexican Revolution. The PRI pole experienced more success than failure for the first thirty years, especially from 1976 to 1985, but was undone by the party's desire for political power in the 1990s. From the 1985 earthquakes to the 1988 election to the 1992 textbook fight, the PRI made a series of mistakes that shook the general public's confidence in its ability to rule. Despite the PRI's fall from electoral grace in 2000,

neither the student movement nor the massacre has taken a place in Mexico's pantheon of historic events. Why not? The PRI pole's minimization policy is part of the reason, because it rejected the massacre as a major narrative thread in modern Mexican history. The PRI's passive tactics refused to articulate the massacre's importance. In that sense, its minimization policy was a measured success. But it could not have achieved that limited success on its own.

The second pole of remembrance was that of intellectuals. Led by ex-student leaders, journalists, filmmakers, and playwrights, it was known for its emotional response to the massacre, especially in the immediate aftermath from 1968 to 1976. For this pole, the massacre was the fourth break in Mexican history. It signified the PRI's moral and political bankruptcy and suggested that the only way forward was a new revolution. In time, calls for revolution faded, but the idea of the fourth break remained, and became a cornerstone of the intellectual pole's argument. Some revision was necessary to place the student movement in line with the notion of the fourth break; the student movement was said to be about democracy from the beginning, which is patently untrue. The intellectual pole also looked back and saw widespread support for the student movement, an assertion unsupported by the evidence. While the intellectual pole's emotions were in the right place – the massacre was, indeed, a horrific event that never should have happened – its analysis was not. For the last forty years, the intellectual pole refused to change its analytical position, inadvertently playing into the PRI pole's hands. The refusal to incorporate new evidence, a symptom of its failure to lead, reinforced a disconnect with the average Mexican, to whom Tlatelolco's importance has not been clearly explained.

Part of the problem with the intellectual pole of remembrance was its insistence on one position. It viewed Tlatelolco in isolation, as if it was somehow worse than previous repressions of teachers, railroad workers, or doctors. It believed that the massacre's importance transcended other repressions and was, in fact, equivalent to nation-changing events like the Mexican Revolution. Stemming from that interpretation, the student movement's experience was limited to a finite number of people, and those who were not there could not possibly understand the movement in its entirety. In short, the intellectual pole was remarkably closed-minded, in an analytical sense. It never occurred to the intellectual pole that those who were not there had memories that were just as valid as the Consejo Nacional de Huelga's (National Strike Council, CNH). Its attitude created an echo chamber by only valuing the authority of experience. In this view, it fell to the intellectual pole to create and maintain an accurate collective memory, meaning one that stressed the movement and the massacre as the fourth break. It denied both the PRI pole's assertions and the average Mexican's memories. Playwrights were the one intellectual group that contested the intellectual pole's collective memory.

Playwrights were the most adaptable group within the intellectual pole. Their works reflected the changing moods of Mexican society, as they related to the Tlatelolco Massacre. From the passive longing of the early 1980s to the aggressive confrontation of the 1990s, playwrights suggested that Mexicans use their personal memories to supplement the intellectual pole's collective memory. It is important to note that playwrights, like the other groups that made up the intellectual pole of remembrance, rejected the PRI pole's policy of minimization. But playwrights went about that rejection in a different way: they wanted to

include Mexicans rather than dictate to them. In other words, playwrights encouraged Mexicans to look back and make their own decisions. From there, playwrights hoped that Tlatelolco's place within the revolutionary narrative would be established.

For playwrights, the massacre was not a new beginning, *per se*, and therefore it was not the revolutionary fourth break promoted by the other groups of the intellectual pole. It was a signal, though. It signified that Mexicans must examine their own personal memories and merge them with the revolution's ideas. The past cannot be a foreign country, because it helped make the present. Thus the past and the present are two sides of the same coin, like remembering and forgetting. Playwrights understood that the

prime function of memory, then, is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present. Far from simply holding on to previous experiences, memory helps us to understand them. Memories are not ready-made reflections of the past, but eclectic, selective reconstructions based on subsequent actions and perceptions and on ever-changing codes by which we delineate, symbolize, and classify the world around us.²

Thus playwrights understood that memories were unreliable indicators of the past. It follows that the intellectual pole's reliance on a few memories was not the best way to create a collective memory. Playwrights situated the massacre within other events in the nation's history, giving it a meaning the intellectual pole never could. For playwrights, the massacre deserved remembrance as a significant, and symbolic, event. It could not exist in isolation, because it was not an isolated event; it was, in fact, part of a tradition of repression. By connecting the massacre to other events, playwrights urged remembrance, even if the memories were selective. The act of remembering, together as a group, was an important part of the massacre's significance.

² *Ibid.*, 210.

While playwrights challenged the intellectual pole's collective memory, other groups reinforced it. Jorge Fons's film *Rojo amanecer* (1990), in which the massacre is treated as the fourth break, was a near-perfect example of the intellectual pole's theory and collective memory. The same can be said of Gilberto Guevara Niebla and Pablo Gómez's 2008 works dealing with Tlatelolco and its impact. Both authors relied on the authority of their experience gained as student leaders in 1968 to explain Tlatelolco's importance. In that vein, they venerated not only the student movement and the massacre, but the entire 1960s. At the same time, the intellectual pole, save playwrights, rejected Special Prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo Prieto's 2006 report. Carrillo Prieto's report de-mythologized and contextualized the massacre, and demonstrated that the student movement was not unique in terms of repression. Playwrights, filmmakers, authors, and others contested the massacre's memories, thus changing them. While most of the intellectual pole continued to stress isolation, a few tried to integrate the average Mexican's memories.

Memory studies have shown that neither collective memories nor personal memories exist on their own. They constantly commingle, thus reflecting and altering each other, often in unexpected ways.³ "Memory and history are processes of insight; each involves components of the other, and their boundaries are shadowy. Yet memory and history are normally and justifiably distinguished: memory is inescapable and prima-facie indubitable; history contingent and empirically testable."⁴ The intellectual pole of remembrance attempted to pass its memories off as a kind of official history. To do so, it relied on the authority of experience. The playwrights' challenge in the 1980s and 1990s and Carrillo Prieto's report in 2006 exposed the

³ *Ibid.*, xviii-xix and Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History," 1401-02.

⁴ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 187.

intellectual pole's failure to lead. At the same time, the PRI pole's minimization policy provided another challenge. Neither pole convinced the average Mexican that its official history, or collective memory, was correct.

The essential truth of the Tlatelolco Massacre is that it matters to a small group of people but its meaning, in the larger sense of the Mexican Revolution or the national narrative, is undefined by most Mexicans. For forty years, the intellectual pole has said, over and over again, that the massacre was the fourth break and a call to revolution. For forty years, the PRI pole has remained passive, undermining remembrance by co-opting former student leaders and disavowing the massacre's importance. The result is confusion. The past is not a foreign country. It is, instead, a gateway to the present. The past affects the present, and memories reflect that. "The relationship between past and present is dynamic and hence always provisional. As new realities present themselves in the present, the past is reintegrated into historical understanding in new ways."⁵ New realities, for my purposes, are re-evaluations of the Tlatelolco Massacre. They range from playwrights encouraging openness to Carillo Prieto's report. Both the intellectual pole and the PRI pole failed to integrate these new realities, thus the massacre continued to exist, for them, in isolation. The massacre was never included in the revolutionary narrative, because that went against the primary ideas of both poles. The PRI pole wanted to forget the massacre while the intellectual pole saw it as the beginning of "Mexican democracy." When Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas acknowledged the massacre in 1998, he tried to create an inclusionary environment, similar to what playwrights advocated. Cárdenas treated the student movement as a national event, which affected the entire country. His

⁵ Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993): 159.

position was opposed to the poles of remembrance, for which the movement was an isolated event. For both poles, isolation remained crucial to the massacre's importance, or lack thereof.

Does Tlatelolco still matter? In short, yes. It matters as a historical event that has not yet been reconciled with the revolutionary narrative. As a result, it exists in a sort of netherworld and is neither fully accepted nor fully rejected. The problem lies in interpretation. For the PRI pole of remembrance, the massacre was an unfortunate, but ultimately insignificant, event. Paradoxically, by embarking on a path of deliberate minimization and intentional forgetting, the PRI pole gave it some importance. For the intellectual pole of remembrance, the massacre was nothing less than the fourth major break in Mexican history. The intellectual pole published books, plays, and magazine and newspaper articles, and produced films and television programs trying to prove its thesis. "Unlike the schematized landscape of functional memory, events passionately recalled are often more emphatic than when originally experienced. Just as we forget or [omit] scenes that initially failed to strike us, we exaggerate those that did."⁶ It was not surprising, then, that the intellectual pole of remembrance focused on its experience, because experience was what set its members apart from the general public. It made them unique. For this group, the student movement and the massacre were singular experiences that cannot be repeated and that have defined their lives. Over time, they attributed more and more importance to the massacre, which was reflected in literature and films, especially. For them, every anti-PRI protest, during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, had its roots in the 2 October 1968 massacre.

The distance of time suggests an objective analysis. The massacre should reside within the revolutionary narrative, but it does not because both poles are prisoners to their

⁶ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 208.

perspectives. Both poles wanted to “break with the past, to construct as great a distance as possible between the new age and the old”, but for different reasons.⁷ For the intellectual pole, the fourth break meant a new revolution. For the PRI pole, a break with the past meant forgetting the massacre, or at the very least, consigning it to the historical dustbin. To move forward, both poles must evolve. They must accept that the massacre happened and that it is important enough to be remembered, not just by them but by every Mexican. They must leave their echo chamber and look at how the massacre has affected the average Mexican. Time marches inexorably forward, and neither the intellectual pole nor the PRI pole have the iron grip on information they once did. The intellectual pole is at a crossroads. It must assume the mantle of leadership it long ago gave up or it will be discredited. Mexicans have other sources of information, which are widely available. The gates of history will continue to swing open, and the average Mexican will provide the strongest push.

⁷ John R. Gillis, “Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship,” in *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 8.

APPENDIX A: Abbreviations

I. Government-related

Corriente Democrática (Democratic Current, CD)
Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Electoral Institution, IFE)
Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD)
Partido de la Revolución Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI)
Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN)
Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution, PARM)
Partido Comunista Mexicano (Mexican Communist Party, PCM)
Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (Mexican Workers Party, PMT)
Partido Popular Socialista (Popular Socialist Party, PPS)
Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party, PST)
Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Public Education, SEP)

II. Education and Culture

Ciudad Universitaria (University City, CU)
Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (National Council for Culture and Arts, CONACULTA)
Instituto Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute, IPN)
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM)

III. Others

Asamblea de Barrios (Neighborhood Assembly, AB)
Consejo Nacional de Huelga (National Strike Council, CNH)
Coordinadora Única de Damnificados (United Coordinating Committee of Earthquake Victims, CUD)
Ejército Zapatista de la Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN)
Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Tecnológicos (National Federation of Technological Students, FNET)
Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado (Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements in the Past, FEMOSPP)
North American Free Trade Agreement (Tratado de libre comercial de América del Norte, NAFTA)
Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX)
Productora e Importada de Papal, S.A. (PIPSA)

APPENDIX B: Rosario Castellanos, “Memorial de Tlatelolco”¹

La oscuridad engendra la violencia
y la violencia pide oscuridad
para cuajar el crimen.
Por eso el dos de octubre aguardó hasta la noche
Para que nadie viera la mano que empuñaba
El arma, sino sólo su efecto de relámpago.

¿Y a esa luz, breve y lívida, quién? ¿Quién es el que mata?
¿Quiénes los que agonizan, los que mueren?
¿Los que huyen sin zapatos?
¿Los que van a caer al pozo de una cárcel?
¿Los que se pudren en el hospital?
¿Los que se quedan mudos, para siempre, de espanto?

¿Quién? ¿Quiénes? Nadie. Al día siguiente, nadie.
La plaza amaneció barrida; los periódicos
dieron como noticia principal
el estado del tiempo.
Y en la televisión, en el radio, en el cine
no hubo ningún cambio de programa,
ningún anuncio intercalado ni un
minuto de silencio en el banquete.
(Pues prosiguió el banquete.)

No busques lo que no hay: huellas, cadáveres
que todo se le ha dado como ofrenda a una diosa,
a la Devoradora de Excrementos.

No hurgues en los archivos pues nada consta en actas.
Mas he aquí que toco una llaga: es mi memoria.
Duele, luego es verdad. Sangre con sangre
y si la llamo mía traiciono a todos.

Recuerdo, recordamos.
Ésta es nuestra manera de ayudar a que amanezca
sobre tantas conciencias mancilladas,
sobre un texto iracundo sobre una reja abierta,
sobre el rostro amparado tras la máscara.
Recuerdo, recordamos
hasta que la justicia se siente entre nosotros.

¹ Rosario Castellanos, *Memorial de Tlatelolco*. Retrieved from <http://xicanopoetrydaily.wordpress.com/2009/01/28/memorial-de-tlatelolco/> on 5 February 2009.

APPENDIX C: Octavio Paz's poem and letter¹

Señores Coordinadores del
Programa Cultural de la
XIX Olimpiada,
México, D.F.

New Delhi,
October 7, 1968

Dear Sirs:

Some time ago, you had the kindness to invite me to participate in the World Meeting of Poets that will be celebrated in Mexico during the present month of October, as part of the activities of the Cultural Program of the XIX Olimpiad. At the same time, you invited me to write a poem extolling the spirit of the Olympics.

I declined both invitations because, as I expressed it to you at that time, I did not think I was the person best suited to contribute to this international gathering and, above all, to write a poem on this theme. However, the recent turn of events had made me change my mind. I have written a short poem in commemoration of this Olympiad. I send it to you, enclosed with this letter with the request that you do me the favor of giving it to the poets who will be present at the Meeting.

I thank you in advance for giving to the request in the final part of the second paragraph of this communication the attention it deserves.

¹ Young, "Tlatelolco Literature," 112-13. Both the letter and the poem were translated by Mark Strand for Young's thesis. Strand's translation appears below.

“MEXICO: THE XIX OLYMPIAD”

to Dore and Adja Yunkers

Clarity

(Maybe it's worth
Writing it down on this clear
White paper)

It is not clear:

It is madness

(A yellow and black
Concentration of bile in Spanish)
Stretched over the page.

Why?

Shame is anger
Turned against oneself:

If

A whole country feels shame
It is a lion crouched
Ready to leap

(City

Employees wash away blood
In the Plaza de los Sacrificios.)
Look at this.

Stained

Before having said anything
Worthwhile,

Clarity

Delhi, October 3, 1968

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National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, DC

Nettie Lee Benson Collection, University of Texas, Austin, TX

Vanderbilt University Television Archive, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

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VITA

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In his spare time, Mr. Kelly enjoys playing and watching sports and reading about history, especially areas that are outside his specialty

ABSTRACT

Since 1968, the Tlatelolco Massacre has been called, by some, a dividing line in Mexican history. For intellectuals, it represents the fourth break in Mexican history. The first three breaks were the Conquest in 1521, the wars of independence beginning in 1810, and the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Tlatelolco Massacre, then, has been seen as a nation-defining event. But intellectuals were not the only ones for whom Tlatelolco was important. The ruling Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) had a vested interest in forgetting the massacre. For the PRI, which saw itself as the Mexican Revolution's ideological guardian, the massacre was an unfortunate, but minor event. For the forty years considered in this study, the battle between the two groups has been over how to remember the massacre and how to fit it into the revolutionary narrative.

Using memory studies, I examine how the massacre has been remembered and forgotten, and how memories have changed over time. Pioneering studies by Maurice Halbwachs, regarding collective memory, and Pierre Nora, regarding how memory and history converge, have guided my analysis. Emily S. Rosenberg's *A Date Which Will Live* (2003) is another important influence for its discussion of how the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor has been seen since 1941. Also important have been works by Tlatelolco veterans like Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Monsiváis, Ramón Ramírez, Gilberto Guevara Niebla, and Raúl Álvarez Garín, which illustrate the intellectual idea of the fourth break.

While the concept of the fourth break is interesting, intellectuals never convince the broader Mexican public of its efficacy. Consequently, intellectuals withdrew from the leadership position they assumed after the massacre and stopped engaging the public. Instead, they published the same arguments time and again, but only for themselves. At the same time,

Tlatelolco never fully disappeared from the public eye. Jorge Fons reinforced the intellectual theory of the fourth break with his film *Rojo amanecer* (1990). Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas declared a day of mourning on 2 October 1998, and Vicente Fox appointed Special Prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo Prieto to investigate not just Tlatelolco, but all the social movements from the 1940s to the 1970s. Thus, despite new information becoming more available, the intellectual pole refused to evolve and take it into consideration. As a result, Tlatelolco still exists in a netherworld.