Intersections Between the Dirty War and the War on Drugs in Northwestern Mexico (1969-1985)

By
Adela Cedillo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(History)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
2019

Date of final oral examination: 05/01/2019

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Steve J. Stern, Emeritus Professor, History
Pablo F. Gómez, Associate Professor, History and the History of Medicine
Patrick Iber, Assistant Professor, History
Falina Enriquez, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
Alberto Vargas, Faculty Associate, Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program

© Copyright by Adela Cedillo 2019
All Rights Reserved.

To the civilians who were victims of the dirty war and the war on drugs, especially children and underage youth. May they never be forgotten.

To the 43 disappeared students of Ayotzinapa whom we are still searching for.

To the Guarijío and the Rarámuri peoples, *matétera-bá.*

To my beloved *abuelita*, who passed away in 2016, when I had just begun this project. Her remembrance gave me strength to keep going until it was finished. *In memoriam.*

To Miguel Topete Díaz, who introduced me to the Golden Quadrilateral but did not live long enough to learn that I would write about his deeds. *In memoriam.*

Table of Contents

Abstract/ v

List of Abbreviations/ vii

Acknowledgments/ xii

Introduction: The Mexican Serpent's Egg/ xviii

Research Questions and Intended Contribution to the Field/ xix

A Brief History of This Project/ xxviii

The Dirty War and the First Drug War in the Historiography/ xxxi

Theoretical Framework and Nomenclature/ xxxv

Organization of the Chapters/ xlii

Methodology and Sources/ xlv

Chapter One: A History of Structural Violence in the Northwest/ 1

Centuries of Violence/ 3

The Yaqui Valley, Birthplace of the Green Revolution/ 21

The Political History of Drug Trade in the Golden Triangle/ 25

The Formation of a Narco-populist Regime in Sinaloa/ 30

Anticommunism and the National Security Doctrine as State Rationale/ 39

The Birth of the Socialist Armed Movement in the Sierra Tarahumara/ 50

The Forgotten 1968 Guerrilla Movement/ 56

The Aftermath of Chihuahua's Guerrilla Movement/ 62

Conclusions/ 66

Chapter Two: The 23rd of September Communist League's Micro-War in the Golden Quadrilateral (1973-1975)/ 69

The Liga's Revolutionary Project and the State Response/ 77

Radical Peasants, Student-Guerrillas, and the *Foco* Experiment/ 90

The Commandos' Expansion/ 97

The Chínipas Commando/ 97

The Urique Commando/ 106

The "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando (CGOG, a.k.a. the Quiriego commando)/ 110

The End of the Guerrilla Dream in the Highlands/ 118

Land Reform and Indigenous Radicalism/ 124

Conclusions/ 133

Chapter Three: The *Enfermo* Movement, Guerrilla Culture, and Narco-culture in Sinaloa during the 1970s/ 137

"Are you Drug Trafficker or Guerrilla?"/ 137

The Sinaloan Student Movement and the *Enfermedad*/ 145

From the Assault on Heaven to the State of Siege/ 152

The Helicopters of Death/ 156

The Tactical Withdrawal (1976-1979)/ 161

The Guerrilla Culture Between Global Appropriations and Local Developments/ 164

Interplays Between Guerrillas and Drug Traffickers/ 171

Life Stories/ 173

Narco-culture: From Sinaloa to the World/ 178

Conclusions/ 186

Chapter Four: The War on Drugs, Counterinsurgency, and the De Facto State of Siege in the Golden Triangle (1977-1982)/ 189

The Beginning of a U.S. War on Mexican Soil/ 193

State Collusion with Drug -Trafficking Networks on the Eve of Operation Condor/ 197

Operation Condor as a Watershed in the Conflict Between Sinaloa and the Federation/ 203

Condor's Attacks Against Social Movements in Sinaloa/ 215

The State of Siege in the Sierra Madre Occidental/ 217

The Specter of an Ecocide/ 231

The Outcomes of Operation Condor/ 235

Conclusions/ 240

Chapter Five: Counterinsurgency as the Foundation of the Deep State and the Payoff System/ 242

The Military Mindset Across the Dirty War and the War on Drugs/ 248

The Guadalajara Cartel and the Consolidation of the Deep State/ 261

The Mexico-Contra Connection/ 267

The Formation of a Payoff System/ 280
Conclusions/ 292

Conclusions: The De Facto State of Exception as the Exception of the Mexican State/ 295

Key Findings/ 295
What We Should Know About the Secret Wars but Still Do Not Know/ 304
The State of Exception as the Rule/ 306

Appendix 1: Maps/ 313

Appendix 2: Corridos and Narcocorridos/ 318

Appendix 3: Figures/ 334

Bibliography/ 338

Intersections Between the Dirty War and the War on Drugs in Northwestern Mexico (1969-1985)

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the interconnection between the dirty war and the first war on drugs, two conflicts that have been given only minor scholarly attention. While there is a growing academic body of literature pertaining to the dirty war (1964-1985), studies on the first drug war (1977-1987) have been virtually absent in the historiography. My approach offers a fresh perspective on the development of these two secret wars in the Golden Quadrilateral, a region in northwestern Mexico made up by portions of the states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango, which became simultaneously an epicenter of guerrilla movements and the economic hub of the drug industry. These conflicts are examined in relation to long-term structural violence, post-revolutionary violence, and the Cold War.

This project looks at two case studies: the guerrilla warfare launched by the 23rd of September Communist League and the counterinsurgency campaigns against it, and Operation Condor, the first anti-drug campaign with a dual civil-military command designed under a counterinsurgency framework. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) along with the Attorney General of Mexico (PGR) took the civil command of the operation for a year, while the army militarized the northwestern highlands for a decade. I demonstrate that the Mexican government applied the counterinsurgent concept of internal enemy not only to political opponents but also to drug growers and traffickers. However, while the security forces aimed at eliminating guerrilla movements, they coerced the most powerful drug lords to make arrangements regarding turf, smuggling routes, protection rackets, and bribes to local, state, and

federal authorities. Thus, instead of being a genuine anti-drug campaign, Operation Condor was a war by the national security apparatus against state and local powers to reorganize the drug industry.

I explain the structural conditions that paved the way for the secret wars to take place and the ideological and cultural foundations of guerrillas, drug traffickers, and counterinsurgency agents in order to shed light on the causes of political violence in the Golden Quadrilateral. This study argues that the secret wars led to the formation of a structure of power parallel to the rule of law that encompassed the security apparatus, crime syndicates, and illegal commodities for the global market, what some scholars have termed as deep state, which is in charge of regulating the criminal underworld through violence. In addition, I demonstrate how these secret wars were inextricably connected because the counterinsurgency agents who took part in them were permitted to profit from the drug trade in return for maintaining the hegemony of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Lastly, my work looks at how militarization overlapped with criminal sovereignty, leading to the imposition of a *de facto* state of siege and systematic human rights abuses.

List of Abbreviations

ACNR Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria or National Revolutionary Civic Association

AGN Archivo General de la Nación or National Archive

AHUAS Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa or Historical Archive of the Autonomous University of Sinaloa

BFP Batallón de Fusileros Paracaidistas or Parachute Fusilier Brigade

BREZ Brigada Revolucionaria "Emiliano Zapata" or "Emiliano Zapata" Revolutionary Brigade

Cacique Local political boss.

Campesino-a Peasant or farmer.

CCIT Centro Coordinador Indigenista de la Tarahumara or Tarahumara Indigenist Coordination Center.

CENTAC Central Tactic Program

CER Comité Estudiantil Revolucionario or Student Revolutionary Committee

CIA Central Intelligence Agency

Chota Police agent

CNTE Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación or National Educational Workers Confederation.

CONAL Coordinadora Nacional de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre or National Direction.

COR Comité Obrero Revolucionario or Worker Revolutionary Committee

CGOG Comando Guerrillero "Oscar González" or "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando

CNC Confederación Nacional Campesina or National Peasant Confederation

CNDH Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos or National Human Rights Commission

CNED Central Nacional de Estudiantes Democráticos or National Center of Democratic Students

CNOP Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares or National Confederation of Popular Organizations

CONASUPO Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares or National Company of Popular Subsistance

CPMAG Comité Político-Militar “Arturo Gámiz” or “Arturo Gámiz” Political-Military Committee

CTM Central de Trabajadores Mexicanos or Confederation of Mexican Workers

DAAC Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización or Office of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization

DEA Drug Enforcement Administration

DFS Dirección Federal de Seguridad or Federal Security Directorate

DGISP Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales or General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations

DIPD División de Investigaciones para la Prevención de la Delincuencia or Research Division for the Prevention of Crime

DISEN Dirección de Investigaión y Seguridad Nacional or Directorate for Investigation and National Security

Ejido A form of corporative landholding in which the Mexican government used to remain as the owner.

EZLN Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional or Zapatista Army of National Liberation

FECSM Federación de Estudiantes Campesinos Socialistas de México or Federation of Socialist Student Peasants of Mexico

FEG Federación de Estudiantes de Guadalajara or Student Federation of Guadalajara

FEMOSPP Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado or Special Prosecutor Office for Social and Political Movements of the Past

FER Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario or Student Revolutionary Front

FEUS Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios de Sinaloa or University Students’ Federation of Sinaloa

Foquismo A guerrilla strategy that emphasizes the role of a small military vanguard as the embryo of the revolutionary army.

FRAP Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas del Pueblo or Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People

FSLN Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional or Sandinista National Liberation Front

FTC Force Task Condor

GEGS Grupo Especial del Gobierno de Sinaloa or Sinaloa Government's Special Group

GPG Grupo Popular Guerrillero or Popular Guerrilla Group

GPGAG Grupo Popular Guerrillero "Arturo Gámiz" or "Arturo Gámiz" Popular Guerrilla Group

G23S Grupo 23 de Septiembre or 23rd of September Group

Guacho Soldier

INEGI Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística or National Institute of Statistics and Geography

INI Instituto Nacional Indigenista or National Indigenist Institute

IRSS Instituto de Readaptación Social or Social Rehabilitation Institute of Sinaloa

IPN Instituto Politécnico Nacional or National Polytechnic Institute

JCM Juventud Comunista de México or Mexican Communist Youth

Latifundista Large land estate owner

LCA Liga de Comunidades Agrarias or League of Peasant Communities

LCE Liga Comunista "Espartaco" or "Espartacus" Communist League

LC23S or Liga Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre or 23rd of September Communist League

Los Enfermos The Sick-Ones, the most important guerrilla group in Sinaloa in the 1970s

Los Guajiros A guerrilla group with a presence in Chihuahua, Jalisco, Oaxaca, and Mexico City.

Los Halcones The Hawks, a paramilitary group that orchestrated the massacre of 1971 in San Cosme, also known as the *halconazo*.

Los Lacandones A Guerrilla group form Mexico City which took its name for the indigenous group from the Lacandon Jungle.

Los Macías A guerrilla group from Nuevo León, named ironically after the boxer “El Ratón” Macías.

Los Procesos The Processes, a guerrilla group from Nuevo León and Mexico City.

MAR Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria or Revolutionary Action Movement

MEP Movimiento Estudiantil Profesional or Professional Student Movement

MLN Movimiento de Liberación Nacional or National Liberation Movement

M23S Movimiento 23 de Septiembre or 23rd of September Movement

NAU Narcotics Assistance Unit

NARA National Archives and Records Administration

NSA National Security Archive

Organización Partidaria or Pro-Party Organization, a coalition of Mexican revolutionary organizations that preceded the LC23S.

PAN Partido Acción Nacional or National Action Party

PCM Partido Comunista Mexicano or Mexican Communist Party

PHINA Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios or Records of Agrarian Communities

PML Partido Liberal Mexicano or Mexican Liberal Party

PNR Partido Nacional Revolucionario or National Revolutionary Party

PdlP Partido de los Pobres or Party of the Poor

PGR Procuraduría General de la República or Attorney General of Mexico

PJC Policía Judicial de Chihuahua or Chihuahua Judicial Police

PJJ Policía Judicial de Jalisco or Jalisco Judicial Police

PJS Policía Judicial de Sinaloa or Sinaloa Judicial Police

PJSO Policía Judicial de Sonora or Sonora Judicial Police

PPS Partido Popular Socialista or Popular Socialist Party

PRD Partido de la Revolución Democrática or Party of the Democratic Revolution

PRI Partido Revolucionario Institucional or Institutional Revolutionary Party

Ranchería Small village or hamlet.

RF Rockefeller Foundation

SEDENA Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional or Department of National Defense

SEGOB Secretaría de Gobernación or Secretary of State

Serrano Highlander

SMO Sierra Madre Occidental

SNTE Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación or National Educational Workers Union

SRA Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria or Secretariat of Agrarian Reform

UAS Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa or Autonomous University of Sinaloa

UdG Universidad de Guadalajara or University of Guadalajara

UGOCM Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México or General Union of Mexican Workers and Peasants

UNAM Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México or National Autonomous University of Mexico

UNISON Universidad de Sonora or University of Sonora

UNS Unión Nacional Sinarquista or National Synarchist Union

Acknowledgements

It is usual for long-term academic projects to be indebted to dozens of people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Steve J. Stern for his mentoring and support during my six years in the program, even after his retirement. Steve was a source of intellectual inspiration and his critical feedback has always enriched my perspective. If that were not enough, he also helped me in crucial moments, especially when I was at risk of losing my immigration status. I will never have enough words to express my gratitude for what he did for me. I also thank emeritus professors Florencia E. Mallon and Francisco Scarano for their support as co-advisors during my first three years in grad school. Some of the ideas that make part of this work were fermented in their research seminars.

I would also like to thank Patrick Iber, who coincidentally joined the History Department after Steve, Florencia, and Franco retired. He kindly agreed to become my co-advisor and provided valuable suggestions and critiques. Professors Pablo Gómez, Falina Enríquez, and Alberto Vargas Prieto agreeded to read my dissertation despite never having me as their student. I greatly appreciate their feedback. I also thank Alberto for having supported my extra-curricular projects through the Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program (LACIS).

I am also indebted to professors from different institutions. Alexander Aviña and Gladys McCormick read some of my chapters and gave me invaluable feedback. Verónica Oikión Solano shared with me not only her expertise but also important sources. Francisco Ávila Coronel generously gave me a great deal of archival material. Elizabeth Henson advised me about all types of sources and provided fundamental support during my research trips to Sonora and Chihuahua. I thank them all.

Jaime Pensado and Enrique Ochoa organized a colloquium at the University of Notre Dame in 2016 about radicalism and the dirty war in Mexico, whose final result was the edited volume *México Beyond 1968* (2018). Thanks to Jaime and Enrique for their invitation to participate in both initiatives and for having edited my book chapter about the Liga, which was an earlier version of my current chapter two.

In 2017, professors Benjamin T. Smith and Wil Pansters had the courtesy of inviting me to a colloquium at the University of Warwick about the history of drug trafficking, even though I was at a very early stage in my research. I had the opportunity to meet several experts in the history of Mexican drugs and drug trafficking like Isaac Campos, Alexander Dawson, Froylán Enciso, Carlos Flores, and Salvador Maldonado, Carlos Pérez Ricart, whose works illuminated my understanding about the topic. Professor Smith also shared many sources of his impressive collection with me, which I truly appreciate.

To my fellows in the History department and other departments at the University of Wisconsin, Lin Li, Valeria Navarro-Rosenblatt, Jeanne Essame, Bridgette Werner, Denise Castillo, Viviana Quintero, Tamara Wattnem, Licho López, Trésor Yoassi, Maryanne Schiffman, Edith Beltrán, Marcelo Cassals, and Jake Blanc, a heartfelt thanks to you. Jessica Kirstein not only was a very supportive colleague but also helped me to translate sections of my chapter three into English.

The Graduate Program Coordinator, Leslie Abadie, was always willing to help me to navigate a system that I was not used to as a foreign student, I deeply thank her. I extend my thanks to Paloma Celis Carbajal, the former librarian of the Latin American Studies at Memorial Library, who was always keen to help me. I would also like to thank to Axolote, Group of Mexican Students and Friends for all the initiatives that we worked on concerning the

Ayotzinapa case. In my current town, Cedar Falls, Iowa, I also benefited from the friendship of several professors at the University of Northern Iowa, colleagues of my husband Fernando. They eased the last stage of my writing process.

Both my graduate school career and my dissertation were possible because of the generous financial support of several institutions and persons. The University of Wisconsin-Madison granted me a multi-package aid, which included a two-year fellowship. I was also recipient of a pre-dissertator fellowship, a one-year dissertator fellowship, and a scholarship that Steve Stern created to support my writing process for one semester. The Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Program fellowship awarded me funding for one academic year and I was also recipient of a summer FLAS fellowship to learn Portuguese. A couple of summer research travel grants facilitated my archival research in Mexico. Thanks to the Charles A. Hale fellowship from the Latin American Studies Association I was also able to concentrate on the writing stage of my dissertation.

My fieldwork in Washington, D.C. and New York City was possible because of the accommodation provided by Florencia Ruiz, Aimee Sullivan, and Luis Siqueiros, to whom I thank. Throughout Mexico, I received much needed assistance to carry out my fieldwork in high-risk conditions. I apologize in advance to potential English readers who do not speak Spanish, but it is important for me to thank people in Mexico in their language.

En Guadalajara, Jalisco Miguel Topete Díaz (✝), Bertha Lilia Gutiérrez Campos “Tita,” Antonio Orozco Michel, Jesús Zamora García, Rodolfo Gamiño Muñoz, Carlos Sepúlveda y otros miembros del Colectivo “Rodolfo Reyes Crespo” conforman una comunidad de memoria invaluable y de gran ayuda para quienes estudian temas relacionados con la guerra sucia. Jesús Zamora compartió generosamente conmigo los documentos digitalizados que constituyen el

Archivo Memoria de la resistencia en Jalisco. La hospitalidad de Tita me permitió viajar en repetidas ocasiones a Guadalajara para hacer investigación. Doy gracias a todos ellos.

En Sinaloa, los historiadores Sergio Arturo Sánchez Parra, Rafael Santos Cenobio y Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez me dieron una gran orientación para familiarizarme con la historiografía local sobre el movimiento Enfermo y el narcotráfico. Agradezco especialmente a la encargada del Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, Dina Beltrán López, su gran paciencia para ayudarme a localizar y reproducir documentos y tesis, así como por haberme presentado a su hermano Joel, quien me ayudó a concretar algunas entrevistas. Agradezco a mis entrevistados Maricela Silva Balderas, Saúl Alarcón Amézquita, César Cristerna, José Luis López Duarte, Oscar Loza Ochoa y a diversas personas en Mocorito, Badiraguato y San Ignacio por su confianza y su tiempo.

En Sonora, el cronista oficial de Hermosillo, Ignacio Lagarda Lagarda me compartió con gran generosidad parte de los documentos en que se basó para escribir su obra *El Color de las Amapas* y me presentó a su primo, Rubén Burgos Lagarda, quien amablemente me llevó a conocer la zona Guarijía. Les extiendo mis sinceros agradecimientos por su inestimable ayuda. Agradezco también a Chalino Valenzuela y Esteban Vega por haber suspendido horas de trabajo para concederme entrevistas. En Ciudad Obregón coincidí por un venturoso azar con Eleazar Gámez Rascón y Guadalupe Vázquez, a quienes doy gracias por una entrevista memorable. Asimismo, agradezco diversas ayudas prestadas por Mayra Borbón y las historiadoras Elizabeth y Denisse Cejudo Ramos. Extiendo un agradecimiento especial a Raúl Florencio Lugo Hernández, sobreviviente del asalto al cuartel Madera de 1965 con quien he tenido la oportunidad de conversar en múltiples ocasiones.

En Chihuahua, el maestro Jesús Vargas Valdés me ayudó gentilmente a conseguir todos los números del suplemento semanal donde ha narrado la historia de las luchas armadas en Chihuahua y se mostró siempre dispuesto a responder mis dudas sobre la historia regional, lo cual le agradezco. Asimismo, doy las gracias a Rosalío Morales Vargas, Jesús Manuel Cadena Loya, Ramiro Castellanos y, sobre todo, a Alberto Domínguez Rodríguez por la gran ayuda que me proporcionaron, aunque no me haya alcanzado el tiempo para concretar entrevistas más profundas. A Alberto Domínguez le expreso mi admiración por las condiciones por demás difíciles en que ha buscado a sus hermanos Gabriel y Plutarco desde su silla de ruedas. Celebro que haya podido recuperar los restos de Gabriel. Deseo hacer un reconocimiento también a las familias Gaytán Aguirre, Scobell Gaytán, Armendáriz-Ornelas y Gómez Caballero, emprendedoras de la memoria sin cuyo tesón no hubiera sido posible para los investigadores rescatar la historia de los guerrilleros chihuahuenses.

En Nuevo León, la hospitalidad de Elvia Jiménez de Sáenz hizo posible que pudiera entrevistar a María de la Paz Quintanilla y Juan Aguado. En Ciudad de México, Alejandrina Ávila y Benjamín Palacios me concedieron largas horas de entrevistas. A todos ellos gracias por lo que me han compartido todos estos años. A las familias Guzmán Villa y Guzmán Pliego y a José Luis Esparza, Rubén Ramírez, Alfredo Alcántar Camarena, Javier Andrade y José Luis Alonso, gracias por haberme relatado fragmentos de sus memorias en un contexto informal.

A pesar de la gran cantidad de apoyo que obtuve, esta disertación se produjo en medio de condiciones personales sumamente difíciles, entre ellas un problema migratorio que me impidió salir de Estados Unidos al tiempo que debía empezar mi trabajo de campo. Esta situación me orilló a apoyarme temporalmente en ayudantes de investigación. Diana Ávila reprodujo versiones públicas del Archivo General de la Nación y Miguel Ángel Ramírez y Rafael Sinaloa

fotografiaron expedientes en archivos del Instituto Nacional Indigenista en las ciudades de México y Chihuahua, respectivamente. Agradezco su trabajo y profesionalismo. Gracias también a Araceli Ruiz por la elaboración de los mapas y a Herman Padilla por su asesoría en la mejora de las imágenes.

Me siento afortunada y agradecida por haber contado con la amistad, el cariño y el apoyo de Alejandra Pinal, Aurelia Gómez Unamuno, Cynthia Bobadilla, Elizabeth Arenas, Enrique Esqueda, Jean-Bosco Kakozi, José Bolaños, Julia Aguilar, Nadia Errachidi, Ricardo Gamboa y Víctor Pérez durante este largo camino. Gracias también a mi familia a los dos lados de la frontera por su apoyo infinito y por la paciencia que me han tenido. Fernando no sólo ha sido mi compañero por más de once años, también nos une una pasión común por la historia de la guerra sucia. Ante las inusuales circunstancias de aprender inglés académico al mismo tiempo que hacía el doctorado, él ha sido un gran soporte. Finalmente, nada de lo que he logrado hubiera sido posible sin mi mamá. No me alcanzan las palabras para describir lo que ella ha hecho por mí, pero lo agradezco con todo mi ser.

Introduction: The Mexican Serpent's Egg

> Anyone who makes the slightest effort can see what is waiting in there in the future. It's like a serpent's egg. Through the thin membranes you can clearly discern the already perfect reptile.
> Vergérus from the film *The Serpent's Egg* by Ingmar Bergman

El amante de Janis Joplin (*Janis Joplin's lover,* 2003), by Sinaloan writer Elmer Mendoza, describes underground life in Sinaloa in 1969. The novel follows the story of three fictional characters: David Valenzuela, *El Sandy*, a peasant of the Golden Triangle region with a cognitive disability; *El Chato*, a university student who becomes a member of a guerrilla movement in Culiacán; and *El Cholo*, the son of a high-ranking official turned drug trafficker. David and *El Chato* are cousins, and *El Cholo* is a childhood friend of *El Chato*. In the highlands, David accidentally kills a *narco-cacique* in self-defense and has to flee to the city of Culiacán to seek shelter with *El Chato*'s family.

After a number of adventures—which included playing in Major League Baseball and spending time with Janis Joplin in Los Angeles, California—David ended up working as a smuggler for *El Cholo*, without knowledge of the type of merchandise he was ferrying. The judicial police discovers that David is carrying marijuana in his boat and arrests him. The sadistic torture that David endures unleashes student protests against police brutality. At the same time, a counterinsurgency elite unit called *Los Dragones* kills his cousin *El Chato* and takes his body on a "death flight."[1] *El Cholo* bribes Mascareño, a police chief and accomplice of drug traffickers, to have David released, but the latter is taken onto another "death flight." Mascareño ironically tells David: "you are gonna have the same fate as your cousin, except that I will toss you alive.

[1] The so-called "death flights" were a state terror practice that the Mexican government employed during the 1970s, consisting of tossing the bodies of clandestine prisoners into the sea from airplanes or helicopters. Chapters three and five provide more references about them.

Take him to the helicopter! –But boss, there is still sunlight. –I don't give a damn. Tie him to an anvil… fucking shitty guerrillas, besides, they are colluding with *narcos*."[2] When David realizes his destination, he jumps from the helicopter into the sea in front of Altata's coast, the only act of liberty in his life path as a scapegoat and martyr.

Mendoza's novel deals with an array of tropes regarding Sinaloa's culture, but its more remarkable feature is to depict in an astonishly realistic fashion the relationship between peasants, guerrillas, drug traffickers, and counterinsurgency agents. As Mendoza evinced, those actors embodied distinct worlds but belonged to common family networks and coexisted in the same spaces: neighborhoods, schools, *plazas*, places for entertainment, and even prisons. Their interactions shaped a great portion of the political and social life in Sinaloa during the Cold War. The novel is written in a caustic and hilarious style, the type of dark humor that a society that has undergone systematic violence engenders. My dissertation tackles the same topics as the novel, although the reader will not find anything facetious in these pages, rather an unflinching history of political violence in northwestern Mexico.

Research Questions and Intended Contribution to the Field

My project was born as a quest to explain the paradox of a seemingly politically stable and peaceful post-revolutionary Mexico that transformed into one of the most violent countries in the world in the twenty-first century. The scholarship over the Mexican Cold War has largely neglected violence, especially the interplay of distinct expressions of violence and its outcomes. My dissertation adopts a relational approach to look at the interactions between all major actors

[2] Elmer Mendoza, *El amante de Janis Joplin* (Mexico City: Tusquets Editores, 2003), 246.

that resorted to political violence during two conflicts that have received little historical attention, namely the dirty war and the war on drugs during the 1970s.

The central argument of my research poses that both wars were intertwined in ways that were pivotal in the state formation process, particularly in the making of the deep state, a parallel structure to the rule of law that made possible the alliance between top state agents and drug lords.[3] This dissertation maintains that the intersection of those conflicts had exceptional features in the northwest compared to other regions, given that it was the economic hub of the drug industry since the 1940s and the birthplace of socialist guerrilla movements in the 1960s. The northwest was a laboratory that anticipated the future of Mexico in the twenty-first century as the country became dominated by a mafia-state nexus.

The traditional scholarship on modern Mexico has played down the violence that took place during the post-revolutionary period (1929-1982). Instead, it depicted a "golden age" of institution-building, economic growth (the "Mexican miracle"), social peace, consolidation of the middle class, cultural achievement, and overall modernity, with sporadic outbursts of state violence like the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, usually seen as a watershed in the Mexican Cold War. That scholarship also misguidedly portrays the lingering local conflicts and the armed revolutionary movements as irrelevant attempts to challenge the ruling party's authoritarianism.[4] New evidence concerning systematic state terror practices has led to a

---

[3] See the "Theoretical framework" below for a discussion about the deep state.

[4] Castañeda (1994) holds the view that Mexico was an exceptionally peaceful country compared to Central and South America. Works by Rubin (1997) and Joseph, Rubenstein, & Zolov, eds. (2001), among others that deal with some aspects of post-revolutionary Mexico show that the Mexican dirty war and the first drug war were largely absent from the academic discussion. Spenser (2004); Joseph & Spenser (2008), and Grandin & Joseph (2010) belong to a historiographical trend that challenges traditional views of the Cold War in Latin America but do not fully analyze the importance of political violence in Mexico. Finally, the commemoration wave of the fiftieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre made evident that a Mexico City-centered historiography constructed this episode as the most important event of the Mexican Cold War.

growing consensus characterizing the PRI's rule as an era of repression, however, the *pax priísta* myth refuses to go away.[5]

Since the 1930s, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, previously PNR and PRM) gradually became a *de facto* one-party state—even though it gave the semblance of a multi-party system—by fostering a corporatist and clientelist regime to incorporate large sectors of the population into the party. In consequence, "modernity in Mexico was orchestrated by a total state that strove at all times to suppress the duality of state and society."[6] Notwithstanding its anti-democratic features, the PRI was credited for the hegemonic consolidation and overall stability of the Mexican state in comparison to other Latin American countries that underwent civil wars, coups, and dictatorships.

For decades, it was ignored that the exceptional features of the post-revolutionary regime did not prevent Mexico from having a dirty war parallel to those in the Southern Cone. However, the declassification of Mexican official archives in 2002 has turned the narrative on the golden age, economic miracle, and *pax priísta* upside down.[7] New regional case studies have demonstrated that part of our understandings of post-revolutionary Mexico have been seen from the perspective of the nation's capital, the center of political, economic, and cultural power, where violence was mild and sporadic compared to other regions.

---

[5] For instance, Alan Knight claimed that during the twentieth century Mexico increasingly became a country free of political violence. Knight, "Political Violence in Postrevolutionary Mexico", in *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America*, Kees Koonings & Dirk Krujit eds. (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 105. For a refuting of that perspective see Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[6] Gareth Williams, *The Mexican Exception. Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2011), 12.

[7] About the disclosure process of the archives of the Secretary of Interior (SEGOB) see Tanalis Padilla & Louise E. Walker, eds., "Spy Reports: Content, Methodology, and Historiography in Mexico's Secret Police Archive" Dossier, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (July 2013): 1-103.

My work is part of a new current that is re-conceptualizing political violence as one of the most salient features of the Mexican Cold War. As Wil Pansters proved in his long-term analysis of violence in twentieth century Mexico, violence has been inherent to the state formation process.[8] Also, contrary to traditional scholarship that neglects the importance of the underworld and the criminality of state actors and institutions, this new historiography incorporates an analysis of criminal sovereignty, the state of exception, state crimes, institutional corruption, and illicit transnational commodities as a central part of state building.[9] In sum, the new historiographic current emphasizes what was usually believed to be on the fringes of the Mexican state.

By embracing the *pax priísta* myth, it would be impossible to understand how a seemingly stable and peaceful country became the stage of an endless war on drugs and everyday atrocities in the twenty-first century. I do not contest that Mexico used to have a stable political system, but I demonstrate that such stability was based not only on institutional, diplomatic, and economic achievements, but also on the exercise of extreme violence against those deemed internal enemies: dissidents, guerrillas, and apparently drug growers and traffickers.[10]

My work analyzes the manufacturing of the dirty war against a political-military organization called the 23rd of September Communist League (hereafter the Liga, 1973-1981), and the full-fledged militarization of the anti-drug strategy that initiated with Operation Condor

---

[8] Wil Pansters, ed. *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012): 10.

[9] Williams (2012), Pansters ed. (2012), and Pensado & Ochoa eds. (2018).

[10] Aguayo (2001) was the first scholar to have access to the secret archives of the political police—the Federal Security Directorate (DFS), revealing the systematic human rights abuses against political dissidents. Bellingeri (2003); Oikión & García (2006); Castellanos (2007); Condés (2007); Padilla (2008); Calderón & Cedillo (2012), and Aviña (2014) broke down the taboo that prevented scholars from studying the revolutionary movements of the Cold War.

(1977-1987), the first counternarcotics campaign co-coordinated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Mexico. This project presents an innovative perspective on the development of each conflict in the Golden Quadrilateral region, which comprises portions of the states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango connected through the Sierra Madre Occidental. It is unclear whether state agents, political activists or drug traffickers christened the region, but it had geostrategic advantages for each party. The Golden Quadrilateral best illustrates how violence shaped the dynamics of power by structuring an extralegal order in which both state agents and illegal actors competed for hegemony and established new political and social relationships mediated by extreme violence. The structural conditions concerning the dispute over land and resources, the partial absence of state institutions in vast areas of the Sierra Madre, and the transnational drug market are explanatory factors that I address as part of a broader context, not as the core of my work.

The historiography on northwestern Mexico is predominantly circumscribed by state borders and seldom compares different states. Conversely, my research sustains that the Golden Quadrilateral surpasses administrative boundaries and has a distinct identity forged by a set of geographical conditions and historical processes associated with political and social violence. The constant circulation of people, knowledge, and practices between the highlands and the lowlands has defined the history of the Golden Quadrilateral, while the long-standing division between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples has configured a setting of structural violence.

A word is in order about nomenclature. The leading producing region of marijuana and poppy in the intersecting highlands of Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Durango was dubbed the "Golden Triangle." I use the concept of "Golden Quadrilateral" to refer to the region with a

history of long-term violence and "Golden Triangle" as the drug-producing region, although the whole extension of the latter fits into the former (see appendix 1, maps 2 and 3).

The Liga fostered a nationwide guerrilla movement that became one of the primary targets of counterinsurgency from 1973 to 1981. The majority of its members were students and professionals, although it also enjoyed some popular support in industrial and rural areas. The organization amounted to a few thousand members and core supporters and obtained funding through "expropriations"—primarily bank assaults and the kidnapping of top officials and businesspeople. The Liga was an extremely ideologized organization that set high behavioral standards for its members and prohibited any involvement with organized crime, even though some rural guerrillas incidentally established camps close to drug production areas. Despite a growing literature about the Liga, my work is the first piece of scholarship that looks at its activities in the Golden Quadrilateral. In the highlands, the Liga operated by way of the "Arturo Gámiz" Political-Military Committee (CPMAG), which recruited both Guarijío and Rarámuri indigenous communities and carried out assaults against caciques and security forces. In Sinaloa's valleys, the local *Enfermo* (Sick-One) movement, which embodied the most radical expression of the Mexican left, became a Liga's front.

Operation Condor was unrelated to the transnational state terror campaign of the 1970s in South America that bore the same name, although some of its methods were similar. The Mexican Condor, launched in 1977 after a Mexico-U.S. agreement to intensify attacks on drug supply, entailed a massive civil-military campaign to eradicate marijuana and poppy fields. While the Mexican Condor was a national campaign, it was primarily concentrated in the Golden Triangle, transforming this region into a small-scale Vietnam. Operation Condor represented the first war on drugs and the first major reorganization of the drug industry.

I demonstrate that even though the dirty war and the first war on drugs responded to a U.S. foreign policy bent on eliminating communism and controlling drug trafficking by employing military methods, the PRI took advantage of the simultaneity of the conflicts to strengthen its hegemony and advance corruption. Both the U.S. and the Mexican governments funneled a wealth of resources to the security forces to wage those wars. Since the late 1960s, informed by the National Security Doctrine and counterinsurgency, security forces employed illegal tactics against the alleged internal enemies regardless of the magnitude of the threat. Those tactics, standard but selective, consisted of illegal detention, extrajudicial execution, torture, rape, forced disappearance, forced displacement, and the fumigation of peasant communities.

The intersection of both conflicts created a hostile climate for any social protest, armed or non-violent, to the point where the drug war appeared as another front of the war on communism. Security forces defeated the guerrilla movement by the early 1980s, but the drug trade continued and further expanded across and beyond the country, even though the Mexican government pretended to comply with U.S. anti-drug policies. The U.S. government turned a blind eye to the corruption of the Mexican authorities because of the role of the deep state as a key ally in the continental fight against communism, as it will be explained in chapters four and five.

The ultimate goal of state terror was the socio-political control of the *serrano* population through a *de facto* state of siege to guarantee its subordination to the military, the only representative of the state in the Sierra Madre Occidental. However, the rule of drug lords in the highlands continued despite anti-drug campaigns, confirming that criminal sovereignty was not only possible because of the virtual absence of state institutions, but also because of complicity

between state agents and illegal actors. One of my most relevant findings is that counterinsurgency agents who took part in the extermination of guerrilla movements and the anti-drug operations were allowed to benefit from the drug trade given their role in maintaining the hegemony of the PRI. While many state agents from low to high ranks received bribes for being part of a corrupted regime, only those who had a leading role in the elimination of enemies of the state could join what I call the "counterinsurgency pay-off system."

My dissertation also tackles the political subjectivity—understood as the imaginary or set of ideas, beliefs, values, and symbols that underpin collective action—of both legal and illegal actors to explain their motivations and their impulse towards violence. I analyze how the Mexican versions of guerrilla culture, narco-culture, and the doctrines of national security and counterinsurgency were byproducts of both local ideologies and the global Cold War.

The Cold War was a time of sharp political and social polarization in Latin America, in which a large number of utopias and dystopias flourished. Every political actor had a project of social engineering: liberals, nationalists, developmentalists, socialists, communists, the far-left, Christian democrats, Catholics informed by Liberation Theology, the far-right, and even the hippies. In the Mexican case, besides the circulation of those currents, the local conditions brought forth narco-culture. Drug traffickers fought for drug market control and territorial hegemony and developed narco-culture to gain social recognition and legitimation, through which they were able to occupy the public space.

Virtually no one during those years understood the political implications of narco-culture because drug traffickers were not seen as political actors. In fact, they only turned into political players given that the drug trade gradually became the most profitable illicit commodity in Mexico from the 1940s onward. The heyday of Mexican marijuana and heroin in

the 1960s preceded the coca boom of the 1980s, and the militarization of the drug war occurred in Mexico before any other Latin American country, as Luis Astorga underscored, even if the Colombian case is more widely known.[11] Thereby, Mexico was also at the forefront in converting drug traffickers into political actors, and the emergence of narco-culture as an exceptional Mexican phenomenon is a sign of that process.

I was not able to explore the deep political implications of narco-culture, whose intersection with necropolitics contributes to explain drug-related violence in the current century. Nevertheless, I claim that narco-culture was one of the few—perhaps the only—victorious projects of the Mexican Cold War laboratory of utopias/dystopias. In present-day Mexico, large sectors of the population live under a violent necropolitical dystopia, but very few acknowledge that this collective nightmare was born decades ago.

Given that the secret wars were neglected for decades, some scholars specialized in Mexican affairs have failed to see that the 2006 drug war was an extension of a conflict that began in the 1970s. The convergence of those wars not only fueled the formation of the deep state, but also led to the gradual expansion of criminal sovereignty from the northwestern states to the rest of the country. I am confident that my dissertation provides new insights of the trajectory of violence from the Cold War to the twenty-first century.

In summary, my dissertation challenges several deeply entrenched assumptions in the historiography of the Mexican Cold War: the idea that stability equated peace; the minimization of political violence and its actors, and the overstatement of Mexico City as a power center that

[11] Luis Astorga, "Drug Trafficking in Mexico: A First General Assessment", Management of Social Transformation, Discussion paper no. 36, 1999, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001176/117644Eo.pdf, accessed February 10, 2017.

determined social and political events in the rest of the country. It also makes an original contribution to prove that during the Cold War the Mexican state was split between a democratic state that upheld the rule of law, and the deep state, a parallel violent and illegal rule, which propelled the expansion of criminal sovereignty linked to profitable illegal commodities. While formal democracy and a culture of human rights moved forward since the political reform and the amnesty to political prisoners in 1977-79, the undercurrents of the *priísta* regime also advanced the deep state and criminal sovereignty. Therefore, what prevails in present time is not the culture of human rights, but a permanent human rights crisis.

Finally, my research shows that the scholarship on the global Cold War has failed to include Mexico as an example of the connections between counterinsurgency, drug wars, and the national security apparatus, even though it was one of the first countries in the Western Hemisphere where they took place. Since Mexico is not an exceptional case, my work may help scholars who work on comparative analysis on countries that experienced a simultaneous upsurge in the drug industry and popular insurgency.

A Brief History of This Project

My dissertation represents my first time working on northwestern Mexico, and also my first approach to the political history of drug trafficking. My previous projects focused on the Mexican dirty war, guerrilla organizations other than the Liga, and the emergence of the human rights movement. My awareness about the Golden Quadrilateral region stemmed from a series of “historical tours” that I undertook from 2003 to 2007, accompanying Liga’s former militants to revisit the sites of their guerrilla camps, where they had clashes with the armed forces and where their *compañeros* perished.

During endless hours on a bus, I had the opportunity to talk to several ex-guerrillas. The case of Miguel Topete Díaz was particularly striking given his extensive involvement in radical activitism (1968-1982) in both urban and rural areas. In 2007, he returned for the first time to the places where he had been deployed in the 1970s to the Sierra Baja Tarahumara. In Makurawe, San Bernardo, Sonora, Topete met with relatives of Guarijío peasants who had been former guerrilla sympathizers. They thanked him because they believed that guerrillas had helped Guarijíos to win land. Far from being touched, Topete was disappointed and claimed that land reform had not been the Liga's objective and that indigenous people had failed to understand the revolutionary message. I witnessed something that was unusual in everyday life in Mexico: an indigenous community recognizing *mestizos* for their contribution to their emancipation. That story, unknown beyond some Guarijíos and ex-guerrillas, captivated me.

A couple of years after that trip, I conducted formal interviews with Topete. He shared with me the Liga's documents that he had managed to preserve under the most difficult conditions, his books of poetry inspired by his militant years, and the first draft of his testimony, *Los ojos de la noche* (*The eyes of the night*, published in 2009) about his participation in the "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando. In 2012, Topete passed away without accomplishing his project of writing the second part of his memories about his clandestine life from 1975 to 1982, and his incidental arrest in 1984 for having been mistaken as a drug dealer because of the weapons he was carrying.

By the time I began my PhD in 2013, I chose to work on the history of the Liga in the Golden Quadrilateral to explore the radicalization process and the political subjectivity of both student-guerrillas and indigenous communities. However, in 2014, an alliance of military and police agencies and members of a drug gang kidnapped and disappeared forty-three students

from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in Iguala, Guerrero, a crime that unleashed the formation of a global movement for truth and justice for the students. The Ayotzinapa case illuminated zones of the past that had been covert and I realized the urgency to explore them. Thus, I decided to incorporate the history of drug trafficking in the Golden Quadrilateral into my project. It is worth mentioning that drug cartels from Sinaloa and Chihuahua controlled drug production and smuggling in Guerrero in different times and regions since the 1970s.

Since I began working in the AGN-SEGOB files in 2003, I came across a great deal of information about drug trafficking, including mugshots of smugglers who were either imprisoned or disappeared during the 1970s. In the interviews I conducted with former guerrillas over the years, they told startling anecdotes about drug traffickers they had met in prison, like Alberto Sicilia Falcón, Manuel Salcido Unzueta, *El Cochiloco* (*Crazy Pig*), and others lesser known. Finally, in the historical tours abovementioned, I witnessed how drug trafficking pervaded the social fabric in places where the revolutionary left used to wield influence.

However, I made the common error of assuming that drug traffickers only belonged to the criminal sphere. My failure to notice the deeply political meaning of the coexistence of the so-called *narcos* and guerrillas in the same spaces led me to construct a partial vision about the Mexican state during the dirty war in my previous works. After years of research, I can prove that the analysis of the intersections of both the dirty war and the drug war is critical to understand how the extermination of the revolutionary left fostered the alliance between the state and organized crime since the 1970s. This dissertation is far from exhausting the possibilities for both research and interpretation, but I expect this first approach on the role of the secret wars in the formation of a dual state contributes to pave the way for new investigations that either reinforces or questions my work with more evidence.

The Dirty War and the First Drug War in the Historiography

There is a growing yet small academic body of work related to the dirty war (1964-1982), while the first drug war (1977-1989) that began with Operation Condor has been rarely framed as an armed conflict, even though it was a low intensity war; in consequence, it is absent in the historiography. Since the 1960s onward, the Mexican government promoted a widespread campaign of misinformation and silence to keep those conflicts from entering the public sphere and forming part of the national collective memory. Given the official censorship, media outlets concealed the counterinsurgency campaigns and employed euphemistic expressions such as "fight against terrorism" or "drug eradication," and treated both guerrillas and drug traffickers as a cancer that needed to be removed from the social body.[12]

Not until the political transition of 2000, in which the National Action Party (PAN) defeated the PRI and ended 70 years of one-party rule, did the archives of the intelligence services became declassified. Survivors and witnesses came out of the shadows for the first time in decades, and media outlets made references about both conflicts with a totally different approach than during the Cold War years. In a rather exceptional way, virtually all the historiography on those secret wars has been produced in the current century.

The Mexican dirty war became a topic of academic interest in the early 2000, although few works have been produced by historians. One of the pioneering efforts to break the silence was an edited volume published by Verónica Oikión Solano and Marta Eugenia García Ugarte entitled *Movimientos armados en México, siglo XX* (2006). In 2012, Fernando Herrera Calderón

---

[12] Jorge Mendoza, "Los medios de información y el trato a la guerrilla. Una mirada psicopolítica", in *Movimientos armados en México en el siglo XX*, Verónica Okión & Marta Eugenia García eds. (Zamora: CIESAS/COLMICH, 2006), vol. 1, 145-180.

and I wrote an article about the historiography on the dirty war.[13] Although we witnessed a remarkable growth in the academic production on the topic from 2006 to 2012, we did not foresee that it would continue to motivate interest. Yet the list of books, articles, and presentations continue to increase to this day.

A peculiarity of this scholarship is that the authors have focused on the history of guerrilla organizations and state terror rather than on collective processes or structural problems related to political violence during the period. A notable exception is Alexander Aviña's, *Specters of Revolution: Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside* (2014), which analyzes the history of the National Revolutionary Civil Association (ACNR) and the Party of the Poor (PDLP) by looking at Guerrero's long-term tradition of popular rebelliousness and the overlapping of local, national, and transnational contradictions that fostered revolutionary violence.

The interest on the dirty war in Guerrero has far outstripped any other Mexican region. Only a small part on the historiography about revolutionary movements and the dirty war focuses on the northwest. The works by Aleida García Aguirre (2015), Jesús Vargas Valdés (2015), and Elizabeth Henson (2019) on the Popular Guerrilla Group (GPG) in Chihuahua, and those by Rafael Santos Cenobio (2007), Ignacio Lagarda (2007), Sergio Sánchez Parra (2012), Alicia de los Ríos (2010), and Erik Pastén (2018) about the Liga, are among the few specialized studies that locate their work within the northwestern states.

---

[13] Fernando Calderón & Adela Cedillo, "Análisis de la producción historiográfica en torno a la llamada guerra sucia mexicana," in *El Estudio de las Luchas Revolucionarias en América Latina (1959-1996): Estado de la Cuestión*, Martín López Ávalos, Verónica Oikión, and Eduardo Rey Tristán eds. (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán & Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2014), 263-288.

Regarding the history of drug trafficking, although illegal drugs have been an academic trend topic over the last thirty years, we still lack a long-term history of the Mexican marijuana and opium poppy or a history of the Mexican cocaine trade similar to Paul Gootenberg's work *Andean Cocaine* (2008). Alexander Dawson's outstanding history of the Mexican peyote, *The Peyote Effect from the Inquisition to the War on Drugs* (2018), is enlightening even though peyote never reached the status of public enemy that marijuana and poppy have held since the early twentieth century.

There are several fundamental works related to the social, political, and cultural history of Mexican drugs, drug trafficking, and counternarcotics campaigns in the twentieth century written by Luis Astorga (1995, 2005, 2013), María Celia Toro (1995), Ricardo Pérez Montfort (1999, 2016), Isaac Campos (2012), José Domingo Schevienini (2012), Carlos Flores Pérez (2013), Guillermo Valdéz (2013), Benjamin T. Smith (2013), Elaine Carey (2014), Froylán Enciso (2015), Carlos Pérez Ricart (2016), and Juan Antonio Fernández (2018), among others, while the so-called narco-culture has become a sub-field on its own that has produced extensive scholarship. The groundbreaking work by Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, *Los Zetas Inc, Criminal Corporations, Energy, and Civil War in Mexico* (2017) has marked the beginning of a new drug history concerning the twenty-first century.

Predominant ideas about illicit drugs as pertaining to criminal activities, transnational policies or cultural habits have limited the study of other areas, like the political-military dimension that I research. The difficult access to sources has obstructed the production of other types of narratives. Although my focus is not the history of drug trafficking, my research would have benefited from works about drug grower communities in the Golden Triangle and the political economy of the drug trade. I also regret the absence of a work that analyzed the

productive systems related to the Mexican drug industry, an equivalent of the work by Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (1985) about the interwoven history of sugar and slavery. In sum, the history of the drug industry is still in its early stages of development, even for the case of Sinaloa, which usually draws more academic attention.

My work combines the history of counterinsurgency and counternarcotics campaigns, following the lead of scholars such as Alfred McCoy, Peter Dale Scott, Jonathan Marshall, and Daniel Weimer, among others. For the Mexican case, the pioneering book by Salvador Maldonado, *Los márgenes del Estado Mexicano. Territorios ilegales, desarrollo y violencia en Michoacán* (2010) is one of the few that has adopted such approach. The author analyzed several regions in the state of Michoacán neglected by the Mexican state throughout the second half of the twentieth century, where *caciquismo*, drug trafficking, guerrilla movements, social protests, counterinsurgency, militarization, electoral politics, developmentalism, and ultimately neoliberalism converged. Maldonado provided powerful insights into the complex interactions of those processes, although his emphasis on the margins of the state is questionable since those seemingly marginal phenomena have had a dynamic development that has gradually placed them into the core of state formation.

Another contribution to the same line of inquiry was the dissertation by Carlos A. Hernández, "Narcomundo: How Narcotraficantes Gained Control of Northern Mexico and Beyond," (2015), which also focuses on the overlapping between the dirty war and the war on drugs in Mexico's border region and the northwest. Hernández asserts that "under the pretext of eradicating drug production by *narcocultivadores* or narcogrowers, Mexican authorities also launched an offensive against dissident groups interested in readdressing the land issue in rural

Mexico, effectively eradicating dissidence, but no drugs."[14] This argument has a problem of temporality, given that the dirty war in the countryside began in the 1960s, while the first explicit reference of a combination of both counterinsurgency and the anti-drug campaign Canador was the military Plan Tecpan of 1975, executed in Guerrero. Hernández's work includes many important issues and characters related to what he calls the "twin wars," but it does not address specific case studies.

Alexander Aviña (2018) examined the overlapping between the dirty war and the drug war in Guerrero during the 1970s, posing that those were "wars directed against poor people intended to reassert state control. For the PRI, the boundary between drug control and political control, between popular political protest and drug criminality, became usefully permeable."[15] Along with the Golden Quadrilateral, Guerrero is the most important region to analyze those intersections. They occurred to a lesser extent in other parts of the country, but those cases have yet to be explored.

Theoretical Framework and Nomenclature

My dissertation does not offer an in-depth theoretical discussion about the categories of *de facto* one-party state, dual state, deep state, cover netherworld, state of exception (alternatively called state of emergency or siege), criminal sovereignty or criminal governance. However, all the chapters include a wealth of examples on how those concepts are empirically

[14] Carlos A. Hernández, "Narcomundo: How Narcotraficantes Gained Control of Northern Mexico and Beyond, 1945-1985" (PhD Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2015), iv.

[15] Alexander Aviña, "A War Against Poor People," in *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies,* Jaime Pensado and Enrique Ochoa, eds. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018), 136.

applied. Other key concepts like guerrilla warfare, *foquismo*, protracted popular war, and counterinsurgency will be explained in chapters one, two, and five.

I agree with the scholarship that has demonstrated that the PRI was not a powerful Leviathan that exercised absolute dominion over Mexico, yet underscored the anti-democratic and violent features of the political regime.[16] Paul Guillingham and Benjamin Smith used the concept of *dictablanda* to describe that hybrid regime, which resulted from the combination of democratic and authoritarian elements and "was profoundly complex, dynamic, and ambiguous."[17] I do not share the same enthusiasm for the term because it conveys the idea that Mexican authoritarianism was soft, while in fact there was a myriad of regional experiences that include military governors resembling six-year dictators. There were as many authoritarian variants as regional *priísmos*, although regional studies tend to reveal the darkest facets of the ruling party.

Scholars like Soledad Loaeza have interpreted the attempts by sectors of the PRI to expand its democratic practices as signs that the regime was in a crossroads between democracy and authoritarianism.[18] But regardless of the fact that some presidents were not so prone to the latter, the predominant trend in the history of the PRI since 1929 was the monopolization of political power to build a *de facto* one-party state that performed similar functions to a dictatorship—a phenomenon that is common among regimes emanated from a revolution. The

---

[16] For instance, Wil Pansters, ed. *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico. The Other Half of the Centaur.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), and Jeffrey Rubin, *Decentering the Regime, Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997).

[17] Paul Gillingham & Benjamin Smith, eds., *Dictablanda: Politics, Works, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), vii.

[18] Soledad Loeza, "La política de acomodo de México a la superpotencia. Dos episodios de cambio de régimen: 1944-1948 y 1989-1994," *Foro Internacional* 50, no. 3-4, 2010: 627-660.

true wind of change began through the 1977 political reform that introduced changes to the electoral system and represented the first democratic transition.

My emphasis on the coercive elements of the *priísta* rule is not to claim that it was an actual dictatorship. As the analysis of the armed conflicts that the Mexican state faced during the 1960s and 1970s shows, the government had to concede land distribution, political reform, amnesties, and other similar measures as part of the official strategy to end dissent and appease leftist radicalism, even though such changes were far from meeting the expectations by the revolutionary left. The greatest paradox of the period was that opponents had to take up arms for the Mexican government to fulfill the rights enshrined by the 1917 Constitution.[19]

While specialists in modern Mexican history have obsessively reflected about the observable characteristics of the Mexican post-revolutionary regime, its covert features have received little attention. The approach that I have found most useful to analyze the contradictions of the state in relation to the rule of law is parapolitics, a field that comprises the "study of criminal sovereignty, of criminals behaving as sovereigns and sovereigns behaving as criminals in a systematic way."[20]

I draw on the theory of the dual state, which propounds the existence of an extra-legal order within the state apparatus but beyond the democratic state, an autocratic security force that different authors have called either security state, prerogative state, deep state, or government of the shadows. The pioneers of the study of the dual state, Carl Schmitt, Ernst Fraenkl, and Hans

---

[19] Calderón & Cedillo, "Introduction: The Unknown Mexican Dirty War," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico, Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982*, Calderón & Cedillo eds. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-18.

[20] Robert Cribb, "Introduction: Parapolitics, Shadow Governance and Criminal Sovereignty," *Government of the shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty,* E. Wilson, ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 8.

Morgenthau had opposite political views.[21] Nevertheless, the dual state nomenclature is usually at risk of being interpreted as leaning to the far-right or to conspiracy theories, disregarding the intellectual history of the term.[22]

The concept of "deep state" emerged originally in Turkey in the mid-1990s as "a catchphrase often used to encapsulate the long-standing relationship between the country's civilian government, its security apparatus, and unlawful actors."[23] Ryan Gingeras defined Turkey's deep state as an "eclectic, ever evolving political theater of competition and cooperation, one that includes elements both explicitly legal and illegal in nature."[24]

My study follows the approaches of Ola Tunander, Peter Dale Scott, Eric Wilson, and Gingeras, who have demonstrated in their respective case studies how the national security apparatus uses networks of illegal actors to attain its political goals, thus shaping a deep state that commits extra-judiciary violence while claiming to protect the democratic state against internal and external enemies.[25] Tunander claims that the deep state not only acts in parallel to the democratic state, but also monitors and exerts control over it and is the very apparatus that

---

[21] Schmitt was the jurist of the Third Reich while Fraenkl was a Jewish socialist jurist, exiled in America after fleeing Nazi persecution. Morgenthau was a Jewish conservative jurist, a representative of realism in international relations theory, but opposed to Schmitt. Ola Tunander, "Democratic State vs. Deep State: Approaching the Dual State of the West" in *Government of the shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty,* Eric Wilson, ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 56-72.

[22] Geoff Nunberg, "Opinion: Why the Term 'Deep State' Speaks to Conspiracy Theorists," *NPR*, August 9, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/08/09/633019635/opinion-why-the-term-deep-state-speaks-to-conspiracy-theorists, accessed April 2, 2019.

[23] Ryan Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 18.

[24] Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime*, 264.

[25] Peter Dale Scott, *Deep Politics and the Death of J.F.K.*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Tunander, "Democratic State vs. Deep State;" E. Wilson ed., *Government of the shadows;* Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime,* and E. Wilson ed., *The Dual State, Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

defines when and whether a state of exception will emerge, hence it is the actual sovereign. The deep state uses extra-legal violence to force the general population to trade democratic freedoms for alleged security and protection, establishing a political order that limits the range of democratic discourse and the rule of law. The very goal of the deep state is to preserve the current system of power.[26]

Other scholars have proposed interpretations about the infiltration of illegal actors in the state giving way to a narco-state or state capture. For instance, in a volume edited by Luis Jorge Garay and Eduardo Salcedo (2012), the authors developed the concept of "co-opted state reconfiguration" to define the causal link between the variety of forms of illegality and criminality and state corruption. They posed that the drug industry alters the laws and norms of rationality, operation, and legitimation of the state as well as the unwritten rules of the civil society.[27] This approach seems to defend an essentialist view of the state, as if violence and corruption were not part of the state formation process but a sort of virus that infects an entity whose sole nature is to uphold the law. This perspective fails to address the conflicting nature of the state.[28] The narco-state thesis is extensively refuted in chapter five.

The argument that Mexico had a *de facto* one-party state regime does not contradict the claim that it was split into a dual state. In fact, it was because the one-party state was prone to

---

[26] Tunander, "Democratic State vs. Deep State," 59. In his case study about Cold War Italy, Tunander also maintained that the deep state does not defend the national interests, but the agenda of a transnational elite led by the United States. Given that each country had different levels of cooperation with the U.S. government, it is not possible to claim that the deep state was a "U.S. elite" within the nation-state in all cases. In the Mexican case, the U.S. national security apparatus only coopted a part of the Mexican one, as chapter one and five explore.

[27] L. Garay & E. Salcedo eds., *Narcotráfico, corrupción y estados: cómo las redes ilícitas han reconfigurado las instituciones en Colombia, Guatemala y México* (Mexico City: Debate, 2014).

[28] Furthermore, as McCoy observes: "state configurations are in an endless state of flux, cohering and collapsing, with peripheries and interstices thus expanding or collapsing". McCoy, "Requiem for a Drug Lord: State and Commodity in the Career of Khun Sa" in *States and Illegal Practices,* Josiah McC. Heyman ed. New York: Berg, 1999, 130.

systematically violate the rule of law that the deep state became a possibility. Also, the formation of the deep state occurred in several countries during the global Cold War, Mexico was not an exception.[29] However, the situation of allegedly democratic countries like Mexico, which produced high-demand illegal commodities for the global market, was unusual. I maintain that the entanglement between drug lords and state agents in Mexico actually gave birth to a two-fold phenomenon, on the one hand the deep state, on the other, what Alfred McCoy coined as the "covert netherworld."

The covert netherworld "conjoins the contemporary term 'covert' signifying state security, and the classical 'netherworld', connoting the parallel subterranean kingdom of the dead, to depict a similarly spectral clandestine realm intersecting with and influencing the visible surface of society in ways that elude existing models of politics or political economy."[30] This invisible interstice is "inhabited by criminal and clandestine actors with both the means and need to operate outside government channels." The covert netherworld is the space where the security apparatus, criminal syndicates, and producers of illegal commodities for the global market interact. Those legal and illegal actors compete over hegemony or form alliances. Such a space is fluid and unstable, a permanent entity in continuous expansion, where notions of state, nation, sovereignty, and citizenship fade.

---

[29] In his work, Gingeras mentioned the cases of Turkey, Mexico, China, the United States, Italy, and Russia for purposes of comparative analysis and claimed that "Turkey's deep state is symptomatic of a global pattern of state development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries." He concluded that "the deep state paradigm may be helpful in labeling and explaining the structural relationships undergirding centers of power and influence committed to the security of the state." Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime,* 260-267.

[30] McCoy, "Covert Netherworld: Clandestine Services and Criminal Syndicates in Shaping the Philippine State", in *Government of the shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty,* Eric Wilson, ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 228.

I believe that the deep state and the covert netherworld allude to different spaces of illegal power because the deep state operates both within and outside the democratic state, while the covert netherworld interacts with the democratic state as an autonomous realm. Therefore, I will use the term "deep state" to refer to the illegal violent rule of state agents who colluded with drug lords to form an alliance that became a permanent structure within the Mexican state after the first stage of Operation Condor. I will employ the concept of "covert netherworld" to comprise the unstable realm where the *de facto* state of exception imposed by the deep state had a concrete development, and where criminal sovereigns came to terms or competed with the security forces, as chapters four and five show.

A salient example of the multilayered and complex nature of the security forces was the Federal Security Directorate (DFS). The DFS pretended to defend the rule of law by persecuting guerrillas and drug traffickers but incarnated the deep state as it carried out extra-legal repression and made political arrangements with crime syndicates. At the same time that it defended an official nationalist discourse, the DFS behaved as a subordinate elite by following CIA instructions and played on the covert netherworld by creating its own racketeering networks.[31]

A last note about language usage regarding drug-related issues will be helpful. The drug industry has hierarchies and specialized workers as any other productive activity. The caricature that media outlets have sold about the so-called *narcos* (*narcotraficantes* or drug traffickers) falls short of capturing the complexity of social relations in the drug underworld. I use the categories of drug growers, *gomeros* and *marihuaneros*, to refer to poor peasants or middle-class farmers who produce illicit commodities. *Narco-caciques* are the bosses or brokers of specific towns,

[31] Russell Bartley & Sylvia Erickson Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins. The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Journalist Manuel Buendía* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015): 405-434.

municipalities or micro-regions, while drug lords or kingpins allude to those in control of several regions. Small-scale couriers are called *mulas* or *burros* (mules), but those in charge of larger operations are drug traffickers. In the 1970s, the words *sicario* (hitman), *halcón* or *puntero* (hawk), *narco*, and "dealer" (an Anglicism in Spanish) were not in use. Sources talked about *pistoleros* (gunslingers), informers, and drug sellers instead.

Back in the early twentieth century, there were also a variety of terms applied to drugs and drug traffickers that cannot have an adequate translation in English. It is worth mentioning that in Spanish the words *drogas* (drugs) and *narcóticos* (narcotics) always allude to illegal products. I used the word *narco* or drug trafficker only to refer to any drug-related worker whose specific activity is not known. The expression "drug clan" means an extended family that participated in the illegal trade, but "drug gang" does not have a family connotation.

While I acknowledge that the concept of "drug cartel" is misleading because it implies a monopoly over the trade, I stick to it given its generalized usage. Categories like narcopopulism, narcoclientelism, and narco-culture will be explained in chapters one, three, four, and five. I believe that it is improper to use *narco* as a prefix for any activity related to the drug industry, but at this point in the development of the historiography of drug trafficking we lack better categories.

Organization of the chapters

Chapters are thematically organized and shaped to be read as a single unit. Like the novel *Rayuela* by Julio Cortázar, whose title is inspired by the game of hopscotch, the reader can begin with any chapter. This strategy aims to draw attention from readers interested in any of the topics

that the dissertation approaches, either revolutionary movements, indigenous resistance, drug trafficking, counterinsurgency, or the Cold War history of the Mexican northwest.

My research covers a span of twenty years from mid-1960s through mid-1980s, although chapter one explores the long arc of legacies of violence since pre-contact times to the Cold War and foregrounds the striking continuity of indigenous settlements despite attempts by conquerors, colonizers, the Mexican state, and drug cartels to wipe them out. Chapter one shows that it is not a coincidence that in this complex region of uninterrupted violence and sharp ethnic and social contradictions began some of the bloodiest wars of post-revolutionary Mexico, like the dirty war and the drug wars.

Chapter two looks at the *foco* experiment by the Liga in the Sierra Tarahumara of Sonora and Chihuahua, which succeeded in amassing peasant indigenous support. I consider it an experiment because it was the first time that a Mexican revolutionary organization aspired to launch a war by using an array of guerrilla strategies, like *foquismo* and the protracted popular war. The chapter shows that counterinsurgency campaigns had contradictory outcomes. In Southern Sonora, state terror could not curb social and armed protests and a period of land reform ensued, while in the Chihuahua highlands the political cleansing allowed for the expansion of the illegal drug industry.

Chapter three focuses on the relationship between political subjectivity and violence. By using the case studies of the *Enfermo* movement and narco-culture in Sinaloa, I demonstrate that those actors articulated their option for violence in languages that paid attention to both local and global realities and symbols, from their upbringing in the culture of the Mexican Revolution to their appropriation of global ideological trends, such as socialist currents and the banal mindset of conspicuous consumption.

Chapter four analyzes how the Mexican state employed the same strategies it had applied against guerrillas in the Sierra Tarahumara to allegedly combat drug production in the Golden Triangle, while in fact the security forces carried out selective enforcement to destroy minor drug growers and traffickers to favor the most successful ones. This chapter also explores the role of the U.S. government in the imposition of a drug war on Mexico. Even though it failed to disrupt drug trafficking networks, Operation Condor represented another victory for the Mexican government because it subjected drug lords to the PRI's clientelist regime, which in turn set the foundation for the deep state.

Chapter five lays out the development of the counterinsurgency doctrine in Mexico and explains why it created a symbiosis between drug traffickers and security forces. This chapter shifts the focus from the Golden Quadrilateral to Guadalajara, Jalisco because the deep state reached its paradigmatic expression in the Guadalajara cartel, made up by Sinaloa's drug lords, DFS agents, high-ranking officers, top officials, and other elite actors. The chapter does not focus on the history of the Guadalajara cartel, yet it delves into their transnational activities to explain the intertwining between drug smuggling and counterinsurgency beyond Mexico. This chapter also examines individual cases of counterinsurgency agents that the media dubbed *narco-officers* to explain the functioning of the pay-off system.

In the conclusions, I address how the secret wars gave way to a *de facto* state of exception that was rather uncommon in the Latin American landscape and has become a permanent form of illegal state power. I connect my findings to the outbreak of the 2006 war on drugs and suggest lines of research to deepen the history of the Mexican secret wars and the dual state.

Methodology and Sources

The primary method of my work consisted of documental research in relevant archives. I analyzed official reports, national and local newspapers, journals, propaganda, communiqués, testimonies, interviews, correspondence, court cases, forensic reports, folk songs known as *corridos*, poems, pictures, and films, among other primary sources. I believe that the majority of my sources were original and have been rarely used, particularly the ones I located at the files of the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) and the Secretary of Interior (SEGOB)—which includes the DFS and the General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations (DGIPS) files—at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN). I also conducted research in archives in the Mexican states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and in Washington, D.C.

The information I collected was overwhelming, but during the process of organizing my harvest of documents I exclusively focused on the leads that helped me explain how the secret wars were interconnected, thus facilitating the construction of a coherent narrative. However, there is a great deal of data that I did not include because it exceeded the writing goals of the dissertation. For instance, I did not fully exploit the documentation related to the Mexican guerrilla movements and the drug war at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the National Security Archives (NSA), and Wikileaks.

The level of detail of the daily reports by the U.S. embassy in Mexico and other U.S. agencies regarding the anti-drug policy would better serve a history that exclusively addressed that topic, showing the tensions and conflicts that preceded agreements between the U.S. and the Mexican governments. In the case of the Liga, the reporting by U.S. agencies was largely focused on two issues: high-profile kidnappings and the search for gun dealers who might have sold weapons to guerrillas, none of which were my focus of attention.

Part of the declassified documents that I consulted in U.S. archives was based on intelligence reporting or inter-agency communication, but there was also a large portion of information that was not confidential. For instance, some documents were English translations of articles in Mexican newspapers. Although I did not have conditions to explore the full extent of both the NARA and the NSA, I have a well-founded suspicion that the core of information about the Mexican secret wars by the CIA and the DEA has yet to be released, despite the FOIA requests made by the NSA and other scholars.

I interviewed several survivors of the guerrilla commandos in the Sierra Tarahumara, the *Enfermo* movement, and other members of the Liga. This approach was not my original intended method, but I was lucky enough to meet those former guerrillas through my network of colleagues and friends. However, my narrative has not done justice to their testimonies and I decided that their voices should be part of another project.

I was also able to make several trips to the highlands of Sonora and Sinaloa in 2017 and 2018, thanks to the generosity of the relatives of friends who live in the Sierra Madre Occidental. Under no other circumstance could I have visited those inaccessible hamlets devastated by war and poverty. It is a task of utmost importance to make ethnographic research on communities targeted by the low intensity wars since the 1970s, although the current state of war makes such work extremely difficult.[32] I believed that my conversations with *serrano* peasants and survivors of Operation Condor also deserved an analysis entirely focused on them, which fell beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[32] Despite the long-standing war in the Golden Triangle, there is not a single work similar to the study by Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars. Life Under an Air War* (1972), about the secret air campaign in Laos—a remarkable example of an ethnographic approach to a secret war.

Several scholars have asked me whether it is possible to conduct research in the highlands. My response is that, unless they have guides who are widely known and respected by locals, a trip to the place is ill-advised. Becoming an eye-witness of everyday hyper-violence can be a traumatizing experience and drug gangs are very distrustful of non-locals. Being observed or followed by *hawks* (armed informants in the paramilitary structure) is a normal situation; the true risk could be to run into a paramilitary checkpoint or get caught in a skirmish. Despite the international attention that the Golden Triangle draws for being the homeland of powerful drug lords, it is still a hyper-violent region neglected by state agents, politicians, and international agencies in charge of humanitarian intervention.

Another group of sources that I barely used was the digital *Archivo Memoria de la Resistencia en Jalisco*, containing thousands of documents about the history of the guerrilla movements, especially those related to the Liga. However, those sources were mostly focused on Jalisco and I realized that regional differences also contributed to shape the political subjectivity of guerrillas, even if they shared the same worldview and ideology. Comparing the differences between political traditions in members of the same organization would have been an interesting and original exercise, but it was unrelated to the topics investigated in this dissertation.

In the last stage of my writing process, digital archives containing AGN-SEGOB files became available, for instance, the *Archivos de la Represión* along its U.S. counterpart, the Mexican Intelligence Digital Archives (MIDAS). Furthermore, this year president Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced the full declassification of documents from intelligence agencies (except for military agencies). Both, official and non-official initiatives to make public the information that the PRI and the PAN administrations carefully concealed, potentially mark the beginning of a new era for scholars working on topics related to the Mexican Cold War.

Chapter One: A History of Structural Violence in the Northwest

The states of Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango form the Mexican northwest. This chapter looks at the long-term political history of the northwest with emphasis on the Golden Quadrilateral, a region that owes its name to the fact that the Sierra Madre Occidental (SMO) cuts across the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango (see appendix 1, maps 1 and 2). [1] The SMO forms part of the American Cordillera and runs from the Arizona-Sonora border through the state of Guanajuato, where it intersects with the Sierra Madre del Sur and the Transversal Volcanic Axis of Central Mexico. The SMO is the largest mountain range in Mexico, with a length of more than 1250 km., a width of 150 km., and mountains ranging from 2000 m. to 3000 m. in altitude. It is also home to the deepest canyons in the country, including the *Barranca de Urique*, Chihuahua, which has a depth of 1879 m.[2]

The Golden Quadrilateral is not a geographical region as much as it is a cultural one, therefore, its boundaries have changed over time and cannot be accurately defined. Thus, the region broadly comprises the traditional territory of the Yaqui (Yoeme), Mayo (Yoreme), Guarijío/Guarijó (Makurawe), Rarámuri, Pima (Akimel O'odham) and Tepehuán nations, and the now extinct Totorame and Tahue peoples. The area spans across the Alta and Baja Sierra Tarahumara, the highlands of Sinaloa and Durango, the Mayo and Yaqui valleys, and the Culiacán and El Fuerte valleys.

---

[1] A more accurate denomination for this region would be "the northwestern sierra and its surroundings," in order to avoid a teleological impression, but I use the twentieth-century name as a handy label. Other places described in this chapter have had different extensions and denominations over the course of time, but for the sake of simplification I will also use current names.

[2] Angel Bassols Batalla, *El Noroeste de México* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1972), 125.

A sharp contrast exists between the Golden Quadrilateral's micro-regions. The diversity of climates includes humid sub-tropical, temperate, and semi-arid. The valleys of Sinaloa and Sonora have some of the most fertile lands in the country because of its soil composition and their proximity to large river systems, while the highlands are only suitable for rain-fed agriculture. The Alta Sierra Tarahumara is dominated by pine-oak forests and the Baja Tarahumara contains semi-arid vegetation such as: mesquite, agave, ocotillo, and cactus. The region also possesses a high biodiversity, a great number of endemic species, and rich mineral deposits.

The Golden Quadrilateral is a cohesive region because, regardless of the remarkable differences among the groups who have inhabited it, they have forged a common history, in which structural violence has played a central role. I define structural violence as the type of violence of the modern age that results from acute social, economic, and cultural contradictions, whose transformation is contingent upon processes at both the regional and global level, ranging from the shift of economic patterns to revolutions. The first part of the chapter examines the conflicts that set the conditions for structural violence, like the opposition between indigenous and non-indigenous groups and between *serranos* (highlanders) and external actors since the Spanish conquest through the twentieth-century.

The second part of the chapter aims at explaining some of the most important processes of the Cold War period, like the Green Revolution in Sonora and Sinaloa, the formation of a national security apparatus and counterinsurgency infrastructure, the rise of a drug economy in the Golden Triangle oriented towards the transnational market, and the emergence of the socialist guerrilla movement in Chihuahua and Sonora. In the conclusions, I analyze how these processes are interconnected.

Centuries of Violence

Pre-contact indigenous groups in the macro-regions of Oasisamerica and Aridoamerica were at different stages of development, some were hunter-gatherers and others practiced agriculture and built urban centers.[3] These ethnic groups used to be in conflict with each other and the defeated paid tribute to the dominant group. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish conquest precipitated a cyclic population flow between the highlands and the valleys. The first massive displacement of population occurred when colonizers arrived in the northwest and indigenous tribes fled to the mountains.[4]

In the 1530s, Spanish conquerors led by Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán reached the territory of Sinaloa and defeated developed sedentary groups like the Tahue and Totorame through the usage of scorched-earth methods. Also, the spreading of pandemic diseases proved an unintentional war tactic, which caused the ultimate elimination of those indigenous nations. Beltrán founded the provinces of Culiacán and Espíritu Santo (Chametla) and incorporated them to the New Kingdom of Galicia. However, Beltrán's expedition was unable to conquer the territory of nomadic and seminomadic tribes, in part because troops did not find food staples to sustain themselves.[5]

Hernán Cortés—the infamous conqueror of south and central Mexico who was also Beltrán's mortal enemy—explored the northwestern coast, named the California Gulf after himself ("Sea of Cortés"), and sent loyal sailors to Baja California. Other expeditioners went into

---

[3] Oasisamerica and Aridoamerica are the pre-Columbian ecological macro-regions spanning current northern Mexico and southwestern United States. Alfredo López Austin & Leonardo López Luján, *Mexico's Indigenous Past*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

[4] Antonio Nakayama Arce, *Sinaloa, un bosquejo de su historia* (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 1982), 50.

[5] Sergio Ortega Noriega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 49-50.

the Cahita zone of Sonora, and by the 1560s, Francisco de Ibarra had established the New Kingdom of Vizcaya and its capital in Durango City, whose provinces would include Sinaloa and San Sebastián (northern and southern Sinaloa).

As explorers advanced to the north, they discovered large mineral deposits and created settlements around them. In 1567, Spaniards established the village of Santa Bárbara in Tepehuan territory, from which Juan de Oñate engineered the conquest of New Mexico in 1598.[6] Other mining towns were founded decades later in Concho territory, like San José del Parral (1631) and Santa Eulalia (1652). The expansion of Santa Eulalia fostered the foundation of the village of San Felipe el Real de Chihuahua in 1709. Thus, the northwest had a belated development in relation to other New Spain's regions.

Spaniards were not able to organize the encomienda system in the northwest because of prevailing indigenous nomadism. Mining became one of the most profitable activities and to a lesser extent farming, ranching, and trade, but settlers had to deal with recurring labor shortages. Nevertheless, by the end of the sixteenth century the colonial order was defined with the division of society through ethnic and class lines: Spanish owners, tributary Indians, and a sector of Black and mixed-race people who worked as presidio soldiers and laborers. [7]

The violence of the conquest, the frequent enslavement of Indians by explorers, pandemics, and the imposition of the Catholic religion led to a precipitous decline in the population and resources of indigenous nations. In that context, several indigenous communities built relations of cooperation with the Spanish settlers, while others—particularly nomadic

---

[6] Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), 14-23.

[7] Ortega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa*, 65. In the northwest, several presidios were established given the indigenous insurrections and the menace of foreign incursions.

tribes—used both armed and non-violent strategies to resist colonial rule. Given the indigenous rebelliousness, the Spanish crown put an end to the conqueror-entrepreneur scheme and tried out another colonization model: the mission system that religious orders had already implemented to subject the semi-nomadic *chichimeca* population in the Bajío and Western regions. The mission system entailed the establishment of self-sufficient Catholic communities in infidel territory to evangelize and acculturate locals.

From the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century, Franciscans and Jesuits established hundreds of missions in Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, California, Arizona and New Mexico.[8] As missionaries advanced inlands with the support of presidio soldiers, they gradually dominated Cahita peoples but pushed the most indomitable among them to the Sierra Madre. Jesuits also ventured into the highlands, and by the early seventeenth century, they had established the missions of Santa Cruz de Topia and San Andrés in Durango, and San Juan Bautista de Badiraguato in Sinaloa (1605). Missionaries disregarded the cultural differences among indigenous tribes, thereby they congregated both nomadic and sedentary groups, as well as groups in conflict with one another.

Missions not only imposed Catholicism, but by forcing the incorporation of Indians to their structures, they destroyed tribal life and exploited indigenous workforce for agriculture and cattle raising purposes to meet the needs of both missions and Spanish settlers. Missions also provided the labor for the mines and estates. Infidel Indians and lay Spaniards were not allowed to live within the pueblo missions, however, that fact did not bring security to their dwellers. Overwork triggered indigenous rebellions, the killing of missionaries, and the ravaging of the

---

[8] Ortega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa*, 70-75.

missions. Rebels sought the total removal of Spaniards from indigenous territory, although acculturation made impossible a return to pre-contact times.

There were several revolts in the first part of the 17th century by Acaxees, Xiximes, and other groups, but the first major uprising occurred in 1616-1620 in the Tepehuán territory in New Vizcaya (Durango). It resulted in the deaths of one thousand Tepehuanes and three hundred Spaniards. [9] Another important rebellion broke out in 1632 and caused the slaughter of eight hundred Guarojíos and Guazapares in Chínipas, Chihuahua—the Chínipas mission had been established only five years before.[10] Few years later, in 1645, the Concho people razed San Francisco de Conchos and the surrounding missions, even though before the rebellion colonizers had seen them as the most loyal Indians. The same year, there was another uprising by Tobosos and Salineros in the Bolsón de Mapimí region. The Spanish backlash to every rebellion was overwhelming and brought about the total extermination of dozens of ethnic groups. In that regard, the colonization of the northwest had more commonalities with the genocide of Native Americans in the United States than what occurred in central and southern Mexico.

From 1648 to 1653, the Rarámuri people revolted three times against Jesuit missions. In 1649, the governor of New Vizcaya, Diego Guajardo, personally undertook the suppression of rebels and ordered the burning of their houses and their corn provisions, as well as the foundation of the military village of Aguilar (Basúchil) in rebel territory. A year later, the Rarámuri destroyed the mission of Papigochic, and in 1652 Don Gabriel Teporaca took the village of Aguilar, starting the most widespread Rarámuri uprising ever. Educated by Jesuits,

---

[9] José de la Cruz Pacheco Rojas, *Durango, historia breve* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica-COLMEX, 2010), 51-58. Tepehuanes would revolt again in 1643-45.

[10] Eugeni Porras Carrillo, *Los warijó de Chihuahua: una etnografía mínima* (Chihuahua: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez-ENAH Chihuahua, 2002), 25. The Guarijío and Guarojío (also spelled Warijó) are the same ethnic group, but those who lived on the Sonora side were called Guarijíos and those from Chihuahua Guarojíos.

Teporaca used that knowledge against colonizers. He promoted the destruction of their civil and religious institutions, their productive units, and even their sacred symbols, in the same way that Spaniards had unraveled the indigenous world. But unlike other indigenous rebellions headed by religious leaders, Teporaca did not purport being a god or god's messenger. In 1653, Teporaca was captured and hanged in Tomóchic and his body placed on display for the public to view it.[11]

From 1680 through 1698, there were more uprisings by New Mexico's Pueblo Indians, Rarámuri, Concho, Toboso, and other peoples, and the Spanish crown suppressed them by creating more presidios.[12] Rebellions did not halt the formation of new missions, even though they impacted the pace of Spanish colonization. Also, a new challenge loomed in the mid-eighteenth century as Apaches raided *haciendas* and caused great economic losses to landowners.

In the late seventeenth century, Jesuits established missions in close proximity to the newly discovered mines of Álamos, Cusihuiriachi, Urique, Batopilas, and Uruachi. At this point, mining virtually structured the economy of the northwest. Unlike other *novohispano* regions, in the northwest neither slavery nor the *repartimiento* were the predominant labor systems. Except for the metayage system that ruled missions, wage labor prevailed, thereby Jesuits became unfair competitors for settlers.

The growing economic and political power of the Society of Jesus in the Americas, coupled with other problems created by the Jesuits in Spain, compelled the Spanish crown to

---

[11] Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua,* 36-37. Teporaca's rebellion has been insufficiently studied and it has not been compared to similar insurrections in New Spain and other viceroyalties.

[12] William B. Griffen, "A North Mexican Nativistic Movement, 1684," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 17, no. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn 1970): 95-116.

expel the congregation from all its territories in 1767. In the northwest, the missions were secularized, a process that represented a victory of the Spanish colonial rule over local powers.[13] Nevertheless, from 1767 to 1821, indigenous communities were vulnerable to the plundering of settlers and their communal lands and water sources were distributed as private property. Furthermore, the non-indigenous presence in indigenous communities weakened their cultural identity. Indians had no choice but to become peons in settlers' enterprises and were far from being beneficiaries of the eighteen century Bourbon Reforms. Yet, Cahita peoples continued to challenge colonial authority in order to preserve their territory and autonomy.

The War of Independence (1810-1821) in the northwest had a different development than in the rest of New Spain, given that peninsular Spaniards and Creoles were unified against unruly Indians. During the first stage of the revolution, the insurgent army led by liberal Creole caudillos reached Sinaloa, Sonora, Durango, and Chihuahua, where it suffered major defeats.[14] In 1821, the northwestern Creole elite endorsed the Plan of Iguala that proclaimed the independence of New Spain. Besides that, the most important consequence of the conflict had been the formation of a smuggling economy in the northwest Pacific coast. The balance of the colonial rule in the northwest was also different from the rest of New Spain because indigenous armed resistance was more protracted and recurring, and Spaniards could never fully pacify the septentrion. On the contrary, their legacy was an everyday violence that structured social

---

[13] It is worth mentioning that the decline of the mission system had begun before the expulsion of Jesuits. In 1740 there was a rebellion by Yaqui and Mayo peoples against their missions. In 1753, the viceroy 1st Count of Revillagigedo secularized the missions of Topia, San Andrés, and Xiximes, and his successors also planned on secularizing all the northwestern missions. Ortega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa*, 101.

[14] In Central Mexico, the clash between peninsular Spaniards and Creoles was one of the causes of the independence movement. In the final phase of the revolution, conservative Creoles took over and consummated the independence. Ortega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa* and José Pacheco, *Durango, Historia breve*.

relations and had a highly negative impact on population growth.[15] In fact, the scarcity of people in the region was one of the causes for which Mexico lost half of its territory as a result of the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48).

In the nineteenth century, the northwest bore some similarities to the rest of the Mexican territory, like elite divisions; infighting between centralists, federalists, liberals and conservatives; economic crises; epidemics; military and popular uprisings; conflicts to define states' boundaries, and local efforts to face U.S. American and French invaders. Nevertheless, the region had to deal with two unique issues: the formation of a borderline with the United States after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and the pressure of Native American tribes, pushed by the California Gold Rush into Mexican territory.

For centuries, the northwest had been economically and culturally connected to the territories of California, Arizona, and New Mexico more than to any other Mexican region, and the new border wreaked havoc on Mexicans at both sides.[16] Moreover, the fact that indigenous inhabitants of the lost territory had never recognized any external sovereignty, brought into question the legitimacy of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. [17]

The imposition of the borderline also deepened the division between the so-called *gente de razón,* who believed to embody the civilization and progress—European-descent landowners, merchants, and ranchers—and the "barbarian" Indians. Given that the Mexican state pointed at

---

[15] According to Aboites, by 1800, New Vizcaya had half the inhabitants than three centuries ago. Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua,* 69.

[16] For an analysis of the complex interactions among different groups after the creation of the border see Eric Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

[17] One of the best works about the politics of autonomous native peoples who lived in the disputed territory is by Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the US–Mexican War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

the persistence of Indian incursions as one of the causes for territorial loss, the border states assumed a policy of extermination towards native population, similar to what took place simultaneously on the U.S. side. Non-indigenous settlers were summoned to defend the border in exchange for land and tax exemptions. From the second half of the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, the deadliest campaigns against Apache, Comanche, Yaqui, and Mayo peoples developed, while at the same time large waves of immigrants arrived in the region.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, from dozens of nations that had existed in pre-contact times, the last survivors were the Cahita peoples: Yaqui, Mayo, Guarijío/Guarijó, Rarámuri, Ópata, and Zuaque, and the O'odham peoples, Pima (Akimel O'odham), Pápago (Tohono O'odham), and Tepehuán. There were also minor Cucapá, Kikapú, and Seri (Coomcac) enclaves, as well as portions of nations like the Navajo, fragmented by the borderline.[18] The Rarámuri, Guarijío/Guarijó, Pima, and Tepehuán survived by fleeing to the steepest mountains of the SMO. The Yaqui nation was the last indigenous group at war against the Mexican state; they were ultimately defeated in 1929, but recognition of their collective land tenure would occur ten years later.

During the *Porfiriato* (1876-1911), the northwest became one of the most dynamic regions for capitalist development through export-oriented mining, logging, railroads, irrigation agriculture, and the modern hacienda system. In Sonora and Chihuahua also took place some events that contributed to the crisis of the Porfirian regime, namely the Tomóchic Rebellion

---

[18] Ignacio Almada, *Breve historia de Sonora* (Mexico City: FCE-COLMEX, 2000), 47.

(1891-92) in the heart of the Sierra Madre; the Yaqui massive enslavement and deportation to Yucatán's *haciendas* in the early 1900s; and the Cananea Strike (1906).[19]

In the late nineteenth century, a widespread popular cult emerged to revere Teresa Urrea, "The Saint of Cabora," a half-indigenous anti-Porfirian healer who was a source of inspiration for both indigenous and mestizo uprisings in the sierra and the valleys. The *Santa* was the principal ideological influence of the Tomóchic rebellion, which ended with the massacre of dozens of rebels and their families. This millenarian and anti-Porfirian rebellion was a remarkable example of the conflict between autonomous mestizo peasants and the positivist elite of central Mexico. It also showed how the non-indigenous people that had participated in the extermination of native peoples had a shifting identity, as the inhabitants of the urban centers recast them as the new savages that had to be wiped out in the name of progress and modernization.[20]

The northwest was also the scene of unattainable utopias. As the colonization policy by the Mexican state offered excellent conditions to white settlers, it attracted U.S. entrepreneurs like the engineer Albert Kimsey Owen, a socialist reformer and founder of the Credit Foncier Company, which established a cooperative colony in Topolobampo, Sinaloa in 1880. The principles of an array of utopian socialist thinkers from the United States and Europe undergirded the social experiment, which garnered more than 1,200 people, mostly U.S.

---

[19] The enslavement of up to eight thousand Yaquis in the first decade of the twentieth century did not have any impact *per se*; it was reckoned after journalist John Kenneth Turner depicted these atrocities in his groundbreaking work *Barbarous Mexico* (1910), which proved very influential among Mexican revolutionaries. Eugenia Meyer, *John Kenneth Turner. Periodista de México* (Mexico City: Era-UNAM, 2005).

[20] Paul Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the turn of the Nineteenth Century*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

citizens.[21] Owen's original plan was to build a railroad from Norfolk, Virginia to Topolobampo and establish the "Pacific city" to take advantage of the Atlantic-Pacific trade.

Owen's project represented a transplant of ideas, people, and practices unrelated to the Mexican context, but in northern Sinaloa, which was barely populated, it did not disturb local society. The colony model proved a failure because of differences among administrators and colonists, who were split between socialist and capitalist factions (*saints* vs. *kickers*). Regardless of their ultimate fiasco, colonists tested new farming practices and a modern irrigation system in Los Mochis, El Fuerte Valley. They also revitalized Topolobampo's port and laid the foundation for the Pacific railway, a project that the Mexican government would accomplish in 1961.[22]

Before the 1890s, the forest industry did not exist in the Sierra Madre, but with the development of the Northwestern Railway in 1897, sawmills were built in the municipalities of Casas Grandes, Madera, Temósachic, and Guerrero. The railway from Ojinaga, Chihuahua to Topolobampo triggered the formation of sawmills in Bocoyna and the surroundings of Urique, and Maguarichi. Moreover, the expansion of the railroad system strengthened the mining industry. The extractivist model had a devastating impact on indigenous communal lands.[23]

In 1906, several members of the anti-Porfirian Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) participated in the organization of the first strike at the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company in Sonora,

---

[21] For an overview of Owen's ideological influences see Carlos Illades, *Las otras ideas. El primer socialismo en México, 1850-1935* (Mexico City: Era, 2008), 181-203.

[22] The colonists lost their land and water concessions in the early twentieth century, which were sold to the U.S. entrepreneur Benjamin Francis Johnston. He established the Sinaloa Sugar Company that would become the most important sugar mill in the state and would foster the foundation of the city of Los Mochis. Ortega, *Historia breve de Sinaloa*, 250-253; Nakayama, *Sinaloa*, 367-372. For a long-term history of commercial agriculture in Sinaloa see Hubert Carton de Grammont, *Los empresarios agrícolas y el Estado. Sinaloa, 1893-1984* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1990).

[23] Jesús Vargas Valdés, *Madera Rebelde: Movimiento agrario y guerrilla (1959–1965)* (Chihuahua: Ediciones Nueva Vizcaya, 2015), 30.

whose suppression by U.S. vigilantes and rangers outraged Mexico's public opinion. One year later, the PLM participated in a textile workers' riot in Río Blanco, Veracruz, in which the army killed hundreds of workers. The most radical sector within the PLM followed the ideas of the anarchist leader Ricardo Flores Magón, one of the chief advocates of armed revolution, who organized support networks in both the United States and Mexico.[24] When the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910, emerging regional *caudillos* (political-military bosses) representing economic elites, peasants, workers, and indigenous people organized the insurrection. Caudillos developed a stronger popular appeal than political parties, which led to the PLM's marginalization.

The conflict initially focused on political transition and the northwest—particularly the state of Chihuahua—served as the scenery of the most decisive battles.[25] The Treaty of Ciudad Juárez (1911) put an end to the first stage of the fighting, as Porfirio Díaz stepped down of the presidency. The Coahuilan landowner and chief revolutionary leader, Francisco I. Madero, won the first democratic elections in late 1911, but former Porfirian forces, led by Gral. Victoriano Huerta, successfully overthrew and killed Madero in early 1913. The new dictatorship plunged the country into a bloody civil war. Among the several forces fighting against Huerta the Constitutionalist army, headed by the Coahuilan rancher Venustiano Carranza, became the best articulated.

By 1913, a former social bandit from Durango, nicknamed "Pancho Villa," who had joined the *maderista* movement in 1910, organized the Division of the North of the

---

[24] See Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2014).

[25] Describing local rebellions, like *orozquismo*, and other complex events that took place in the northwest from 1910 to 1920 is beyond the intent of this chapter. For a general introduction to the revolution see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution,* 2 vol. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

Constitutionalist army by incorporating a highly heterogeneous blend of popular forces, including peasants of the Sierra Madre, primarily motivated by land distribution.[26] Contrary to Emiliano Zapata's Liberation Army of the South, the Division of the North did not include whole communities interested in fighting for collective land and corporate rights. Villa intended to create a society of prosperous farmers similar to the U.S. Southwest. In that regard, the Division of the North was ideologically closer to the Constitutionalists, but Villa broke with Carranza when the latter refused to abide by the agreements of the 1914 Convention of Aguascalientes. Segments of the Yaqui and Mayo peoples did not side with the *villistas*—who might be closer to their class interests—but with Álvaro Obregón, a Sonoran smallholder and commander of the northwestern Constitutionalist army.[27]

In the final years of the armed stage of the revolution, the Constitutionalists defeated the Conventionists and managed to promulgate a new Constitution in 1917.[28] Obregón became the seeming "winner" of the revolution after toppling Venustiano Carranza through the Plan of Agua Prieta (1920). In fact, the revolution produced no actual winners but did result in a demographic catastrophe: it is estimated that between one to two million people had an unnatural death

---

[26] Villa became the only Latin American character who ever invaded U.S. territory, as he raided the village of Columbus, New Mexico in 1916. The most comprehensive work about Villa is the biography by Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[27] There are conflicting claims about the extent of Obregón's fulfillment of indigenous demands in the aftermath of the revolution, but it seems that Obregón's support to them was rather selective. See Héctor Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada. Sonora y la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: SEP, 1977), and Linda B. Hall, *Alvaro Obregón, Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981).

[28] Zapata was assassinated in 1919 and Villa ceased fighting in 1920; he was killed three years later. For an analysis of the reasons why the Sonoran faction first attained the revolution's leadership and then the national hegemony see Héctor Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*.

between 1910 to 1920, out of a total population of 15 million—the worst population collapse in Mexico since the Spanish conquest.[29]

Since the beginning of the revolution, there was a remarkable predominance of northern caudillos, despite the massive enrollment of southern peasants in the contending armies. In the aftermath of the conflict, the Sonoran constitutionalist leaders Adolfo de la Huerta, Álvaro Obregón, and Plutarco Elías Calles held the presidency for three consecutive terms, from 1920 to 1928, and Calles extended his leadership in national politics until 1934—a period dubbed the *Maximato,* which was crucial for state building.[30] During the 1920s, there were also some rebellions and purges within the Mexican military that rendered thousands of victims.[31] Furthermore, the so-called "Sonoran Dynasty" was fiercely secular and its anti-clerical measures caused that groups of rural and urban Catholics launched the Cristero War (1926-1929). In the northwest, the ruling elite sided with *callismo* and *cristero* outbreaks were rare. The conflict finished with a flimsy agreement between the government and the Catholic Church.[32]

Through the post-revolutionary period, the ruling elite dealt with two competing trends within its nationalist project: the building of a liberal and modern industrial state that fostered a

---

[29] There is little agreement among scholars about the degree in which epidemics, starvation, displacement, migration, and lost births impacted the population collapse, but the unprecedented amount of massive executions between rival factions played a role in the account for the human cost. Robert McCaa, "The Demographic Cost of the Mexican Revolution", *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 367-400.

[30] The biographies of Sonoran caudillos are relevant to understand national politics during the 1920s and also their personal influence in the state formation process in the northwest. See Jürgen Buchenau, *The Last Caudillo: Álvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and J. Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

[31] Adolfo de la Huerta himself led one of the uprisings in 1923-24. For an analysis of the 1920s military rebellions see Enrique Plascencia de la Parra, *Historia y organización de las fuerzas armadas en México, 1917-1937* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2010); Plascencia, *Personajes y escenarios de la rebelion delahuertista 1923-1924* (Mexico City: UNAM-Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1998).

[32] The Cristero war represented another demographic blow with roughly 100, 000 dead and more than 200, 000 exiles. Jean Meyer, *La Cristiada,* 3 vol. (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1976).

national capitalist class, against a welfare state that accomplished the social justice principles of the 1917 Constitution and the demands by social movements. This fundamental contradiction enabled every administration to place itself either to the right or the left of the Constitution. Those who attempted at combining both trends proved unsuccessful.

The National Revolutionary Party (PNR) was founded in 1929 as a coalition to bring together the so-called "revolutionary family," a group of former revolutionaries, caudillos, caciques, and bosses that accumulated and wielded a great deal of power in the aftermath of the armed conflict. The PNR created a de facto one-party state with presidentialist features that, under different names, ruled Mexico interruptedly for seven decades (1929-2000)—a remarkable stretch by global standards and by an allegedly democratic regime.[33]

The government of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934-40) successfully tested the regime's stability when his radical and populist policies divided Mexico's society. Cárdenas confronted powerful enemies, like the land oligarchy, the Catholic right-wing, and the Anglo-American oil companies in order to accomplish the revolutionary social agenda. Large segments of the peasantry, working and middle classes enthusiastically endorsed *cardenismo* and built a popular front. Cárdenas seized on the popular drive to organize the PNR—rebaptized in 1938 as Party of the Mexican Revolution, PRM—through corporatist lines: labor, peasant, popular, and military, paving the way for a clientelist system.[34] Corporatism and patronage became the pillars of the ruling party hegemony and also shaped a political culture that expanded beyond the state.

[33] Gilbert M. Joseph & Jürgen Buchenau. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013): 2.

[34] There is a vast corpus of literature about the formation of the post-revolutionary regime, with emphasis in the Cardenista period. For an overview about regional impacts of Cárdenas' policies and conflicting interpretations of cardenismo see Gilbert Joseph & Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) and Alan Knight, "Cardenismo:

Cárdenas dissolved the *hacienda* system and executed the largest distribution of land in the country thorough *ejidos*, whose legal foundations were developed between 1915 and 1934.[35] Nevertheless, the northwestern elites were able to maintain their power as the fusion of elements of the old and new regimes fostered the emergence of a new agrarian oligarchy. The lack of change was most evident in the SMO, where agrarian reforms made little headway and cattle ranchers controlled substantial grazing land.[36] The highlands also remained vulnerable to the expansion of logging and illegal drug cultivation.

The creators of the *ejido* did not consider that the demographic pressure on rural communities would lead to a ceaseless demand for land. Despite an initial high productivity period (1939-1941), most *ejidos* proved to be unprofitable because they depended on rainfall, used low technology, and were oriented towards subsistence. In many cases, their situation was so precarious that peasants combined farming with other activities, became seasonal workers or immigrated to the United States.[37] The PRI used the ejido system chiefly as a mechanism of forced peasant incorporation into the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), which was a "vote factory," along with the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP).

Although communal land tenure of northwestern indigenous nations like the Yaqui and Mayo was recognized, land reform neglected groups like the Guarijío/Guarijó. Moreover, in the

---

Juggernaut or Jalopy?," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 1, (February 1994): 73-107; and María Muñoz & Amelia Kiddle, eds., *Populism in 20th Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

[35] The ejido is a form of corporative landholding in which the state allocates individual parcels and communal lands to rural communities for agriculture, cattle raising, or forestry.

[36] Adrián Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked on Earth* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 135-146.

[37] For an economic analysis of the failure of the ejido system see Blanca Rubio, *Resistencia campesina y explotación rural en México* (Mexico City: Era, 1987).

northwest the post-revolutionary Mexican state failed to negotiate with indigenous groups the terms of their participation in the liberal modernizing project and did little to put an end to the violence that underlaid an age-long division between European-descent citizens and native nations stripped of collective citizenship rights. *Indigenismo*, a patronizing ideology that advocated for the assimilation of indigenous communities to the modern mestizo nation, became the official stance to address the so-called "Indian problem."[38]

Since the 1950s, *indigenista* policies gradually arrived into the Sierra Madre. In 1952, the National Indigenist Institute (INI) established the first Indigenist Coordinator Center of the Sierra Tarahumara (CCIT) in Guachochi, Chihuahua. Such centers would multiply in areas of indigenous political mobilization, although they did not represent a substantial transformation in the communities' lives.[39] The encroachment of indigenous land, the conversion of Indians into laborers, or their subjection to forced labor would prevail through the 20th century.

With the conservative turn of the Manuel Ávila Camacho administration (1940-1946), the PRM began to define itself as a center party and underscored revolutionary nationalism as the only official state ideology. During that term, Mexico participated symbolically in WWII on the side of the Allies (1942-1945) through the 201st Fighter Squadron. Other Mexican contributions to the Allies were more important, such as the *Bracero program*, which sent hundreds of thousands of Mexican nationals to the United States as guest workers from 1942 to 1964.

---

[38] Alexander Dawson offers a different perspective about how indigenous actors did contribute to shape the contents of *indigenista* policies and the relation between the state and indigenous groups. I contend that the situation of northwestern indigenous nations was significantly different to the rest of the country because of the violent rule of the European-descent elite over them. Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

[39] Juan Luis Sariego Rodríguez, *El indigenismo en la Tarahumara* (Mexico City: CONACULTA, 2002).

The ruling party's Cold war era began with a massacre and an incidental change of its name. On January 2nd, 1946, the military slaughtered an estimated thirty members of the far-right wing National Synarchist Union (UNS), who were protesting against alleged fraud in the municipal elections in León, Guanajuato. The episode, which was never officially investigated, represented the last major blow against the right wing. Sixteen days later, the PRM changed its name to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).[40] It was not a cosmetic change, but one that suggested a new path focused on institutionalization rather than on radical reform. Yet, the PRI continued using rhetoric regarding its revolutionary origins to legitimize its rule and thwart competing interpretations about the 1910 Revolution.

In the 1940s, the ruling party progressively implemented a stabilizing development model based on the protectionist policy of import substitution industrialization (ISI). The new policy ushered in a period of steady economic growth until the mid-1970s commonly referred as the "Mexican Miracle." The Miguel Alemán administration (1946-1952) promoted other substantial changes as it pulled back on land distribution and committed itself to industrial and infrastructural development. These initiatives encouraged the formation of a domestic capitalist class, which prospered through extensive graft.[41] *Alemanismo* also finalized the subjection of independent unions to *priísta* patronage. Undemocratic unionism by the CTM was known as *charrismo*.

---

[40] It is unclear whether the name change had any relation to the slaughter of synarchists. The UNS was banned in 1948 and the National Action Party (PAN)—made up by businessmen and upper-middle class professionals—became the only right-wing party allowed to participate in elections. See Pablo Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu. El movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1932-1951).* 2 vol. México, CONACULTA, 1992.

[41] Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Washington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001). Carlos Fuentes also provided a sweeping depiction of *alemanista* corruption in his novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Armemio Cruz*, 1962).

Alemán's *sexenio* ended with the supression of a massive miners' movement and a contested election. In 1951, roughly four thousand miners from Coahuila organized the "Hunger Caravan" to Mexico City, a journey they made largely by walking. The miners demanded basic labor and political changes to democratize its union. But when they finally arrived in Mexico City, the government repressed their protest and sent them back to Coahuila in cattle cages.[42]

A year later, the Coahuilan General, Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, then leader of the Federation of Parties of the People, claimed to have won the presidential elections. In response, *henriquistas* organized a rally in Mexico City to denounce the *priísta* fraud. The situation turned violent when the military arrived to repress the protesters, causing at least seven casualties, dozens of wounded, and five hundred detentions. Similar protests in other parts of the country were also put down with force.[43]

From 1956 onward, both the authoritarian rule and developmentalist policies sparked major social turmoil, with recurring mobilizations against electoral frauds, protests by workers, peasants, and students, and the formation of multi-class fronts that managed to topple various state governors. The state acted quickly to suppress dissent using both legal and extra-legal resources.[44] The ruling party puzzled opponents by offering either consensual agreement, co-optation, "jail, burial, or exile" (*encierro, entierro o destierro*, the catchphrase that the left wing used to refer to repression). In the majority of cases, instead of recognizing the legitimacy of the

---

[42] Mercedes Gaitán, *El movimiento de los mineros en el alemanismo* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1987).

[43] Elisa Servín, *Ruptura y oposición: el movimiento henriquista 1945-1954* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2001).

[44] It is worth noticing that Mexico was also recipient of funds by the U.S. Alliance for Progress since 1962, but the Mexican government funneled those resources to solve its financial needs instead of investing them in productive activities to avoid social upheaval, which was the Alliance's goal. William Kemnitzer, "México en la Alianza para el Progreso," *Foro Internacional* 4, no. 13 (July-September 1963): 56

discontent, the Mexican government accused opponents of being agents of an alleged international communist threat.[45]

In the northwest, the PRI governments were strongly authoritarian and it was not uncommon that generals occupied the governor's office. In several conflicts, state terror prevailed over peaceful resolutions. It is worth mentioning that the Socialist Popular Party (PPS, 1948), was more influential in the northwest than the soviet-oriented Mexican Communist Party (PCM, 1919). However, the leader of the PPS, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, developed a cordial relationship with the PRI and the so called *pepinos* remained as the only leftist party allowed to participate in the rigged electoral system. The lack of genuine political mediators contributed to the radicalization of social movements in the region.

The Yaqui Valley, Birthplace of the Green Revolution

The post-Cárdenas administrations were interested in promoting the type of capitalist farming compatible with a modern industrial state. The transition from traditional to modern agriculture began in the northwest region. The low productivity of traditional farming, combined with the outstanding quality of Sonora's land, aroused the interest of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in the Yaqui Valley.[46] Thus, in 1943, the Mexican government and the RF launched a

[45] Enrique Condés Lara, *Represión y rebelión en Mexico (1959-1985). La Guerra Fría en México. El discurso de la Represión*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2007).

[46] John H. Perkins underscores that the "green revolution" was not an imposition but an agreement between two equally minded parts, and the Mexican government welcomed it because it fitted its agenda of industrialization. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution. Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 112.

collaborative agricultural research program on wheat, which resulted in the adoption of improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, large-scale irrigation, and mechanized agriculture.[47]

With the fast development of high-yielding technology, Mexico reached food self-sufficiency and became a wheat exporter in 1958. Ten years later, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) dubbed the agro-technological package the "green revolution," and Mexico became a showcase to extend the model to other developing countries. Indigenous groups remained excluded from this revolution as well, given that their cultural and communal values had no room in capitalist agriculture.

Although import substitution industrialization was applied to the northwest, the region continued to develop an export-oriented economy and stayed connected to the U.S. Southwest economy. State governments responded to the rapid expansion of agribusiness, the timber industry, and trade by fostering the intermingling of private and public sectors, a situation that hampered the advance of institutional building in areas concerning civil and social rights.

The governments of Sonora and Sinaloa allowed for the formation of new large estates for commercial agriculture and subsidized private landholders. Sonora and Sinaloa only had one-fifth of all Mexican farms, yet they turned into leading agricultural states. The new agricultural model deepened the regional gap between the rich irrigated valleys and the impoverished highlands, and *serranos* provided cheap labor for cash crops. Furthermore, like any revolution,

[47] The program led to the foundation of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT, 1966) in Texcoco, State of Mexico, whose purported goal was to ensure Mexico's food security by raising productivity. Pamela Matson ed., *Seeds of Sustainability: Lessons from the Birthplace of the Green Revolution in Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2012).

the green one had unintended consequences, as it taught Sinaloan narco-caciques how to use technology to improve their illegal crops and take advantage of semi-desert land.[48]

From the 1950s onward, thousands of highlanders descended from the Sierra Madre to the valleys to work on farms or moved to towns and became part of the nascent industrial workforce. At the national level, while up to 65 percent of labor force was in agriculture in 1943, that figure dropped to 50 percent by 1968. Smallholdings and ejidos played a crucial role at the beginning of the industrialization process, as Venezian and Gamble argued:

> Extraction of forced savings through inflation was the primary method used to make the transfer of capital out of agriculture into the new industrial activities. For the poor farmers who were thus manipulated by the currency management of their country, it was somewhat ironic that they be the suppliers of capital for the new industry. Their ability to benefit from industrialization was limited in that they had to leave farming to enter the cities in order to prosper. It is doubly ironic that these capital transfers were used to finance a new breed of commercially minded export farmers who outcompeted the traditional farmer at every step. Mexico thus achieved its industrial status, in both manufacturing and agriculture, on the backs of traditional farmers.[49]

The gradual disappearance of traditional peasants had a considerable impact on women compared to men, given that the loss of access to resources suppressed their economic role in the rural family, and the modern industry did not offer them a similar role. After they relocated to urban areas, former *campesinas* or the daughters of peasants settled in shantytowns and obtained low-paying jobs without the security of smallholding.[50]

Despite innovations by the "green revolution," Mexican capitalist agriculture did not hinge on intensive use of resources through high technology as expected, but on extensive

---

[48] José Alfredo Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco. Desde Navolato vengo* (Mexico City: Océano, 1999), 68. Chapter five will depict the case of the "El Búfalo" ranch, the most impressive result of the combination of green revolution technology applied to illicit crops.

[49] Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution,*115-116.

[50] Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution*, 116.

accumulation of land; abundant and cheap labor; technical development based on improved seeds, dams, irrigation systems, and well drilling; and a policy of protectionism and subsidies, among other features. Private agriculture had environmental and financial consequences that the Mexican government had not contemplated, for instance, groundwater depletion and the fact that production costs exceeded profits. In consequence, this model went into crisis, Mexico lost competitivity in the global market, and the production of staple foods either stagnated or underwent constant fluctuations through the 1960s and 1970s, which led to a gradual loss of food self-sufficiency.[51]

Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth rendered a massive imbalance between the countryside and urban areas. It benefited the domestic capitalist class but had a major negative impact on traditional peasants and peasants-turned-workers.[52] In addition, in the northwest the slow pace of land reform and the unprofitability of ejidos engendered a two-fold phenomenon: a cycle of both nonviolent and armed peasant movements and the transformation of thousands of highlanders into drug growers.

This brief review of the northwest's long-arc history reveals the extent to which violence mediated the relationships between society and the state and elucidates why the region was at the vanguard of some of the most critical processes of twentieth century Mexico. The recurring violence was also an indicator of the structural contradictions between Indians and non-Indians. Despite indigenous participation in the 1910 Revolution, modernity projects like *indigenismo*, developmentalism, and the green revolution maintained a colonizing mindset. In the neoliberal

---

[51] Rubio, *Resistencia campesina,* 43-44.

[52] Pablo González Casanova was one of the first scholars to analyze the contradictions of the developmentalist model in his groundbreaking work *La Democracia en México* (*Democracy in Mexico*, 1965).

era, structural contradictions are far from being solved; on the contrary, they have intensified as drug cartels challenge the territorial integrity and even the existence of indigenous nations, continuing with a long-term process of colonization.

The Political History of Drug Trade in the Golden Triangle

The region of the Sierra Madre where the states of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua intersect became a leading nationwide producer of marijuana and poppy from the 1940s onward. In the 1970s, it came to be known as the Golden Triangle, like its Southeast-Asian counterpart. In Sonora, growers also cultivated marijuana in the riverbanks of the Mayo and Yaqui rivers and poppy in the north, but the state has had a strategic role in smuggling routes rather than in drug production.[53] Only those who acknowledge Sonora's importance in the drug trade refer to the region as Golden Quadrilateral.

Illegal cash crops shaped not only the regional economy but also politics.[54] The gradual development of the illegal drug trade controlled by narco-caciques in the northwest stemmed from multiple causes. Rugged mountain terrain served as a natural protection and the absence of roads and means of communication hindered law enforcement. Even though the highlands lacked the optimal conditions of the valleys, its climate was adequate for both marijuana and poppy production. In addition, the failure of the ejido system, the international drug demand, and the proximity to the border allowed for underground economy to flourish. The drug industry was linked to extreme violence from its inception because of a two-fold tradition: on the one hand,

---

[53] It is unclear who coined the term "Golden Triangle" or when its social use began. Luis Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio* (Mexico City: Plaza & Janés, 2005), 72.

[54] Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism": 126.

the struggles for hegemony between local autonomous caciques and the state; on the other, the structural violence in the SMO that pervaded social relations since the Spanish conquest.

While the history of social and armed movements represented a conflict between actors from below and the elite, the political history of illegal drug trade can be framed as a conflict between legal and illegal elites, in which some caciques and political bosses simultaneously belonged to both realms. Inter-elite conflict did not preclude that the Mexican state also fought those who were at the bottom in the illegal economy. Nevertheless, the state did not assault the criminal underclass and drug growers because they were relevant actors *per se*, but as a mechanism to control the drug market as chapter four will show.

This section examines why narco-caciques gradually increased their political and economic power to the point where they virtually controlled the whole drug production process in the Golden Triangle, notwithstanding that Mexico was part of the global prohibitionist regime since the first half of the twentieth century. The ruling party managed to subject narco-caciques to its clientelist regime and allowed them to act with certain autonomy, but whenever they became a nuisance, the state intervened to "restore order." This process did not follow a linear path, on the contrary, it entailed a great deal of contradictions and violence.

Before the advancement of prohibitionist policies in the late nineteenth century, both *cannabis sativa indica* (marijuana) and *papaver somniferum* (opium poppy) were cultivated in several Mexican regions because they had extended medical uses, and their social uses were primarily related to low-rank military, the underclass, and indigenous people; therefore, drug consumption was not seen as a problem that affected the whole society. As Stephen B. Neufeld showed, at least since the mid-nineteenth century soldiers consumed marijuana in the barracks, being stigmatized because of the public perception of the herb as dangerous. Marijuana was

considerably cheap in street markets, but its sale was forbidden in 1884. Given their privileged access to army facilities, some soldiers and female sellers turned *carrujos* (marijuana cigarettes) into a lucrative business, creating a captive market. [55]

By the turn of the century, the popular image of marijuana was firmly established as a plant that produced violence, insanity, and crime. During the 1910 Revolution, there was widespread marijuana consumption in the contending armies, but the post-revolutionary ruling elite stereotyped marijuana as a contributor to "race degeneracy."[56] Smoking opium was associated with the Chinese and perceived as alien to Mexican culture, while the use of other *drogas heroicas* (heroin and morphine) extended to all social classes, including the aristocracy.

In pursuit of "social hygiene," Carranza enacted the first legislation against opium imports in 1916, and De la Huerta, Obregón, and Calles launched a series of prohibitionist regulations against the cultivation, processing, and trade of marijuana, poppy, and cocaine (under the laws of 1920, 1923, 1925-1927).[57] A 1929 federal penal code introduced the concept of "crimes against public health," and in 1931 it was issued the first federal regulation on drug addicts.[58] Far from eradicating a problem of public health, prohibitionism created an enormous gap between illegal drug production costs and their markup in the black market.

---

[55] Neufeld underscores how the overall positive effects of smoking noted by soldiers contrasted with newspapers' panic discourse. Stephen B. Neufeld, *The Blood Contingent. The Military and the Making of Modern Mexico, 1876-1911* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 194-199.

[56] Ricardo Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición, Aproximaciones a la historia social y cultural de las drogas en México, 1840-1940* (Mexico City: Debate, 2016), 121.

[57] Prohibitionist measures were aimed first and foremost at counteracting smuggling in the U.S.-Mexico border. Since the 1920s, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents crossed the border without authorization in the pursuit of smugglers—a situation that Mexican authorities sought to curtail. María Celia Toro, "The Internationalization of Police. The DEA in Mexico," *The Journal of Latin American History*, 86, 2 (September 1999): 627. See also William O. Walker III, *Drug Control in the Americas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1989).

[58] Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición*, 157-205. Froylán Enciso provided an overview of the history of Mexican prohibitionism in the twentieth century in: Enciso, "Los fracasos del chantaje. Régimen de prohibición de

The 1909 Opium Exclusion Act and the 1914 Harrison Narcotics Tax Act laid the foundation for prohibitionism in the United States. In 1915, after signing the 1912 International Opium Convention, the U.S. government spearheaded efforts to build a global prohibitionist regime. Scholars traditionally believed that the United States imposed such policies to its southern neighbor as part of an informal cultural colonization.[59] However, Isaac Campos demonstrated that the roots of the legal and ideological discourses against marijuana in Mexico, dominated by class and race biases, were domestic and predated the U.S. prohibitionism. Those arguments were even exported to the north, contributing to the stigmatization of the plant.[60]

Nevertheless, the U.S. trend to indiscriminately associate Mexicans with marijuana and criminalize them accordingly, had more weight in the geopolitical scenario than Mexican autonomous efforts to curb illegal drugs. Nineteenth-century Mexican botanists characterized marijuana as an endemic plant, even though it was brought to the Americas by Spaniards in the sixteenth century to manufacture textiles. This misconception influenced U.S. perception of marijuana as a quintessential Mexican drug, and U.S. law enforcement authorities targeted Mexico as the source of U.S. drug consumption since the 1930s onward.[61] Of course, the discourse against Mexican drugs has varied according to U.S. geopolitical objectives.

---

drogas y narcotráfico," in *Los grandes problemas de México, seguridad nacional y seguridad interior*, Arturo Alvarado & Mónica Serrano, eds. (Mexico City: COLMEX, 2010), 61-104.

[59] María Celia Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs* (Boulder: Lunne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 5, and Enciso, "Los fracasos del chantaje."

[60] Although Campos' argument is convincing, it seems that he underestimates the asymmetry of cultural power between Mexico and the United States, and the fact that circulation of major trends is usually viral, thereby it can be problematic to attribute a fixed national origin to prohibitionist claims. Campos' argument about the Mexican origins of the war on drugs stemmed from the same questionable idea of sharp national divisions. Isaac Campos, *Home Grown. Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[61] Harry J. Anslinger served as the first commissioner of the FBN from 1930 to 1962, and his xenophobic and racist views shaped both domestic and foreign U.S. drug policies. Anslinger also championed the criminalization of drugs in the rest of the world, like a global drug czar. During his tenure, the FBN swapped the use of the term cannabis for the Spanish word marijuana to evoke its connection to Mexico. See John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J.*

During a brief period of the Cárdenas administration, Mexico distanced itself from the prohibitionist approach to deal with illicit drugs exclusively as a problem of public health. The mastermind behind the initiative to legalize drugs, Dr. Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, concluded that the harmful effects attributed to marijuana were overrated. Doctors Viniegra and José Quevedo proposed that the state regulated the drug industry to prevent traffickers from having a captive market and to protect patients (drug addicts) from police extortion and traffickers' exploitation. Another point they took into consideration was the low number of drug addicts calculated by Viniegra in 16,000 out of 20 millions of Mexicans by 1938, with the majority concentrated in Mexico City.[62] It represented a major contrast to the number of addicts in the United States, around 275,000 by 1915, a figure that increased during the following years.[63] It was also evident that given its tiny domestic market, Mexico's drug production was largely intended for the transnational market.

In February 1940, the Mexican government issued a new federal regulation that decriminalized drug addiction and promoted the opening of state-regulated drug dispensaries. Traffickers could not beat state competition, but before the new model demonstrated its efficacy President Cárdenas suspended it in June 1940, given the scarcity of drugs due to WWII. In fact, the U.S. government suspended the export of all medical narcotics to Mexico as a way to oppose its legalization. Mexico returned to the prohibitionist practices for the remainder of the century.[64]

Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990); Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 367-386.

[62] Froylán Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica. Paisajes para (re)legalizar las drogas en México* (Barcelona: Debate, 2015), 77-84. It is worth mentioning that Viniegra was from Durango and he might have witnessed how the drug industry worked.

[63] Walker, *Drug Control*, 13.

[64] Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y prohibición*, 282-307.

As Toro underscored, the principal consequence of outlawing imports and exports of drugs in both countries was "the inevitable creation of an underground narcotics trade along the U.S.-Mexican border with proportions that are impossible to estimate."[65]

The formation of a Narco-populist Regime in Sinaloa

In Sinaloa, drug growing began as a marginal activity in the Badiraguato highlands in the late nineteenth century. In contrast, in the early twentieth century poppy gradually became the most important cash crop in the Golden Triangle. In order to cast away the "black legend" against Badiraguato as a drug producer, the Sinaloan elites agreed to blame Chinese immigrants for having introduced the methods to grow, process, and consume opium.[66] Chinese immigrants had taken refuge in the United States and Mexico after the nineteenth-century Opium Wars, and found employment in the railroad industry. Some of them cultivated opium poppy in Sinaloa and other parts of the country for both self-consumption and smuggling, but they were not the ones who benefited the most from the sales.[67]

---

[65] Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs*, 9.

[66] Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 133. Badiraguato's collective memory even singled out the Chinese apothecary Lai Chang Wong—who migrated to Mexico from Hong Kong in 1911 and was christened as José Amarillas—as the first poppy grower in the 1930s. Enrique Ruiz Alba, "Lai Chang Wong o José Amarillas, enamoraba con música, curaba con opio," in *Badiraguato. 18 Encuentros con la historia*, vol. 1, José María Figueroa & Gilberto Alanís López, eds. (Culiacán: Gobierno del Estado de Sinaloa-Revista Cultural Presagio, 2002), 121-123.

[67] Douglas Valentine and Peter Dale Scott sustained that China's Kuomitang cells spread over the world—including Mexico and the United States—to fund their war against communist forces through drug proceeds. This is a suggestive research line, but evidence offered by authors is not as compelling as to claim that people from the Chinese community in Mexico cultivated or sold opium for the Kuomitang. Scott, "Drugs, Anti-Communism, and Extra-Legal Repression in Mexico" in *Government of the shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty,* Eric Wilson, ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 174; Douglas Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf. The Secret History of America's War on Drugs* (New York: Verso, 2004).

In his memoirs, Manuel Lazcano y Ochoa, a top official in several state administrations, reckoned that while society indiscriminately held accountable the Chinese for poppy growing, in the 1930s locals and U.S. citizens had already begun to set up drug trafficking rings.[68] From the 1910 onward, the demonized Chinese and Japanese communities were the target of a state-backed xenophobic campaign, through which thousands of immigrants were either killed or expelled of Mexico accused of having brought opium and diseases.[69] Ethnic cleansing officially ended in 1934, but some of whom participated in heinous acts against Asian immigrants seized their victims' businesses.[70] Xenophobia served as a coverup to strengthen the underground drug economy, although such result was not part of a deliberate planning.

The drug industry replaced the role that mining had performed in the Golden Triangle, but followed a similar pattern of development, in which only investors could make a profit. Members of Sinaloa's wealthiest families connected to the political establishment controlled poppy production as soon as they learned it was a potential money-maker. When setting up their businesses, they appropriated the same model of traditional farming with poor growers, rich brokers, and entrepreneurs who amassed capital to invest it in commercial expansion. Opium entrepreneurs were not devoted to this single activity but diversified their inversions.

---

[68] Manuel Lazcano y Ochoa, *Una vida en la vida sinaloense* (Culiacán: n.p., 1992), 202-205.

[69] The xenophobic campaign included the slaughter of hundreds of both Chinese and Japanese immigrants in Torreón, Coahuila (1911) and Monterrey, N.L. (1913); spatial segregation in ghetto-like neighborhoods; a number of racist restrictions, and the deportation of up to seven thousand China nationals to the María Magdalena island in 1918. In the northwest, the campaign was stronger and lasted until the early 1940s. It would not be exaggerated to claim that the genocide of indigenous groups in the northwest set the conditions for a new ethnic cleansing, given that both Indians and Asian immigrants were perceived as the otherness. See Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican. Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[70] Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism": 132.

One of those characters with multifarious interests was Melesio Cuén Cázares, the three-time mayor of Badiraguato from 1924 to 1952. Cuén was doctor, apothecary, merchant, mining businessman, promoter of the establishment of a cinematograph in the town, and also a *gomero* cacique.[71] Two of his brothers had been mayors of Badiraguato in the 1920s as well, while another brother, Gral. Fernando Cuén Cázares, participated in the Revolution and served as the chief of staff of the military in 1917. Melesio Cuén represented the post-revolutionary cacique who had a non-written yet official permission to partake in illicit activities.

The fact that *narco-caciques* were outlaws does not imply that they shared their subalterns' world; on the contrary, social hierarchies were normally rigid inside the drug industry. Nevertheless, relations between social classes varied, since some narco-caciques made payments that growers deemed fair, while others were more exploitative and abusive. Peasants who participated in the underground economy took that risk because they could not obtain the same earnings by other means. However, given that sowing and harvesting were seasonal activities, peasants alternated them with subsistence agriculture, grazing, mining, working in sawmills or in the valleys' cash crops.[72]

It is important to underscore that highlanders did not develop drug use, like industrial workers, they were rather alienated from the commodities they produced. Thus, it seems that the first generations of drug growers were truthful about their unawareness of the harmful effects of drug addiction in society because of their physical isolation. Perhaps, such an artless perspective

---

[71] Poppy growers were usually called *gomeros* (gum people) because they ooze out the poppy gum. Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 73; José María Figueroa & Gilberto Alanís López, eds., *Badiraguato. 18 Encuentros con la historia*, vol. 1.

[72] Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez, "El Narcotráfico en los Altos de Sinaloa (1940-1977)," (PhD diss., Universidad Veracruzana, 2016), 25; Miriam Faviola Soto Quintero, *Badiraguato* (Culiacán: La Crónica de Culiacán, 2011), 247-262.

on narcotics made it possible for drug growing to transform into a family activity where even children participated and naively used opium gum balls as toys.[73]

Outlaw peasants were the central target of anti-drug initiatives since the late 1930s.[74] The weakening of drug grower communities led them to have more asymmetrical relationships with both narco-caciques and the state. One of the major paradoxes of Mexican prohibitionism was that the same state that neglected the Sierra Madre and never offered it opportunities for economic development, attacked the principal activity that the highland communities found to thrive on, thereby contributing to their impoverishment.

Profitability enticed hundreds of actors to participate in the opium industry. According to media accounts, by 1945 one opium kilogram cost two hundred pesos in Mexico, one thousand pesos in the border, and one thousand dollars in the United States.[75] As market competition became a problem, state agents were the only outside actors capable of regulating the opium trade. As Luis Astorga has documented, it was common for municipal authorities and police agencies, particularly the local Judicial Police, to take bribes to allow for drug cultivation or to be personally involved in its production and smuggling.[76]

One of the most pervasive myths about the transformation of the Golden Triangle into an opium producing region claims the existence of a confidential pact between the United States and Mexico to supply drugs to the U.S. military during WWII.[77] There is no evidence to confirm

---

[73] This situation would radically change decades later. Fernández, "El Narcotráfico en los Altos," and Lazcano, *Una vida en la vida sinaloense*, 207.

[74] Astorga, *Drogas sin Fronteras* (Mexico City: Debolsillo, 2015), 313-386.

[75] Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas*, 77.

[76] Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 27-204.

[77] The idea of such pact has become a popular narrative to justify the participation of Sinaloa in the drug industry. It appears in journalistic articles, novels, and even academic works. For examples of the myth see the novels by

that such an agreement existed, though it appeared that the U.S. government temporarily overlooked the Mexican drug production because it was far from being a priority in the midst of a global war.[78]

Another explanation about Mexico's role as a drug producer and principal transit point in drug smuggling into the United States and Canada, sustains that because WWII disrupted traditional intercontinental drug routes, the U.S. mafia led by Lucky Luciano penetrated Mexico via Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Virginia Hill, who promoted the cultivation of poppy in the northwest to counter the scarcity of morphine and heroin in the U.S. market. These claims seem to be grounded on evidence, but the history of the making of such complex transnational networks is yet to be written.[79]

By the early 1940s, Badiraguato consolidated into the leading poppy producer nationwide. Sinaloa did not become a privileged site of drug production out of contingency, but as a result of a confidential inter-elite agreement. In a similar way that the Mexican state had negotiated with powerful and violent local actors, like the *Cristeros*, an arrangement was made with Sinaloa's large landowners and middle farmers and ranchers. Given that they persistently killed agrarianist leaders in the early 1940s, the Mexican government granted them permission to participate in drug cultivation and trafficking in exchange to their acquiescence in mild land

---

Leónidas Alfaro, *Tierra Blanca* (2005), Jaime Sinagawa, *Amapola* (2008), and J. Sinagawa, *El triángulo dorado* (2009).

[78] Luis Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 195.

[79] Those networks included high-profile narcotics traffickers like Meyer Lansky and Harold Meltzer and reached French and Corsican smugglers. Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf*, 70-73; Scott, "Drugs, Anti-Communism," 180, and Carlos Hernández, *Narcomundo: How Narcotraficantes Gained Control of Northern Mexico and Beyond, 1945-1985* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), 115-124.

reform. Benjamin T. Smith coined the term *narcopopulism* to explain how this seemingly "pro-peasant political style masked the continuation of broad class divisions."[80]

From the 1940s onward, northwestern governors had a direct role in tolerating, regulating or controlling the drug trade despite the prohibitionist regime.[81] Given that law enforcement and other state institutions were largely absent from the SMO, *narco-caciques* became a sort of criminal sovereigns. Top officials and criminal sovereigns were the two faces of the same ruling elite and their roles proved exchangeable. While the phenomenon of sovereigns that behaved as criminals and vice versa was not exclusive to the northwest, the intertwining of drug money and politics was stronger there than in any other Mexican region.

In 1944, Rodolfo Valdés, "El Gitano," a hitman of landowners involved in the drug trade, assassinated Sinaloa's governor Rodolfo Tostado Loaiza, allegedly for having neglected to protect the opium industry despite receiving bribes. Another explanation connected Loaiza's murder with the fact that he did not belong to the PRM and was the first independent state governor of post-revolutionary Mexico. "El Gitano" pointed out Gral. Pablo Macías Valenzuela as the intellectual author of the crime, although the case was never clarified.[82] Accusations against Gral. Macías for his relationship to narco-caciques did not prevent him from assuming Sinaloa's governorship after Loaiza's death. This episode showed how elite actors continued to

---

[80] Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism,": 130. My only disagreement with Smith's argument is that he sustains that radical groups, like agrarianists, also benefited from the narco-pact because they either receive some land or were able to become drug growers. However, the struggle for land in Sinaloa continued throughout the twentieth century, as documents in the SEGOB archive show. Therefore, the claim that narcopopulism appeased radical groups must be nuanced.

[81] Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*; Astorga, *Mitología del "narcotraficante" en México*, (Mexico City: UNAM-Plaza y Valdés, 1995).

[82] It seems that Lázaro Cárdenas meddled in the case to blame Macías, but a military court exonerated the latter. Luis Astorga, "Arqueología del narcotráfico," *Nexos*, July 1st, 1995, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=7451, accessed June 3rd, 2017, Astorga, *Mitología del "narcotraficante,"* 55; Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco*, 33-45.

resort to violence to solve their internecine strife akin to revolutionary times, but more importantly, it inaugurated the relationship between *narco-politics* and high-profile assassinations. Moreover, many Sinaloa governors were signaled as protectors of drug lords or as drug lords themselves since Macías.[83]

In 1948, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) declared that Mexico was the source of half of the illicit drugs in the United States.[84] The U.S. government then put pressure on Mexico to increase its counter-narcotics efforts by targeting the source of supply.[85] That same year, the Mexican government launched the first national eradication campaign known as the Great Campaign, the first attempt to militarize the anti-drug strategy by incorporating the military as a permanently assigned eradication force.[86] Also, it was the first campaign to use aircraft spotter planes.[87] Troops traveled great extensions into several states to manually stick-beat marijuana and poppy plants, especially in the Golden Triangle, but did not follow a systematic plan.

The strategy failed not only for the lack of manpower and its primitive methods but also for the intermingling of *narco-caciques* with the political elite. The former either bribed law enforcement and officers or used their intelligence networks to burn crops and flee targeted

---

[83] The most outstanding cases of *narco-governors* were Gral. Gabriel Leyva Velázquez (governor in 1935-36 and 1957-1962); Leopoldo Sánchez Celis (1963-1968), and Antonio Toledo Corro (1981-1986). They were also prominent members of the PRI and played an important role in national politics. Astorga, *Mitología*; Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism": 127; Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco*.

[84] Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf*, 73.

[85] Astorga detailed how the U.S. government blackmailed Mexico to impose such a punitive campaign. Mexican authorities had manifested their opposition to plant eradication by arguing that those measures were "acts of a totalitarian government." Nonetheless, as Astorga also showed, in the late 1940s the U.S.-Mexico relation had moments of both conflict and synergy regarding drug-related issues. Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras,* 372-382.

[86] Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs*,12.

[87] Richard Craig, "La Campaña Permanente: Mexico's Anti-Drug Campaign," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 20, 2 (May 1978): 107-131.

zones. The campaign was doomed to fail because it did not attack the political and financial structure of the illegal drug trade—a fight that required political rather than military measures. Nevertheless, eradication campaigns became a permanent task that security forces carried out every four or six months.[88]

The Great Campaign set a pattern through which the state systematically would assault drug grower communities and minor drug traffickers but would neglect politicians, financiers, and entrepreneurs who managed the drug trafficking and laundering networks. Unsurprisingly, the 1951 poppy and marijuana harvests of Sinaloa and Sonora were the largest at the time, albeit this fact implied more competitors in the market and lower prices.[89] Furthermore, the *Mexican brown*, made in rudimentary laboratories, could not compete with the purity of the white Turkish heroin that was processed in France and traded by the U.S. mafia. The so-called French connection dominated the U.S. market until the mid-1960s.[90]

During the 1950s, the Mexican government focused on its fight against communism and the drug industry was not perceived as a national security concern. Conversely, from the late 1960s, with the dismantling of the French connection and the exponential increase in the U.S. demand of both marijuana and heroin—propelled to a large extent by counterculture—Mexico became a leading producer and smuggler.[91] This context led to deep divisions within the ruling elite, the end of the *narco-pacts*, and the disintegration of the *narco-populist* regime. The

---

[88] Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs*, 13.

[89] Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 386. For a vivid description about how highlander growers and brokers competed to each other see Fernández, "El narcotráfico en los Altos de Sinaloa."

[90] Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs*, 12.

[91] The demographic explosion of mid-century also had a negative impact on job opportunities. For instance, during the 1960s, the number of landless peasants increased from 1,350 to 20,555. The circumstances pushed hundreds of peasants to become drug growers. Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism,": 143-148.

Mexican government lost track of the new stakeholders in the drug trade, and drug lords fought each other and against the security forces for controlling the market.

The hemispheric political climate of the 1960s led to the "triumph of the prohibitive, punitive model of enforcement in the U.S. governmental bureaucracy over taxation models that ultimately facilitated increased supply-control measures abroad."[92] In 1961, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs signed in New York, prohibited the production and supply of cannabis, coca, opium derivates, and synthetic opioids, except for restricted medical and scientific uses. The convention signaled the consolidation of the global prohibitionist regime. Mexico acceded to it in 1967.[93]

By the late 1960s, the Mexican government faced trenchant pressure by its U.S. counterpart to change its anti-drug strategy. As the United States imposed its "war on drugs" to Mexico, this policy intersected with the dirty war. Inadvertently or purposely, the drug war became a new front against communism, and both conflicts turned the 1970s into the most violent decade of the Cold War in Mexico, reaching their peak of terror in the Golden Quadrilateral and Guerrero.

The drug war was far from putting an end to drug trafficking. As chapters four and five will show, the Mexican government seized on U.S. anti-drug foreign policy to reorganize the drug industry to benefit the PRI. Criminal sovereignty also persisted, and by the 1980s, drug cartels strengthened their control over northwestern peasant communities and began to use forced labor. In the twenty-first century, they enslaved indigenous people in a similar fashion

---

[92] Aileen Teague, "The Drug Trade in Mexico," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History, http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-230, accessed June 4, 2017.

[93] Saúl López Noriega, "El derecho a la amapola," *Nexos*, April 1st, 2016, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=28038#ftnref4, accessed June 4, 2017.

than Spaniards conquerors and Porfirian authorities had done it, reducing them to the "bare life."[94]

Anticommunism and the National Security Doctrine as State Rationale

This section examines the making of an official anti-communist tradition independent to traditional right-wing anti-communism, and the adoption of the National Security Doctrine by the ruling party. Along with developmentalist policies, the formation of a national security apparatus and the introduction of counterinsurgency as a state policy became the cornerstones of the Mexican Cold War.

From the late nineteenth century through the 1910s, the Mexican liberal state had taken measures against socialists, anarchists, and communist groups. But the anti-communism mindset that permeated within the ruling class began to develop during the late 1920s, parallel to the formation of the de facto party-state regime.[95] As Jocelyn Olcott observes, "a year after the creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), and during the Maximato… the governing regime's control over postrevolutionary society remained incomplete, particularly in areas far removed from Mexico City."[96] Therefore, the PNR managed to repress competing revolutionary programs in those areas. In 1929, exactly ten years after the foundation of the

---

[94] Giorgio Agamben reflected on the concept of bare life (*nuda vita*) as the human life that being excluded to the rule of law is included in the political space at will of the sovereign. Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[95] For the history of the repression to the left see Carlos Illades, *El futuro es nuestro. Historia de la izquierda en México* (Mexico City: Océano, 2018) and Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

[96] Jocelyn Olcott, "Mueras y matanza. Spectacles of Terror and Violence in Postrevolutionary Mexico", in *A century of Revolution. Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence During Latin America's Long Cold War*, Greg Grandin and Gilbert Joseph, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 62-87.

Mexican Communist Party (PCM), the Mexican government launched the first widespread persecution of communists, which lasted until 1934. Although authorities employed terror methods—as in the case of the Comarca Lagunera, Coahuila that Olcott reconstructed—their motivation and tactics were more pragmatic than ideological.

The relationship between the administrations of Cárdenas (1936-1940) and Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) and the left-wing forces had ebbs and flows, although the WWII context brought about an alliance between the communists and the government, as the PCM followed the popular front policy adhered by the Communist International (COMINTERN). Nevertheless, the Cold War created the breeding ground for the consolidation of anti-communism as an ideology within the ruling party. While President Ávila Camacho launched a persecution against leftist unionism, the Miguel Alemán administration (1946-1952) blended elements of a U.S.-inspired anti-communism with Mexico's own anti-Red tradition that began back in 1929. The PCM was banned in 1951 accordingly.

The fact that president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) was a vocal advocate of the international red conspiracy theory has overshadowed the fact that presidents Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958) and López Mateos (1958-1964) were also staunch anti-communists. They established a tradition of dealing with any labor, student or peasant movement as national security threats that deserved the army's intervention. For instance, in 1956 the Ruiz Cortines administration ordered the illegal military occupation of dormitories at the *Instituto Politécnico Nacional* to clamp down on students striking for better education and living conditions. This

episode marked both the birth of the new student left and the beginning of the anti-subversive struggle from the military point of view.[97]

During the 1959 railroad movement, the López Mateos administration fired ten thousand strikers and used the military to arrest and imprison around eight hundred, charging them with the crime of "social dissolution," defined by the articles 145 and 145 *bis* of the federal penal code."[98] That law, originally enacted in 1941 to protect the country against fascism during WWII, was applied against strikes and public manifestations until 1970.[99] Notwithstanding that most soldiers had a humble background, they saw demonstrators not as civilians protesting for legitimate reasons, but as dangerous red agitators attempting to subvert the social order.

The national security doctrine adopted by the Mexican government in the late 1950s was synonymous to anti-communist fight because after the slaughter of synarchist militants in 1946, no right-wing movement was ever treated with the same terror methods utilized against the left. Yet, the *priísta* anti-communism took distance from both far-right and moderate right-wing factions, and neither did it fall into the excesses that McCarthyism embodied. In fact, it was confusing for observers of the Mexican political reality that groups affiliated to the PRI claimed to be Marxists or socialists, that Marxist literature was sold at bookstores, and that the Mexican

---

[97] Pensado, "The rise of a 'National Student Problem' in 1956," in Gillingham & Smith, *Dictablanda*, 360-378 and Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture during the Long Sixties* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[98] All railroad leaders spent ten years in the Lecumberri prison, becoming the political prisoners with the longest record in jail. For a history of the railroad movement see Robert F. Alegre, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico: Gender, Class, and Memory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

[99] The article 145 was revised in 1950 and added with the article 1945 bis. Evelyn P. Stevens, "Legality and Extra-Legality in Mexico," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12, no. 1, (January 1970): 62-75.

government did not try to outlaw the teaching of Marxism at the college level.[100] The PRI kept these particularities in order to project a populist image of inclusiveness.

Jaramillismo was the most emblematic armed movement prior to the rise of socialist guerrilla groups. Through the 1940s, in the southern state of Morelos, peasant leader Rubén Jaramillo launched a guerrilla-style movement against what he deemed the betrayal of the goals of the revolution by the PRI. The brutal massacre of Rubén Jaramillo and his family by the military in 1962, under the López Mateos administration, represented a turning point in the treatment of opponents, given that the peasant leader was killed despite being the recipient of a federal amnesty.[101] This episode is considered to be the symbolic beginning of the Mexican dirty war. The mixture of legal and illegal procedures by the government outraged the opposition, who no longer understood the regime's rules. State's responses to social upheaval became more unpredictable and triggered fear and anxiety, thus contributing to the climate of polarization and radicalization that would prevail during the 1960s.

There were five milestones in the development of Mexico's brand of anti-communism: the creation of a national security apparatus intended to spy, trace, and crack down opponents to the de facto one party-state; state control over private and public media oriented to conceal state wrongdoings and smear leftist opposition; the alliance between Mexican and U.S. intelligence

---

[100] Scholars like Friedrich Katz had the impression that the Mexican government was less authoritarian than others in the region based on those indicators. Katz, "La guerra fría en América Latina," in *Espejos de la guerra fría: México, América Central y el Caribe* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa-SRE-CIESAS, 2004, 25-26.

[101] Jaramillismo drew ideas from a variety of sources from Cardenism to socialism, and even Methodist tenets. Jaramillistas did not fight for land and community autonomy as the Zapatistas but sought state support to make the peasant economy viable in face of a rapid modernization. They were the only Mexican social movement that combined both civil and armed struggles over the years. See Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) and Gladys McCormick, *The Logic of Compromise in Mexico. How the Countryside was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

services; the establishment of a counterinsurgency infrastructure; and the participation of security forces—the national security apparatus, the military, and law enforcement institutions—in the drug trade in order to fund the anti-communist fight and reward special agents for "saving the homeland."[102]

The cornerstone of the national security apparatus was the Federal Security Directorate (DFS) created in 1947, the same year that the U.S. government officially adopted the national security doctrine and established the CIA.[103] The DFS initially depended on the presidential office and swiftly became one of the most powerful agencies in the country, a position that enabled it to take part in illegal activities from its inception. One of the promoters of the DFS's creation was Colonel Carlos I. Serrano, a senator for the Federal District (D.F.) and one of the chief advisors for President Alemán. A State Department report dated 1947 by Assistant Military Attaché Maurice C. Holden, listed Serrano, DFS Director Marcelino Inurreta, and Deputy Director Lt. Col. Manuel Mayoral García as actors in the drug trade.[104] Mayoral allegedly controlled marijuana trafficking in Mexico City, and Serrano smuggled opiates into the United

---

[102] My research tackles all these issues except for state-controlled media. There are several ground-breaking works about the media during the *priísta* regime: Benjamin T. Smith, *The Mexican Press and Civil Society, 1940-1976. Stories from the Newsroom, Stories from the Street* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Paul Gillingham, Michael Lettieri, & Benjamin T. Smith, eds. *Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018); Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía, *La conspiración del 68: así se fraguó la matanza* (Mexico City: Debate, 2018); Jacinto Rodríguez, *La otra guerra secreta. Los archivos prohibidos de la prensa y el poder* (Mexico City: Océano, 2007), and Vanessa Freije, "Journalists, Scandal, and the Unraveling of One-Party Rule in Mexico, 1960-1988" (PhD Diss., Duke University, 2015).

[103] For the history of intelligence services see Aguayo, *La charola*; Aaron Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

[104] NARA, "U.S. State Department Confidential Report No. 4543 of the Assistant Military Attaché on the National Security Police of Mexico," 7 September 1947, Record Group 59, 812.105/9-447, cited by P. D. Scott, "Drugs, Anti-communism," 178-179. Aguayo interviewed former DFS agents who denied Inurreta's involvement in drug trafficking but agreed that it would have been impossible for him to disregard what his subalterns did.

States.[105] As Aguayo underscored, the CIA chose the DFS as its preferred intelligence service in Mexico even though it acknowledged the criminal track record of some of its agents.[106]

According to Luis Astorga, with the creation of the DFS "a structural linkage was instituted between the ruling political class and the drug traffickers. […] on the one hand, it ensured that part of the profits was levied in exchange for protection; on the other, it served as a mechanism for containing violence and any political temptation on the part of the traffickers."[107] It should be taken into account that the situation of the drug trade during the late 1940s was substantially different to the following decades—a teleological narrative then must be avoided. Before the 1970s, the smuggling of narcotics was an activity focalized in the Golden Triangle and other marginal regions in the countryside where the DFS had no presence, and drug gangs were rather disorganized and dispersed. Hence, overseeing drug traffickers could not have been a central activity for the DFS during its first years.

From the late 1950s onward, both the executive and the DFS intensified their collaboration with the CIA.[108] Philip Agee, a CIA whistle blower, revealed for the first time the close connection between the agency and the Mexican ruling party in his book, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (1975). Agee had worked twelve years for the CIA (1957-1969), for the most part in

---

[105] Authorities of the Department of the Treasury also pointed to Serrano as an informal "collector of private revenue" for president Alemán. Astorga made a detailed account of U.S. allegations against Serrano in Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 390-405.

[106] Aguayo, *La charola*, 74-75. The agencies that the CIA discarded as chief collaborators because of their shortcomings were the Second Section of the Army Staff; the secret service of Mexico City's Police; the investigation units of both Mexico City's Attorney and the Attorney General of Mexico; and the General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations (DGIPS).

[107] Luis Astorga, "The Limits of Anti-drug Policy in Mexico," *International Social Science Journal*, 53, 169 (2001): 428.

[108] For an analysis of how the CIA also penetrated the Mexican cultural field, particularly the intelligentsia, see Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom. The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Ecuador and Uruguay. In 1967, he was commissioned to the Mexico City Station to perform undercover tasks in regard to the forthcoming Olympic Games. Agee bore witness to the turbulent year of 1968 and the CIA's intervention in the student conflict.[109] A classified book review of Agee's diary written by a CIA anonymous agent largely confirmed his revelations.[110]

The release of the JFK assassination records in 1992 included part of the three volume history of the Mexico City Station (1947-1969), a source that confirms and expands Agee's information.[111] Finally, journalist Jefferson Morley wrote a biography about the Mexico City Station Chief from 1956 to 1969 entitled, *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA* (2008), where he explored the unusual personal relationship between Scott and presidents López Mateos (1958-1964) and Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970). Certainly, those were the glory years of the Mexico City Station, when besides the total cooperation of Mexican authorities, it had fifty U.S. agents and two hundred national Mexicans working as agents and informants. The U.S. government recognized it as one of the best stations worldwide.[112]

---

[109] Agee described in his diary that he became a defector because during his years in Latin America he witnessed a great deal of injustice, poverty, and repression aimed at preserving the privileges of a small economic elite, thereby, he underwent a slowly personal conversion into socialism. As a CIA spy, he also realized that no one in the socialist bloc was even close to have the financial resources and technological advancement as the United States, and such asymmetry of power inspired him to side with the weak. Agee is the only known CIA defector who worked in Mexico.

[110] "Book review of 'Inside the Company: CIA Diary' by Philip Agee," *Studies in Intelligence* 19, no. 2 (Summer, 1975): 35–38, cited by Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War. Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 27. Journalist Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía found out that in 1975, the Echeverría administration sabotaged the release of Agee's book in Spanish by the Grijalbo press. When the book finally came out in 1978 by Laia Paperback, the parts that referred to Echeverría as a CIA asset had been censored. Rodríguez, *La otra Guerra secreta,* 383-400; Rodríguez, "Esas horas con Philip Agee", *Emeequis,* January 22, 2008, 49-53.

[111] Unfortunately, the additional release of JFK records in 2017-18 did not included the three volumes. NARA, The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection, CIA, Anna Goodpasture, "Mexico City Station History," November 16, 1978, record number 104-10414-10124, https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/2018/104-10414-10124.pdf, accessed December 26, 2018.

[112] Goodpasture, "Mexico City Station History;" Sergio Aguayo, *El '68. Los estudiantes, el presidente y la CIA* (Mexico City: Gandhi, 2018), Kindle edition.

The mentioned sources constitute compelling evidence about the substantial meddling of the CIA in Mexico's domestic affairs from 1958 to 1970—a period where even the CIA dominated the U.S.-Mexico relation, as opposed to the State Department. The evidence also shows that the celebrated Mexican foreign policy of non-interventionism regularly served U.S. purposes. The López Mateos administration maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba, but also enabled the CIA to conduct extensive surveillance at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City—the only Cuban diplomatic mission in Latin America—and carry out operations against the island from Mexican territory.[113]

Mexico had diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. and other members of the Soviet Bloc, and in 1972 it established relations with the People's Republic of China. Despite the official discourse of neutrality towards socialist countries, the DFS wiretapped their embassies in Mexico City and allowed the CIA to do the same. Mexico also became a haven for Central and Southern American left-wing exiles, but this policy had notable differences with the asylum tradition established by President Cárdenas, which was driven by humanitarian purposes. The DFS spied on exiles, tracked their links to leftist organizations, and shared that information with the CIA, thus compromising exiles' safety.[114]

---

[113] Agee, *Inside the Company*, 459-60. As Keller shows, despite close cooperation there were also moments of great tension between Mexico and the United States, like in 1961, when the Kennedy administration asked López Mateos to cut off relations with Cuba and the Mexican president "secretly adjusted some aspects of his policy towards Castro while publicly refusing to break relations." Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, 137.

[114] The DFS archive contains the files of each and every exile who entered the country, although it clearly focused on high-profile exiles and the ones who continued with political activities.

Mexico also sought to play a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement, even though the U.S. government had co-opted part of its national security apparatus.[115] While Mexico became an epicenter of espionage and a hub of the Global Cold War, the ruling party maneuvered this strategic position to its own benefit, dismissing the opportunity to transform the country into a genuine non-aligned power center.

Top-level officials like López Mateos, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Luis Echeverría Álvarez, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, Miguel Nazar Haro, and other members of the Mexican intelligence community participated in the LITEMPO project that began in 1960 and offered operation support and security backstopping for the Mexico City station.[116] At least fourteen Mexican officials used the cryptonym LITEMPO and collaborated with the project's chief agent, George Munro, code-named LIMEW. Notwithstanding their hierarchy, presidents López Mateos and Díaz Ordaz also acted as CIA assets and received payments for their cooperation.[117] Nevertheless, there was probably an interstice of mutual distrust, which propelled the CIA to undertake Operation LICOBRA to penetrate the PRI and the Mexican government.[118]

It has not been clarified yet whether Echeverría remained a CIA asset once he became president (1970-1976) or merely allowed the continuation of CIA operations in Mexico. In 1975, the U.S. State Department curtailed Echeverría's aspirations to become Secretary-General of the

---

[115] For Mexico's early engagement with the Non-Aligned movement see Vanni Pettinà, "Global Horizons: Mexico, the Third World, and the Non-Aligned Movement at the Time of the 1961 Belgrade Conference," *The International History Review* 38, no. 4, (December 2015): 741-764.

[116] Goodpasture, "Mexico City Station History." LITEMPO included operations of photographic surveillance, wiretapping, infiltration, and recruitment.

[117] Morley, *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 92.

[118] Agee, *Inside the Company*, 534.

United Nations in 1975 by leaking to the U.N. Security Council that he had been a CIA asset, but the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Daniel Moynihan did not specify the time of such collaboration.[119] There are clues to vindicate that Echeverría was no longer a CIA asset after he took office. Agee noticed that the Mexico City station had a constant turnover of chiefs during the Echeverría term in contrast to the Scott era, which suggested a distant relation between the president and the station.[120]

Furthermore, in early 1971, when the Mexican government discovered that a guerrilla group had received training in North Korea, it expelled five Soviet diplomats. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Emilio Rabasa conveyed to President Nixon, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and U.S. Ambassador Robert McBride that the actions by the Mexican government were guided by a conviction that the establishment of communism in Mexico would not be allowed; Mexico would take care of itself and, as long as Echeverría was president, the United States should not be concerned with a communist threat in its southern flank.[121]

The tone of the message was ambiguous because on the one hand, it reasserted Mexico's capacity to curb domestic communism on its own, on the other hand, it seems that Echeverría was asking for permission to exert such autonomy. In any case, Echeverría assumed that by fighting communism with counterinsurgency standards, the U.S. government would not intervene in Mexico's domestic and foreign policies. So far, no source has identified presidents

---

[119] Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda, "Recibió dinero para espiarnos," *Proceso*, May 5, 1979, https://www.proceso.com.mx/125998/recibio-dinero-para-espiarnos, accessed December 26, 2018. Confidential memos revealed that the U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was behind the strategy to block Echeverría's intent. Public Library of U.S. Diplomacy, Department of State, "President Echeverría's U.N. Secretary General Aspirations," March 11, 1976, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976STATE059343_b.html, accessed December 26, 2018.

[120] Agee, *Inside the Company*, 594.

[121] Gerardo Lissardy, "Con Nixon, el 'romance'", *Proceso*, no. 1316, January 20, 2002, p. 8.

José López Portillo (1976-1982) and Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) as CIA assets, but during their respective terms the CIA increased its presence in Mexican territory.

During the 1960s, the emergence of both social and armed movements caused an early adoption of the counterinsurgency doctrine. Although the latter was developed in the specific context of national liberation revolutions in Asia and Africa and the ensuing collapse of European empires, the ruling party embraced it as a logical consequence of its anti-communist mindset and the CIA urge. The Mexican state not only welcomed the U.S. school of counterinsurgency, but also drew from anti-subversive models across the world.

The concept of counterinsurgency (COIN) is often mistakenly applied to any struggle against insurgents neglecting that, as a doctrine, it was a specific innovation of the Cold War military theory that emerged after Maoism introduced a new paradigm of insurgency warfare in the l940s.[122] COIN was intended to defeat insurgency along with its social base but, above all, it sought to address its root causes in order to prevent future resurgences. A political party like the PRI, which protected its one one-party rule at any cost, was fascinated with the COIN doctrine and made it one of the pillars of the regime along with corporatism, clientelism, and state-controlled media.[123]

Mexican authorities were not submissive followers of U.S. guidelines, but closely cooperated with the United States because thwarting communism was a national priority. Mexico also used its seemingly progressive and independent foreign policy as part of its own anti-communist agenda. Although the Mexican government was more anti-communist than

---

[122] About the British and French schools of counterinsurgency see David French, *The British Way in Counterinsurgency 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Marie-Monique Robin, *Escuadrones de la muerte. La escuela francesa* (Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 2004).

[123] Chapter five will explore how security forces welcomed the introduction of the COIN doctrine to Mexico.

nationalist, it cannot be overlooked that the ruling party merged domestic political traditions with global trends. In other words, the PRI "mexicanized" anti-communism, the national security doctrine, and counterinsurgency. This process of "nationalization," however, was instrumental and obeyed to the PRI's agenda rather to an effort of building an official state ideology, given the cover features of counterinsurgency.

The Birth of the Socialist Armed Movement in the Sierra Tarahumara

"They wanted land, so give them land until they are sick of it…!" Declaration attributed to Gral. Práxedes Giner Durán, governor of Chihuahua, as Madera rebels were tossed into a mass grave.

By mid-twentieth century, lumber market demand accelerated the encroachment of ejidos and smallholder lands in the forests of the Sierra Madre, reaching similar proportions to the pre-revolutionary times. Some Chihuahuan *latifundista* families of the old regime like Terrazas and Creel preserved their privileged position, but also appeared a new generation of wealthy families favored by the Alemán administration with a variety of businesses throughout the country, like the Vallina, Almeida, Iturbide, Trouyet, Baillères, Guerrero, Castro, and Wisbrun.

Under the leadership of the Vallina, a handful of entrepreneurs formed the Chihuahua Group, which became one of the wealthiest in Mexico along with the Monterrey Group. They amassed fortunes in a short time by profiting from the import substitution policy.[124] In 1952, Vallina's group bought the Sierra Madre Land and Lumber Company, a concession of 600,000 hectares, and renamed it *Bosques de Chihuahua*.[125] Their headquarters were in Madera, the most

---

[124] For the history of the Chihuahua Group see Leonor Ludlow, *Grandes financieros Mexicanos* (Mexico City: LID, 2015); Miguel Ángel Vázquez Ruiz, "Grupos económicos en el norte de México," Problemas del Desarrollo. *Revista Latinoamericana de Economía* 35, no. 137 (April-June 2004): 95-115.

[125] William Greene owned the lumber company, along with the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company and the Northwestern railroads, but his emporium collapsed one year after the Cananea strike and his holdings were sold to U.S. investors. They formed the Northwestern Railway Company and the Madera Company Limited, accumulating

important sawmill in the Alta Sierra Tarahumara since its foundation as a logging town in 1906.[126]The Chihuahua Group also purchased the Northwest Railway company in 1946, but sold it in 1952 to the Mexican government for a much higher price than its original cost. The government finished the Chihuahua-Pacific railway, *El Chepe*, in 1961, which opened a route from Los Mochis, Sinaloa to Chihuahua City by crossing the highlands.[127] The railway proved fundamental to open the SMO to a wide range of actors, like merchants, missionaries from different religions, tourists, social activists, guerrillas, and drug traffickers.

Bosques de Chihuahua sold land to cattle ranchers, who formed a new generation of local caciques. In 1956, Florentino Ibarra, Tomás Vega, Robert Schneider, and Alejandro Prieto created the *Cuatro amigos* (Four Friends) society, a 250,000-hectare cattle ranch company. Some of the plots they exploited used to belong to Pima and mestizo *ejidatarios* and other smallholders, who unsuccessfully demanded the return of their lands by legal means. The growing tension between dispossessed peasants and caciques would not have a peaceful solution because the Mexican state failed to become a mediator. The governors of Chihuahua from 1956 to 1974, Teófilo Borunda, Práxedes Giner Durán, and Oscar Flores Sánchez were staunch anti-communists and defenders of the interests of both urban and rural elites and proved reluctant to negotiate with the opposition.

---

more than one million hectares. Another outstanding landholding was the Hacienda Babícora owned by the family of U.S. newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst from 1887 to 1954. Those large landholdings were disputed by peasants before and after the revolution. U.S. investors sold both their railroad and lumber concessions to Eloy Vallina in 1946. Mark Wasserman, *Pesos and Politics: Business, Elites, Foreigners, and Government in Mexico, 1854-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[126] Jesús Vargas, *Madera Rebelde*, 81-88. See also Miguel Angel Parra Orozco, *Oro Verde: Madera, Vida de una Región Chihuahuense* (Chihuahua: n.p., 1995).

[127] Francisco R. Almada, El *ferrocarril de Chihuahua al Pacífico* (Mexico City: Editorial Libros de México, 1971).

Through the 1950s and 1960s, a series of protest erupted by ejidatarios, laborers, and landless peasants in the northwest, and Chihuahua became again the hub of unrest. Peasants of the Alta Tarahumara, affected by the *Cuatro Amigos* society, joined the movement. The PPS' General Union of Mexican Workers and Peasants (UGOCM) organized protesters to carry out rallies, strikes, sit-ins, land invasions, and cross-country marches. As the movement experienced repression and the disregarding of its demands, some leaders broke with the PPS and opted for the armed struggle.[128]

In 1964, an alliance of students, teachers, and peasants resulted in the foundation of the *Grupo Popular Guerrillero* (Popular Guerrilla Group, GPG) in the highlands (see appendix 1, map 4). The new armed challenge had roots in a long history of peasant violence in the SMO. A handful of northwestern families participated in the GPG's collaboration networks, namely the Gaytán, Scobell, Gámiz, Gómez, and Ornelas. The reconstruction of their history would be an essential work to understand the role of family bonds in the organization of underground life, in which women were key actors.[129]

Rubén Jaramillo had been the last popular leader who attempted to fix the course of the revolution through violent means. In contrast, the GPG was a socialist guerrilla movement that intended to ignite a new revolution guided by the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism. Marco Bellingeri coined the term "armed agrarianism" to explain the post-revolutionary wave of rural violence in Chihuahua, especially the transition from the old model of a peasant armed

---

[128] Elizabeth Henson, "The 1965 Agrarian Revolt in Madera, Chihuahua", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History,* *http://latinamericanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-381?rskey=Vysfpf&result=14*, accessed April 30, 2017.

[129] The novel by Carlos Montemayor, *Las mujeres del alba* (2010), focused on the female relatives and collaborators of guerrillas.

force based on self-defense tactics to a modern guerrilla pursuing a regime change.[130] Thus, the GPG was the pioneer of the revolutionary New Left and the socialist armed movement.

When members of the semi-rural educated elite decided to take up arms, they were not imitating foreign ideologies as the Mexican government claimed. *Normalista* students and teachers had first-hand knowledge of the causes of extreme peasant poverty and became involved in social struggles after concluding that the PRI's developmental model served U.S. imperialist interests and would never bring social justice to the downtrodden.[131] Also, as Aleida García proposed, *normalistas* became organic intellectuals and mediators between peasants and the state as a matter of class solidarity, given their own peasant background.[132]

A group of six documents written by Arturo Gámiz in early 1965, known as *Resolutions of the Second Encounter in the Sierra "Heraclio Bernal,"* revealed that systematic repression by both caciques and the state had convinced activists that traditional political channels had been exhausted. The *Resolution's* adopted an orthodox interpretation of Marxist-Leninist tenets to justify armed struggle as the only path to revolution. They also sustained that displays of

---

[130] While I agree with Bellingeri on the innovation represented by the GPG, I do not subscribe the term of "armed agrarianism" because it can be applied to an array of experiences after the post-revolutionary period besides the socialist armed struggle. Furthermore, this concept might be misleading as it suggests a contrast with a peaceful or unarmed agrarianism, even though agrarianist movements usually employed direct action tactics and other radical measures. Marco Bellingeri. *Del agrarismo armado a la guerra de los pobres: Ensayos de guerrilla rural en el México contemporáneo, 1940-1974* (Mexico City: Ediciones Casa Juan Pablos/Secretaría de Cultura de la Ciudad de México, 2003), 69-102.

[131] The *normales rurales* (rural teacher-training schools) were boarding schools for the sons and daugters of peasants, and student-teachers were called *normalistas*. The model of normal schools dated back to the 1920s and meant to prepare socially conscious educators to teach in remote areas of the countryside and facilitate state's projects. In Chihuahua, students from the normal schools of Salaices and Saucillo became guerrilla supporters. Tanalís Padilla, "'Latent Sites of Agitation': *Normalistas Rurales* and Chihuahua's Agrarian Struggle in the 1960s", in *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies,* Jaime Pensado and Enrique Ochoa, eds. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 53-54.

[132] Aleida García Aguirre, *La revolución que llegaría: Experiencias de solidaridad y redes de maestros y normalistas en el movimiento campesino y la guerrilla moderna en Chihuahua, 1960–1968* (Mexico City: n.p., 2015).

guerrilla power would cause the masses to follow the revolutionary vanguard—an idea clearly inspired by Ernesto Guevara's *foco* theory.[133]

Elizabeth Henson criticized the adoption of *foquismo* for considering that it fostered the formation of an aspiring revolutionary vanguard disconnected of the unarmed peasant movement, which was doomed to fail because of its isolation.[134] Certainly, the first military actions by the GPG from 1964 to 1965, like the execution of caciques, the destruction of private property, and the storming of the rural police's headquarters in Mineral de Dolores, made clear that the masses would not follow the guerrilla movement, even if they sympathized with their leaders.[135]

A combination of guerrillas' strategic mistakes and counterinsurgency campaigns thwarted both the armed struggle and the peasant movement. On September 23, 1965, the GPG assaulted the makeshift military barracks in Madera, which consisted of buildings owned by *Bosques de Chihuahua*. The assault proved a disaster, the army had six casualties and the GPG lost eight members out of thirteen, including its leaders Arturo Gámiz and Pablo Gómez. The commander of the Fifth Military Zone, Tiburcio Garza Zamora, took control over the Madera municipality and SEDENA sent four planes to overfly the region. The Parachute Fusiliers Brigade (BFP), commanded by Col. José Hernández Toledo, was also sent to trace fugitives in

---

[133] I discuss Guevara's *foco* theory in chapter two. In the production of the "Resolutions" might have intervened other intellectuals in the group, like Oscar González Eguiarte. *Resoluciones del Segundo Encuentro en la Sierra "Heraclio Bernal"* (Chihuahua: Línea Revolucionaria, 1965), http://www.madera1965.com.mx/res1.html, accessed December 5th, 2016.

[134] Oddly enough, guerrillas were not against the continuation of mass struggle and participation in elections. E. Henson, "Madera 1965: Primeros Vientos," in Calderón and Cedillo, *Challenging,* 19-39.

[135] The most relevant work about the history of the GPG is by Elizabeth Henson, *Agrarian Revolt in the Sierra of Chihuahua, 1959-1965* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2019). See also Alberto López Limón, "Los mártires de Madera, rebeldía en el estado de Chihuahua, México," in *El rebelde contemporáneo en el Circuncaribe: imágenes y representaciones*, ed. Enrique Camacho Navaro (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006).

the highlands, but the troops only made indiscriminate detentions of peasants, failing to capture any rebel.[136]

Chihuahua's guerrilla movement was largely overlooked, but as new sources emerged in the early twenty-first century, scholars assessed it as a key episode in the Mexican Cold War.[137] Virtually all the scholarly works about the GPG have been produced in the last twenty years and have focused on the conversion of a small fraction of the agrarianist movement into a guerrilla force. No work explores in depth the reasons behind the persistence of the armed struggle in Chihuahua despite the failure of Madera.

I sustain that guerrillas carried on not only because of the pervasiveness of land dispossession and cacique violence, but also because of the surge of state repression after the 1965 assault. Moreover, post-Madera guerrillas felt a moral commitment with their so-called *martyrs* to continue their struggle. Survivors went underground and reorganized in adverse conditions, given their lost connection to peasant movement and the lack of channels to forge relationships with international guerrilla organizations or socialist governments. Post-Madera guerrillas have not been credited enough for making possible the continuation and expansion of the armed struggle in the country under such circumstances.

---

[136] Henson, *Primeros Vientos*, 33-35. For allegations about a possible military infiltration to the GPG prior to the assault, see López Limón, "Los mártires de Madera."

[137] This transformation first occurred in the literary field. Public intellectual and writer Carlos Montemayor triggered the remembrance of the GPG and the dirty war through his novels *Guerra en El Paraíso* (*War in The Paradise,* 1997), *Las armas del alba* (*The Weapons of Sunrise*, 2003), *La Fuga* (*The Escape*, 2007), and *Las mujeres del alba* (*The Women of Sunrise*, 2010). The memorialization of Madera in the public sphere included the first feature film about the GPG, *Las armas* (The Weapons, 2013) by José Luis Urquieta, and the 2015 decree by the largely conservative Congress of Chihuahua to engrave in golden letters the phrase *Martyrs of Madera, 1965* on the wall of honor in the congress building. A handful of families have organized an annual tribute in the graves of the Madera's fallen since the late 1960s; it was a secret ritual before 2000 and then became widely publicized. There are also ejidos, schools, and streets named after Arturo Gámiz and the martyrs of Madera.

The Díaz Ordaz administration realized that the Alta Sierra Tarahumara could be on the verge of a serious conflict, and in 1966 it sent Lázaro Cárdenas—an overt sympathizer of the Cuban Revolution—to Chihuahua as an intermediary to talk to local and state authorities and leaders of an array of social movements, including the peasant leaders of Madera.[138] Yet, guerrillas persisted with their armed challenge even after Díaz Ordaz ordered the distribution of more than 53,000 hectares to the Huizopa Ejido in Madera in July, 1966.[139] It is important to underscore that not all GPG's heirs stuck to weapons. Since the early 1970s, the semi-legal Committee for Popular Defense, which incorporated former guerrilla sympathizers, fought for housing for squatters and against human rights abuses in Chihuahua.

The Forgotten 1968 Guerrilla Movement

Before the GPG became a matter of academic interest, it was customarily regarded as an isolated event, far distant from the power centers that purportedly defined national history. In addition, the socialist armed movement of the 1970s was seen as a byproduct of both the Cuban Revolution and public outrage after the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre.[140] This is a flawed interpretation, as it overlooks the importance the armed struggle in Chihuahua contributed to the rise of radicalism within the national student movement in the late 1960s. Also, the suppression

---

[138] Hugo Esteve Díaz, *Amargo lugar sin nombre. Crónica del movimiento armado socialista en México (1960-1990)* (Guadalajara, Jal.: La casa del Mago, 2013), 97.

[139] Henson mentioned the case of the ejido Belisario Domínguez, Madera that was referred to in the news, but the only ejido with that name in the agrarian records (RAN) belongs to the namesake municipality and received 4,000 hectares of land in 1971. Henson, *Primeros Vientos*, 19 and Padrón e Historia de Núcleos Agrarios, http://www.ran.gob.mx/ran/index.php/sistemas-de-consulta/phina, accessed September 10, 2017.

[140] Jorge Castañeda, *La utopía desarmada* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1994). The 1968 student movement in Mexico City has been the most studied topic of Cold War Mexico, and this scholarship usually depicts the armed struggle as a consequence of the Tlatelolco massacre.

of the GPG represented the first implementation of the counterinsurgency doctrine in the country.

Students interested in opposition politics read the magazines *Sucesos para Todos*, *Política*, and *Por Qué*?, which contained articles about the guerrillas in Chihuahua and Guerrero. National student networks, like the National Center of Democratic Students (CNED) and the Federation of Socialist Peasant Students of Mexico (FECSM)—both linked to the PCM—served as platforms to exchange information about social struggles and discuss new ideas, like *foquism*o.[141] Paradoxically, while the PCM symbolized the Old Left, its student and youth networks became important spaces in the formation of the New Left.

The Cuban Revolution had a significant impact on the Mexican Left, but it did not cause the emergence of armed movements.[142] Nor was the Madera assault an imitation of the attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953, as Donald Hodges and Ross Gandy sustained.[143] Two survivors of the Madera assault, Florencio Hernández and Francisco Ornelas, have rejected claims implying that they were mimicking the Cubans, as the latter did not invent the tactic of assaulting military barracks.[144]

As several scholars have demonstrated, the multifarious causes of the armed struggle in Mexico were related to the authoritarian regime; systematic repression of unarmed social

---

[141] Carla Villanueva, "'For the Liberation of Exploited Youth': Campesino-Students, the FECSM, and Mexican Student Politics in the 1960s" in *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies,* Pensado & Ochoa, eds., 73-91.

[142] For the influence of the Cuban Revolution in Mexico see Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*.

[143] Donald Hodges & Ross Gandy, *Mexico, the End of the Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 89.

[144] In their testimonies, Hernández and Ornelas do not even mention the Cuban Revolution. Raúl Florencio Hernández Lugo, *El asalto al cuartel de Madera. Chihuahua, 23 de septiembre de 1965* (Mexico City: Centro de Derechos Humanos Yaxkin, 2003), and Francisco Ornelas, *Sueños de Libertad* (Chihuahua: n. p., 2005).

movements; structural violence in the countryside; cultural changes that marked the global sixties; the influence of global left-wing ideologies like Maoism, Vietnamese-Marxism, Castro-Guevarism, revolutionary nationalism, Liberation Theology, and the home-grown revolutionary tradition.[145]

Traditional scholarship about the 1968 have disregarded the simultaneity between the armed struggle in Chihuahua and Guerrero and the student movement in Mexico City, but the independent development of revolutionary attempts in those states is a major argument against Mexico City-centered visions.[146] Furthermore, the counterinsurgency activity in the northwestern and southern sierras explains the brutality of the military intervention in Mexico City. For instance, the Fusiliers Parachute Brigade (BGP) who sieged Tlatelolco on October 2nd, had already assaulted unarmed civilians in their search for guerrillas in Chihuahua.

Certainly, the impact of the Tlatelolco massacre cannot be downplayed. Post-1968 activists assessed that the student movement had failed to incorporate common people to the struggle, hence they proposed "going to the people." Thousands of students discontinued their formal education and moved into indigenous or mestizo peasant communities, working-class neighborhoods, and shanty towns, where they gained an ethnographic perspective on extreme

---

[145] See Oikión and García, *Movimientos armados*; Calderón and Cedillo, *Challenging Authoritarianism*; Bellingeri, *Del agrarismo armado*; Alexander Aviña, *Specters of Revolution. Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); and A. Aviña, "Guerrilla Movements and Armed Struggle in Cold War Mexico," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History, http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-387, accessed September 1st, 2017.

[146] Jaime Pensado and Enrique Ochoa discuss the mythologization of the 1968, the visions centered in Mexico City, and the reassessment of the armed experience in "Toward a Provincialization of 1968," in *México Beyond 1968*, Pensado & Ochoa eds., 273-295.

poverty and marginalization that contributed to their radicalization and even incorporation to guerrilla organizations.[147]

The 1968 guerrilla in the Sierra Tarahumara had a similar effect of youth radicalization to Tlatelolco, although it has been misread as an inconsequential short-live experience. Nonetheless, by tracing their convoluted path, I have found out that post-Madera guerrillas were a key factor for the expansion of the armed movement beyond Chihuahua. On October 1965, survivors and sympathizers of the Madera assault created the 23rd of September Movement (M23S). They criticized the tactical errors by the GPG, but never questioned its theoretical premises. Shortly after its creation, the *sierra-llano* (mountain-valley) rivalry caused the M23S to split into two factions, with the student wing preserving the M23S name.[148]

The M23S's leaders, Pedro Uranga, Juan Fernández, and Saúl Ornelas had been members of the GPG but had risen through the ranks without any combat merit. They proposed the organization move into urban areas to organize the armed struggle at a national scale. They did not dismiss *foquismo* but believed that by creating an infrastructure in the town, which concentrated all sort of resources, they could better supply the foci. Thus, they reformulated Guevara's theory, which claimed that peasant communities would do such work. The M23S established a training camp in the state of Hidalgo and two fronts in the states of Chihuahua and

[147] Esteve Díaz, *Amargo lugar sin nombre*, 341. Mexican Maoist groups developed the "popular politics," and became an outstanding expression of the radical yet unarmed left that went "toward the masses." See Jorge Iván Puma Crespo, "Small Groups Don't Win Revolutions. Armed Struggle in the Memory of Maoist Militants of Política Popular," *Latin American Perspectives* 44, no. 6, (November 1, 2017): 140-155.

[148] Bellingeri, *Del agrarismo armado*: 99-108. Ernesto Guevara framed as "sierra-llano rivalry" the conflict of leadership between the guerilla *foco* of the Sierra Maestra and the urban network who participated in the Cuban Revolution. Although Guevara overstated such conflict to promote the *foco* theory, the sierra-llano rivalry had iterations in several guerrilla experiences, including the Chihuahua's case. Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 2.

Guerrero. In January 1967, the secret police discovered the organization and arrested all their members.[149]

In 1967, the M23S's peasant wing founded the Popular Guerrilla Group "Arturo Gámiz" (GPGAG). Although Madera peasant survivors rejected the leadership of the student wing, they elected the well-seasoned urban activist and intellectual Oscar González Eguiarte to be their leader.[150] The GPGAG sought to create a guerrilla in the Sierra Tarahumara to organize the peasantry for a national revolution, a project that resembled Villa's *División del Norte*, but with clearer political goals. The GPGAG believed that the revolution would begin in the countryside and would expand to towns, similar to the Chinese and Cuban cases (see appendix 1, map 4).

The GPGAG recruited some Rarámuri and Pima followers, but it failed to garner broader support by indigenous communities. González Eguiarte did not disregard the importance of the cities and recruited former members of the Mexican Communist Youth (JCM) to create an urban support network in Chihuahua. However, beyond this small group of peasant and student activists, the GPGAG was incapable of connecting to any social movement.

From 1966 to 1968, the GPGAG launched several attacks against the army and landowners in the Alta Sierra Tarahumara. On July 20, 1968, guerrillas burned down a sawmill belonging to the *Maderas de Tutuaca* company, which had exploited the land of the Tomóchic

---

[149] "Movimiento 23 de septiembre. *Informe de la Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) sobre la detención de los miembros de un movimiento guerrillero originado en Chihuahua en los años sesentas (documento fechado el 26 de enero de 1967)"*, *Nexos*, no. 246, June 1st, 1998: 10.

[150] Miguel Topete, ed. *Ayer, en la mañana clara. Salvador Gaytán y el 23 de septiembre de 1965* (Guadalajara: La Casa del Mago, 2012), 93. Oscar González Eguiarte (Saucillo, Chihuahua, 1945-Tesopaco, Sonora, 1968) is one of the lesser known Chihuahua's guerrilla leaders despite his relevance. He became member of the Socialist Youth and studied Economy at the UNAM. However, he dropped school to become a full-time activist. He was representative of the UGOCM and responsible of the urban networks of the GPG. Jesús Vargas Valdés, "El Grupo Popular Guerrillero 'Arturo Gámiz'," *Magazine*, *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, May 6, 2018, 4E; Nithia Castorena-Sáenz, "El Grupo Popular Guerrillero 'Arturo Gámiz'", https://memoriassubalternas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/nithia-castorena-sc3a1enz1-2015-09-23-gpgag.pdf, accessed December 11, 2017.

ejido located in the municipality of Guerrero. In a manifesto explaining the attack, the GPGAG claimed to be the two-fold heir of the Tomóchic Rebellion and the Madera assault, evoking the symbolic meaning of Tomóchic as the 1910 revolution's forerunner. Oscar González had a cyclical vision about history and conceived his efforts as belonging to an age-long chain of struggles of the wretched against their oppressors that would eventually end in popular victory.[151]

The GPGAG's goals went beyond orchestrating spectacular actions against caciques, loggers, and the military. Oscar González planned to forge a "strategic corridor" between the mountain range of Chihuahua and Sonora, where the guerrilla *foco* could build a peasant support network to prevent security forces from entering into the region, thus forming a liberated zone.[152] However, the GPGAG faced widespread persecution by seven thousand soldiers who took part in the counterinsurgency operations named *Eagle* and *Slip Knot*.

While some locals supported the guerrillas, others denounced them, forcing the GPGAG to flee to the Sierra Baja of Sonora, an area unfamiliar to them. In August 1968, Carlos Armendáriz Ponce perished in a skirmish with the military and Oscar González was wounded in a leg. As the group continued its march, the military killed José Luis Guzmán Villa. Between September 9 and 11, the Judicial Police of Sonora (PJSO) and the 18th Cavalry Regiment led by Colonel Juan Belmonte Aguilar, belonging to the 4th Military Zone, caught and tortured the four remaining guerrillas. Oscar González, Arturo Borboa Estrada, Guadalupe Scobell Gayán, and José Antonio Gaytán Aguirre were put in front of a firing squad on the outskirts of Tesopaco,

---

[151] "Manifiesto a la Opinión Pública", in Minerva Armendáriz Ponce, *Morir de sed junto a la fuente* (Mexico City: Universidad Obrera de México, 2001), 134.

[152] Hugo Esteve, *Amargo lugar sin nombre*, 381; Oscar González Eguiarte, "Diario de campaña" in Juan Fernando Reyes Peláez, *Introducción a la historia de la guerrilla en México 1943-1983* (Torreón: n.p. 2004), 86-96.

Rosario, even though capital punishment was illegal in Mexico. The *fusilamientos* caused a collective shock among villagers, who still today remember the episode vividly.[153]

In 1969, the Díaz Ordaz administration divided 250,000 hectares of the Tutuaca Forest Reserve among eleven peasant communities within the ejidos of Tomóchic, Temósachic, Ocampo, and Guerrero.[154] In both the GPG and the GPGAG cases, the local state failed to serve as a broker and the central state intervened belatedly, after guerrillas proved capable of affecting landowners' interests. Guerrillas were far away from sparking a revolution, but they put limits on caciques' dominion and compelled the state to re-launch land reform. Nonetheless, those measures were insufficient to prevent the re-emergence of armed struggle in the Sierra Tarahumara after the GPGAG's fall. [155]

The Aftermath of Chihuahua's Guerrilla Movement

One year before his execution, on September 6, 1967, Oscar González had met with guerrilla sympathizers in Ciudad Obregón, Sonora to form the guerrilla's political arm, the 23rd of September Group (G23S, sometimes called M23S). The brothers Manuel and Eleazar Gámez Rascón were in charge of the group. Manuel (1946-1974) was born in Tarachi, Arivechi, a small

---

[153] Mario Menéndez, "Las guerrillas de Chihuahua," Por qué?, no. 25, December 20, 1968, 9-13; Ignacio Lagarda, "Cómo murieron en Tesopaco", *InfoCajeme*, September 12, 2007, https://www.infocajeme.com/general/2007/09/como-murieron-en-tesopaco/, accessed October 10, 2017. In her book, *Morir de sed junto a la fuente*, Minerva Armendáriz Ponce included her personal testimony about the involvement of his brother Carlos in the GPGAG, his death in combat, and the executions of the rest of the group. Lagarda conducted interviews with members of the security forces and local witnesses, rendering a different depiction of Tesopaco's events. Testimonies by locals seem to be very contradictory and would deserve further analysis.

[154] "Ampliación y dotación para once comunidades", *El Norte*, Chihuahua, Abril 2nd, 1969, 1; Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, http://www.ran.gob.mx/ran/index.php/sistemas-de-consulta/phina, accessed 10 October 2017.

[155] Echeverría was the president that distributed more hectares of land after Díaz Ordaz, but none of them gave away so much quality land as Cárdenas did it. Dolores Trevizo, *Rural Protest and the Making of Democracy in Mexico 1968-2000* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2011).

village in the Sonoran highlands. He was a mestizo of Apache and European descent, and his family belonged to a generation of rural dwellers who had migrated to the valleys in search of improving their living conditions. Manuel studied Chemical Engineering at the University of Guadalajara, Jalisco, where he met several adherents of the armed struggle.[156]

In 1969, Manuel penned a manuscript titled *By the Light of this History of Battles*, which became the G23S's political program. The essay analyzed how the failure of the 1910 revolution had led to the 1965 assault and also to the emergence of a series of social movements in the 1960s that represented the most serious manifestations of class struggle. Manuel claimed that the 1910 revolution had created a "colonial-bourgeois state," whose destruction could only be achieved through a socialist revolution.[157]

The G23S attempted to overcome the regionalism of its predecessors and broaden its support network by recruiting sympathizers in social movements by students, peasants, laborers, and squatters in the states of Chihuahua, Sonora, and Jalisco. In mid-1971, the G23S merged with the Revolutionary Action Movement (MAR) and changed its name to MAR-23.[158] The MAR was founded in 1966 by a group of Mexican students at the Patrice Lumumba University in the USSR. Around fifty-three of its militants received military training in North Korea and

---

[156] Héctor Delgado, "Recordando Madera, orígenes de la Liga 23 de Septiembre", *Unomásuno,* September 21, 2011: 14.

[157] Jesús Manuel Gámez Rascón, "A la luz de esta historia de batallas", 1969 (unpublished manuscript in author's possession).

[158] Fernando Pineda Ochoa, *En las profundidades del MAR: el oro no llegó de Moscú* (Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés Editores, 2003), 136.

established cells in Chihuahua, Michoacán, Guerrero, Jalisco, and Mexico City with the help of student and family networks.[159]

In March 1971, in the midst of talks with the G23S about the fusion, the MAR experienced a severe blow as security forces uncovered several safe houses. Assuming that the USSR was behind a conspiracy against the Mexican government, President Echeverría immediately expelled five Soviet diplomats.[160] DFS agents tortured prisoners for days and learned about the connection between the MAR and old troublemakers from the Chihuahua highlands.[161] That revelation likely prompted Echeverría to authorize the expropriation of *Bosques de Chihuahua*. On April 16, 1971, the Official Journal of the Federation (DOF) published a presidential decree that granted 256, 611 hectares to 1325 peasants, including some of the Pima nation. They formed a new ejido, El Largo, Madera, which became the largest ejido in Mexico.[162]

Echeverría attended the official land-grant ceremony in Chihuahua on April 17. According to an article published by *El Norte de Chihuahua,* during the event Echeverría held a spontaneous argument with Rafael Vallina, one of the *Bosques de Chihuahua* owners. The president allegedly told him that shareholders had greatly profited from the exploitation of the forest and now had to share its wealth with peasants, who had the right to own land; the age of

---

[159] The MAR was the only Mexican guerrilla movement to have received international support, along with a group of Mexican Maoist who went to China to receive political-military training in the late 1960s.

[160] Pineda, *En las profundidades*, 133.

[161] Pineda, *En las profundidades*; Saúl López de la Torre. *Guerra secretas: memorias de un exguerrillero de los setentas que ahora no puede caminar* (Mexico City: Artefacto, 2005); Salvador Castañeda, *La negación del número. La guerrilla en México 1965-1996, una aproximación crítica* (Mexico City: CONACULTA, 2006).

[162] Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, http://www.ran.gob.mx/ran/index.php/sistemas-de-consulta/phina, accessed 10 October 2017.

logging was over and a change was necessary through a modern mindset oriented by a social purpose; the conflict had already spilled a great deal of blood, and capitalists needed peace for their businesses to thrive.[163] Given that the Secretary of Interior had nearly total control over media outlets, the same newspapers that had depicted guerrillas as criminals and landowners as victims, portrayed Echeverría as the president who confronted landowners to enact the principles of the Mexican Revolution.

Land reform was an unwanted victory of the guerrilla movement, but it was also part of a broader set of populist reforms known as the "democratic opening," through which the Echeverría administration intended to rebuild the legitimacy of the regime after the Tlatelolco massacre and placate several social movements across the country.[164] Such opening was nothing but a camouflage of the traditional *priísta* cooptation that granted many former 1968 activists and young politicians key positions in government ministries.[165] Echeverría also used a persuasive nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric to convince his detractors that his administration was to the left of the Constitution, as if had he not shown himself to be a rabid anti-communist prior to his presidency. Nonetheless, Echeverría accomplished dividing the left between the followers of the "democratic opening," the radical but unarmed left, and the revolutionary left.

---

[163] Echeverría's rethoric did not envision that ejidatarios would become mere suppliers to lumber companies, without making any profit on their own. Cited in Javier Contreras, *Los informantes: documentos confidenciales de la guerrilla en Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, 2007), 308.

[164] María Muñoz and Amelia Kiddle made an insightful comparative exercise on Lázaro Cárdenas and Echeverría. Both politicians entered the presidency during a moment of political and social crisis and sought to build a broad-based support from masses to impulse their reforms and assert their hegemony, but their policies had contrasting results and Echeverría failed to appeal to the masses as Cárdenas did it. Muñoz & Kiddle, "Introduction: Men of the People" in *Populism in 20th Century Mexico,* Muñoz & Kiddle, eds., 14, 38.

[165] For an analysis of the relationship between the left-wing middle-class and the "Democratic Opening" see Louise Walker. *Waking from the Dream. Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Echeverría's populist package relied on the "shared development" model, a continuation of the state-oriented economy added with a barrage of social welfare programs to purportedly attain social justice. Echeverría leaned on the CTM and the CNC to perform his policies through clientelist channels, but his populism could not prevent the emergence of a new wave of independent unionism, rural mass organizations, and revolutionary attempts.[166]

Echeverría had claimed Cárdenas' legacy but failed to convince civil society that he genuinely sought the collective well-being; his administration was largely associated with elite divisions, mismanagement of social spending, the 1976 economic crisis, repression of independent unionism and journalism, and state terror. The processes that the illegal drug trade unleashed, discussed in next chapters, turned out to be more effective deterrents of popular uprisings than populist reforms.

Conclusions

The northwest, and particularly the Golden Quadrilateral, is different from other Mexican regions because of its uninterrupted tradition of violence that began in pre-contact times. Indigenous rebellions from the sixteenth through the twentieth century, popular resistance to the violent making of a U.S.-Mexico borderline, the 1910 revolution, the dirty war, and the drug war had common organic roots. This argument does not intend to essentialize the northwest by implying that its inhabitants were violent by nature. It looks at its tradition of violence as a corpus of knowledge and practices that local actors employed systematically to reject external

---

[166] See Samuel Schmidt, *El deterioro del presidencialismo mexicano. Los años de Luis Echeverría* (Mexico City: Editores Asociados Mexicanos, 1986); Jorge Basurto, *La clase obrera en la historia de México: En el régimen de Echeverría: rebelión e independencia,* vol. 14 (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores-UNAM, 1983); and Muñoz & Kiddle, *Populism in 20th Century Mexico.*

rule. Such disavowal was coupled with the limited capacity that both the colonial and the nation state had to hegemonize the territory, impose the rule of law, and develop an effective institutionalization.

The definition of boundaries between legality and illegality has been largely problematic in a territory whose native peoples never officially accepted non-indigenous sovereignty or fought for the recognition of their autonomy, like the Yaqui. The last resort against unsubmissive Indians was genocide: the modern state in the northwest was built on the foundations of the indigenous extermination campaigns of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the extraordinary continuity of indigenous peoples in the Sierra Madre Occidental may lead to question if they should be recognized as the legitimate sovereigns of the highlands, even though criminal sovereigns and security forces still struggle over regional hegemony in present-day.

Teporaca's uprising in the Tomóchic area, the Tomóchic millenarian rebellion, and the burning of the Tomóchic sawmill by guerrillas were acts of collective violence that resulted from distinct causes but, at the same time, they belonged to a tradition of rebelliousness by indigenous and peasant communities who struggled against the usurpation of their land and the dominion of colonizers or elite groups. Rural subaltern groups have also defended their right to carry out activities deemed illegal by the state, from preserving indigenous religion and culture to cultivating and smuggling outlawed plants; in all cases, an irreducible claim for autonomy was at stake.

The post-revolutionary ruling elite built a powerful modern state, with a sophisticated apparatus for both consent and coercion, but it mostly reached the Golden Quadrilateral from time to time in the way of institutionalized terror. The historical instability of the relationship between highlanders and the state has led the former to assume that the only law that mattered

was the *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation or "an eye for an eye") for their political and social interactions, given the inexistence of the rule of law.[167]

The production of illegal commodities with a high demand in the cross-border market in the late 1960s could not have occurred in peaceful terms. Sinaloan caciques transferred their traditional practices of extreme violence to their struggle for the drug market. In a parallel fashion, in Chihuahua, Sonora, and Sinaloa actors from below used their historic repertoire of violence to fight for radical change. There was a world apart between guerrilla movements and drug-trafficking, however, both indigenous and mestizo highlanders were the social base of both activities and were committed to self-defense. Also, radical peasants and poor drug growers might have followed opposite trends, but their goal was the same: improve their living conditions.

The northwest has been a region of extraordinary complexity, the scene of violent clashes between incompatible cultures, where social utopias flourished, and home-grown crime syndicates took over the most profitable illegal commodities in the history of Mexico. This chapter concludes that an age-long tradition of extreme violence, an equally prevalent tradition of local autonomy, and incomplete state domination set the conditions for the dirty war and the drug war to be more protracted and violent in the northwest than in the rest of the country, with the sole exception of Guerrero. It was not hard to foresee that war would resurface in the Golden Quadrilateral in the twenty-first century—that was the Mexican serpent's egg.

---

[167] For examples of how highlanders wielded that law of talion see Fernández, *El narcotráfico en los Altos de Sinaloa.*

Chapter Two: The 23rd of September Communist League's Micro-War in the Golden Quadrilateral (1973-1975)

> The act of making a revolution is lofty, full of love, selflessness, and generosity by revolutionaries, but beyond rhetoric, it is a horrible activity, very cruel and painful for the people when revolution undergoes its war stage.
> Miguel Topete Díaz, *Los ojos de la noche*.

The 23rd of September Communist League (hereafter the Liga), deemed the most radical organization of Mexico's political spectrum, was one of the principal actors of the socialist armed struggle from 1973 to 1982. The incorporation of such an extremist group into the political scene led the national security apparatus to take extraordinary measures, like granting extra-legal powers and resources to security forces to fight subversion and imposing a *de facto* state of siege. Furthermore, in the northwest the ruling party used the discourse about the drug war as a cover-up of the dirty war against the Liga. Hence, the Liga was inextricably related to the development of the counterinsurgency infrastructure and state protection of the illegal drug industry in ways that have been largely unperceived. My analysis sheds light on how the Liga contributed to shape those secret aspects of the Mexican state.

The Liga was the result of the national organization of radical students from northern states, Jalisco, and Mexico City, albeit the only region where it was able to connect to social movements was the Golden Quadrilateral. This chapter looks at the establishment of the Liga in the Sierra Tarahumara not as an external process, but as a continuation of a guerrilla tradition set by the Popular Guerrilla Groups, (GPG and GPGAG) and the 23rd of September Group (G23S) (see appendix 1, map 4). I do not render a comprehensive monography of the Liga; my objective is to show that in a region of endemic violence the guerrilla movement was—paraphrasing Mao's famous quote—the spark that started the prairie fire.

Traditional historiography has depicted the Liga as a group of adventurers who lacked social support and launched a far-fetched initiative to sow the seeds of violence in the peaceful *provincia*, a portrayal that I refute by demonstrating that the Liga mobilized factions of students, peasants, and laborers. [1] I also prove that even though the Liga aimed at implementing an abstract political project, whose ideological elaboration drew beyond local realities, the armed struggle that it ignited was not the cause, but the consequence of structural violence.

This chapter delves into the development of the Liga in the Sierra Baja Tarahumara and Southern Sonora. In chapter three, the focus shifts to Sinaloa, an agricultural state where the categories of urban and rural were blurrier given the old exchange tradition between the highlands and the valleys. It is worth mentioning that the Liga had a presence in the cities of Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, Hermosillo, Durango, Mexicali, and Tijuana, however, in those places the guerrillas failed to create organic links to social movements, except with student groups.

While the Sierra Tarahumara has caught the attention of many anthropologists since the mid-twentieth century, the indigenous-guerrilla alliance became a taboo.[2] My study is one of the first to address the implementation of *foquismo* in the Sierra Tarahumara, as well as the impact of the counterinsurgency on indigenous communities who would later become the target of the

---

[1] For visions that lambast the Liga or Mexican guerrillas in general, see Carlos Monsiváis & Julio Scherer García. *Los patriotas: de Tlatelolco a la Guerra sucia* (Mexico City: Aguilar 2004); Jorge Castañeda. *La utopía desarmada* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz and Planeta, 1994), and Mario Huacuja & José Woldenberg, *Estado y lucha política en el México actual* (Mexico City: El Caballito, 1976). For a historiographical review of the traditional interpretations about the Liga see Adela Cedillo, "Violencia, memoria, historia y tabú en torno a la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre", in *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: cuatro décadas a debate: historia, memoria, testimonio y literatura*, Rodolfo Gamiño et al. eds. (Mexico City: UNAM, 2015), 343-373.

[2] The anthropologist Armando Haro asserts that during the 1970s and 1980s the government could treat any student or professional who arrived in the Sierra Tarahumara to work with indigenous communities as a suspect of subversive activity. It seems that those who were not involved with guerrillas chose to turn a blind eye to the conflict to avoid the authorities' harassment. Armando Haro in discussion with the author. Hermosillo, Sonora, May 15, 2017.

war on drugs. The Liga was stigmatized as the organization that caused the military intervention in the highlands, thereby other aspects of its activity were ignored. I highlight that the Liga had a positive impact on the fight of the Guarijío people against *caciquismo* and underpinned yet another Rarámuri insurgency in the Rarámuri long tradition of rebelliousness.

The Liga's largest front nationwide were the so-called *Enfermos* (Sick-Ones), a far-left student movement from Sinaloa active through the 1970s, which took its name from the motto: "we are sick with the red virus of the revolution." The *Enfermos* not only attempted to hegemonize the student movement in the high schools and university campuses in Culiacán, Mazatlán, Los Mochis, Guasave, and Guamúchil, but they also participated in mobilizations by peasants, laborers, bus drivers, construction workers, and squatters.

A combination of the proletarianization process and free access to higher education made it possible for rural youth from the surrounding areas of Culiacán, including the Sierra de Badiraguato, to attend the Autonomous University of Sinaloa (UAS). Many of them joined the ranks of the *Enfermo* movement. However, guerrillas never attempted to penetrate the Sinaloan highlands, known to be under control of *narco-caciques*. The *Enfermos* acknowledged their firepower but did not frame them as enemies because they regarded criminal actors as a lumpen sector doomed to disappear after the triumph of the socialist revolution, according to their dogmatic interpretation of Marxism-Leninism.

In a converse way, urban students from the states of Baja California, Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Jalisco were capable of initiating a rural guerrilla movement in the Sierra Tarahumara because *narco-caciques* did not control the entire mountain range yet. Small-scale marijuana and poppy growers existed in the Sonora and Chihuahua highlands where the Liga had a presence, but guerrillas viewed them neither as allies nor as enemies. Drug traffickers also

were indifferent to the students' revolutionary project. In consequence, the guerrilla *focos* found a clear path to call Guarijío and Rarámuri communities to wage a war against caciques, traders, and large estate owners. [3]

Urban and rural guerrillas did not belong to exclusive spheres, despite the difference between the highlands and the valleys. Their mobilization resulted from endemic social and political violence, the intermingling of state and private interests, *caciquismo*, and the long-lasting disregard of popular demands by the state. This chapter shows that the simultaneity of armed actions in both the towns and the countryside was not a mere expression of over-ideologized guerrillas seeking to destroy the capitalist system. The students' revolutionary discourse resonated with other social actors who also believed that the structural divides of class, ethnicity, and even gender had created sharp contradictions that could only be solved through violent means. Thus, although the Liga's experiment followed a global trend, it fundamentally had organic roots.

The Liga launched two simultaneous operations in the states of Sinaloa and Sonora on January 16, 1974, unleashing a watershed confrontation between guerrillas, the private sector and the state. In Culiacán, the *Enfermos* led student brigades in an action on the outskirts of the city pompously called *El asalto al cielo* ("the assault to heaven"). The guerrillas intended to embolden fifteen thousand day laborers to fight against landowners and business owners and trigger an insurrection, but the police and the military thwarted the uprising. This episode is analyzed in chapter three.

---

[3] I took the concept of micro-war from Romain Robinet, "A Revolutionary Group Fighting Against a Revolutionary State: The September 23rd Communist League Against the PRI-State (1973–1975)," in Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo, eds. *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico, Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1964-1982* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 129-147.

El asalto al cielo stands as one of the most widely known actions perpetrated by the Liga. In contrast, the events that took place in the Sonora highlands went unnoticed nationwide.[4] On the morning of January 16, in San Bernardo, Álamos, the "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando (CGOG) abducted the 74-year-old Hermenegildo Sáenz Cano, also known as Don Gilo—a powerful cattleman, shopkeeper, and usurer of the municipality. This became the first political kidnapping in Sonora's history (see appendix 1, map 5).[5]

Guerrillas targeted Don Gilo because of his alleged involvement in the persecution of the GPAGP in 1968 and held him for nineteen days until his family paid the one-million-peso ransom.[6] Afterwards, the Sonora Judicial Police (PJS) and the military apprehended several guerrilla collaborators, among them Guarijío Indians. In an interview with the local newspaper *El Informador del Mayo*, Don Gilo referred to some of his kidnappers as local peasants used as cannon fodder by guerrillas.[7] Neither Don Gilo nor media outlets touched on the peasant's ethnicity. Nevertheless, as punishment for supporting the Liga the police and the military wreaked havoc on Guarijío communities.

Oddly enough, in 1975 media outlets announced the discovery of a "lost tribe," and credited Edmund Faubert for having found out that the Guarijío were different from the Mayo

---

[4] Despite the popularity of the Liga's "assault to heaven," there is not a work providing an in-depth explanation of those events. For a general interpretation see Sergio Arturo Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas: una historia política y cultural del movimiento estudiantil de los enfermos (1972-1978)* (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2012), 366-372.

[5] The work by Ignacio Lagarda, *El color de las amapas. Crónica de la guerrilla en la Sierra de Sonora* (Hermosillo: UTS/ITESCA/LTS, 2007) is the most detailed account of the kidnapping of Hermenegildo Sáenz and the activities of the CGOG in the Sierra Baja Tarahumara.

[6] [Manifiesto a los proletarios del campo y la ciudad del Comando Oscar González], reproduced in Lagarda, *El color de las amapas,* 92.

[7] Alejandro Olais Olivas, "Objetivo principal de los secuestradores en el país quebrantar la estabilidad política," *El informador del Mayo,* Navojoa, Sonora, February 8, 1974, 1-2, and Alejandro Olais Olivas, "Dice Hermenegildo Sáenz: No, esos no son mis secuestradores," *El Informador del Mayo*, Navojoa, Sonora, April 29, 1974, 1-2.

and the Yaqui Indians, notwithstanding the fact that anthropological and linguistic research over the Guarijíos had existed since the 1930s.[8] Faubert was a Canadian trader who worked for the Sonora government to purchase Indian handicrafts and sell them in North America. Faubert seized on his alleged finding to become an intermediary between the government and Guarijío land petitioners.[9] President Echeverría did not distribute land among the communities that Faubert represented, but he did it for the Guajaray ejido, whose petitioners were known to have collaborated with the Liga.

Echeverría's fast-track resolution to the Guajaray's land petition intended to cut off peasant support to the guerrillas, although it was a small-bore measure within the broader context of land distribution in Sonora (1975-76), which aimed at impeding the radicalization of the peasant movement in the Mayo and Yaqui valleys. Peasants from Guajaray believed they were the first in the Guarijío nation to receive land due to their involvement in the armed struggle and were proud of their victory. On the contrary, guerrillas' teleological framework dismissed the indigenous position by considering that immediate incentives did not redress the structural problems of capitalism. The Liga interpreted land reform as a mere counterinsurgency strategy and criticized itself for having failed to bring about a general insurrection in the Golden Quadrilateral.

I argue that while indigenous peasants were responsive to Communist ideas and embraced the Liga's guerrilla warfare, they also preserved their own agenda, based on their

---

[8] See Howard Scott Gentry, "The Warihío Indians of Sonora-Chihuahua: an Ethnographic Survey," *Anthropological Papers,* no. 65, Washington, D.C., Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, 1963: 61-154, and Kenneth S. Hilton, *Palabras y frases de las lenguas tarahumara y guarijío* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1947).

[9] Ignacio Lagarda Lagarda, "Crónica de un viaje a la nación guarijía" (unpublished manuscript in author's possesion).

understanding of land as the foundation of self-sufficiency, freedom, and identity. The conflict represented a micro-war of emancipation because it enabled the Guarijío nation to break away from their long-standing submission to caciques. But Guarijíos' isolation, the centralism of the Mexican *intelligentsia,* and deep-seated racist views about indigenous peoples caused this micro-war to go unnoticed. Only state agents who participated in civic action programs and the anthropologists and religious personnel who worked in the region learned about the conflict.

Scholars have interpreted the government's civic action programs and land reform efforts as mere expressions of a counterinsurgency policy designed to win the "hearts and minds" of people.[10] While there is compelling evidence that these reforms were part of a counterinsurgency plan, it is beyond question that they also met popular demands. Notwithstanding that the Liga deemed its *foco* experiment a failure, the Guarijíos benefited from the armed struggle because it forced the state to recognize them as citizens and enforce their civil rights. However, given the proximity of Guarijío territory to the Golden Triangle, from the early 1980s onward the indigenous have dealt with the encroachment of drug traffickers onto their lands to grow illegal crops or to raise livestock, since the latter is a front for money laundering.[11]

In this chapter I address not only the history of the CGOG but also the *focos* of Chínipas and Urique in the Chihuahuan highlands. After the 1971 land reform in the Alta Sierra Tarahumara, the Echeverría administration ended large-scale land distribution in the area and implemented civic action programs throughout Rarámuri territory, although it left unsolved local

---

[10] Alexander Aviña, "'We Have Returned to Porfirian Times': Neopopulism, Counterinsurgency, and the Dirty War in Guerrero, Mexico 1969-1976," in María Muñoz and Amelia Kiddle, eds., *Populism in 20th Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 106-121; Carlos Montemayor, *La guerrilla recurrente* (Mexico City: Debate, 2007).

[11] David Yetman, *Sonora. An Intimate Geography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 53; Carlos Alvarado, *La Tarahumara: una tierra herida* (Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos de Chihuahua, 1996).

conflicts related to “La Ponderosa” lumber company. The Liga taught the indigenous political-military strategies that they applied in their conflict with the company, which stole timber from their ejidos and opposed land distribution to landless peasants. Nevertheless, the Rarámuri endured a great deal of state terror without any real positive outcome, given that the civic action programs failed to attend their priorities. Paternalistic *indigenismo* and counterinsurgency weakened their capacity for self-defense and drug lords took over their territory, which was at the heart of the Golden Triangle.

By 1976, counterinsurgency campaigns had managed to expel guerrillas and other left-wing activists from the Sierra Tarahumara, and one year later Operation Condor went into effect in the Golden Triangle. During both the dirty war and the drug war security forces acted as a colonizing force seeking to impose state hegemony. State terror not only led to the establishment of federal institutions in the highlands, like the National Indigenist Institute (INI) and the military, but also facilitated the expansion of drug trafficking networks. There is no evidence to prove that this was the ultimate purpose of the war against guerrillas and social movements, but the Mexican government accepted this result.

The extermination of both rural and urban guerrillas in the Golden Quadrilateral is a salient case that demonstrates that political cleansing was one of the factors behind the successful expansion of the drug industry. While guerrilla violence pushed the state to comply with the rule of law, especially the legal framework concerning land reform and indigenous rights, counterinsurgency allowed for the formation of an illegal parallel order dominated by drug lords and their political allies. Finally, this case also reveals the capacity of indigenous peoples to resist colonizing forces, a history where they were not only victims but also winners.

The Liga's Revolutionary Project and the State Response

During the first months of the Echeverría administration occurred the student massacre of June 10, 1971, in Mexico City, orchestrated by a government-sponsored paramilitary group known as *Los Halcones* (*The Hawks*). Similarly to the 1968 massacre in Tlatelolco, the government concealed the death toll, disappeared a large portion of the corpses, and made up a cover story to hold accountable the alleged far-right enemies of Echeverría for the bloodshed.[12] As Enrique Condés suggests, scholars who believed that the Tlatelolco massacre had been the midwife of the urban guerrilla movement neglected that the so-called *halconazo* had a greater impact, as it fueled the radicalization of the post-'68 national student movement.[13] Students criticized the mild response of traditional left-wing parties like the PCM and the PPS to the recurring displays of state terror, and searched for superior forms of organization to promote both self-defense and offense. In consequence, the number of radical organizations increased, especially urban guerrilla groups.[14] The *halconazo* not only shattered the Old Left, but also the façade of progressive government that Echeverría had carefully carved out through his "democratic opening."

By 1971, there were so many guerrilla commandos operating throughout the country that their leaders began to discuss the need for a national guerrilla organization that embraced both

---

[12] The SEGOB published the cover story as a false testimony by one of the Hawks: Antonio Solís Mimendi, *Jueves de corpus sangriento. Sensacionales revelaciones de un halcón* (Mexico City: n. p., 1972).

[13] Enrique Condés Lara, El *10 de junio ¡no se olvida!* (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2001); Condés Lara, *Los papeles secretos del 10 de junio* (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2003).

[14] For the specific impact of the *halconazo* in the formation of guerrilla groups see Adela Cedillo & Ricardo Gamboa, "Interpretaciones sobre los espacios de participación política después del 10 de junio de 1971 en México", in *Violencia y sociedad. Un hito en la historia de las izquierdas en América Latina*, eds. Verónica Oikión and Miguel Ángel Urrego (Morelia: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo/Colegio de Michoacán, 2010), 79-110.

urban and rural guerrilla tactics. Leaders from the so-called *Procesos* (Processes), *Guajiros,* and the MAR-23 encouraged the formation of the *Organización Partidaria* (Partisan Organization) in 1972.[15] The name emphasized the importance of creating an authentic revolutionary party, in contrast to those of the Old Left that the guerrillas identified as reformist and opportunistic.[16] The political-military principles of the *Partidaria* were outlined in a series of documents called *Madera no. 1, 2, 3, and 3 bis,* which manifested hardline Marxist-Leninist positions.[17]

The *Partidaria* established connections between eight guerrilla organizations who agreed on a common program after holding a secret meeting in Guadalajara, Jalisco. After almost two weeks of discussions on ideology, political economy, revolutionary strategy, and military tactics, on March 15, 1973, they founded the 23rd of September Communist League and named its monthly publication *Periódico Madera.* By choosing these legends, the Liga bolstered the vision of the 1965 Madera assault as the onset of a new revolution and a source of political legitimacy.[18] The organization amalgamated the most radical factions of the student movements in the states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Nuevo León, and Mexico City, but only the

---

[15] See below the origins and political identity of these groups.

[16] For a detailed account of the formation process of the Liga, see Alberto López Limón, "Proceso de construcción de la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre (1973-1975)," *Cuadernos de Marte. Revista latinoamericana de sociología de la guerra*, no.1 (April, 2011):177-207; Lucio Rangel, *El virus rojo de la revolución* (Morelia: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2013). There is also a published testimony by one of the few survivors of the Liga's founding meeting: Gustavo Hirales, *Memoria de la guerra de los justos* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1996).

[17] *Madera 1, 2, 3, and 3 bis*, 1972-1973 (unpublished manuscripts in author's possession).

[18] Several important guerrilla organizations refused to become part of the Liga, namely the National Revolutionary Civic Association (ACNR), the National Liberation Forces (FLN), and the People's Union (UP). The People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FRAP, 1973) was the first Liga's splinter group. The most important rural guerrilla organization, the Party of Poor (PdlP) from Guerrero, originally accepted to coalesce with the Liga, but the latter criticized the allegedly undemocratic leadership of Lucio Cabañas as well as his agrarian positions, and the PdlP expelled the Liga cadres from its territory in mid-1973. This rupture became the iconic expression of the ideological difference between students and peasants. Yair Vázquez Camacho, "*La relación de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre y el Partido de los Pobres en el estado de Guerrero. La imposibilidad de la unidad (1970-1974)*" (BA thesis, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010).

MAR-23 and the *Enfermos* from Sinaloa had organic connections to popular movements. It is also worth of noting that, unlike the majority of the Mexican guerrilla groups, the Liga prioritized the political-intellectual debate among its cadres.

The militants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, which reveals that the Liga was fundamentally a youth project. Both leaders and rank and file cadres came from northern and western states, notwithstanding that the student massacres had occurred in Mexico City. This shows that regional state violence was equally or more important to the youth radicalization process than the events in Mexico City, contradicting traditional centralist views.

The history of the Liga's formation entails a long account of micro-alliances, agreements, and ruptures, but for the goals of this chapter it is enough to list the groups that comprised the revolutionary coalition.

1. The *Procesos* ("Processes") was a guerrilla organization based in Monterrey, Nuevo León, that consisted of former militants of the Communist Youth (JCM) and a liberation theology-inspired group splintered from the Catholic Professional Student Movement (MEP).[19] The group's leader, Raúl Ramos Zavala (1947-1972), wrote one of the first major pieces of the Mexican guerrilla literature titled "The Revolutionary Process," in which he laid out the theoretical bases for the armed struggle.[20] The group lacked a self-denomination but their followers were named the *Procesos* after the manuscript. After Ramos Zavala died in a shooting

[19] The dissident members of the MEP were the only guerrillas who did not come from the left but the right. For an analysis of this ideological switch and the influence of Jesuit fathers on the group see: Jaime Pensado, "El Movimiento Estudiantil Profesional (MEP): una mirada a la radicalización de la juventud católica mexicana durante la Guerra Fría," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 31, no. 1 (Winter, 2015): 156-192.

[20] Raúl Ramos Zavala, *El tiempo que nos tocó vivir… y otros documentos de la guerrilla en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Huasipungo, 2003).

with the police on February 6, 1972,[21] Ignacio Salas Obregón (1948-?) ascended to the position of chief leader of the *Partidaria*. Salas did not conceal his upbringing in liberation theology and took the *nom de guerre* "Oseas" after a Biblical prophet who claimed: "for they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea, 8:7).[22] In their first assessment of the Liga, DFS agents described it as a clandestine guerrilla organization with a religious rather than a communist leaning, and suggested that Jesuit fathers were responsible for having shaped the mindset of the "subversive" elements.[23]

2. The *Guajiros* or *Núcleo Central* (Central Core) was a group made up of students, teachers, and former members of the JCM who set up clandestine cells in Mexico City, Chihuahua, and Baja California since 1969. Militants from Chihuahua had previously belonged to the urban support networks by the GPG and the GPGAG.[24] When the *Guajiros* perpetrated a multiple bank robbery on January 15, 1972 in the city of Chihuahua, the governor Oscar Flores Sánchez was personally involved in the investigation and ordered the execution of the *Guajiro* leader, Diego Lucero Martínez.[25] The group's military leader was a student named Leopoldo

---

[21] Pascal Beltrán del Río, "Raúl Ramos Zavala, ideólogo de la guerrilla urbana, 30 años después," *Proceso*, February 6, 2002, http://www.proceso.com.mx/239725/raul-ramos-zavala-ideologo-de-la-guerrilla-urbana-30-anos-despues, accessed July 17, 2017.

[22] Pascal Beltrán del Río, "El caso del fundador de la Liga 23 de septiembre, ante la fiscalía especial," Proceso, February 16, 2002, http://www.proceso.com.mx/187061/el-caso-del-fundador-de-la-liga-23-de-septiembre-ante-la-fiscalia-especial, accessed July 15, 2017. There is scant information about the short life of Salas Obregón, a budding Marxist theoretician who astonished his comrades given his capacity to memorize entire books by Marx and Lenin and to apply them to current political situations. He was detained-disappeared by the police on April 25, 1974.

[23] "Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre", February 24, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-6, H-296-300.

[24] José Luis Alonso Vargas, "Guerrilleros mexicalenses", and Diego Lucero Estrada. *Sueños guajiros. Diego Lucero y la guerrilla mexicana de los años 60 y 70* (Mexico City: Casa de las Palabras, 2011). In the Gulf of Mexico coast and the Caribbean islands the countryfolk are called "guajiros." There was a famous Mexican song called "Guajiro dream," an expression that became popular in the colloquial language to allude to impossible aspirations.

[25] Javier Contreras, *Los Infiltrados*, 320-323. Oscar Flores was a staunch anti-communist and was also heavily involved in the drug industry, as I will expose in chapter four. As a pay-off for his counterinsurgency merits, Flores was appointed Attorney General of Mexico in 1976. The commander of the Fifth Military Zone of Chihuahua, Fernando Pámanes Escobedo, was also active in the anti-guerrilla campaign, and in 1974 the PRI designated him

Angulo Luken (1939-1981) from Sinaloa, who became a key figure in the formation of the guerrilla movement in the Golden Quadrilateral.

3. The MAR-23 was the first guerrilla coalition but by early 1973 police repression had decimated it, except for its support bases in the Sierra Tarahumara and a handful of urban cells, which became part of the Liga. One of the leaders of the MAR-23, Manuel Gámez Rascón, "Julio", was recognized as the second leader in the hierarchy of the Liga after Salas Obregón.

4. The *Enfermo* movement was the radical faction from the Student Federation of the Autonomous University of Sinaloa (FEUS), whose leaders were former members of the JCM.

5. The Student Revolutionary Front (FER, also known as "the fierce guys"), was founded in 1971 by former members of the JCM, radical students from the University of Guadalajara, and a street gang known as the *Vikingos*. The FER became the second largest urban guerrilla organization after the *Enfermos*, with dozens of brigades and a horizontal leadership.[26]

6. The *Lacandones* was created by militants who came from the Spartacist movement that emerged in 1962 as a fraction that split off from the PCM and also included former street activists (*brigadistas*) from the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, who had participated in the 1968 student movement in Mexico City employing direct-action and self-defense tactics.[27] This organization launched three urban guerrilla

---

governor of the state of Zacatecas. The state attorney at the time, Antonio Quezada Fornelli, had also a key participation in both counterinsurgency and Operation Condor.

[26] For a detailed history of the FER, see Sergio Aguayo, *La Charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2001); Rodolfo Gamiño & Jesús Zamora, *Los Vikingos, una historia de lucha política y social* (Guadalajara: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Colectivo Rodolfo Reyes Crespo, 2011), and Rodolfo Gamiño, *Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario. Antecedentes, nacimiento y represión* (Guadalajara: La Casa de Mago, 2016).

[27] Itzel López Nájera, "El Movimiento de 1968 y las tácticas de los estudiantes del Instituto Politécnico Nacional: condiciones de producción del discurso revolucionario de la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre", *Pacarina del Sur,* no. 28, (July-September, 2016), http://pacarinadelsur.com/dossiers/dossier-18/58-dossiers/dossier-18/1330-el-

commandos in 1971: *Lacandones*, *Arturo Gámiz*, and *Patria o Muerte* (Homeland or Death). Their leader was Miguel Domínguez Rodríguez, a *norteño* student who was apprehended in 1972, and whose brothers would play a key role in the Liga. While the *Lacandones* financed the Liga's creation with bank robberies, the majority of its members were detained, tortured, and imprisoned before the meeting in Guadalajara took place.[28]

7. The *Macías* were a splinter group of the Spartacist Revolutionary Movement (MER) from Nuevo León. In 1968, the peasant leader Mónico Rentería and several students from Nuevo León and Tamaulipas formed a guerrilla commando. Notwithstanding their proximity to the Sierra Madre Oriental, they set up a *foco* in the opposite direction, in the Durango highlands. However, the group did not carry out any military activity and the *foco* only lasted two months. Rentería abandoned the project, but the remaining cadres headed by Edmundo Medina Flores and Salvador Corral García sought out the Liga's leaders in order to be allowed to join the organization.[29] The Liga recovered the weapons that the *Macías* had hidden in the Durango highlands, but for unknown reasons it never established another *foco* in the region.[30]

---

movimiento-de-1968-y-las-tacticas-de-los-estudiantes-del-instituto-politecnico-nacional-condiciones-de-produccion-del-discurso-revolucionario-de-la-liga-comunista-23-de-septiembre-, accessed November 22, 2017.

[28] When the police discovered the group, it realized that they lacked a self-denomination and referred to them as *Lacandones*. *Lacandones* was the name of a Maya group located in southern Mexico that remained unconquered since the 16th century. Carlos Salcedo García, "Grupo Guerrillero Lacandones. La luz que no se acaba", 2005 (unpublished manuscript in author's possession), 8; Guadalupe Santiago Quijada and Jorge Balderas Domínguez, "Fundamento ideológico de la acción revolucionaria del grupo armado Lacandones", in *Nóesis. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 14, no. 34 (August-December 2008): 66-91.

[29] In an informal conversation with the author, Miguel Topete recalled that Medina Flores had a remarkable resemblance to the Mexican boxer Raúl Macías, whose last name became a metonymy to designate the group.

[30] "Declaración de Elías Orozco Salazar", October 22 1973, Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección Federal de Seguridad, Versión Pública de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre, H-107; "Por el asesinato de Garza Sada", *Proceso*, Mexico City, April 2nd, 1977, http://www.proceso.com.mx/3600/por-el-asesinato-de-garza-sada, accessed September 20, 2016.

8. The Revolutionary Student Committee (CER) and the Revolutionary Worker Committee (COR) were two branches of the same group composed of students from the Autonomous University of Nuevo León, former members of the JCM, and industrial workers. Given that Nuevo León stood as the most industrialized state in Mexico, its private sector felt threatened and made an exceptional investment in the local counterinsurgency campaigns to wipe out guerrillas.[31]

Ignacio Salas Obregón summarized the *Madera* manuscripts and the discussion among guerrilla organizations in an essay that became the Liga's official doctrine titled *The Fundamental Questions of the Revolutionary Movement* (1973).[32] The Liga sought to destroy the bourgeois state, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and construct a socialist state.[33] Based on Leninist tenets, the Liga believed that the proletariat was the only revolutionary class and that the peasantry was doomed to disappear, but in the meantime, it had to join the ranks of the revolutionary army against its oppressors.

In order to overcome the paradox of being an organization made up by students advocating for the proletarian power with poor connections with the labor movement, the intellectuals of the Liga developed the "Thesis of the University-factory", which put forward that the university functioned as a factory, professors were workers, and students simultaneously were objects of work and workforce. Given the development of their political consciousness, the

---

[31] For an account of the emergence of the far-left in Nuevo León and the guerrilla commandos of the CER and its extermination see Benjamín Palacios Hernández, *Héroes y fantasmas. La guerrilla mexicana de los años 70* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2009).

[32] Ignacio Salas Obregón. *Cuestiones fundamentales del movimiento revolucionario* (Mexico City: Editorial Tierra Roja, 2003).

[33] Although the Liga claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist organization, its ideological corpus was highly eclectic. For the theoretical influences of the Liga see Gustavo Hirales, *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre. Orígenes y naufragio* (Mexico City: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1977).

student-proletarians had the responsibility of being the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.[34]

The Liga aimed to promote the general insurrection of the masses through a combination of armed agitation and propaganda (*agitprop*), while in the countryside it sought to build a popular army capable of creating liberated zones, adopting the strategy of the protracted people's war inspired by the revolutionary experiences of China and Vietnam.[35] The short-term objective was to "harass and wear down" the bourgeoisie and its repressive apparatus through both urban and rural guerrilla warfare, which would eventually evolve into a war of position. The war was projected to last for sixty years.

The Liga disavowed Ernesto Guevara's *foquismo*, which claimed that the insurrectional *foco*—the strategic mobile force—would produce the subjective conditions for the revolution in the countryside, such as organization, ideological awareness, and a leading vanguard, thus contradicting the Leninist tenet of organizing the proletariat in the first place.[36] However, the Liga believed in the convenience of setting up *focos*, whose actions would serve as a distraction to draw the security forces to the sierra instead of the valley. In geostrategic terms, the Liga planned to transform their enemy's weakest points —the highlands— into the guerilla's strongest points. The idea of dispersing the enemy's forces resonated with Guevara's motto of creating

---

[34] Alfredo Tecla Jiménez, *Universidad, burguesía y proletariado* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Popular, 1978): 26.

[35] Leopoldo Angulo Luken, *Nos volveremos a encontrar* (Guadalajara, Jal.: La casa del mago, 2011), 40, 75.

[36] Ernesto Guevara, "Guerra de guerrillas: un método", September 1963, http://juventudguevarista.cl/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GUERRA-DE-GUERRILLAS.pdf, accessed September 12, 2017; Régis Debray, "Revolución en la revolución", March 1967, http://pf-memoriahistorica.org/PDFs/1967/PF_025_doc.pdf, accessed September 12, 2017.

"two, three, many Vietnams." Finally, the Liga viewed the *focos* as a rearguard to protect persecuted revolutionaries in the cities.[37] In this way, the Liga created its own brand of *foquismo*.

The Liga understood the war as a quantitative problem, by claiming that the organization had to garner as many weapons as possible to match the security forces.[38] By concentrating the military activity in the countryside, urban revolutionaries would supposedly have a broader range of action. In its propaganda, the Liga promoted the killing of as many members of the police and the military as possible to demoralize the enemy, steal their weapons, and advance the war. The Liga clearly disregarded the state's capacity to enlarge its repressive apparatus as well as the fashion in which the Mexican security forces benefited from the U.S. military complex.

The Liga's structure consisted of a National Direction (CONAL) whose ruling bodies were the Political Bureau and the Military Bureau. The CONAL divided the country into five Political-Military Coordinating Committees:

- Central: also known as the Red Brigade, comprised Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, and Puebla;
- Northwest: Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, and the Baja California peninsula;
- Northeast: Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas;
- West: Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Aguascalientes, and
- South: Veracruz, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Guerrero, and Chiapas.

These five regions had a general coordinator and state coordinators; the latter oversaw guerrilla cells and *agitprop* brigades in towns. The CONAL sought to seize on the acute socioeconomic and political contradictions in rural areas by setting up guerrilla *focos*, namely the

---

[37] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 40.

[38] Topete, *Los ojos,* 69.

"Arturo Gámiz" Political Military Committee (CPMAG) in the Golden Quadrilateral, the "Emiliano Zapata" Revolutionary Brigade in Jamiltepec, Oaxaca (BREZ), and the Genaro Vázquez Revolutionary Brigade (BRGV) in the Sierra of Zihuatanejo, Guerrero.[39] One of the Liga's military experts, Tomás Lizárraga Tirado, "El Tom de Analco," was appointed the intermediary between the CONAL and the three *focos*. Some *Enfermos* were involved in the formation of a guerrilla *foco* in the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas, the Lacandon Revolutionary Brigade (BRL). The latter officially became part of the Liga in 1974 but continued to act as a semi-independent organization.[40] At the time of its greatest expansion in early 1974, the Liga had a presence throughout Mexico from northern to southern borders. By becoming a national movement, the Liga fulfilled one of the Madera generation's dreams.

Given that security forces had managed to target and weaken the Liga's constituent groups, the Liga was born as a vulnerable organization and the secret police uncovered it just a couple of months after its founding.[41] Furthermore, the Liga exposed itself by carrying out a number of high-profile kidnappings. In a failed kidnapping attempt, on September 17, 1973, the guerrillas killed Eugenio Garza Sada, who was the richest man in Mexico and the leader of the powerful Monterrey Group, which controlled several holding companies. In response, the private sector accused Echeverría of promoting socialist ideas that brought about revolutionary violence and broke with the government.[42]

---

[39] Miguel Topete, *Los ojos de la noche. El comando guerrillero Oscar González* (Guadalajara, Jal.: La casa del mago, 2009), 21.

[40] Adela Cedillo, "Breve historia de los desaparecidos de la Brigada Revolucionaria Lacandona", *Blog La Guerra sucia en México,* (July, 2005), http://guerrasuciamexicana.blogspot.com/2017/01/breve-historia-de-los-desaparecidos-de.html, accessed October 12, 2017.

[41] Sergio Aguayo, *La charola*, 178.

[42] Trevizo, *Rural Protest and the Making of Democracy in Mexico,* 133.

In October 1973, the Liga kidnapped the honorary British consul in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Anthony Duncan Williams, and the wealthy businessman Fernando Aranguren Castiello. The Liga demanded the nationwide distribution of its communiqués, the liberation of fifty-one political prisoners to be sent to North Korea, and a ransom. The government concluded that the consequences of accepting those demands would exceed the repercussions of allowing the execution of the kidnapped, and publicly manifested that it would not negotiate with criminals. Members of the CONAL and the Jalisco's coordinators disagreed on the fate of the kidnapped; amidst the confusion, Duncan Williams was liberated and Aranguren killed.[43]

Echeverría did not respond to these events as a statesman willing to enforce the law, but rather as a gangster seeking revenge. From late 1973 onward, the dirty war dramatically intensified, as virtually all political prisoners were tortured, and several were executed or subjected to temporary or permanent forced disappearance. Some interpretations point at the guerrilla in the Sierra de Atoyac, Guerrero as the cause of the government's escalation in state terror policies, but the Liga's kidnappings had an equal if not stronger role in their spreading.[44]

The Echeverría administration simultaneously opened the country to receive exiles escaping the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile after the coup of September 11, 1973. The Echeverría's asylum policy would also include exiles from the military coups in Uruguay (1973) and Argentina (1976).[45] Mexico can claim some exceptionalism for having had a populist

[43] Sergio René de Dios Corona, *La historia que no pudieron borrar: la guerra sucia en Jalisco, 1970-1985* (Guadalajara: La casa del Mago, 2004), 81.

[44] The most complete yet unfinished account of cases of torture, executions, and forced disappearances of the dirty war is the report by José Sotelo, ed. *Informe Histórico a la Sociedad Mexicana ¡Qué no vuelva a suceder!* Mexico City: Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado, 2006 (draft). However, this report is largely Guerrero-centered.

[45] For the Mexican tradition of welcoming refugees in the twentieth century see Pablo Yankelevich, *México, país refugio: la experiencia de los exilios en el siglo XX* (Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés-INAH-CONACULTURA, 2002).

government that exterminated its domestic far-left but proved willing to welcome left-wing exiles from abroad. However, in the international arena the Mexican government was seen as opposing the military dictatorships and authoritarian governments of the rest of Latin America.

There was a well-thought strategy underlying Echeverría's seeming schizophrenic policies, for they were not mutually exclusive but complementary.[46] Echeverría boosted his international image as an humanitarian and progressive president from a stable country, who despite his nationalism was concerned about the so-called Third World and advocated for its independence from global super-powers, seconding the principles of *third-worldism*.[47] Thus, the Echeverría administration neither had domestic limitations nor international restrictions to unfold state terror policies, and used its positive international image to avoid further scrutiny. Also, given state control on media outlets, the dirty war was kept from the eyes of the global public opinion.

Scholars have debated whether the Liga or the socialist armed movement in general represented a national security threat. Sergio Aguayo affirms that:

> …the DFS nourished the paranoia of the president [Díaz Ordaz], and when guerrillas emerged, it refrained from assessing their real strength. We cannot help but thinking that [the DFS] did it to increase its power because having a powerful enemy justified the increase of budget and influence. It might not have been the original intent, but it was the outcome because during the 'dirty war' the DFS grew as never before.[48]

Aguayo's interpretation of the DFS's motivations is well-grounded, although his argument on the invention of the enemy has to be nuanced. Archival material shows that the DFS did make different assessments over the level of danger that guerrilla organizations posed. By

---

[46] I thank Guillermo Trejo for having made me this observation in the colloquium "Confronting Mexico's Dirty War: Youth Radicalism(s), Repression, and Accountability" (University of Notre Dame, 2016).

[47] For an analysis of how Echeverría used foreign policy as an instrument of political legitimation see Yoram Shapira, *Mexican Foreign Policy under Echeverría* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978).

[48] Aguayo, *La charola*, 124.

early 1975, an agent produced a summary of the Liga's record, portraying Salas Obregón as a brilliant mastermind imbued with ideological fanaticism, whose detention in 1974 caused the group's disbandment. The agent asserted that the Liga's internal conflict led to the formation of loose commandos without a centralized national direction, which continued to use the Liga's name but did "no longer represent a political danger, only a social one given that they have gained experience to carry out homicides and robberies…".[49]

Regardless of the DFS's poor understanding about the Liga, it is clear that during the "Salas period" the secret agents perceived it as a threat to political stability. Echeverría likely entertained the possibility that the only national guerrilla coalition might grow enough to delegitimize and destabilize, if not topple, his government, and then decided to launch a preventive war of extermination. In addition to the physical elimination of guerrillas, the Secretary of Interior (SEGOB) waged psychological warfare to spread the idea that the Liga represented nothing but a minority group of delusional terrorists alien to the Mexican society.[50] The government won this cultural battle as the history of the Liga was buried under thick layers of forgetfulness and silence, especially the one concerning the interwoven paths of urban students and indigenous communities in the northwestern highlands.[51]

---

[49] "Análisis del estado de organización en que se encuentra actualmente la agrupación subversiva llamada "Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre", AGN, DFS, 11-235-75, L25, H-180.

[50] R. Gamiño, *Guerrilla, represión y prensa en la década de los setenta en México: invisibilidad y olvido* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 2013) and J. Mendoza, "Los medios de información y el trato a la guerrilla. Una mirada psicopolítica", in Verónica Okión & Marta Eugenia García, eds. *Movimientos armados*, vol. 1, 145-180.

[51] See the poem "Escondida" (*Hidden*) by Leopoldo Angulo in the appendix 2, no. 3.

Radical Peasants, Student-Guerrillas, and the *Foco* Experiment

The Liga became influential in the northwest and created an intricate political structure with dozens of cadres. Manuel Gámez Rascón assumed the position of general regional coordinator and worked with state coordinators in Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, and Baja California, as well as coordinators in key towns. The Northwest branch established the "Arturo Gámiz" Political-Military Committee (CPMAG) in the Golden Quadrilateral, which became one of the Liga's most developed fronts under the military leadership of Leopoldo Angulo Luken, "Matus."[52] By using the name of "Arturo Gámiz," the Liga implied the continuation of the struggles initiated by both the GPG and the GPGAG, and also fostered a veneration for past local guerrilla heroes. In April 1973, the CONAL selected cadres familiar with the northwest or the peasant lifestyle to be part of the rural guerrilla movement. The CPMAG planned to set up guerrilla camps in the Sierra Baja Tarahumara, where the former MAR-23 had previously done political work in peasant communities.

The CPMAG was by far the Liga's most ambitious project, for it comprised the guerrilla *foco* in the Sierra Tarahumara—in the municipalities of Quiriego, Álamos, Chínipas, and Urique—and the urban brigades in the Yaqui and Mayo valleys, Choix, and El Fuerte, intended to build supply lines. The radical factions of the student movement at the University of Sonora (UNISON), the Rural Teacher-Training School "General Plutarco Elías Calles" in El Quinto, Sonora, and the UAS became important places of recruitment. From 1973 onward, the Liga also created brigades close to the CPMAG area in Ciudad Obregón, Esperanza, Navojoa, Huatabampo, Etchojoa, Etchoropo, Guaymas, Empalme, and Hermosillo in Sonora, and Los

---

[52] With only 34 years old, Angulo was the oldest member of the CONAL and his comrades dubbed him "Matus," as the 969-year-old biblical character Matusalén (Methuselah).

Mochis, Guasave, Sinaloa de Leyva, Guamúchil, Culiacán, and Mazatlán in Sinaloa, which managed to incorporate laborers and workers through *agitprop*.[53] The Liga attempted to form a brigade in Santa María del Oro, Durango, but the police quickly dismantled it (see appendix 1, map 4).[54]

Jesús Salvador Gaytán Aguirre ("Don Chuy," 1932-2011), the veteran leader of Madera who had been living underground since 1965, announced to his followers in the highlands: "Comrades, the 23rd of September Movement already has a League!"[55] This statement suggests that Gaytán disagreed with the Liga's stance on the subordination of the peasantry to the proletariat. However, he was pragmatic and did not voice his opposition to the Liga's line, given that he had found in it an irreplaceable core of allies for his fight against the government.

Gaytán, along with Arturo Borboa—a Rarámuri peasant whose son had been killed in Tesopaco—and Juan Rojo Olivo ("Heraclio"), were the organizers of groups of peasants that supported the GPG, the GPGAG, the G23S, the MAR-23, and the CPMAG, drawing a 10-year arch of guerrilla activity in the Sierra Tarahumara (1964-1974).[56] The participation of veterans of the armed struggle in the Liga seemed to have legitimized it above other guerrilla organizations, to the point where its dogmatic leaders initially tolerated veterans' agrarian positions. Furthermore, veterans had thorough knowledge of the Sierra Madre and served as intermediaries

---

[53] The Liga might have been the first Mexican guerrilla organization to write propaganda in an indigenous language. For instance, see the handout to the laborers of the Yaqui and Mayo valleys: "Compañero Chiním Pualerom del Yaqui entoc Mayo", *Periódico Madera*, no. 52 (August 1980): 11-14, https://ligacomunista23.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/a-los-pizcadores-de-algodon.pdf

[54] "Estado de Durango," June 10, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-17, H-149-150. The Liga's brigades in Parral, Chihuahua, and Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, and Mexicali and Tijuana in Baja California were disconnected from the movilizations in the Sierra Tarahumara and its surrounding valleys despite their geographical proximity.

[55] Miguel Topete, interview with the author, Guadalajara, Jalisco, July 15, 2011.

[56] Miguel Topete, ed., *Ayer en la mañana clara. Salvador Gaytán y el 23 de septiembre de 1965* (Guadalajara, Jal.: La casa del Mago, 2012).

between urban cadres and peasants. Nevertheless, the CPMAG continued to reproduce old divisions between students and peasants.

As the Liga's urban cadres arrived in the Sierra Tarahumara in July 1973, they organized support networks and formulated military plans, but paid little attention to conflicts unrelated to their political goals. Miguel Topete Díaz (1946-2012), a student originally from rural Jalisco who had joined the JCM in the late 1960s, became an urban guerrilla in the FER in the early 1970s; given his peasant background, he was one of the cadres that the Liga placed in the CPMAG. Ten years later, Topete was one of the few survivors of the CPMAG and the last survivor of his commando. In *Los ojos de la noche* (*The Eyes of the Night,* 2009), a testimony about his days as rural guerrilla, Topete regretted that the CPMAG had only developed political-military work in Sonora, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa but not in Durango, thus thwarting the creation of a quadrilateral guerrilla movement.[57]

Topete failed to reflect on the reasons that curbed the expansion of the Liga. As in the case of the Sierra of Badiraguato, the intersectional area of the Durango highlands belonged to the Golden Triangle, and the Liga neither had grounds nor resources to encroach the *gomero* territory. In the exceptional cases where guerrillas had a presence in the poppy zone (in the triangle between Urique, Guadalupe y Calvo, and Choix), drug traffickers did not perceive them as a threat to their interests. It seems that during the 1970s the weakness of the Mexican guerrilla movements prevented crime syndicates from investing in counterinsurgency—an opposite situation to what ocurred in Colombia from the 1980s onward.

Guerrillas acknowledged the existence of drug growers in the Sierra Tarahumara but failed to consider them a hindrance to their revolutionary project. In 1981, Angulo wrote a

---

[57] Topete, *Los ojos*, 21.

manuscript titled *Historia* at a time when the guerrillas had been wiped out in the northwest. He described his return thorough "El Chepe" to the former theater of operations of the CPMAG in the Chihuahua highlands. An intrigued switchman asked him: "What are you going to do there? No one lives there. The Judicial Police killed the last man three years ago, I think because of money; the guy was a poppy grower… there are several soldiers around there…"[58] The military presence revealed that Operation Condor was still in force in that region by 1981, but Angulo never mentioned it.

Nevertheless, Angulo made an interesting observation about how the government fused both conflicts. He asserted that at the peak of guerrilla warfare in 1974, the federal government announced in media outlets that the military's siege in the Chihuahua highlands was due to an anti-drug campaign, but security forces exclusively hunted down guerrillas.[59] Given that the media usually portrayed guerrillas as mere criminals, it is possible to claim that before Operation Condor—which changed the dynamics of the drug war—the government used the alleged anti-drug campaign as a smokescreen to hide both guerrilla activities and counterinsurgency.[60]

The history of the Liga in the highlands of Sonora and Chihuahua represented a continuation of the political work that the G23S/MAR-23 had carried out earlier with the indigenous communities of San Rafael de Orivo, Chínipas and El Frijol, Quiriego. Guerrillas were in contact with workers from the sawmill and the mines, as well as *ejidatarios*. In San Rafael de Orivo, the "La Ponderosa" timber company attempted to cut pines inside communal

---

[58] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 37.

[59] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 94.

[60] I reviewed several local newspapers of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua which had the same biased editorial line about guerrilla movements. For an analysis of the representation of the Liga in the media, see Gamiño, *Guerrilla, represión y prensa.*

land in violation with its agreement with the Rarámuri *ejidatarios*. Wilfredo Ramos, brother of the chief cacique, attempted to whip the peasant leader Pedro Rodríguez Rascón, "Gabino," whose brother Lorenzo was the ejido commissar. However, "Gabino" put to use his guerrilla training and shot Wilfredo dead. "Gabino" and two companions left to Quiriego while the Ramos siblings beat Lorenzo in an act of revenge. Wilfredo's murder shocked the region to the extent that the chief cacique left his estate and the military arrived in San Rafael.[61] This episode, that would have been worthy of Gabriel García Márquez's pen, inaugurated the Liga's micro-war in the Golden Quadrilateral.

In the El Frijol ejido, the leaders of the local peasant movement, Enrique Mendoza Beltrán, his wife Micaela Bacasehua, and José Bacasehua, accepted to become guerrilla supporters of the recently created Liga. The peasant movement was radicalized because even though the ejido petitioners had formally received land in March 1971, the state government continued to protect the local cacique, who refused to turn over the land he had illegally appropriated from the ejido.[62] Quiriego was a transitional zone between the Sierra Baja Tarahumara and the valley, whose terrain was not the most suitable for a rural guerrilla. This issue might have helped the secret service discover the guerrilla presence in El Frijol, by following the trace of outsiders in the area.

In late August 1973, both the military and the Sonora Judicial Police (PJSO) carried out the second major anti-guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Baja after *Operation Slip Knot* called *Operation Bean*. The chief of the PJSO, Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Arellano Noblecía,

---

[61] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 77; Topete, *Los ojos de la noche*, 203; "Movimientos sociales en el municipio de Chínipas," anonymous manuscript. None of these sources mention the name of the main cacique or the date of these events.

[62] "Ejido El Frijol," http://www.ran.gob.mx/ran/index.php/sistemas-de-consulta/phina, accessed November 24, 2017; Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 76.

followed the tradition of military officers appointed for positions in police corporations. He was known for having led the seizure of the UNISON in 1973 in order to thwart the student movement. The fight against both the Liga and the radical peasant movement led Arellano's to become one of the top counterinsurgency officers in Sonora.[63]

The PJSO caught and tortured several Guarijíos and one of them revealed the location of guerrillas after having his feet burnt. The security forces attempted a pincer movement to smash the guerrilla camp in the Cerro El Frijol, but the group escaped and dispersed through the region.[64] The caciques seized the opportunity to falsely accuse several land petitioners of being involved with the guerrilla movement. Thus, security forces suppressed the peaceful agrarian activists of the branch "Jacinto López" of the UGOCM in Quiriego.[65]

Before the surprise attack at the Cerro El Frijol, part of the group had abandoned the zone and made their way to Chínipas to set up another guerrilla camp led by Salvador Gaytán and Juan Rojo and supported by the Rarámuri communities from the Sierra Baja of Chihuahua.[66] Later on, members of the disbanded group headed to Chínipas to join the new camp but suffered a few accidents along the journey that required medical attention. Therefore, the group decided to set up a temporary camp in the Quiriego-Álamos border with the help of the Guarijío people. They named themselves the "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando (CGOG) and were comprised of a handful of urban revolutionaries and local peasants led by Gabriel Domínguez Rodríguez (1946-1974) "El Cholugo", a former leader of the Lacandon commandos born in the

---

[63] General Miguel Ángel Godínez Bravo, Subchief of Staff of the Presidential Guards, had recommended Arellano Noblecía to that position. Lagarda, *El color de las amapas*, 69.

[64] Lagarda, *El color de las amapas*, 139.

[65] Lagarda, *El color de las amapas*, 73.

[66] Topete, *Los ojos*, 203.

Durango highlands and raised in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. While the CGOG was officially part of the CPMAG, it remained largely isolated from the organization.[67]

Despite its low organizational capacity, in late 1973 the CPMAG established a third guerrilla camp in the municipality of Urique headed by Eleazar Gámez Rascón, "Andrés" as the political leader and José Antonio León Mendívil, "El Negro" as the military instructor.[68] The sixty year-old Rarámuri Arturo Borboa, known as "El tío" or the "Lion of the sierra," taught the group how to survive in the highlands and was the mediator between the Liga and the Indians. Given that most communities were monolingual, Borboa was the only Liga's spokesperson in the commando's political tours, giving speeches in both Rarámuri and Spanish.[69]

Instead of contributing to the development of a single guerrilla *foco*, the three camps operated as independent fronts. They lacked a functional structure and showed a high level of improvisation and disorganization. The Liga's military strategy revealed its shortcomings as the foci quickly lost contact with urban brigades as a result of the detention of some intermediaries in early 1974. Furthermore, the guerrilla activity in the sierra did not prevent repression in the valley as the Liga had expected. [70] For instance, in late February 1974, the security forces tortured, raped, and imprisoned several Liga's members from Hermosillo, Sonora, and killed two of them.[71] This type of repression shocked the public opinion in the Sonora's capital, although

---

[67] Topete, *Los ojos*, 3; José Domínguez, "Cuatro hermanos en la guerrilla", *Nexos*, July 1st, 2004, http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=11194, accessed September 2, 2016.

[68] "El Negro" Mendívil participated in the student movement of Sinaloa since 1968 and was one of the leaders of the *Enfermo* movement. "Toño León: de guerrillero a diputado", *Blog Ojo de gato*, October, 2000, http://likatsin.blogspot.com/2012/09/tono-leon-de-guerrillero-diputado.html, accessed January 20, 2018.

[69] Alejandrina Ávila Sosa, interview with the author, Mexico City, August 3, 2018.

[70] "Declaración de Estanislao Hernández García," AGN, DFS, March 30, 1974, Exp 11-235-74 L-10 H-20.

[71] The virulence of the police response against student-guerrillas stemmed from the fact that they had shot a highly popular traffic officer called Ernesto Morales, "Moralitos," to steal his gun. The city built a monument to

urban dwellers were somewhat indifferent to the events taking place in the highlands. Notwithstanding the odds, the foci were able to survive for almost two years thanks to the support they received from indigenous communities.

The Commandos' Expansion

The Chínipas Commando

In September 1973, the Chínipas commando ventured in San Rafael de Orivo and sabotaged the small local airport—which also served to smuggle drugs—to inhibit the arrival of security forces. Guerrillas established a camp in the surrounding mountains and began to politicize and recruit peasants. In response, the government militarized the Sierra Baja of Chihuahua and distributed troops to every major town.[72] According to Angulo, when troops made inroads into the hamlets, peasants had already fled to mountains because guerrillas had advised them not to give away their scarce food supplies to their enemies. Given the military's inability to rely on locals to explore the region, the government declared a de facto state of siege to coerce peasant support. Soldiers regularly harassed and even killed unarmed peasants.[73]

Systematic abuses led to the rapid growth of the Chínipas commando to the point that peasants represented 95% of the group. On February 1, 1974, the military arrived in San Rafael de Orivo to establish a garrison at the airport. In the dawn of the 2nd, Juan Rojo led the guerrilla assault on the barracks, but underestimated its fortification. Angulo depicted "hungry men, dressed in rags, with guns that went from .22 shotguns, pistols, powerful 30-06, and 7mm rifles

---

commemorate Morales, but the killings of the students were never investigated. Rubén Duarte Rodríguez, *Días de fuego. El movimiento universitario sonorense de los años 70* (Hermosillo: Universidad de Sonora, 2003), 81-93.

[72] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 100.

[73] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 84.

to the fast M-2 and M-1, kicking the government's ass."[74] As guerrillas began to withdraw, they clashed with another military column making their way to San Rafael. In the end, a total of three soldiers and one guerrilla died in combat.[75] The CPMAG criticized the futility of the operation and the commando's tactical errors but believed that the military casualties served as positive propaganda for the Liga.[76]

As one of the very few state institutions in the Chihuahua highlands, the Indigenist Coordinator Center of the Sierra Tarahumara (CCIT) of Guachochi, Chihuahua, received complaints by people who did not want to take part in the conflict. On February 26, 1974, teachers of the elementary boarding school from Rocoroyvo, Uruachi, visited the CCIT. They reported that ten days ago guerrillas had threatened teachers and asked them to close the school and stop collaborating with the military, given that on February 6 the school had provided lodging for the troops who had fled in disarray with wounded soldiers after clashing with the guerrillas.[77] Teachers also observed that guerrillas had recruited both Indians and mestizos in Rocoroyvo, La Paz, San Rafael de Orivo, and other hamlets of the municipality of Chínipas by providing food and weapons to communities. Widespread rumors asserted that there were around

---

[74] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 89.

[75] Topete, *Los ojos de la noche*, 205. The guerrilla Wenceslao Martínez Ochoa died as he covered the withdrawal of the commando. He was a former member of the FER from Jalisco and the only urban cadre in the Chínipas commando along with the nurse Esperanza Flores Robles.

[76] A member of the CPMAG who did not participate in the combat wrote a vague report on the events: "Combate de los obreros revolucionarios de San Rafael de Oribo (sic). Del Comité Político Militar Arturo Gámiz a los obreros y campesinos pobres de la Sierra Tarahumara," *Periódico Madera*, no. 4, (April 1974): 59-60.

[77] The CCIT conveyed information about guerrillas to the headquarters of the National Indigenist Institute (INI), whose director was the renowned Mexican anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. "Oficio No. 39-II-74" February 26, 1974, Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla" de la Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, Box 104, File 073, Record 9, 14-16.

five hundred guerrillas in the region, but it is unlikely because the CPMAG lacked capacity to organize such large numbers of peasants.

Teachers attached to their claims a three-page manifesto where the Chínipas commando explained with a didactic language the causes of its struggle against the government and the capitalists, exemplified in its fight to expel "La Ponderosa" timber company from San Rafael de Orivo and other ejidos. The manifesto proposed a basic program consisting of removing all timber companies from the highlands and destroying their machinery; executing capitalists, security forces' agents, and their allies, like those who sold out the movement, and organizing small commandos with great mobility to monitor the region, proselityze, spy on potential enemies, and steal their weapons. Guerrillas also called in for the alliance of peasants with workers to establish political-military committees aimed at creating a popular revolutionary army. The Chínipas commando emphasized that they were but a small part of a national movement fighting for a socialist revolution.[78]

In an unknown date of early 1974, the Chínipas commando had a skirmish with the military in Guacharare, Chínipas, in which the peasant guerrilla Roberto Aguilar, "Tito" perished. This loss motivated his wife Isabel Jiménez to join the commando. She was nicknamed "the widow" and participated in the "expropriation" of the rancher Jesús Palma in El Limón ejido. The commando roughly had thirty members and Jiménez was the only woman, although there were many more female collaborators in the *ejidos* mentioned by the DFS reports.[79]

---

[78] This manifest is one of the few existing sources to know the CPMAG's discourse to recruit peasants. "A los campesinos y obreros," February 26, 1974, Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla," Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, Box 104, File 073, Record 9, 17-19.

[79]"Estado de Sonora," February 13, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-25, H-131.

On June 17, 1974, Salvador Gaytán, the Rodríguez brothers, and thirteen members of the Chínipas commando set fire to a sawmill owned by "La Ponderosa" in Rocoroyvo. Before spreading gasoline on it, one of the leaders gave a speech denouncing the military and the timber company, while militants distributed CPMAG propaganda to the workers and stole three boxes of dynamite. Later, on their way to Basachi, Bocoyna, the group burnt a loader and attacked a logging truck, forcing the driver and his front passenger to push the vehicle full of lumber off a cliff.[80] Guerrillas had no casualties but Salvador Gaytán was wounded in a leg during the assault and "the widow" helped him escape.[81]

The DFS report on the assault suggested that Evaristo Velazquillo, the former *ejido* commissar of Rocoroyvo, was a guerrilla supporter. This case would not be the exception, given that the authorities of several ejidos collaborated with the commandos. In fact, the CPMAG was able to carry out spectacular operations given its organic integration to peasant communities. Scholars have usually seen the PdlP and the ACNR of Guerrero as the only guerrilla movements of the 1970s with a rural social base, but the CPMAG's case also must be considered.

The *Periódico Madera* reproduced a couple of letters by two northwestern committees in relation to the Rocoroyvo's assault. The first letter criticized the operation's lack of concrete goals, while the other stated that it was relevant because "for the first time the masses of the region organized independently to fight against their exploiters; they abandoned the utopia of conquering their demands by legal means, and broke with the strong bonds of the bourgeois ideology regarding the rule of law, while marching and imposing their demands by the strength

[80] "Estado de Chihuahua", June 18, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-17, H-132-133.

[81] Alejandrina Ávila Sosa, interview with the author, Mexico City, August 3, 2018.

of their unity and their weapons."[82] The Liga encouraged either the expropriation or destruction of the means of production as a way to sabotage the exploitation of labor, but it failed to reflect on how this tactic resonated with the early nineteenth-century Luddite movement that Marx had criticized for being a revolt at a time when workers had not realized their enemies were not the material instruments of production but the form of society that utilized those instruments.[83]

The guerrilla attacks unleashed a wave of state terror in the highlands that echoed the days of the nineteenth-century Tomóchic rebellion. On September 1, 1974, the military detained and killed the Rarámuri governor of Bacusinare, Monterde, Feliciano Rivas Campos, "Gervasio," and Dionicio Trillas Murillo, who had participated in both the Chínipas and Quiriego commandos. Rivas' head was found in a canyon nearby Monterde.[84] Other peasants were hanged in trees or tossed alive into canyons. Angulo reported the case of a military plane that left three defaced corpses in the town of Chínipas. The practices of beheading, hanging, and desecrating corpses were a holdover of the 1910 revolution, but the performance of forced disappearance became a PRI innovation.

By October 2nd, 1974, the CCIT reported to the INI's headquarters in Mexico City about the recently created Indigenist Coordinator Center of the Sierra Baja Tarahumara in Témoris, Guazapares, and urged authorities to improve the roads and highways of the Sierra to facilitate communication between Témoris and other towns. Although the report failed to allude to counterinsurgency campaigns, it is evident that the haste to improve communications was intended for that purpose. The CCIT also explained the problems Indians faced in Monterde,

---

[82] "Carta del Comité de Coordinación del Trabajo Subserrano en el Noroeste al Comité Político Militar 'Arturo Gámiz'," *Periódico Madera*, no. 4, April 1974: 18.

[83] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 554-555.

[84] Topete, *Los ojos de la noche*, 203-204.

Guazapares, an ejido with a population of more than one hundred Rarámuri and mestizo *ejidatarios* and more than two hundred Rarámuri people excluded from land possession. "La Ponderosa" advised *ejidatarios* to reject land distribution among the dispossessed, while the Chínipas commando defended the latter and recruited many of them.[85] Notwithstanding their lack of experience, the recruits had to participate in skirmishes with the military.

The CCIT claimed that the Rarámuri people were terrorized and caught between supporting either the military or the guerrillas, and eventually suffered retaliation from both sides. The CCIT made a list of fifteen Bacusinare's peasants who had been in that situation and demanded protection to authorities. The CCIT proposed that agrarian authorities intervened to legalize land possession for all excluded peasants and turn Monterde into a forestry ejido with the advisory of government programs. The CCIT expected that by using only legal means the *ejidos* of Monterde, San Rafael de Orivo, and Rocoroyvo would be able to limit the power of "La Ponderosa."[86]

When the CCIT pointed out the intervention of state institutions as if it were an innovative solution for the conflict between estate owners and peasants, it seemed to neglect that peasant rights were one of the foundations of the post-revolutionary state. However, the federal government did not even follow the CCIT's plan. In 1980 the Secretariat of Agrarian Reform (SRA) addressed the Monterde's conflict by deepening the community division: it stripped land rights to several peasants for alleged inactivity and granted their plots to other petitioners.[87]

---

[85] "Informe Especial," October 2nd, 1974, Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla" de la Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, Box 128, File 97, Record 7, 1-3.

[86] "Informe Especial", 4.

[87] "Resolución sobre privación de derechos agrarios y nuevas adjudicaciones de unidades de dotación en el ejido del poblado denominado Monterde, Municipio de Guazapares, Chihuahua," Diario Oficial de la Federación,

Among the newly dispossessed peasants were the former guerrillas Feliciano Rivas and Dionisio Meraz.

The language in the CCIT reports suggested that the institution did not seek to resolve the causes of rural violence but instead to prevent indigenous peasants from collaborating with the Liga. There are no known sources to confirm that the INI followed a master counterinsurgency plan, but it is beyond doubt that it served as a front of the civic action programs by the Echeverría administration. Also, given that the state did not have an espionage network in the Sierra Tarahumara, the CCIT reports were sent to the DFS headquarters.[88] Thus, when Angulo assumed that the INI staff, teachers, and other state workers sent to the highlands acted as government's spies, he was on the mark.

Angulo had sharp ideological differences with the Chínipas commando and argued that the creation of three independent *focos* in the sierra had stemmed from class divisions. In regard to the agrarian position of Chínipas, he stated:

> The quarrel that the poor peasant has against the cacique does not pose a revolutionary movement; it is a desperate form of radicalization due to poverty, the government's demagogic offers, and a remnant of the agrarian movement of the 1930s. That was the central difference between the Chínipas' group and us. We could say that they won their war, given that the government distributed land in the zone; we lost or have yet to win ours because class divisions and poverty continue.[89]

Angulo implied that the extermination of the Chínipas commando was due to its agrarian politics. In addition, the commando based its political-military strategy on spectacular actions as well as the incorporation of guerrillas into the everyday life of peasants. For instance, Angulo

---

02/12/1980, http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=4847825&fecha=12/02/1980, accessed January 27, 2018.

[88] I located the same documents about the CPMAG by the CCIT in both the Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México in Chihuahua and the AGN-DFS in Mexico City.

[89] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 46.

described situations where guerrillas used the Liga's money to solve family problems. Angulo also dismissed the Chínipas commando by claiming that its politics were parochial and an extension of domestic bourgeois programs, while the CGOG formed part of the international revolutionary movement.[90] Despite their lack of international activity, the Liga's cadres maintained that its movement was but another scenario of the global war against capitalism, an example of proletarian internationalism. By setting internationalism above localism, the cadres believed they were rendering the ultimate proof of revolutionary purity. Hence, the divisions between student-guerrillas and radical peasants proved irreconcilable.

Salvador Gaytán behaved as if he stood above the CONAL and Angulo expelled him from the Liga by mid-1974, thus provoking the isolation of the Chínipas commando. Unlike urban guerrillas, peasants neither had military training nor knowledge about security measures or where to obtain weapons; they acted more spontaneously and became an easy counterinsurgency target. Salvador Gaytán descended to the valleys by June 1974 to cure his wounded leg, while Juan Rojo defected. Angulo acknowledged that he never wanted to negotiate the reconciliation with them because he saw the agrarianists as a case of opportunism.[91] As it was evident that Gaytán and Rojo would not return to the highlands, members of the Chínipas commando visited the CGOG to ask them for political leadership, but Gabriel Domínguez denied their petition because they no longer belonged to the Liga. However, the Chínipas commando continued as a local group. The Rodríguez brothers of San Rafael de Orivo, and Rubén Aguilar—the brother of

---

[90] Topete, *Los ojos*, 46.

[91] Angulo, *Nos volveremos,* 122.

the fallen Roberto Aguilar—fought over leadership of the group, but sources do not reveal the outcome of this dispute.[92]

On February 11, 1975, a rancher from Guazizaco, Chihuahua—a town next to San Rafael de Orivo—informed Captain Luis García Jiménez in San Bernardo about guerrilla activity in the municipality of Chínipas. According to the DFS report, the snitch explained that long-haired, bearded men had arrived in the region three years ago, forcing the people who disagreed with them to abandon San Rafael de Orivo. He also denounced guerrilla collaborators in Guazizaco and committed to serving as a guide for the military in the region.[93] Other reports allude to guerrilla activity in the border of Chihuahua and Sonora by late 1975.[94]

The *Corrido of Pedro Rodríguez* by the corrido singer from Chínipas, Maurilio Velducea Sotelo, is the last piece of information about the Chínipas commando. It narrates that five local guerrillas arrived in the region by plane on March 25, 1976, and fled to the highlands, but given that the *federales* (the military) were casually there, the guerrillas Pedro Rodríguez and Nicho [Trillas] died in combat in Tierra Blanca, Guazapares the following day. Federal forces tied the corpses to beasts of burden and took them to the town hall of Chínipas, where people from San Rafael de Orivo went to identify them.[95] Troops of the 4th Military Zone searched for guerrillas until late 1976, when they confirmed that the armed movement had been entirely eliminated.

---

[92] "Estado de Sonora," February 2nd, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-25, H-131-132.

[93] "Estado de Sonora," February 2nd, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-25, H-131-132.

[94] "Estado de Sonora," June 26, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-34, H-34, and "Estado de Sonora," November 24, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-34, H-99.

[95] Maurilio Verducea Sotelo, "Corrido de Pedro Rodríguez," April 1976 (see appendix 1, corrido no. 2) and "Movimientos sociales en el municipio de Chínipas" (anonymous unpublished manuscript in author's possession). The latter contains an interview to a dweller of Chínipas who vaguely described the conflict from 1974 to 1976 and enlisted some of the victims of state terror in the municipality. Ignacio Lagarda shared with me a copy of the corrido and the death certificate of Pedro Rodríguez, who was buried in the cemetery of Chínipas.

Thus, the history of the Rarámuri guerrilla movement began and ended with the deeds of Pedro Rodríguez, "Gabino."

The Urique Commando

In the municipality of Urique, the Liga had collaborators in Cerocahui, Bahuichivo, and other small *rancherías*.[96] According to a DFS investigation, in the neighboring municipality of Guadalupe y Calvo the Liga had sympathizers among federal teachers and military reservists in Tohayana, Las Pilas del Potrerillo, Calabacilla, San José de Cruces, and San Juan Nepomuceno, with which guerrillas held political meetings (see appendix 1, map 4).[97] Locals called guerrillas "the students" or "cuiras," which came from the Rarámuri greeting "cuira" (hello) that guerrillas overused. The commando worked with both indigenous and mestizo people.

According to Angulo, while Chínipas and Quiriego resembled a backward Porfirian society, Urique had a higher level of capitalist development and offered better conditions for guerrilla warfare because of its deep canyons. Angulo acknowledged that Urique had been a poppy and marijuana producer since they began to be used as drugs—an undefined point in time—although he believed that the population had not seen *guachos* (soldiers) before guerrillas arrived in the area. He asserted that the alleged anti-drug campaigns helped the military snatch weapons from peasants and search for guerrillas, but he failed to see drug production as a major concern.[98]

---

[96] "Estado de Sonora," April 3, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-10, H-56-57.

[97] "Estado de Chihuahua," August 26, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-21, H-140. The report mentions San José de Gracia, but the correct name is San José de Cruces.

[98] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 127.

The Urique commando perpetrated random ambushes against security forces, not in the canyons but in the bordering zone with the Sinaloa valleys. For instance, Angulo described the assault of a single guerrilla against a military bus in the El Fuerte valley, Sinaloa, which left three dead soldiers and many wounded. The shooter, Tomás Lizárraga, and his companion Alberto Domínguez managed to escape to the highlands.[99] The armed forces increased its presence in the region through checkpoints and recognition flights, although they did not have direct clashes with guerrillas. Angulo claimed that by October 1974 a series of proselytist events among railroad workers from El Fuerte to Bahuichivo, Chihuahua led to the military siege of the three-state zone, forming a triangle between Bahuichivo, San Rafael de Orivo, and San Bernardo.

Urique was the only *foco* that maintained a fluid communication with the valleys, but it initially oriented its politics in a bid to take control of the CPMAG's leadership. The Urique commando disagreed with Gaytán's armed agrarianism and followed the Liga's line, but Eleazar Gámez, "Andrés," was dissatisfied with Angulo's role. Furthermore, the struggle for power between Ignacio Salas, "Oseas" and Manuel Gámez, "Julio"—number one and two of the Liga—disrupted the politics of the commando. The confrontation was related to Salas' opposition to any alliance with groups who did not accept the Liga's ideology and leadership. On the contrary, Gámez advocated for what he ironically referred to as "the little question" (*la cuestíncula*), namely the need to link the armed struggle to the social movements nationwide, calling his approach "the party-masses linkage theory."[100]

---

[99] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 96. The author did not provide the date of the assault.

[100] The issue number four of the *Periódico Madera* contains several articles written by "Oseas" describing at length the fight against the party linkage theory. Former members of the Liga also explained the purge of the *cuestínculos*, see Melchor Inzunza & Andrés Montoya, "Entrevista con Cástulo Anselmo Alejo Armenta y Gonzalo Inzunza Cervantes," Culiacán, Sinaloa, 1979-1980, https://sinaloatv.mx/?p=2679, accessed January 25, 2018.

Manuel Gámez was suspected of betrayal because his alleged mistakes had resulted in the fall of several members of the organization. He was officially expelled from the Liga on February 1974, while his followers, dubbed "the little question guys" (*los cuestínculos*), were politically purged for their supposed democratism and opportunism. It seems that Salas convinced the CONAL to have Manuel Gámez executed as a punishment for a betrayal that no one ever demonstrated.[101] By March 1974, Angulo visited the Urique commando to expel Eleazar Gámez. He accepted his expulsion because he had not been able to contact his brother Manuel, then left the highlands to search for him. Arturo Borboa, "the lion of the sierra," also protested the purge against the Gámez brothers by defecting from the Liga.[102] As Salvador Gaytán learned about Eleazar's removal, he expelled the only two students left in the Chínipas commando, Jesús Manuel Cadena Loya, "Fabián Teporaca" and Esperanza Flores, "Paty."[103] The couple then joined the Urique commando, whose new leader was León Mendívil.

The Urique commando lessened its work with indigenous communities and focused on its relationship to the sawmill workers of La ponderosa, who refused their incorporation into the

---

[101] Evidence suggests that Manuel Gámez was executed before the third national meeting by the CONAL took place on April 4th, 1974. The topic of internal executions raises the sharpest controversies among the Liga's survivors, who are divided between those who admit the existence of this practice and the deniers. In the case of Manuel Gámez, there is evidence that he was executed by his former comrades, like the statements by guerrillas who were arrested and tortured by the DFS, and the testimony by a potential witness. After searching for his brother during years, Eleazar Gámez also came to that conclusion. Pascal Beltrán del Río, "Las ejecuciones internas de la guerrilla," *Proceso*, no. 1321, February 24, 2002: 18-21; "Declaración de Juan Carlos Olivo Flores," AGN, DFS, May 17, 1974, Exp. 11-235-74, L-11, H-239; "Declaración de Leonor Hortencia Baños Alvarez," AGN, DFS, August 28, 1975, Exp. 11-235-75, L-33, H-70-75; and Héctor Ibarra Chávez, "Surgimiento, auge y debacle del movimiento estudiantil sinaloense en los años setenta: Movimiento de Los Enfermos," in *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: Cuatro décadas a debate*, Gamiño et al. eds., 222.

[102] Borboa either hid in another region or the security forces captured him. Reyes Peláez, *Introducción a la historia de la guerrilla*, 144.

[103] Cadena Loya was a student from Chihuahua who had joined the MAR in 1968 and received military training in North Korea. He was also one of the urban cadres who collaborated with the Peasant Justice Brigade of the Party of the Poor in the Sierra de Atoyac, Guerrero; given his expertise, the Liga sent him to the Golden Quadrilateral. Pineda, *En las profundidades del MAR*, 184.

Liga but accepted political advice from guerrillas to form a union. Workers provided food to guerrillas and taught them to hunt.[104] Furthermore, given that both rustlers and *narcos* threatened the *serrano* traders' safety, León Mendívil offered the latter to exchange protection for supplies. In this way, the Urique commando created a collaborative network with people who did not support the armed struggle. It was a matter of survival, but when Angulo visited the Urique camp in late 1974, he disavowed such strategy and removed León Mendívil from the commando's directorship.[105]

Angulo accused León Mendívil and Alejandrina Ávila of being sissies (*blandengues*) because they proved incapable of killing caciques and guachos. Ávila reckons that they did not kill anyone because Arturo Borboa asked them to respect locals given the kinship networks in the region. "If you killed a rich man you could get in trouble with his poor relatives, because people did not have class consciousness," she claimed.[106] In Urique, class and race identities were not so polarized; therefore, the Liga could not promote its binary worldview that had proved successful in Chínipas and Quiriego, where virtually all Indians were dispossessed, and all Whites had property.

On January 1975, the Urique and Quiriego commandos merged but decided to leave the highlands to settle down in the town. There was an argument in the new commando concerning whether the conditions existed to continue the armed struggle. Ávila and León Mendívil decided to return to civil life. The commando split in La Reforma, Chihuahua and Angulo's group followed the Chepe's track. Ávila and León Mendívil crossed over the poppy region, but when a

---

[104] Alejandrina Ávila, Interview with the author, Mexico City, August 3rd, 2018.

[105] Gustavo Hirales, *Memoria de la guerra de los justos*, 255-256.

[106] Alejandrina Ávila, Interview with the author, Mexico City, August 3rd, 2018.

drug grower noticed that the path they followed would cause them to run into soldiers, he offered them to show them an alternative route.[107] They left the Sierra for good on February 19, 1975, the same day the federal government celebrated the military with an official ceremony in each of the country's military zones. The couple knew in advance that troops had to attend the party and would cut-back on their siege of the sierra. With this opening, the last members of the disintegrated commando were able to flee unnoticed from the zone.[108] Once in town, León Mendívil and Ávila joined the so-called "rectifiers"—a group of former guerrillas who believed that the armed struggle had proven to be the wrong path and became very critical of the Liga.

The "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando (CGOG, a.k.a the Quiriego commando)

While the Chínipas commando had the largest number of clashes with the military and the Urique commando was the only one that intervened in the Liga's politics, the CGOC performed the most pervasive political work in the Sierra Baja of Sonora. By mid-1974, the CGOG had five permanent members: the political leader Gabriel Domínguez, the military leader Carlos Ceballos, Miguel Topete, Plutarco Domínguez, and Hermenegildo Ruelas, "El Chapul," a Guarijío violin player from Machilibampo, Quiriego.[109] The CGOG also had several collaborators and occasionally acquired members from the other commandos to assist with executing key missions.

The CGOG followed the Liga's orthodoxy, but given its geographical isolation, it stayed out of the internecine strife that consumed the organization in 1974. Isolation, however, enabled

[107] Alejandrina Ávila, Interview with the author, Mexico City, August 3rd, 2018.

[108] Guillermo Manzano, "Toño León: de guerrillero a diputado."

[109] Topete, *Los ojos*, 189-202.

the commando to explore a vast area around Quiriego and San Bernardo, establishing close-knit relationships with Guarijío communities in the Mayo river bank through political tours (see appendix 1, map 5). Notwithstanding the extreme poverty of the Guarijío people, guerrillas greatly benefited from the *serrano* tradition to offer food to strangers. Topete claimed that the commando had talked to one thousand families and the majority became guerrilla sympathizers.[110] Unlike the Chínipas commando, which created expectations for short-term solutions, the CGOG anticipated that the war would be prolonged and grievous because of the enemy's strength, and it would take several generations to defeat him. Hence, there would not be immediate rewards for anyone.[111]

The CGOG perpetrated several spectacular actions that began with the successful kidnapping of Don Gilo Sáenz on January 16, 1974. According to the DFS, this act fostered a climate of fear among the rich of Sonora, who were afraid of being targeted.[112] Given that it was the first political kidnapping in the state, a broad set of authorities intervened in the investigation: the municipal police of Álamos; Francisco Arellano Noblecía and Pedro Ignacio Trelles, chief and subchief of the PJSO; Francisco Sahagún Baca, commander of the Federal Judicial Police (PJF) in Sonora; the Sonora's branch of the DFS; and a military battalion commanded by Major

[110] Topete, *Los ojos*, 131.

[111] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 109.

[112] "Estado de Sonora," January 17, 1974, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1085, 24. Only three months later, on March 22, 1974 the U.S. Vice-consul in Hermosillo, Sonora John Patterson was kidnapped and then murdered. The authorities originally assumed that the Liga was responsible, but an investigation proved that it was not a politically motivated crime; the perpetrator was an American citizen, the former prisoner of war Bobby Joe Keesee. However, this high-profile kidnapping contributed to the climate of fear in the state. "Patterson Kidnap/Murder: The United States v. Keesee," November 22, 1974, Department of State, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974STATE258308_b.html, accessed August 15, 2018.

Arturo Cardona Pérez, Army Subchief of Staff of the 4th Military Zone of Hermosillo.[113] None of these authorities prevented the Liga from collecting the one million pesos ransom that the Sáenz family paid. Don Gilo was released on February 3 and returned to his home after spending an entire day walking through the Sierra Baja.

From March 9 to 13, 1974, the PJS apprehended several scapegoats among peasants, but also some guerrilla supporters, like Severo Zazueta, Victoriano Ruelas Ciriaco, Francisco Acuña and Epigmenio Ramírez. As Ruelas attempted to escape the police shot him dead. Twelve days later, through confessions extracted under torture, the PJSO traced and arrested the Liga's leader in Ciudad Obregón, Estanislao Hernández García, who was responsible for coordinating between the Sierra Baja and the Yaqui Valley.[114] Mario Sánchez Galán, the DFS chief in Sonora, reported to its headquarters that Arellano Noblecía was mistreating and intentionally starving Hernández without following proper interrogation procedures. Given the wealth of information that Hernández possessed, Sánchez Galán asked his superior authorities to intervene and have him sent to his office.[115]

The PJSO authorized Hernández's relocation to a secret prison in the Military Camp No. 1 in Mexico City to be interrogated by the DFS sub-chief Miguel Nazar Haro, even though the detainee had already been presented to the media in Sonora.[116] After authorities temporarily

---

[113] Francisco Sahagún Baca was one of the best-known counterinsurgency agents of the dirty war. In the following years, both Sahagún and Arturo Cardona Pérez would be the protagonists of media scandals for their drug-related activities, a topic that I will develop in chapter five.

[114] Estanislao Hernández was a former member of the MAR-23 trained in North Korea, who had also been a military instructor of the Peasant Justice Brigade of the Party of the Poor in Guerrero. Fernando Pineda, *En las profundidades del MAR,* 107.

[115] "Estado de Sonora," March 26, 1974, AGN, DFS, 11-235-74, L-10, H-41-42.

[116] "Declaración de Estanislao Hernández García," AGN, DFS, March 30, 1974, Exp 11-235-74, L-10, H-50-52. The security forces also arrested Juan Gutiérrez, Manuela Flores, Marisol Orozco Vega, María Elisa García, and a dozen

disappeared Hernández, they transferred him to the Lecumberri federal prison. According to Ignacio Lagarda, Don Gilo refused to make a criminal complaint against his abductors, although this offense is prosecuted ex-officio.[117] The great deal of resources invested in the investigation of such a marginal crime revealed that the authorities saw the Liga as a national security concern.

As more guerrillas were detained, the CGOG lost any connection to the Liga in the valleys. DFS reports regarding guerrilla collaborators in the Sierra Tarahumara, describe them as "a group of unaware peasants [*inconscientes*] without ideology, who collaborate with the 'Arturo Gámiz' Commando under pressure."[118] The DFS denied that the *inconscientes* had any agency or a political agenda. During 1974, the military raided the Guarijío communities to plunder, torture, kill, and imprison the alleged guerrilla support bases. The CGOG proved incapable of protecting them, a shortcoming that Topete regarded as "politically unjustifiable."[119] Paradoxically, the brutality of the security forces compelled many peasants to become guerrilla collaborators.

Given the lack of sources, it is difficult to know the version by the rank-and-file soldiers who participated in the counterinsurgency campaigns, but some official reports are self-incriminating. On March 14, 1974, the DFS along with the PJSO and the municipal police of both Ciudad Obregón and Guaymas, arrested Ricardo Rodríguez Moreno, who belonged to a Liga's cell in Esperanza, Sonora. He stated that soldiers belonging to the 18th Cavalry Regiment from Esperanza who were his friends, informed him that they had killed and tortured several

---

of collaborators of the Liga; all of them had had a minor participation in the kidnapping, serving as messengers and providers.

[117] Lagarda, *El color de las ampas*, 88.

[118] "Organigrama de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre," reproduced in Alonso Vargas, *Los guerrilleros mexicalenses*, 32.

[119] Topete, *Los ojos*, 52.

people in the Sonora highlands because they were following orders, although they did not agree with those actions. Rodríguez also claimed that a sergeant from that same regiment offered to be his personal gun dealer and revealed that he smuggled drugs from Mexico into the United States.[120] It seems that the pattern of officers who were involved in both drug smuggling and counterinsurgency was already recurring at that time.

On May 2, 1974, the CGOG ambushed and killed Agapito Enríquez Argüelles and Agapito Enríquez Rosas Jr., heads of the cacique family that owned vast portions of the Sierra Baja and was responsible for oppressing the Guarijío nation since the nineteenth century. The double execution was a turning point in the relations between caciques and Indians. The DFS reported that on June 30, 1974, in the *ranchería* of "Los Algodones", close to San Bernardo, there was a meeting of seven members of the Liga with local peasants. The CGOG handed out a mimeo explaining that it had killed the *Agapitos* because of their collaboration with the military to identify and torture peasants. The Enríquez had also lent their estate for the military to set up their barracks. The CGOG made a call to exterminate capitalists and traitors for being enemies of the revolution.[121]

Months later, in a reckless act, guerrillas attended the annual Independence Day ball dance at San Bernardo to provoke a clash with the PJSO, but the latter did not show up. In those days, the General Command of the 4th Military Zone informed the DFS about the presence of fourteen "long-hairs" in the Guajaray ejido, but the military never located them.[122] A couple of days later, the CGOG went to the "Las Pamelas" hydrometric station near San Bernardo and

---

[120] "Estado de Sonora," March 3rd, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-8, H-18-19.

[121] "Estado de Sonora," July 6, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-19, H-32-33.

[122] "Estado de Sonora," September 18, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-21, H-23.

stole thirty sticks of dynamite.[123] On September 23, the commando commemorated the Madera assault by burning the Agapitos' hacienda in Burapaco and the military barracks inside. The unfolding of guerrilla power counterbalanced the effects of state terror on communities, which helped explain the Guarijío loyalty to the CGOG until the end of the conflict.

The *serrano* upper class never expected to bear witness to political upheaval in the region, while indigenous people longed for a change and were receptive to the message of the young men dubbed as *Mechudos* (long hairs), who promised that the revolution would put an end to divisions between the rich and the poor. In the Rarámuri and Guarijío languages, the word *yori* means both "White people" and "devil's children." In the Guarijío worldview, the devil is the eldest brother of God and may be stronger than him, which explained the submission of Guarijíos to the *yoris*.[124]

According to Angulo, the Guarijíos did not perceive guerrillas as *yoris* or Indians and called them *Mechudos* to emphasize that they were a new category of "strange people."[125] Guarijíos typically distrusted *yoris* and foreigners, but they crossed the racial line because they saw the *Mechudos* as allies against the caciques. The fact that the majority of non-indigenous guerrillas were from the northwest and had a similar accent to locals contributed to a better understanding among each other.[126]

---

[123] "Estado de Sonora," September 20, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-21, H-276.

[124] About the Guarijío worldview see Alejandro Aguilar Zeleny and José Luis Moctezuma, *Los pueblos indígenas del noroeste: atlas etnográfico* (Mexico City: INAH, 2013).

[125] This was an exceptional perception considering that some *Mechudos* had white skin and ligh-colored eyes. Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 66.

[126] Esteban Vega Zazueta, interview with the author, San Bernardo, Álamos, Sonora, May 17, 2017.

The war polarized the Sierra Baja Tarahumara. Caciques teamed up with the military and the PJSO against guerrillas but had little support from peasants. While some Guarijíos sided with their *patrones* (bosses), the majority refused to cooperate with security forces and many supported the guerrillas. The CGOG recruited the most politically advanced Guarijíos, among them: Celestino Ruelas, "*Tío* Celes," an 84-year-old *maynate* (shaman), who was one of the most respected figures of the Guarijío nation; Severo Zazueta, "Zacarías", and his wife Carmen Zazueta, "Juana" from Bavícora, Álamos.[127] Celestino told his people that guerrillas were *amotitia*, which in Guarijío language means "like you". Thus, people no longer perceived guerrillas as foreigners and began to call them the *Mechudos of Celestino*.

Guerrillas undervalued the importance of having an indigenous peasant woman in their commando. "Juana" embodied the most oppressed sectors in the class, race, and gender hierarchies. Despite her illiteracy and the fact that she grew up in a patriarchal society, the Liga's message about putting an end to the causes of poverty emboldened her to become a militant. Nevertheless, guerrillas believed that "Juana" did not meet their fitness standards and she was expelled just three months after joining the commando. Guerrillas also manifested their dislike for her because she had become Celestino's lover after she broke up with Severo. Celestino left with her and caused the commando to lose its most valuable allies.[128]

The commando's attitude toward "Juana" reveals a deep gender gap in the organization. Topete and Angulo also removed the presence of women from their testimonies even though

---

[127] The *yori* people had an active role in identifying the Guarijío guerrillas. On July 9, 1974, the DFS reported that locals informed to members of the 4th Military Zone deployed in Álamos that they have seen Celestino Ruelas, Felipe Baca, Severo Rodríguez (sic), and his wife Carmen along with three long-haired bearded men on the way to San Agustín, Chihuahua. The troops attempted to chased them but did not find them. "Estado de Sonora," July 9, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-20, H-131.

[128] Topete, *Los ojos*, 150.

they participated in the CPMAG as leaders, nurses, messengers, and combatants. The Liga was the guerrilla organization with the highest female membership in the country, yet it lacked a women's agenda. The scarce mentioning of women in available sources limits our understanding of how female guerrillas dealt with clandestine life, patriarchy, and state terror in the highlands.[129]

Other female survivors of the Golden Quadrilateral have not written yet about their participation in the Liga, except for María de la Paz Quintanilla (1947), a student from the University of Nuevo León and a former member of the MEP, who served as the state coordinator of Sonora's urban brigades. She wrote a short testimony where she claimed that the Liga appointed leadership positions without making gender distinctions as in her case.[130]

Former female guerrillas from other Liga's fronts sustained that they saw their participation as a subversion of gender roles *per se*, and shared the common socialist view that women's rights would be enacted after the triumph of the revolution.[131] The lack of discussion about women's issues within the organization may have resulted from the fact that female guerrillas were not acquainted with feminist currents for having labeled them a "petit-bourgeois thinking," and also because men outnumbered women by far.

---

[129] Alejandrina Ávila and Esperanza Flores Robles, "Paty," were the only women who stayed in the rural commandos for one year and a half given their roles as nurses. Robles passed away in 2008. I was able to conduct an interview with Ávila, but despite our four-hour conversation there were topics we could not tackle, like the gender relationships in the Liga.

[130] "Intervención de María de la Paz Quintanilla Vargas" in *Guerrilleras. Antología de testimonios y textos sobre la participación de las mujeres en los movimientos armados socialistas en México*, Luz Aguilar, ed. (Mexico City: n. p., 2014), 68.

[131] See a variety of female testimonies in Aguilar ed., *Guerrilleras* and Lucía Rayas, "Women and the Guerrilla Experience", in *Challenging Authoritarianism*, 167-181.

The End of the Guerrilla Dream in the Highlands

There is a noticeable contrast between the resources invested by the security forces to locate guerrillas and the analysis made by the DFS about the real impact of the so-called "subversive movement" in Sonora. A report of October 9, 1974 suggested that a climate of social peace prevailed among students, peasants, workers, and teachers, and portrayed the Liga as the sole agitator. The report summarized the activity performed by the three commandos in the highlands of Sonora and Chihuahua and the urban guerrillas' tactics, which consisted of agitation and the dissemination of propaganda among students and laborers, expropriations, and the execution of police agents in order to steal their weapons and terrorize the security forces in cities like Ciudad Obregón, Novojoa, and Hermosillo. The DFS also listed the names of the twenty-seven guerrillas serving a prison sentence in Sonora.[132] The report makes clear that authorities were overconfident about their capacity to destroy the Liga. They could not foresee that it would survive until 1981.

On November 19, 1974, the CGOG sent David Valenzuela, a reliable Guarijío collaborator, to deliver a message in San Bernardo, but a *yori* spotted him and informed the military. Valenzuela was subsequently captured and after four days of being tortured revealed the location of the guerrilla camp at La Ventanita, which was amidst two hills next to the Arroyo Guajaray creek. On the dawn of November 24, troops led by Captain Luis García Jiménez ambushed the camp. According to Topete, soldiers threw a grenade into the creek and initiated an intense shooting. The grenade exploded near Gabriel Domínguez and Severo Zazueta causing them serious injuries; they were still screaming when soldiers finished them off. Topete, Plutarco Domínguez, and "El Chapul" were also injured, but Topete and Ceballos managed to fight back

[132] "Panorama del Estado de Sonora," October 9, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-74, L-22, H-247-48.

and escaped together. Plutarco and "El Chapul" also fled in different directions. Survivors found a way out because the military had not completed the siege. According to Lagarda, the *yoris* of San Bernardo criticized the troops for having avoided frontal combat despite their geostrategic superiority, as if they were afraid of guerrillas.[133]

The communities in close proximity to La Ventanita heard the grenade blast. In interview with the author, the first thing that witnesses remembered was "the day of the explosion," and how the military ordered Guarijío peasants to load the guerrilla corpses on mules to take them to San Bernardo to bury them in the cemetery. The image of the dismembered bodies left a long-lasting impression on *serranos*. Hermenegildo Valenzuela brought up that his brother David had isolated himself from the community and barely left his house.[134] By being one of the very few Guarijíos who sold out the *Mechudos*, David lost the trust of the pro-guerrilla community.

The official version diverges significantly from the accounts by Topete and local witnesses. Two days after the ambush, the garrison in San Bernardo reported to the General Commando of the 4th Military Zone that as its flying column approached the guerrilla camp, the "malefactors" opened fire on troops, but soldiers repelled the aggression and killed two guerrillas, while two more escaped. Captain García withheld information about his troops breaking fundamental principles outlined in the Geneva Conventions, such as the prohibition of harming combatants when they are outside the frame of hostilities.[135] Also, the photographs of

---

[133] Lagarda, *El color de las amapas,* 122. See the corrido "Arriba de Guajaray" (*Upward Guajaray*) by Miguel Topete in the appendix 2, no. 1.

[134] Hermenegildo Valenzuela Taya, interview with the author, Guajaray, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

[135] The report also describes what the military founded in the camp, namely weaponry, dynamite, walkie-talkies, medical supplies, literacy materials, books by Marx, Lenin, and Mao, the Liga's propaganda, the *Periódico Madera*, fourteen notebooks by guerrillas, and everyday life supplies. According to the legal framework, the guerrillas were caught in *flagrante delicto* for conspiracy and stockpiling of weapons, thereby the military should have arrested

the corpses that the military sent to the DFS for their identification show two men partially wrapped in portable stretchers, thus preventing a close look at their torn bodies (see appendix 2, figs. 3, 4, and 7).[136]

Topete and Ceballos found a safe haven among their Guarijío supporters, while “El Chapul” lost contact with the group and Plutarco disappeared.[137] However, official documents might shed light on Plutarco’s whereabouts. On January 21, 1975, the DFS reported that the 4th Military Zone had received information about the location of two decomposed corpses in a cave near the Arroyo Guajaray creek. Troops visited the site believing the corpses belonged to the two wounded guerrillas who had escaped during the raid.[138] However, the report does not provide further details about the cause of death, the treatment of the bodies or their identification.[139]

Topete and Ceballos attempted to rebuild the CGOG by recruiting more Guarijíos and also sought to re-establish communication with the Urique commando. In December 1974, Angulo and Lizárraga visited the CGOG for the first time in nine months and explained to their comrades that the state’s extermination policy had decimated the Liga, including several of its leaders, and its remaining cadres were caught up in mutual recriminations and numerous splits.

---

them instead of bombing the camp. “Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre,” November 26, 1974, Exp. 11-235-74, L-23, H-181-182.

[136] The corpses were buried on November 25 without having an autopsy, even though it was mandatory. The DFS observed that one of the deads was a local Indian but it only proved interested in searching for the identity of the white man. “Estado de Sonora,” November 28, 1974, Exp. 11-235-74, L-23, H-202-206. See pictures in the appendix #

[137] Lagarda, *El color de las amapas*, 181.

[138] “Estado de Sonora,” January 21st, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-24, H-236.

[139] It is totally feasible that one of the deads in the cave was Plutarco Domínguez. When I interviewed the ejidatarios of Guajaray they held the opinion that Plutarco likely took shelter in a cave but passed away because of his wounds. Lagarda believes that the Plutarco’s case led to the formation of a Guarijío legend about the ghost of a boy who passed away near Los Conejos (later renamed as Los Bajíos ejido). Ignacio Lagarda in discussion with the author, Hermosillo, Sonora, May 13, 2017.

Angulo had already left the Liga and joined the BREZ, which by July 1974 had become the first of the Liga's fronts to disown the organization.[140]

In his role as the intermediary among the *focos*, Lizárraga had facilitated conversations over the unification of rural guerrillas and their split from the Liga. Despite their experiences working with indigenous peasants from different regions of the country, rural guerrillas shared an intense disdain for agrarian politics, revealing a class cleavage between students and peasants impossible to overcome. Topete and Ceballos were shocked and disillusioned by news, and it was not difficult for Angulo to convince them to join the Urique commando. Thus, the remaining members of the CGOG abandoned the Sonora highlands by their own will, rather than waiting to be pushed out by counterinsurgency forces.

Due to Topete's inability to walk as a result of an injury, on January 16, 1975 the commando planned to hijack an airplane belonging to an air taxi company named "Aerolíneas de Sonora," owned by Don Gilo Sáenz, the shopkeeper that the CGOG had kidnaped exactly a year earlier.[141] In Gocojaqui—an estate also owned by Sáenz—guerrillas kidnapped a worker along with his family and coerced him to call his boss to ask for an air taxi to take his alleged sick toddler to see a doctor in Navojoa. As the pilot, Martín Vuksinich, arrived in Gocojaqui, four guerrillas commandeered the plane and forced him to fly to Tecomichi, Urique. After landing, they burned the small Cessna.[142] Guerrillas walked up to the camp, but only stayed for a short

[140] José Luis Alonso Vargas, *Los guerrilleros mexicalenses* (Ecatepec: Rival Ediciones, 2004), 38. The remnants of the "Genaro Vázquez" Brigade and a brigade from Monterrey, N.L., also joined the BREZ. The Liga referred to the splinter groups as the MASP because of the initials of their leaders: *Matus*, *Arturo*, *Sam*, and *Pancho*. The Liga saw *Matus* as an upper echelon traitor.

[141] Lagarda, *El color,* 128.

[142] "Estado de Sonora," January 17, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-24, H-201; "Estado de Chihuahua" [Statement by Martín Vuksinich Palomares], January 17, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-24, H-204-206. Vuksinich rendered his statement to both the federal public prosecutor of Chihuahua and the Divisional General Félix Galván López, Commander of the 5th Military Zone in Chihuahua. Galván López, who took part in both anti-

period, given that a discussion among leaders led to the disbandment of the commando.[143] Those who aspired to continue the armed struggle took different routes in order to avoid detection, but they later reconnected in Jalisco. In the highlands of Choix, Sinaloa, two guerrillas had a shooting with the PJF with no casualties or detentions.[144] Topete criticized the manner guerrillas fled the region, claiming they had thrusted peasants in a war only to abandon them later.[145]

The guerrilla cell moved from Guadalajara, Jalisco to Mexico City and founded the Organization of Professional Revolutionaries (ORP), whose leader Angulo adopted the *nom de guerre* "Zacarías" to honor Severo Zazueta.[146] The ORP disbanded in 1981 after the police shot and disappeared Angulo as he attempted to rob a bank in Mexico City. Shortly before his disappearance, Angulo visited the guerrilla's former territory in the highlands for the first time since 1975 and wrote his *Historia*, in which he acknowledged the guerrilla movement's defeat and deemed himself the last warrior.[147]

---

subversive and anti-drug campaigns in Chihuahua, was appointed Secretary of National Defense during the López Portillo administration.

[143] Guillermo Manzano, "Toño Mendívil, de guerrillero a diputado." León Mendívil did not provide a detailed account about the dissolution of the commando, he only claimed that there was a mild confrontation between the two factions, but all agreed upon leaving the highlands.

[144] "Estado de Sonora," January 23, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-24, H-242.

[145] Topete, *Los ojos de la noche*, 188.

[146] Leopoldo Angulo Luken, *Apuntes para el desarrollo teórico del marxismo. Proyecto político de la Organización de Revolucionarios Profesionales (ORP)* (Mexico City: n.p., 2015).

[147] *Historia* was published for the first time thirty years later as *Nos volveremos a encontrar* (*We will meet again*). While guerrillas usually lost their written production given the conditions of underground life, Topete managed to preserve the original manuscript of *Historia* and the propaganda by both the Liga and the ORP, even though he served prison time from 1984 to 1986 for a late indictment concerning his participation in subversive activities. Topete also wrote several manuscripts about the FER and the Liga. Carlos Ceballos and Tomás Lizárraga broke up with the ORP in late 1975 and formed their own guerrilla cell; they were killed in murky circumstances in 1977. After leaving the CPMAG, Salvador Gaytán and Juan Rojo participated in other peasant struggles; the two veterans passed away in 2011. The last CPMAG's survivors, Jesús Cadena, León Mendívil, and Alejandrina Ávila have been reluctant to write about their participation in the guerrilla movement.

One of the most loyal supporters of the CGOG had been a Guarijío peasant named Manuel Valenzuela Vega, "Chalino" (1944), who had participated in the land struggle since the early 1960s. He was also the first *ejido* commissar of Guajaray during the early 1970s, when the community had yet to acquire legal possession of the land. "Chalino" bears the prodigious memory that is common among illiterate peasants, although he was the only literate person in Guajaray. During a two-hour interview, he recalled dozens of anecdotes regarding his participation in the commando. With an expression of sorrow on his face, he remembered the numerous times he and his comrades were savagely tortured despite suffering from severe malnutrition. During one torture session outdoors, he focused his attention on the full moon in the hopes of taking his mind off what was happening to him. He did not provide further details about torture but repeatedly evoked the moon's beauty on that night. "When soldiers beat us they always overdid it"—he concluded.[148]

"Chalino" admitted that he had accepted the invitation to depart with the *Mechudos* on January 6, 1975, but his daughter's birth on that same day caused him to have second thoughts. The CGOG then asked him to be ready to form a local guerrilla commando, but the *Mechudos* never contacted him again. During his last trip to the highlands in the early 1980s, Angulo visited "Chalino" to ask about the fate of the Guarijíos in the aftermath of the conflict. Both men acknowledged the war had concluded.[149] Today in Guajaray, Chalino's daughter is known as the *Mechuda*—a living reminder of the day that guerrillas left the region and never returned.

---

[148] Manuel Valenzuela Vega, Interview with the author, Guajaray, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

[149] Manuel Valenzuela Vega, Interview with the author, Guajaray, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

Land Reform and Indigenous Radicalism

In their testimonies, Topete and Angulo acknowledged the difficulties of working with an indigenous population they believed had “400 or 500 years of backwardness in their mode of production.”[150] Both Topete and Angulo made constant references of the resemblance of the Sierra Tarahumara with the Porfirian society, given the prevalence of the metayage system, the truck system, debt bondage, corporal punishment, and the underdevelopment of transportation, communication systems, and industries. Guarijíos practiced subsistence agriculture and were hardly connected to the capitalist economy. They worked for the caciques in exchange for small quantities of corn, which was never enough to feed their families; in consequence, they migrated to the valleys as seasonal workers.

In the Rarámuri case, Angulo thought that the capitalist economy had undermined the indigenous social organization with *ejidos*, sawmills, and railroads, having a significant impact on the communities' religion and culture.[151] Spanish had replaced Rarámuri as a result of Indians' insertion into the capitalist workforce and the prevalence of racial discrimination. In contrast, Guarijíos were almost monolingual, lived isolated and had never officially received land, nor benefited from any state institution.

The Liga had a non-paternalistic approach to Indians but did not make any effort to learn about their worldview and culture either—except for their survival strategies. As Topete confessed, before arriving in the Sierra Baja, urban cadres had never heard about the Guarijíos and saw them as a kind of raw material for their revolutionary army.[152] Guerrillas were outraged

[150] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 55.

[151] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 64.

[152] Topete, *Los ojos*, 36.

by the living conditions of communities where death from starvation was prevalent, but compassion did not prevent them from reinforcing a hierarchical political relationship.

However, it would be erroneous to argue that indigenous peasants were victims of student radicalism. Rarámuris and Guarijíos were political subjects who had struggled for land before they encountered the Liga, and their radicalization stemmed from a combination of state negligence and repression rather than indoctrination. Regardless of their level of understanding of the Liga's ideology, Indians believed in the armed struggle as a major opportunity to have land. They saw land not only as a livelihood, but also as the base of their cultural identity. Given their isolation, Indians could not have mobilized resources to rise up in arms without external help. Hence, guerrillas and Indians provided mutual support for their political projects, a convergence that rendered unexpected outcomes and different interpretations.

The Liga failed to trigger a revolution but might have provoked what Herbert H. Heines called the "radical flank effect," a phenomenon in which the presence of extremists encourages support for another sector's moderate demands as a way of undercutting the influence of radicals.[153] After security forces perpetrated gross human right abuses, the state launched civic action programs to win over the hearts and minds of peasants. Similar to the Guerrero case, the federal government built hospitals, shelters, schools, roads, and highways, opened Indigenist Coordinator Centers (CCT) in San Bernardo and Témoris, and carried out land reform.[154] The

[153] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy & Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

[154] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 128. For a discussion about the effects of indigenismo in the region, see Juan Luis Sariego Rodríguez, *El indigenismo en la Tarahumara* (Mexico City: CONACULTA, 2002).

analysis on how the state used indigenist policies as a counterinsurgency weapon is absent in the current scholarship on *indigenismo* in the Sierra Tarahumara.[155]

In 1975-76, at a time when the peasant movement was increasingly more radical, Echeverría expropriated roughly 100,000 hectares of land from large estate owners in both the Yaqui and Mayo Valleys and distributed it to 8, 000 petitioners.[156] Traditional interpretations regarding land reform in Sonora have focused on divisions between the federal government and the landed oligarchy, minimizing the struggles by unarmed peasant organizations and the presence of both urban and rural guerrillas in the state.[157] There is no evidence to sustain that the armed struggle was the direct cause of land reform, as it had been in the cases of Tutuaca and Madera, but it played an indirect role by affecting the scope of land reform initiatives.

On October 23, 1975, the PJSO commanded by Francisco Arellano Noblecía, and the 18th Cavalry Regiment from Esperanza, headed by Colonel Juan de Dios Calleros Aviña, fired on peasants who had invaded an estate to demand land reform in San Ignacio Río Muerto, in the Yaqui Valley, killing seven protestors.[158] Although the order to dislodge peasants with violence likely came from the presidency, Echeverría blamed the governor Carlos Biébrich Torres and forced him to resign.[159] Arellano Noblecía was promoted to the Presidential Guards a day after

---

[155] Juan Luis Sariego conducted an ambitious research project about the development of Indigenist policies in the Chihuahua highlands but failed to mention the guerrilla presence in the region. In her works about Guarijíos, María Teresa Valdivia Dounce also disregarded the relationship between the Liga's activities and the introduction of *indigenismo* in the Sonora highlands. See Sariego Rodríguez, *El indigenismo en la Tarahumara* and Valdivia, *Entre yoris y guarijíos: crónicas sobre el quehacer antropológico* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2007).

[156] Rubén Jiménez, "Movimiento campesino en Sonora", *Cuadernos Políticos*, no. 7 (January-March 1976): 67-78.

[157] Almeda, *Breve Historia de Sonora*, 161.

[158] Trevizo, *Rural Protest*, 104. One of the most detailed accounts on the political context of the massacre was the report by journalist Jesús Blancornelas, *Biébrich, crónica de una infamia* (Mexico City, Edamex: 1978).

[159] There are many contending interpretations about the conflict between Echeverría and Biébrich but they are based on rumors rather than compelling evidence. However, the view that Echeverría planned the massaccre to have

the massacre, given the patronage by Major Miguel Ángel Godínez, Sub-chief of Staff of the Presidential Guards. San Ignacio Río Muerto was close to the Liga's operation area, but its agrarian movement was unrelated to guerrillas. However, given the radicalization of the peasant movement, the government might have been afraid that guerrillas seized on the conflict. The government thus opted for land distribution in the Yaqui and Mayo valleys, unleashing the anger of large estate owners and the private sector, who claimed that Echeverría was a communist.

The wave of land distribution that began in the valleys reached the Sierra Baja. Guajaray had a land petition that dated back to 1963 and was authorized in 1973, although the government delayed its execution to avoid a conflict with local caciques. On May 19, 1976, the Echeverría administration published the decree that allotted 5024 hectares to the Guajaray ejido to benefit 23 peasants.[160] The government bought land from the caciques and executed the decree on May 28, 1976.

Neither the state nor the federal government knew that the CGOG had abandoned Sonora, given that the secret service continued to inform the superior authorities about the guerrilla presence. For instance, a DFS report of November 24, 1975, stated that Cristino Acosta García, the *ejido* commissar of El Frijol, Quiriego, had denounced the presence of three long-haired, bearded men with weapons in the area, giving names of the alleged guerrilla collaborators in his *ejido*.[161] Acosta also warned the authorities about a group of twelve marauders in La Ventana,

---

Biébrich removed from office is the most accepted. Steven E. Sanderson, *Agrarian Populism and the Mexican State. The Struggle for Land in Sonora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 188.

[160] "Guajaray", Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, https://phina.ran.gob.mx/imprimirNAPDF.php?idCat=37970374&cveUnica=2614109622244800, accessed December 10, 2017.

[161] "Estado de Sonora,", November 24, 1975, AGN, DFS, Exp. 11-235-75, L-34, H-77. The report coincided with the first anniversary of the ambush at La Ventanita camp, but the *Mechudos* did not return to the region, for they were building the ORP in Mexico City. The *ejido* commissioner might have used the guerrilla presence as a pretext to incriminate his personal enemies. He gave names of peasants who had defected the guerrilla long time ago, like

close to the border between Sonora and Chihuahua, to whom the DFS identified as members of the CPMAG. It seems that the remnants of the Chínipas commando visited their former Guarijío partners to ask for their support.

Echeverría most likely gave the land to Guajaray to put an end to their alliance with guerrillas. Guarijío petitioners from other communities that were not involved with the guerrilla movement did not receive land at that time, despite the intermediation of the Canadian merchant, Edmund Faubert, who allegedly "discovered" the Guarijío "tribe," according to the sensationalist media.[162] Nevertheless, the Guarijíos began a peaceful peasant movement in 1977, and the López Portillo administration followed the same path as his predecessor, buying land from the caciques in the Sierra Baja to distribute it among peasants. If we believed that land reform was exclusively a state strategy to preserve the PRI's hegemony*,* we would risk disregarding the experiences, sacrifices, and beliefs of indigenous peasants, for whom land reform was a popular victory. When Angulo visited the Guarijío peasants in 1981, they thanked him for that reason. However, former guerrillas never understood that for indigenous people land was not only property but also the basis of their worldview and identity.[163]

The anthropologist María Teresa Valdivia Dounce arrived in San Bernardo, Sonora in 1978, joining the official initiative to build an Indigenist Coordination Center (CCI-SB).

Enrique Mendoza Beltrán and Juan Bacasehua. Also, Mendoza had relatives who were former guerrilla collaborators in La Ventana.

[162] Faubert arrived in the Guarijío territory for the first time in 1975 and stopped supporting the communities in 1977, after his failed intervention in the struggle for land. María Teresa Valdivia, *Los guarijíos de Sonora: un proyecto de antropología aplicada* (BA thesis, Universidad Veracruzana, 1984), 106-109.

[163] Angulo, *Nos volveremos*, 131. In 2007, I had the opportunity to join a group of former Liga militants on a trip to their memory sites in the Golden Quadrilateral. In Makurawe, San Bernardo, we met with a Guarijío community. The local governor expressed gratitude to the guerrillas because they believed that the armed struggle had brought about land distribution in the 1970s. As soon as the meeting finished, Topete insisted that land reform was not a victory because it had not been the Liga's historical objective, and he was disappointed that peasants did not understand their message but rather interpreted the process through the lens of the "petite bourgeois reformism."

Coincidentally, the latter was set up in the same building that the military used as barracks during the counterinsurgency campaign from 1973 to 1976. Valdivia became a protagonist in the Guarijío struggle for land and wrote a series of essays that later became a book titled *Entre yoris y guarijíos: crónicas sobre el quehacer antropológico* (2007).[164] Valdivia lacked previous knowledge of the Sierra Baja and learned about guerrillas through oral testimonies. Consequently, when she claimed that the guerrilla experience contributed to raising awareness among Guarijíos about their agency and rights but did not bring about land distribution, she overlooked the broader context in which the armed struggle, the civic action programs, and land reform took place.[165]

During the harvest of 1976, Guarijíos refused to give their half of corn to caciques, an unprecedented event in the Sierra. The powerful female cacique, Dolores Samaniego, travelled to the Álamos city hall to demand that the authorities suppressed the reluctant peasants, but the mayor Jesús Gil informed her that she was the one causing trouble, given that the metayage system was illegal.[166] The insubordination of peasants demonstrates that they were still inspired by the Liga's message against exploiters, having learned that they could eliminate caciques. The latter usually bribed authorities, but the conflict had changed the institutional ways to manage the problems between *yoris* and Guarijíos. In 1977, Sixto Jiménez, director of the Indigenist Coordinator Center of Etchojoa (CCI-E), wrote to Ignacio Ovalle, the INI's National Director about the desperate situation of the Guarijío "tribe." Jiménez complained that caciques were

---

[164] For an excerpt of this work in English see Valdivia, "Between Yoris and Guarijíos. Chronicles of Anthropology", in *Journal of the Southwest* 56, no. 3, 2014: 371-377.

[165] Nevertheless, the B.A. thesis by Valdivia offers a more nuanced view concerning the effects of the armed struggle among Guarijíos, recognizing that it was the turning point of their awakening and their impulse to fight. Valdivia, *Los guarijíos de Sonora*, 103.

[166] Valdivia, *Entre yoris y guarijíos,* 106.

taking revenge on peasants by threatening their livelihoods, and that social tensions could lead to an uprising as it did in the past decade (sic). He also demanded emergency provisions to feed the starving people.[167] That year, several Guarijíos died of starvation.

Valdivia's interpretation of the land reform minimized the mayhem and foregrounded the participation of external actors like Edmundo Faubert, to whom she credits as the first organizer in the struggle for land. Valdivia also described the importance of her personal role as advisor for the peasant leaders José Zazueta Yoquibo and Cipriano Buitimea. Caciques first aimed at retaining the land through violent means, intimidating these leaders. However, the movement strengthened with the unification of landless Guarijío communities and the solidarity expressed by the Mayo, Yaqui, Pápago, and Seri nations from Sonora, who had received land during the Echeverría administration.

Valdivia found crucial evidence to prove that caciques had illegally appropriated the Sierra's land for cattle usage. Notwithstanding their lack of entitlement, the government paid caciques as if they were legitimate estate owners, neglecting the first nations' rights. Furthermore, the government purchased the properties above their market value, privileging elite interests above social rights. Among the beneficiaries were the caciques Jorge Sáenz Félix, Andrés Enríquez, Petra Rosas of Enríquez, Josefa H. of López, Andrés Enríquez, Isaac Enríquez, Antonio Enríquez, Benito Enríquez, Severiano Enríquez, and Francisco Lara. The majority of them were related to the family who had dispossessed the Guarijío nation since the nineteenth

[167] Sixto Jiménez Brito, "Situación del Grupo Indígena Guarijío", Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Centro Coordinador Indigenista de Etchojoa, April 25, 1977, 2.

century.[168] The purchased land served as the basis for the creation of new *ejidos* from 1978 to 1982, namely Los Conejos, Los Estrados, Burapaco, and Mesa Colorada.

Chalino Valenzuela, the long-lasting commissioner of the Guajaray *ejido*, had a different perspective on the process and discussed how land reform stemmed from the armed struggle:

> The new generations do not know how we won the land. Even Cipriano [Buitimea] got it wrong, he thinks that it was because of his paperwork, but it was because we rose up in arms and kicked out the caciques. The *yoris* had to leave the Sierra and only returned to sell their land to the government. The bloodshed gave wealth to the Guarijíos. […] I have talked to other people in the ejido, we would like to make a monument to the *Mechudos* for what they did for us.[169]

The government not only granted land to reverse the radicalization of the peasant movement but also to broaden the PRI's corporative networks. The *ejidos* were usually incorporated into the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), one of the political machines to channel votes for the PRI in both state and federal elections. For Guarijíos, being acknowledged as citizens also meant the obligation to collaborate with state institutions and partake in a corrupt political system. Not even the radical peasants of Guajaray eluded their incorporation into the CNC nor their cooperation with the CCI-SB.[170]

---

[168] "Reunión para el análisis de la política indigenista en el Noroeste. Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Delegación Estatal Sonora," February 29, 1980, CDI, Biblioteca Juan Rulfo, File FD 26/0073, 54; "Resolución sobre dotación de tierras, solicitada por vecinos del poblado denominado Guarijíos Burapaco, ubicado en el municipio de Álamos, Son.," Diario Oficial de la Federación, May 7, 1982, http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=4732204&fecha=07/05/1982, accessed 28 January 2018.

[169] Manuel Valenzuela Vega, interview with the author, Guajaray, Álamos, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

[170] For instance, there is a letter signed by the commissioners of five Guarijío ejidos to the vice principal of the CCI-SB to ask for his approval of a research project that CCI's anthropologists intended to carry on in Guarijío communities. The letter was written with a specialized language revealing that their authors were the same CCI's anthropologists. Paradoxically, such simulation served the purpose of legitimizing the presence of the CCI in Guarijío territory by underscoring that it was not a state imposition but the people's will. The seal of the Guajaray ejido bears the acronym of the CNC. "Carta de los Comisarios Ejidales de Burapaco, Los Conejos, Sejaqui, Topiyeca y Guajaray al Lic. Javier Santana Delgado, Subdirector Encargado del CCI Guarijío," June 21, 1982, CDI, Biblioteca Juan Rulfo, File FD 26/0054, 3.

Esteban Vega Zazueta, a Guarijío peasant from Burapaco who lived the conflict from its inception is also the current guardian for the cemetery of San Bernardo, Álamos. In an interview with the author, Esteban remembered his days as a worker for Agapito Enríquez, the abusive cacique who usually whipped his workers. After concluding that he was starving despite his hard work, Esteban began to provide food and shelter to the *Mechudos*. He took pride in claiming that although he was caught and tortured many times, he never betrayed the commando. Esteban understood his relationship to guerrillas as an act of reciprocity, in which: "they suffered for us, and we suffered for them."[171]

As Esteban began to work in the cemetery, the former guardian revealed to him the place where the military had buried Gabriel Domínguez and Severo Zazueta. During more than thirty years, Esteban took care of the clandestine grave with extraordinary loyalty, removing wild vegetation from the patch and preventing the site from being desecrated. When the Domínguez family visited the cemetery of San Bernardo for the first time in 2006, Esteban showed them the grave (see appendix 2, fig. 5). Nonetheless, the Domínguez family had to wait until 2014 to have the remains exhumed to conduct a DNA test. After Gabriel's positive forensic identification, the Domínguez family decided to bring his remains to his hometown, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (see appendix 2, figs. 6 and 7). Gabriel became one of the very few disappeared of the dirty war to be found, while the fate of his brother Plutarco remains unknown.

Esteban asked the Domínguez family to return Severo Zazueta's remains to the cemetery of San Bernardo. At the end of our conversation, he underscored: "I am poor, I do not have anything to eat for days, but I wish that someday someone will put up a cross with the name of Severo Zazueta and a caption [epitaph] that reads that he was a guerrilla, so he will never be

[171] Esteban Vega Zazueta, interview with the author, San Bernardo, Álamos, Sonora, May 17, 2017.

forgotten."[172] Although *ejidos* did not put an end to structural poverty and the Guarijíos have continued to deal with the long-lasting consequences of the counterinsurgency, they do not regret their participation in the Liga. On the contrary, both Chalino and Esteban expressed their intentions to memorialize the guerrillas as a way of showing their gratitude.

Conclusions

The Liga's micro-war in the Golden Quadrilateral was possible because of the agrarian peasant movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the long-lasting conflict between mestizo caciques and indigenous communities in the highlands of Sonora and Chihuahua. The Liga partially accomplished "Che" Guevara's dream of applying the *foco* theory outside Cuba. However, while the National Liberation Army (ELN) that Guevara commanded was incapable of building a support network among the peasant communities of the Ñancahuazú river in Bolivia, the Liga's project only survived due to peasant support. This was a paradoxical outcome considering that the Liga was opposed to Agrarianism and Castro-Guevarism.

Certainly, only the radical factions of the peasant movement that the Liga approached took part in the micro-war. Other peasant movements might have been on the verge of armed conflict, but the government executed land reform to prevent guerrillas from capitalizing on peasant discontent. The pattern that the state followed in Madera, Tutuaca, and Guajaray was the same: a mixture of counterinsurgency campaigns and land reform. The latter was meaningless to the revolutionary cadres, but it was enough to placate peasants and lessen their support for guerrillas. It is necessary to do more research in order to understand cases that followed a different path, like Chínipas and Urique, even though sources are dramatically scarce.

[172] Esteban Vega Zazueta, interview with the author, San Bernardo, Álamos, Sonora, May 17, 2017.

The guerrilla experience in the Golden Quadrilateral is a useful case for refuting generalizations about the Mexican Dirty War. Traditional interpretations maintain that the state defeated the socialist armed movement both politically and military, yet a nuanced analysis of organizations like the Liga proves that radicalism did contribute to transform the balance of power between state and society. The Liga was not a group of extremists detached from society, but a complex organization that mobilized different levels of nationwide popular support in the five regions where it operated. In the Sierra Tarahumara, the Liga's own brand of *foquismo* challenged the power structures and marked a watershed in the relationships between *yoris* and Cahita peoples by disrupting the hierarchies of class, race, and even gender.

Both the geographical features of the highlands and the Liga's integration into *serrano* every-day life gave guerrillas a head start over security forces. However, the Liga's disdain for agrarian politics, its over-ideologization, and the struggles for leadership corroded the organization. Given its dogmatism, the Liga incorporated Indian communities as a subordinate ally, but the latter also used the Liga to "win their war." Guarijíos became aware of their agency and rights and felt proud of their victories. This sense of triumphalism prevails among Guarijíos, notwithstanding that *ejidos* only brought them limited food security and drug-related violence has threatened their territory since the early 1980s. The Liga boosted peasant agency but did not break from a long tradition of imposing an exogenous political model on indigenous peoples. The Zapatist Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which took up arms on January 1, 1994, has been the only Mexican guerrilla organization to claim the manifold dimensions of indigenous agency, including their rights to self-government and territorial autonomy.

One of the key findings of my research concerns the role of the INI in the conflict, as an institution that spearheaded the civic action programs in the Sierra Baja Tarahumara by both the

Echeverría and the López Portillo administrations. The INI established Indigenist Coordinator Centers in Témoris (1974) and San Bernardo (1977), within the guerrilla's influence zone. The CCI served as the intermediary that negotiated land distribution among Guarijíos and attempted to find a solution to the conflict between the timber company and *ejidatarios* in the municipalities of Chínipas, Guazapares, Uruachi, and Urique. The CCI brought about a massive transformation in the communities with the slow introduction of developmental programs, bank credits, schools, medical services, infrastructure, and the submission of peasants to the official corporatist structures. While the integrationist features of indigenismo have been largely analyzed, the role of the INI as a counterinsurgency agent and a promoter of the PRI's hegemony deserves an in-depth study.

Another topic that proved relevant, but I do not explore in detail, is the way in which the drug war impacted the political organization of highland communities that the state had already targeted for supporting guerrillas. In 1977, only one year after the counterinsurgency campaigns came to an end, Operation Condor began in the Golden Triangle. Indigenous communities were among the primary victims of state violence and did not benefit from external solidarity. The complicity between security forces and drug lords has also led to the development of drug production in the Rarámuri, Tepehuán, and Pima territory, which mimicked the traditional production relations between caciques and peons. As long as the INI discouraged radical struggles by indigenous peasants and subjected them to the paternalistic and clientelist logic of the state, it prevented communities from building up self-defense resources to face the wave of drug-related violence. My work opens up additional venues of investigation to understand the interplay between state policies, the drug industry, and indigenous politics since the 1970s.

The Liga neglected the importance of drug trafficking and paid a high price for its erroneous assessment. The political cleansing in the Sierra Tarahumara was a condition to the expansion of the drug industry, even though is not possible to determine whether this outcome was part of a master plan by the state. However, while the state proved capable of cracking down, co-opting, or annihilating social movements in the region, it allowed for the exponential growing of the drug threat. At the present time, in the municipality of Urique drug cartels have established forced labor camps, where both kidnapped immigrants from Central America and indigenous people work in slave conditions.[173] Several municipalities mentioned in this chapter, such as Chínipas, Urique, Guazapares, Uruachi, Bocoyna, Guachochi, Batopilas, Morelos, and Guadalupe y Calvo are among the most affected by the current drug war. Every year, hundreds of civilians are tortured, killed, disappeared or displaced by drug gangs. The Guarijíos might have won their micro-war, but in the long-term criminal sovereignty has won the macro-war.

[173] Patricia Mayorga, "The Tarahumara Mountains: Migrants Death Camps," *Proceso*, December 14, 2015, Translated by Patrick Timmons, https://mexicanjournalismtranslationproject.wordpress.com/2017/08/20/the-tarahumara-mountains-migrant-death-camps-patricia-mayorga/ accessed November 30, 2017.

Chapter Three: The *Enfermo* Movement, Guerrilla Culture, and Narcoculture in Sinaloa during the 1970s

"Are You a Drug Trafficker or a Guerrilla?"

In mid-1973, Sergio Hirales Morán, one of the leaders of the *Enfermo* movement in Sinaloa, boarded a bus in Cualicán bound for Mexicali, Baja California. During a routine inspection at a checkpoint, the army found marijuana, propaganda, and weapons hidden in the passengers' luggage. When it was Hirales's turn to be questioned, the soldiers brusquely asked him: "Are you a drug trafficker or a guerrilla?" After a *calentada*, Hirales falsely confessed to being the owner of the drugs, and he was taken to prison. If he had revealed that he was a guerrilla, he would have been subjected to the cruelest methods of torture to make him inform on his comrades.[1] It was public knowledge that security forces treated guerrillas worse than drug traffickers.

The Hirales' case was an ordinary event, yet representative of the type of conflicts that began to overlap in the state of Sinaloa during the early 1970s, in a setting gradually dominated by drug trafficking, guerrilla movements, and counterinsurgency. Although the state of Guerrero was the most visible stage of the dirty war, the triad of violence reached its peak in Sinaloa, transforming the state into an exceptional field of extra-legality and terror. In addition to the structural conditions and processes unleashed by the Cold War analyzed in chapter one, the three currents were the result of a combination of local political and cultural traditions and global ideological influences.

---

[1] The "calentada," or heated interrogation was the customary euphemism for alluding to torture. This anecdote was told to me by ex-guerrillas. Sergio's brother, Gustavo Hirales, offered a more ambiguous version of it in his fictionalized testimony: Hirales, *Memoria de la guerra de los justos*, 254-255.

The ways in which counterinsurgency was intertwined with the war on drugs will be analyzed in the next chapter. The ideological bases of counterinsurgency and its local appropriations will be the subject of chapter five. This chapter focuses on the formation of the political subjectivities of guerrillas and drug traffickers in the 1970s, as expressed in guerrilla culture and narco-culture. Such analysis has the purpose of understanding the terms in which each actor justified their choice of violence to defend their belief systems and lifestyles.

In her book *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (2003), Elisabeth Jean Wood shows that, in the case of the popular insurgency in El Salvador during the 1980s, emotional and moral motivations were essential for triggering the insurgent collective action in high-risk circumstances characterized by repression and civil war, and those elements were even stronger than ideological commitment. Wood's conclusions cannot be extrapolated to the Mexican case because of the fundamental role that ideology played in the articulation of both the Liga and the *Enfermo* movement; however, they do reveal the importance of paying attention to the multiple dimensions that underlie radicalism.

Guerrilla culture's most evident antithesis was the counterinsurgency doctrine, a contradistinction that has been widely studied. Conversely, the antagonism between guerrilla culture and narco-culture in Mexico has not been explored yet, despite the fact that they developed simultaneously in Sinaloa. This opposition is more intriguing insofar as it was not an expression of physical confrontation between guerrillas and *narcos,* but fundamentally a competition on the ideological-symbolic sphere.

Froylán Enciso highlighted the existence of both a high and a low narco-culture. The former corresponds to those actors who blend in with the power elites, notwithstanding their illicit activities. The latter belongs to the popular sectors employed by the drug-trafficking

industry who earn their living in it, but do not exercise control over any aspect of production. It is largely intended to "recruitment, ideological protection in the face of stigmatization, and psychological risk management."[2] I believe that this division was not as clear in the 1970s, when the narco-culture phenomenon was just beginning to take shape. Moreover, in the period before the cocaine boom in the 1980s, narco-culture was substantially rural and restricted to drug-producing regions, especially the Golden Triangle.

This chapter argues that both guerrilla culture and narco-culture emerged as a reaction to the model of modernity that was introduced into Sinaloa through the development of agribusiness to favor the post-revolutionary agrarian elite. Sinaloan guerrilla culture proposed to put an end to capitalism and implement a socialist socioeconomic system based on the pursuit of the common good and social equality. On the other hand, narco-culture was the epitome of illegal capitalism, whose central aspiration was to emulate the elite's level of wealth at any human or moral cost.

Although both cultures revolved around collective violence to achieve their ends, their understandings of violent practices clashed. Guerrillas identified the dictatorship of capital, the bourgeois state, and the security forces that safeguarded the system as their principal enemies, which they aspired to defeat through political-military strategies. Conversely, drug traffickers established a moving boundary in which today's friend/ally could be tomorrow's enemy, and any method was valid to subdue him/her. Narco-violence was determined solely by the laws of market competition, albeit it had its own codes of honor, such as the prohibition on "messing with someone's family."

---

[2] Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 196.

Both guerrilla culture and narco-culture had as a point of reference the official vision of the Mexican Revolution and other insurgent episodes from Mexican history, which entailed the cult of masculinity and power of the great national or regional heroes. Like the revolutionaries of 1910, both guerrillas and drug traffickers used the *corrido* (a rural ballad) to narrate their confrontations with the state. These groups showed a certain fascination with weapons, but at no time did they commit irrational violence, as the media used to present it, since both had clearly defined projects, as will be discuss below. Beyond these similarities, there is no proof that drug traffickers have played the role of Robin Hood-esque social bandits or anti-system rebels without an ideology.

It is important to point out that women were present at each stage of the guerrilla struggle as well as in each process of the drug industry, but they were rarely taken into account in the creation of cultural referents. These had patriarchal foundations, although guerrilla culture discursively advocated gender equality. The historiography on the topic has also disregarded transgressive women, except for a few works. Elaine Carey emphasized the role of women in her pioneering work on the Mexican case, *Women Drug Traffickers: Mules, Bosses, & Organized Crime* (2014), which spans from the beginning of the twentieth century through the 1970s.[3] In regard to female guerrillas, there is no work on the *Enfermas* (the female activists of the *Enfermo* movement), and this is perhaps the major void in studies on the subject.[4] The difficulty in accessing sources on the *Enfermas* has precluded including a gender perspective in this chapter.

---

[3] See also Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez, "Las mujeres en el narcotráfico," *Revista Clivajes*, no. 1 (January-July 2014), https://www.academia.edu/34970558/204121326-Las-mujeres-en-el-narcotrafico-Clivajes-UV.pdf, accessed October 10, 2017.

[4] There is only one thesis about the women of the Liga: Gabriela Lozano Rubello's *Guerrilleras de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: sujetos de transgresión en México (1973-1977)* (M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, 2014).

Despite being clandestine cultures, both guerrillas and drug traffickers aspired to dominate the public space through spectacular actions and entered into a spontaneous competition for hegemony, with young people being their main target for recruitment. Because of the period's explosive demographic growth, the youth sector had greater social relevance. The people to whom cultural messages were directed came from families of the same social sectors: laborers from the agro-industrial valleys, peasants from the Sierra Madre Occidental, fishermen, and workers. Thus, recipients were put to choose between two forms of illegal activities that promised a better life for the poor, either in the short- or the long-run.

This chapter does not provide a description of the war between drug clans that captured Sinaloa's urban space during the 1970s. Juan Fernández addressed this conflict in his study *El Narcotráfico en Los Altos de Sinaloa 1940-1970* (2016), although more research is needed to detail the activities of drug clans/gangs involved, both in the cities and the highlands. Even though sources are very scarce, Fernández showed that it is possible to reconstruct drug-trafficking networks through oral sources, including *narco-corridos*.

I have also ruled out describing the origin and specificities of narco-culture, because of the vast bibliography that deals with this subject, including the works of Luis Astorga (1996), Elijah Wald (2001), José Manuel Valenzuela (2002), Mark Edberg (2004), Nery Córdova (2011), Juan A. Fernández (2011), Shaylih Muehlmann (2013) and Gabriela Polit Dueñas (2013), among others. What I emphasize about narco-culture is the context of its emergence and its development vis-à-vis other projects that were also forged underground.

In regard to urban guerrillas, the history of the *Enfermo* movement, from its student phase to its participation as a Liga's front (1972-1979), has been explored by Rafael Santos Cenobio (2007), Sergio Arturo Sánchez Parra (2012, 2018), Camilo Vicente Ovalle (2018) and Fernando

Herrera Calderón (forthcoming). However, their works focus on the *Enfermos* as a self-contained world, without considering their everyday interactions with other actors beyond popular movements or repressors. Thus, although these authors have also examined the political culture of the *Enfermos*, the innovation of my analysis is to underscore the coexistence of guerrilla culture in the same spaces as narco-culture and how this had a pervasive social effect by creating a climate of fear, confusion, and anxiety, which favored the escalation of counterinsurgency and the final defeat of the guerrilla movement.

The *Enfermo* movement absorbed the international influence of communist revolutionary currents, particularly the Latin American guerrilla movements represented by Castro-Guevarism, Carlos Marighella's approach on urban guerrillas, the guerrillas of Guatemala, Colombia, and Venezuela, and the Tupamaros of Uruguay.[5] Instead of leaning toward a single current, the *Enfermos* developed rather eclectic ideological positions. Victoria Langland posed, in reference to the 1960s Brazilian student movement, that the upsurge of student political culture and activism globally since 1968 was always both an exogenous and an endogenous force, influencing the reception, orientation, and ultimate meaning of the student movements.[6] This argument also works for Sinaloa's case, although unlike Brazil, where the guerrilla culture was marginal, the pro-guerrilla current dominated Sinaloa's student movement.

The *Enfermos* also adopted the line of the Pro-party organization's leaders (which would later become the Liga), who presented them with their own reformulation of Marxism-Leninism,

---

[5] For an overview of these currents see Aldo Marchesi, *Hacer la revolución: Guerillas latinoamericanas, de los años sesenta a la caída del Muro* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2019), and Marchesi, "Political Violence and the Left in Latin America, 1967-1979," *Latin American History Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, April 2015, http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-89, accessed March 12, 2019.

[6] Victoria Langland, *Speaking of Flowers* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2013): 10.

translated into theories such as the "university-factory," as described in the previous chapter. The *Enfermos* embodied the most extreme application of that theory and other Liga's tactics (see appendix 3, fig. 12). Furthermore, despite the Liga's pro-industrial worker rhetoric, in the *Enfermos*' praxis the central political subjects were day laborers because industrial development was very scarce in Sinaloa and agribusiness dominated the state. In other words, the Sinaloan armed movement left its "sick" mark on the Liga's political-military framework.

Although the *Enfermos* had organic ties to popular movements, the democratic left widely stigmatized them by calling them delirious, bloodthirsty, and suicidal activists. Both leftist currents, armed and unarmed, fought for the leadership and representation of social movements in one of the periods of major upheaval in Sinaloa's post-revolutionary history. However, the political line that the Liga imposed on the *Enfermo* movement was inadequate to Sinaloa's context, which contributed to the liquidation of guerrillas and the deterioration of the left as a whole.

While the Sinaloan guerrilla culture based its ideology on doctrines elaborated in Europe and reformulated in the global South, narco-culture was a regional product that laid bare Mexico's importance as a drug producer for the United States market starting in the 1960s. The basis of narco-culture was an intense cultural exchange between the Sierra of Badiraguato and the valleys of Culiacán, the most visible expressions of which were conspicuous consumption, the cult of violence, a cowboy-inspired clothing, and narco-corridos played with *Banda* music, a symbol of Sinaloan identity.

Narcoculture also revealed its connection to the hegemonic U.S. culture by imitating its individualistic, consumerist, and competitive values, as opposed to the sierra's community-oriented values. For drug lords, the community offered a source of cheap labor, secure conditions

to protect themselves, and a space of sociability to show off their wealth and to legitimize themselves through clientelist activities that did not differ much from those that the PRI carried out. The essence of narco-culture promoted illicit individual enrichment as a legitimate way of life without any concern for collective wellbeing. This unbridled pursuit of wealth outside legal and moral standards anticipated what would be one of neoliberal Mexico's subjectivities.

Narcoculture established itself as one of the winning currents of the Mexican Cold War, with a capacity for constant expansion that reflected the dynamism of the drug industry. Conversely, at the end of the dirty war in Sinaloa around 1979-1980, guerrilla culture became a social taboo. Given that thousands of young people had chosen to participate in the drug industry since the 1960s, it would be facile to assume that such fact anticipated the crushing defeat of the revolutionary project. However, Sinaloa was the only state in the country where urban guerrillas achieved the "party-masses linkage" that Manuel Gámez, "Julio" proposed, and the outcomes of both the political struggle and the ideological-symbolic competition were contingent events. Counterinsurgency then was a key factor in the advance of narco-culture and the drug industry. To this day, Sinaloa is stigmatized as a state linked to drug trafficking, and its powerful traditions of insurgency and social struggle not only do not form a part of its official history but have also been eradicated from the collective memory.

The first section of this chapter begins with an introduction to the *Enfermo* movement, centered not on its political confrontations with different levels of government or its interactions with social movements, but rather on its period of greatest radicalization and militarism. I argue that state violence defined the level of radicalism of student-guerrillas, in consequence, the *Enfermos*' political culture was constructed as a type of self-protection, with both defensive and offensive features. The description of the "assault on heaven" shows that the surge of urban

guerrillas allowed the Sinaloan government to expand its counterinsurgent apparatus and impose a de facto state of siege.[7]

Even though the *Enfermo* movement was decimated in 1974-75, state terror was an incentive for keeping the Liga's student brigades alive for at least five years more. At the same time that the Sinaloan government focused on eliminating guerrillas, it allowed drug traffickers to come down from the sierra, capture the urban space, and collude with the state security apparatus. In the early 1970s, the federal government concentrated counterinsurgency resources in the state of Guerrero, although this situation drastically changed with the advent of Operation Condor in 1977, which shifted the focus of attention to Sinaloa and the Golden Triangle. The following sections analyze the peculiarities of Sinaloan guerrilla culture in its local and global dimensions, the intersections between the lives of guerrillas and drug traffickers, and, finally, narco-culture.

The Sinaloa Student Movement and the *Enfermedad*

…there are many open [routes], we have the whole Sierra Madre Occidental, from which some day we will descend bringing the true liberty to our people.
A student of the FEUS, 1968.[8]

The *Enfermos*' movement in Sinaloa transpired in three stages: the formative years from 1966 to 1972; the confrontation with the security forces, from 1973 to 1975, and its tactical withdrawal, from 1976 to 1979. From 1973 to 1974, the *Enfermos* acted as a Liga's front, but by 1975, given the annihilation of the *Enfermos*' movement and the imprisonment or banishment of

---

[7] The "assault on heaven" alludes to an expression that Karl Marx employed in a letter to Dr. Kugelman on April 12, 1871, to describe the Paris Commune, where the Parisian working class was "storming heaven."

[8] Cited in Lorenzo Q. Terán, *Tribuna impresa. Crónica periodística, 1966-1970* (Culiacán: UAS, 2005), 81.

its leaders, the Liga's national direction became responsible for organizing the student-guerrilla brigades. Between 1979 and 1981, security forces eliminated the Liga at the national level, except for a few remaining cells that quickly lost strength and ultimately disbanded. This section provides a general description of these stages in order understand the role of repression in the formation of the guerrilla culture.

During the Cardenista period (1936-1940), the socialist thought had a great influence on the main public university in Sinaloa, the "Rosales" Civil College (Colegio Civil Rosales), to the extent that from 1937 to 1941 its official name was changed to Socialist University of the Northwest (Universidad Socialista del Noroeste) and its primary student group was called Federation of Socialist University Students.[9] In 1941, in accordance with the conservative turn of national politics, it changed its name to the University of Sinaloa and in 1965 it gained its autonomy, becoming the Autonomous University of Sinaloa (UAS). The UAS was usually at the center of political infighting given its role as a training ground for cadres that would assume significant political and administrative positions in the state.

The history of both the Federation of University Students of Sinaloa (FEUS since 1941) and the student movement from the late sixties through the seventies has been described in detail by Liberato Terán (1982), Rafael Santos (2005, 2007) and Sergio A. Sánchez (2012, 2018). The period from 1966 to 1972 is marked by the struggle between factions to control the UAS, namely the one led by the state government, the several currents within the FEUS, and the "José María Morelos" group known as the *Chemones*. As Santos points out, "this proliferation of subgroups provoked constant conflicts, tensions, negotiations and, in many cases, impositions of tactics and

[9] For more information on the UAS's socialist stage see Jesús Lazcano Ochoa, *La Universidad Socialista del Noroeste. Documentos, relatos y opiniones* (Culiacán: UAS, 2001).

political strategies" from one faction to another.[10] The 1968 student movement in Mexico City also had an impact in Sinaloa, due to the solidarity networks that the youth formed through groups like the National Central of Democratic Students (CNED).

From 1968 onward, the JCM and the *Chemones* competed for the leadership of the FEUS. Both groups staged the fight against the chancellor Gonzalo Armienta Calderón (1970-1972), imposed by the government against the student will. The confrontations between the anti-Armienta students and security forces and its shock groups (the so-called "Gorillas" or *porros*) became increasingly violent. The students organized in brigades and learned to defend themselves with sticks, stones, and Molotov cocktails.

Towards the end of 1970, when the pro-guerrilla wing headed by Raúl Ramos Zavala broke with the JCM, the Sinaloan student movement began to experience a similar split between those who maintained their allegiance to the PCM and those who favored armed revolution. Gradually, the radicals turned into the most influential force within the student's houses, where low-income and rural students lived. While the communists of the so-called "democrat" or "reformist" wing argued that the priority of the movement was university reform to democratize the UAS, the radicals proposed that the university should be a platform in the struggle against capitalism, allied to workers' and peasants' struggles.[11] That claim did not stem from an ideological trend but responded to the rise of popular struggles in the state, mainly the struggle for land. The surge in repression by the government of Alfredo Valdés Montoya (1969-1974) against any social protest further radicalized the student movement.

---

[10] Rafael Santos Cenobio, *"Los Enfermos:" Un movimiento político-armado en Sinaloa (1972-1976)*, (M.A. Thesis, Universidad de Guadalajara, 2007), 101.

[11] Sergio A. Sánchez, "Caminemos: un periódico enfermo?," *Revista 2.0, Conocimiento histórico en clave digital*, no. 4 (July-December 2012), 101.

At the beginning of 1972, the radicals assumed the leadership of the FEUS and in April of that year the student movement obtained the resignation of chancellor Armienta. That victory motivated the radicals to seek deeper changes within the university. At the same time, they joined social movements and began to clump together with organizations from other states that supported the armed struggle. Unlike what happened in the rest of the country, the self-dubbed "Sick-ones of the red virus of the revolution"—a slogan in reference to Lenin's book, *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920)—were the tendency that managed to hegemonize the student movement at the state level.[12] Most *Enfermos* came from central and northern UAS' campuses and high-schools, and the Technological Institute of Culiacán.

Beginning in mid-1972, the *Enfermos* participated in almost every struggle, from land invasions to strikes. Each demonstration ended in street fighting, but the clashes caused students to lose their fear, acquire self-defense experience, and arm themselves. Although there were usually dozens of detainees, the *Enfermos* proved to be able to maintain a systematic confrontation with the repressive forces. In addition to state terror, which drove the student moment to the self-defense terrain, one of the reasons that explains the radicalism of the *Enfermos* was their conviction that they were facing a pre-insurrectional stage and that the clashes against the state favored the maturation of revolutionary conditions.[13] This interpretation did not respond to a collective delirium, given that Sinaloa was the only state in the country where student-guerrillas controlled university life and were horizontally linked with the movements of peasants, laborers and workers, to the point in which they successfully summoned

[12] Rafael Santos Cenobio, Juan García Valenzuela, & José Alberto Ortega Campos, "Los Enfermos: la configuración de un discurso gráfico radical en Sinaloa, México, 1970-1973," *Ra Ximhai* 13, no. 3 (July-December 2017): 439.

[13] Camilo Valenzuela, "El movimiento de *Los Enfermos*," in Héctor Ibarra Chávez, ed., *La guerrilla de los '70 y la transición a la democracia* (Mexico City: Ce-Acatl, 2006), 91.

these sectors to engage in urban guerrilla combats.[14] The *Enfermos* were also the only Liga's front that could overtly distribute armed propaganda in the university, and even disseminate their messages through the radio.[15]

It is also important to underscore that the *Enfermos* were not isolated. By joining the Pro-Party Organization at the end of 1972 and the Liga in 1973, they gained an understanding over the national extent of the armed movement, from the Sierra Tarahumara to the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas. The local and national mobilizations, coupled with a global climate of revolutionary struggles, made the *Enfermos* over confident about the final victory of their cause. Consequently, despite their scarcity of resources and limited military training, they were highly motivated to fight the numerous police and military agencies that chased them.

The *Enfermos*' incorporation into the Liga since 1973 had ambivalent consequences for the movement. The Liga gave them political-military training and sent experienced militants to organize the bases, but in return the *Enfermos* lost autonomy and abandoned the ideal of unconditional solidarity with all popular struggles to adapt to the Liga's proletarian line, which did not correspond to the agroindustry context of Sinaloa.[16] Thus, instead of focusing on the peasants, who had a great capacity for mobilization, the *Enfermos* sought a connection with workers, which were far from developing a revolutionary consciousness. The *Enfermos* were able to continue their political work with day laborers only because the Liga considered the latter to be field workers. Furthermore, according to the *Enfermo* leader Eleazar Salinas, "the comrades

---

[14] Ibarra Chávez, "Surgimiento, auge y debacle del movimiento estudiantil sinaloense en los años setenta: Movimiento de Los Enfermos," in *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: Cuatro décadas a debate*, Gamiño et al. eds., 214.

[15] The student left controlled the university's radio, Radio UAS, and broadcast programs like "El pensamiento del Che Guevara." Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 273-275.

[16] Santos Cenobio, "Los Enfermos," 230.

from outside did not attain the leadership or the needed moral authority because they ignored the idisincracy of our proletarian people."[17]

The Liga's strategy of organizing clandestine brigades to distribute armed propaganda in the agricultural fields and strikes familiarized subaltern sectors with student-guerrillas and made them receptive to their call. However, the history of this connection has been told from the perspective of the guerrillas and little is known about what the recipients of the revolutionary message believed. A substantial part of the day laborers was of indigenous origin, from both northwestern and southeastern states, thereby their ethnic and class vulnerability turned them into silenced actors.[18] The narratives about the *Enfermos*' movement depict day laborers as receptors where the students emptied their radicalism, as if they lacked their own agency and voice. A similar vision has prevailed about women, even though they were incorporated into the agit-prop brigades and were victims of repression, they have been overlooked as relevant actors.

Despite protracted radical mobilization, Sinaloa lacked the conditions for a popular insurrection. The PRI maintained control of the most important workers' and peasants' organizations in the state (the CNC and the CTM). Furthermore, although the ruling elite was very divided, its different factions agreed on two fundamental aspects: stifling social movements and managing the influence of drug trafficking in politics, forcing drug traffickers to pay bribes,

---

[17] Cited in Ibarra Chávez, "Surgimiento, auge y debacle del movimiento estudiantil sinaloense en los años setenta: Movimiento de Los Enfermos," in *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: Cuatro décadas a debate*, Gamiño et al. eds., 219.

[18] One of the leading scholars of agricultural social movements in Sinaloa, Florencio Posada Segura, maintained that the aftermath of the failed insurrection of 1974, translated into "an indeterminate number of dead, wounded, prisoners, dismissed, persecuted and disappeared ... and [made] it practically impossible to approach the workers' camps." In consequence, no one was able to interview the day laborers who participated in those events. F. Posada Segura, *Movimientos sociales de los trabajadores agrícolas asalariados en el Noroeste de México (1970-1995)* (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2005), 9. See also Rubén Burgos ed. *Movimientos sociales en el Noroeste de México* (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 1985).

as it will be addressed in the next chapter. When the guerrillas emerged, the response of the Sinaloan government was stringent, because it added a layer of chaos and uncertainty to a complex scenario. Thus, the ruling elite pulled together as a block to wipe out the *Enfermos*.

Additionally, the voices that dominated the public opinion about the *Enfermos* were the state-controlled media and the democratic left; the latter accused the student-guerrillas of being a perversion of the revolutionary utopia and a group of assassins.[19] In retrospect, the former member of the Liga, Gustavo Hirales, also described the *Enfermos* as a set of irrational actors, making evident the influence the democratic left had in shaping the memory of the Sinaloan guerrilla movement.[20] Gilberto Guevara Niebla, the former leader of the '68 student movement in Mexico city, demonized the Enfermos by claiming that they:

> …were intended to destroy the university; they got to kill students, destroy labs and burn books, hit women, beat professors. Heriberto Castillo experienced it; Carlos Monsiváis too; I also bore witness to it: in my family it was murdered a second cousin. My family was persecuted, my brother imprisoned, my parents' house and my own house were attacked by the police. Those were years of living under terror, a terror fueled by radical extremism and by the authoritarian behavior of the military and the police, who did not know limits.[21]

This vision not only prevented student movements from other parts of the country from sympathizing with the *Enfermos*, but also contributed to a distorted perception of political violence in Sinaloa. The *Enfermos* developed an authoritarian political culture without the capacity to negotiate with other sectors not because they were irrational, but because they

---

[19] For a PCM version of the guerrillas see Carlos Calderón Viedas, Jorge Medina Viedas & Liberato Terán, *La utopía corrompida. Radicalismo y Reforma en la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa* (Mexico City: Océano, 2009).

[20] G. Hirales, "La guerra secreta," *Nexos*, June 1, 1982, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=4068, accessed January 10, 2018.

[21] Iván Pliego Moreno, "Sobre el 68. Entrevista con Gilberto Guevara Niebla," *Sociológica* 23, no. 68 (September-December 2008): 204. Guevara Niebla was the public intellectual who most contributed to generating an image of the *Enfermos* as bloodthirsty executioners. Guevara undertook an ideological battle against the guerrillas as a result of the May 1973 confrontation between *Chemones* and *Enfermos*, where his cousin Carlos Guevara Reynaga was mortally wounded. Guevara Niebla never accepted that it had been a shooting between both parties, in which the *Enfermo* activist Pablo Ruiz also lost his life. On the contrary, Guevara portrayed the guerrillas as murderers of the democratic left, a caricature that was widely disseminated by the PCM. Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 333.

believed that they were operating in a war-like situation against the bourgeoise state. The democratic left, which did not believe in the reality of war, demanded the use of political mechanisms that characterized the times of peace. The disagreement between both positions was irreconcilable.

Moreover, the analyses about this period by members of the democratic left often overlook or minimize the levels of daily violence in Sinaloa caused by both repression and drug trafficking. The *Enfermos*' movement was not the cause but the consequence of a deeply authoritarian, violent, and decomposed system that was maintained for the benefit of an elite that derived privileges from the organization of both the legal and illegal economy. The acceptance that the *Enfermos* had among some of the most exploited social sectors was a sample of the acute social contradictions of the state, which finally broke out on early 1974.

From the "Assault on Heaven" to the State of Siege

On January 16, 1974, the Liga mobilized dozens of agit-prop brigades to carry out an insurrection attempt called the "assault on heaven." The plan entailed the taking of Culiacán to lay a strategic siege, while at the same time distracting the enemy in the agricultural fields by mobilizing day laborers. The *Enfermos* had tried similar tactics in the past, although they had never intended to take a whole city. For instance, in mid-1972, when the army and the police surrounded the land invaders in the El Tajito ejido, Guasave, the students responded by attacking public buildings and shops in Culiacán.[22] On October 24, 1973, the Liga spearheaded what

---

[22] Sergio A. Sánchez Parra, "*El Sol de Sinaloa* y la violencia política en México durante 1972: el caso de los Enfermos de la UAS," *Letras Históricas*, no. 18 (Spring-Fall 2018): 180-181. El Tajito marked a watershed in the social struggles in Sinaloa, given that on January 6, 1973, the security forces killed the renowned peasant leader Marcelo Loya along with three peasant activists. For the case of struggle of El Tajito ejido see Paulina Araceli Soto

would later be known as a "journey of agitation and combat," in which the brigades assaulted agricultural fields in the Culiacán valley, provoking a work stoppage and destroying communications, tractors, and hay bales. Also, the brigadists stole weapons and cars and clashed with the police in the fields and in the capital.[23] These actions were intended to serve as a political-military training for both the militants and the masses.

Despite the prevailing outrage of the public opinion against the *Enfermos* in the fall of 1973, they were able to create a climate of popular rebelliousness. On January 16, approximately fifteen thousand day laborers paralyzed the agricultural fields and many of them as well as construction workers followed the Liga in the looting of shops, the burning of buses to use them as barricades, and the clashes with the police. The brigades also employed luddite-like tactics of destroying the means of production.[24] According to the *Enfermo* leader Andrés Ayala, the day laborers "were imbued with an economicist conciousness and participated in a wave of claiming [of their labor rights] insteand of a [disposition] to seize power."[25]

The Parachute Fusilier Brigade (BFP) and other army units took over the city and established a state of siege. The police and the military brutally attacked the student's homes and carried out dragnets and mass arrests.[26] The DFS lost control of the movement due to its massive character. Their reports on the thwarted insurrection reflect a very small portion of the events, in

Carballo, "Movimientos campesinos por la tierra en el norte de Sinaloa, 1968-1976. (Estudio de caso ejido campo El Tajito)" (M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2011).

[23] Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 360-361.

[24] Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 366-384.

[25] Cited in Ibarra Chávez, "Surgimiento, auge y debacle del movimiento estudiantil sinaloense en los años setenta: Movimiento de Los Enfermos," in *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: Cuatro décadas a debate*, Gamiño et al. eds., 224.

[26] The journalist Abraham García Ibarra wrote a detailed chronicle of the events, although providing a conspirational interpretation. García Ibarra, *Oligarquía sí! Sinaloa: Estado torpe o reino de la barbarie? Cuando los latifundios se fertilizan con sangre* (Culiacán: n. p., 1974).

addition to focusing on the arrest and torture of the leaders.[27] According to official figures there were only four casualties on that day, but in the aftermath of the assault there were many unaccounted victims.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming counterinsurgency campaign that followed the assault, the Liga called the operation a success because it demonstrated that the guerrillas could mobilize the masses by encouraging them to employ direct action tactics. The Liga even attempted to launch another "journey of agitation and combat" on May 1st.[28] However, neither the day laborers improved their working conditions as they expected, nor did the Liga consummated the general insurrection of the masses to begin a revolutionary civil war. What did happen is that hundreds of students and probably laborers were arrested in the weeks and months that followed the assault and the fate of many of them remains uncertain.

One of the actions of the Liga that contributed to exacerbating the climate of persecution and terror was the kidnapping of the judicial policeman Jesus Zavala Rocha by high-school *Enfermos* on January 18, 1974. The students tortured him to death, with methods that scandalized public opinion for its savagery.[29] Although it was an isolated case, which did not reflect the Liga's political-military line or the local tactics of the *Enfermos*' movement, it was

---

[27] "Los Enfermos," AGN, DFS, public version, single file.

[28] Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 380-81, 391.

[29] "Estado de Sinaloa," January 24, 1974, AGN, DFS, Exp. 100-25-1, H-264-255; Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 375-377; Gladys I. McCormick, "Torture and the Making of a Subversive During Mexico's Dirty War," in *México Beyond 1968*, Pensado & Ochoa eds., 266. Ángeles Magdaleno overstated the case by using it as an example to equate the crimes of the guerrillas with those of the state, even though guerrillas opposed torture because it was against their core values. They only approved the execution of state agents in skirmishes or combats. A. Magdaleno Cárdenas, "Los otros muertos," *Históricas, Boletín del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas*, UNAM, no. 99 (January-April, 2014): 2-14.

used by both the government and the democratic left as an example that the *Enfermos* were a bloodthirsty group motivated by vengeance.

The media's depiction of the Liga as a group of deranged terrorists failed to analyze the causes that led young students to commit such an act. The Sinaloa Judicial Police (PJS) was probably one of the most brutal in the country, combining aspects of professional torture with sheer sadism. When the PJS arrested students, it applied an inexhaustible repertoire of torture techniques to them, regardless of their age or the type of crime they were charged with. In fact, most of the detainees had not committed any offense, beyond belonging to agit-prop brigades. The students who tortured Zavala acted under a mental framework typical of the Sinaloan highlands known as the *lex talionis* or the "an eye for an eye" principle. They meticulously replicated the techniques that the PJS used against their bodies: beating, burning, cutting, and rape. While this level of cruelty was even more appalling considering the students' ages (16-18), it was but a calculated imitation of the police's actions.

The students-turned-perpetrators violated the guerrilla moral codes, making evident that they were not cadres with political-military training but sympathizers. The Zavala's case cannot be seen as an example of the guerrilla culture because it was exceptional regarding the standards of both the *Enfermos* and the nationwide guerrilla movement, and it was closer to the values and practices of narco-culture. Nevertheless, this case also indicates that the *Enfermos*' movement was not a homogeneous block. Individuals with diverse social and geographical origins and with different levels of political-ideological development caused the movement to harbor contradictory tendencies, and at least one of them was prone to unbridled retaliation.

The Helicopters of Death

> That tomb is lost, like us. The *Enfermos* have their marine sepulcher in the Bay of the Eagles, there we will finish all. For the State, death is an absence, and the absence of death is oblivion. Those who sleep in the bay have not died yet: they are still missing: there is no swell or mark that can return them to our proximity.
> Eduardo Ruiz Sosa, Anatomy of memory.

In their testimonies, survivors of the "assault on heaven" depict their activities and discuss the tactical errors made by the brigades. There is no reflection about what happened with the supposed fifteen thousand day laborers and workers who participated in the mobilization. However, the official figures do not give the impression of large-scale repression. As in the case of the massacres in Tlatelolco and San Cosme, no single authority disclosed the exact number of victims or their identities.

The DFS reports indicate that the prevailing terror techniques included mass arrest, torture, and imprisonment. Hundreds of students were arrested in 1974 and released between the years of 1974 and 1976. There was only one official complaint made about a forced-disappearance in 1974 in Culiacán, regarding a militant of the *Liga* named Lourdes Huerta Martínez.[30] There are several reasons for which other cases of forced-disappearances might have gone undenounced. High and middle-ranking *Enfermo* leaders have provided most of the testimonies about the "assault on heaven," but since they were imprisoned or fled to other states, they could not witness the aftermath of the failed insurrection. Also, state-controlled media minimized the events of January 16. On the contrary, Audor Medina Quiñones was a grassroots

[30] Lourdes Huerta was pregnant, thereby in case she had gave birth, it would be a double disappearance. Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, "Informe especial sobre las quejas en materia de desapariciones forzadas ocurridas en la década de los 70 y principios de los 80," 2001, http://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/doc/Informes/Especiales/2001_Desapariciones70y80.pdf, accessed September 13, 2017.

activist and his testimony has the potential to change the vision that has predominated over counterinsurgency in 1974.

In 1973, Baltazar Véliz López, "El Brackett," a student from the College of Agriculture (*Escuela Superior de Agricultura*) at the UAS and member of the *Liga*, introduced Medina to the "Che Guevara" student brigade, which had distributed propaganda and participated in the so-called expropriations. They were one of the dozens of brigades mobilized during the "assault on heaven." Medina claimed that there were so many agricultural fields paralyzed that the Liga did not know what to do, meanwhile the people expected their orders to act. When asked if executions took place during that day, Medina answered "disappearances." The police "would force brigadists into vehicles with *chingazos* [blows] and then we would never see them again."[31]

Véliz López was one of the many detained-disappeared by the DFS in 1975. His family gave him up for dead because "they knew already what he was into," given that being a guerrilla was a death sentence. Medina recalls the nicknames of at least five more detained-disappeared, whose real names he did not know for security reasons: "*'El Tintán*,' his wife 'Margarita,' '*El Rojo*,' '*El camaradita*,' '*El Panadero*,' we did not see them again. The majority were of the College of Agriculture and almost all of San Blas, El Fuerte. Near that school, *guachos* (soldiers) and *judiciales* (police officers) put checkpoints."[32]

Medina was close to joining the list of unreported missing persons. He explained that shortly after the assault, he and his sister boarded a train carrying Liga's propaganda. Then, they noticed DFS agents dressed in civilian clothes walking through the corridors forcing a detainee

---

[31] Véliz knew Medina because both of them were from Sinaloa de Leyva and also because he married one of his sisters. Audor Medina Quiñones, Interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May, 8 2017.

[32] Audor Medina Quiñones, Interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

nicknamed "*El ratón*" to identify his companions. Upon realizing about his imminent arrest, Medina tried to open a window, but the policemen thwarted his escape and beat him. Her sister evaded detention only because she was sitting elsewhere.

When they got off the train, the agents took the detainees to a Marquis and drove them around Culiacán, until finally taken them to a clandestine detention center in Estación Dimas, San Ignacio, a place near the coast that in Medina's memory "was hilly and less populated than nowadays." Medina claimed to have seen more than twenty men "lying on the floor, some moored like mummies, with broken arms or legs, they were moaning and crying. No one could go to the bathroom; everything was full of feces and they [officers] only gave us water—nothing to eat. I was held for around fifteen days and tortured. There were people from the DFS, the judicial police, and the federals [PJF], but I did not see any *guachos* [soldiers]. The DFS agents were the sternest people there."

Medina was unable to find out the identity of the detainees because he was immobilized and could not see them, but he is sure that they were from the student movement, unrelated to drug trafficking. One of the PJS agents who arrived at the detention center was the ex-husband of one of his cousins, who recognized and untied him. After scolding Medina, he left pieces of rope behind and opened a window. Nobody was around to monitor the detainees permanently, since it was impossible for them to escape. Medina picked a detainee who appeared less tortured and untied him. That night they both escaped through the window. Medina stated: "We left barefoot, without a shirt, and with messy long hair. We walked through the mountains, having our feet pricked, until we reached the international highway. A truck driver gave us a ride to Culiacán. I did not have to see it, but my companion, who was from San Blas, informed me that agents tied parts of train track rails to the feet of our comrades before throwing them from a helicopter in the

middle of the ocean. An agent would arrive and say, 'the *boludo* [helicopter] is already here, let's go to the ocean.' Then they would take two or three comrades and we would never see them again. I think the *judiciales* [PJS agents] were in charge of this; they were very repressive with our people."[33]

Medina was afraid to return to Sinaloa de Leyva because on previous occasions police agents had arrested his father and a nephew to inquire his whereabouts, and he feared that could happen again. His only option was to remain as a laborer in the "Victoria" field in Novolato. Only after a few weeks did he dare visit his parents. He knew that his family thought he was dead and would not look for him. Medina returned to study in Culiacán, where he even met the Liga's leader Gerardo Camarena Ayala, but refused to rejoin the guerrillas.

The testimony of Medina as survivor of the "death flights" is credible by its level of detail, his precise description of the geographical environment, and because he had no motivation to produce a story of that magnitude since he is no longer engaged in political activities.[34] There are other testimonies collected by journalists regarding the practice of dropping people into the ocean from helicopters by the Sinaloa police agencies, although these correspond to the 1980s.[35] I do not know if when the writer Elmer Mendoza referred to the

---

[33] Audor Medina Quiñones, Interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

[34] During my field work in Sinaloa I had the opportunity to visit Estación Dimas to search for potential witnesses of the "death flights." It is an isolated place, despite its proximity to Culiacán and Mazatlán. Locals told me that it was a very dangerous zone and I noticed the presence of police agents patrolling the coast. Given the geographical conditions of this town, caught between the highlands and the sea, security forces could have been able to carry out "death flights" without being observed by witnesses. None of the locals I interviewed remembered the repression against the students in the 1970s.

[35] The DEA agent Héctor Berrellez claimed that he bore witness when both DFS and PJF agents arrested three drug traffickers in Mazatlán, put them in a helicopter and tossed one of them into the sea to force the others to confess the location of a marihuana plantation. Charles Bowden, "Blood on the Corn: A DEA Agent is Tortured and Killed in Mexico," *Medium*, November 17, 2014, https://medium.com/matter/blood-on-the-corn-52ac13f7e643, accessed December 20, 2018.

"death flights" in *El amante de Janis Joplin* he had information on specific cases. Nonetheless, there is suggestive evidence indicating that, much like his characters David and *El Chato*, an unknown number of activists were thrown into the sea.[36] The scholarship about the dirty war usually points at Guerrero as the only state where "death flights" were practiced, however, Sinaloa must be included as a key place in the geography of the elimination of the detainee-disappeared.

There are several reasons for which those disappearances might have never been reported. Two determining factors were the social class and the geographic location of the victims. The cases mentioned by Medina come from peripheral municipalities, such as Sinaloa de Leyva and El Fuerte, and none of them appears in an official count of victims. Medina admits that, had he been disappeared, his family would never have done anything to find him, because they were certain that the law would not be in their favor and they too risked being disappeared. The Sinaloan human rights movement against the forced-disappearances began in Culiacán in 1976, but the families of the victims from northern Sinaloa could not easily move to the state capital due to lack of resources.

Furthermore, if as Medina pointed out, the arrests were indiscriminate, it is likely that in clandestine detention centers there were not only lower class students like himself, but also day laborers disparagingly referred to as "oaxaquitos," indigenous or *mestizo* migrants from the southeast who represented an important sector in the agricultural fields. Their absence could go unnoticed without causing alarm. With the available sources, it is impossible to establish how many "death flights" there were, how long this practice was enforced, or the victims' identity.

---

[36] The Sinaloan writer Eduardo Ruiz Sosa also alluded to the "death flights" in his novel about the *Enfermos*, *Anatomía de la memoria* (2014).

However, as in the case of Medina, oral history can shed light on state crimes that otherwise would have been buried forever.

The Tactical Withdrawal (1976-1979)

Once the repression dismantled the *Enfermo* movement in 1974-75, the Liga sent militants from other parts of the country to reinforce the struggle. The brigades carried on in their tactics of armed propaganda, bank robberies, and kidnappings to bankroll the movement.[37] The newer generations of guerrillas were made up of high-school and college students between the ages of 17 and 20, who lacked the leadership or experience of old cadres and tended to commit more strategic errors. In addition, the executions and disappearances of guerrillas persisted because the Liga failed to organize a security system that prioritized the protection of its already scarce militants. The serial loss of brigadists forced the Liga to undertake tactical withdrawals in the hopes of reorganizing underground, but it could never regain the strength it had in 1973-74. Thus, the withdrawal became a permanent condition, despite the efforts to overcome it.

The systematic use of forced-disappearance as a primary state terror technique characterized the period from 1976 to 1979.[38] There were forty-two cases registered between 1976 and 1979 that coincided with the Trizo and Condor anti-drug operations, although it is very likely that there were dozens of unreported cases, similar to 1974.[39] For those who witnessed the merciless hunt against the Liga in those years, it was a conundrum that the security forces hardened their repressive tactics at a time when guerrillas were disjointed and no longer

[37] Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 437-474.

[38] Camilo Vicente Ovalle, "Estado y represión en México. Una historia de la desaparición forzada, 1950-1980" (PhD diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2018), 425-426.

[39] Oscar Loza Ochoa, *Tiempo de espera* (Culiacán: UAS, 2004), 133-137.

represented a significant threat to public security, much less to national security. As Camilo Vicente pointed out, there was an overreaction of the counterinsurgency apparatus against the Liga for its practice of killing police officers and soldiers.[40] Security forces intended to legitimize the elimination of "terrorists" by fostering the perception that it was necessary for the State to respond to evil with a greater evil in order to protect society. However, another reason that seems more important is that the existence of the Liga allowed security forces to demand more resources for its anti-subversive struggle, and even justify their participation in drug trafficking as a way to expand the counterinsurgency infrastructure, as next chapter shall discuss.

During the late 1970s, the Liga made unsuccessful attempts to recover its connections with popular movements. Although the Liga did not achieve a substantial accumulation of forces, the memories of street combats and the "assault to heaven" emboldened student-guerrillas to carry out a major military-political operation. On April 20, 1977, the agit-prop brigades took and burnt trucks and paralyzed large sectors of Culiacán. Then, they spread all over the city to distribute propaganda in schools and had skirmishes with the army.[41]

The April operation was the last Liga's attempt to capture Culiacán's public space. Inadvertently, the Liga gave those in charge of Operation Condor additional reasons to intensify the existing state of siege. In a single year, twenty-seven militants of the Liga were disappeared, and many others assassinated.[42] Unlike 1974, the repression of 1977 gave rise to a movement spearheaded by the relatives of the detained-disappeared, particularly the mothers, who pioneered the struggle for human rights in Sinaloa. The so-called Union of Parents with

[40] Vicente Ovalle, "Estado y represión en México," 417.

[41] Sánchez Parra, *Estudiantes en armas*, 460-464.

[42] Vicente Ovalle, "Estado y represión en México," 417.

Disappeared Sons (*Unión de padres de familia con hijos desaparecidos*) began their fight for truth and justice in the point of intersection between the dirty war and the war on drugs.

While the military and the PGR-PJF took full control of Operation Condor, the DFS and the police agencies of Sinaloa focused on counterinsurgency. On June 28, 1979, DFS agents in coordination with agents of the Governor's Office and the Municipal Public Security Directorate, detained Esteban Sandoval Robles, "El Macho Prieto," and Marcos Vinicio Galaviz Navarro, "La Liebre." Their capture led to the identification of the whereabouts of the Liga's head in Sinaloa, Gerardo Camarena Ayala.[43] On June 29, security forces located Camarena and his wife in the Nueva Culiacán neighborhood; although they tried to defend themselves, they were shot dead.[44] On September 23 of that same year, state security forces and the troops of the 9th military zone were quartered in anticipation of the Liga's actions to commemorate its symbolic anniversary.[45] The government of Sinaloa, accustomed to having the armed movement rise from its ashes, had yet to realize it had struck a mortal blow to the Liga.

The elimination of Camarena put an end to a decade of radicalism, utopian dreams, and extremist tactics, in which the Liga maintained that the best defense would be the attack. The determining factor that kept the students in arms for such a protracted period was the state terror exercised in its crudest forms. In addition, the guerrilla culture played a major role because it gave militants not only an ideology but also a system of beliefs, values, and symbols. Young people drew from it an existential project and a collective identity that enabled them to persist in their struggle until losing the last man and the last woman in the movement.

---

[43] "Estado de Sinaloa," June 28, 1979, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 11, 105.

[44] "Estado de Sinaloa," June 29, 1979, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 11, 108.

[45] "Estado de Sinaloa," September 22, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 11, 131-132.

Guerrilla Culture: Between Global Appropriations and Local Developments

> [The Enfermos] …. They are the ones who dream about hunger and their nightmare is this Country. They are the ones who want to wake up because life hurts and its passing, its weight, suffocates them. They had hope. They used to dream about hope like a lamp that shines light without burning out […] They are the ones who die when everyone else lives peacefully and they do not know that, there, outside awaits the end of their days. They are the ones who read, silently, a book that nobody else has written. And, for their part, they write the book of a Country that no one will read. Nobody knows who they are, nor how many have been infected by their word over the years. Their word is contagious. Their word is the possibility of a weapon clutched in the depths of the night.
> Eduardo Ruiz, *Anatomía de la memoria* [*The Anatomy of Memory*].[46]

Ideology is the aspect of 1970s Mexican guerrilla culture for which the most sources exist. The Liga, in particular, was the armed group with the greatest ideological production at the national level, recorded both in manuscripts for theoretical debate and propaganda for the masses. The intellectuals of the Liga appropriated global currents of communist thought and adapt them to Mexican reality. For the student-guerrillas, belonging to an organization that was capable of such level of ideological production was a source of pride. However, the Liga's texts were the end result of a long process of raising consciousness (*concientización*) and analysis and did not say anything about the non-theoretical sources that allowed the youth to first approach anti-capitalist thought.

In interviews with former guerrillas, they refered to access to the same cultural inputs that the entire left shared: comic strips and magazines critical of the government, Russian socialist-realism novels, *corridos* from the Mexican Revolution, Latin American *canto nuevo* (new song) compositions, Radio Habana broadcasts, and movies with a pro-oppressed political or social message. Young Sinaloans participated in this general leftwing culture, but they were earlier in their incorporation of the elements of guerrilla culture that began to form and circulate globally

[46] Translation into English by Jessica Kirstein.

at the start of the1960s. External ideological influences had a very practical application: they motivated poor students to fight to defend their own class against the injustices of bosses, *guachos* (soldiers), and *chotas* (the police).

A typical case was that of Audor Medina Quiñones (1956). He came from a peasant family from León Fonseca, Sinaloa de Leyva, whose members moved to Culiacán each year, from September to April, to work as day laborers in the tomato fields. A student at the UAS School of Agriculture, who was a friend of one of his siblings, introduced him to reading the radical leftwing magazine *Por qué?* Medina did not like working in the field, thus he decided to study. He admits that in middle school "older activists started to give me books by Marx and Lenin, Russian novels, but I did not understand them at all." Medina also said that the Cuban Revolution and the figures of Fidel and Che had an impact on him. The strong influence of socialism on his school environment made Medina sympathize with those ideas. Medina then became the president of his middle school's student association. By the time that Baltazar Véliz sent him the newspaper, *Madera*, he was already convinced that there had to be a revolution.[47]

A less common case than Medina's was that of César Cristerna (1955). He was twelve years old when the communist father of a close friend began to indoctrinate him, and he had access to the popular leftist comic strips that circulated nationwide at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, such as *Los Supermachos* and *Los Agachados,* whose main cartoonist was Eduardo del Río, "Rius." He was also an assiduous reader of magazines critical of the government, such as *Sucesos* and *Por qué?*. With this background, upon entering high school in Culiacán, Cristerna participated in the student movement between 1971 and 1972. Melchor Inzunza invited him to collaborate as an illustrator for the bulletin, *Caminemos* ("Let's walk"),

[47] Audor Medina Quiñones, Interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

which targeted the chancellor, Gonzalo Armienta. The editors provided him with the content, and he translated it into images.[48] In retrospect, Cristerna believes that his "little cartoons (*monitos*)" were very basic, because in that period, "we did not understand how complicated reality was" and a Manichean vision of the world prevailed.

Despite the fact that Cristerna declined to join the *Enfermo* movement because he did not share its radicalism, he was stigmatized for having worked on the bulletin. Even though he was one of the most talented illustrators in Sinaloa, he was ostracized, and his career sabotaged, which led him to regret his high school past. This subtler repression has gone unnoticed because of the brutal dimensions of the counterinsurgency. The climate of political and social polarization did not leave room for intermediate positions like Cristerna's.

The monthly bulletin, *Caminemos,* which was in circulation between the end of 1971 and the start of 1973, is one of the documents that best captures the combination of the local, national, and global influences on the Sinaloan student movement, reflecting its transition toward urban guerrilla warfare. Initially a section of the PCM that defended university autonomy and reform, led by Melchor Inunza, edited the bulletin. However, starting in 1972 with volume 9, *Caminemos* was edited by members of the "Rafael Buelna Tenorio" University Student House, which fought to turn the university into a space for the revolutionary struggle, integrated into the struggles of workers and peasants. Because of the climate of repression, the FEUS Coordinating Committee went underground in October of 1972. In January 1973, *Caminemos* published its last issue as the FEUS commission's official periodical.[49]

---

[48] César Cristerna, Interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 6, 2017. Cristerna is the author of most of the cartoons in appendix 3.

[49] Santos Cenobio, *"Los Enfermos:"* 276.

Caminemos was an artisanal bulletin, in which students not only expressed their understanding of communist ideology, but also their aesthetic tastes, sense of humor, moral principles, and other intangible aspects of their social utopia. Although to the trained eye the bulletin's content may seem primitive, it actually reflects an unusual phenomenon, which is the qualitative leap that the students made in relation to their parents' generation. Despite its ephemeral existence, *Caminemos* played an important role in unifying the cultural horizon within the student houses, building a revolutionary pedagogy for students, and acting as a collective organizer.[50] Unlike the Liga's heavily theoretical magazine, *Madera, Caminemos* had aesthetic and symbolic appeal. [51] Students stole mimeographs in order to reproduce this propaganda and distribute it on a mass scale.

Caminemos was a sort of snapshot that captured the moment of transition from a student movement that sought to oust a university chancellor to a guerrilla movement that pursued the revolutionary transformation of society (see appendix 3, images 8 and 9). The bulletin stopped focusing exclusively on student issues to give voice to the agrarian struggles that were shaking the state (see appendix 3, images 10 and 11). It also gave space to the writings of both national revolutionary leaders from past and present, like Ricardo Flores Magón and Genaro Vázquez Rojas, and international ones, such as Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Father Camilo Torres of Colombia. There was a selection of contents that, whether in poetic or visual language, conveyed similar messages. Thus, the bulletin featured the poems of Otto René

---

[50] Sánchez Parra, "*Caminemos, un periódico enfermo?*": 103.

[51] The only complete collection of the bulletin *Caminemos* is housed in the UAS Historical Archive (Archivo Histórico de la UAS, AHUAS).

Castillo, José Martí, and Sinaloan poet Juan Guerra Aguiluz, Judith Reyes's corridos, and Cristerna's political cartoons.

Otto René Castillo, the revolutionary from the Guatemalan Rebel Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes,* FAR), whom the army burned alive in 1967, was the bulletin's most quoted poet. Far from being a coincidence, this was a decision based on the fact that Castillo's poems praised courage, honor, tenacity, consistency, and martyrology, which the author exemplified in his own life. See, for example, his poem, "The One Who Is Always There" (*De los de siempre*):

You,
comrade,
the one who is always there.
The one
who never fell back.
Damn!
The one who never
played coward
with the flesh of the people.
Who stood up
against beatings and jail,
exile and shadow.

You,
comrade,
the one who is always there.

And I love you
for your timeless honor,
--little sensitive animal,
for your faith,
greater
and more heroic
than all the giants
of all the religions combined.

But, you know,
the centuries to come
will stand on their toes
on the shoulders of this planet,
trying to touch your dignity
burning with courage
even then.
You,
comrade
who never betrayed
your people,

with tortures
nor with prisons
nor with graft,
you,
tender star,
will come of age with pride
for the delirious millions
emerging
from the depths of history
to give you glory,
you,
modest and human
simple proletariat,
the one who is always there,
unbreakable
metal of the land.[52]

The *Enfermos* were also receptive to the political-moral harangue that Camilo Torres sent to Colombian students in 1965. *Caminemos* reproduced it, underscoring the following parts:

> We know that agitational efforts are important, but that their real effects are lost if they are not followed by organization and by the struggle for power. One of the principal reasons for the transitory and superficial nature of the student's contribution to the revolution is the lack of commitment in their economic, familial, and personal struggles. A student's nonconformity tends to be either emotional (because of sentimental reasons or frustration) or else purely intellectual. This explains the fact that at the end of his university career, his nonconformity disappears or is, at best, hidden away. The rebellious student no longer exists. He becomes a bourgeois professional who buys the symbols of bourgeois prestige and barters his conscience for a high salary. […] This lack of contact [with workers and peasants] can make the student a traitor to his historical vocation; when the country demands a total commitment, the student answers with nothing but words and good intentions. When the mass movement demands a daily and constant effort, the student replies with shouts, stoning, and sporadic demonstrations. When the people demand an effective, disciplined, and responsible presence in their ranks, the student answers with vain promises or excuses. The student's revolutionary convictions must lead to real commitment taken to the ultimate consequences.[53]

The *Enfermos* based their discourse on the impossibility of betraying the exploited classes because of their class identity. In one of its articles, *Caminemos* pointed out:

> We comrades who live in the student house, who come from the exploited class: workers, peasants, etc., must continue forward in the struggle […] It should not be forgotten…that if we won the movement and managed to expel that little chancellor (*rectorzuelo*), it was because of the people's support. And therefore,

---

[52] Otto René Castillo, "To the One Who is Always There," http://www.ottorenecastillo.org/Lets/Always.html, accessed March 10, 2019, and "Poesía de Otto René Castillo," *Caminemos*, no. 6 (January 1972): 9.

[53] John Gerassi ed., *Revolutionary Priest. The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 403-404 and Camilo Torres, "Mensaje a los estudiantes," *Caminemos*, no. 13, (July 1972): 13-14.

> we should always be with them, so that together we reach the fixed goal, where the class to which we belong rises to power.[54]

Caminemos also revealed that the movement acquired an authoritarian hue in following the path of radicalism that Father Torres proposed. As Sánchez Parra points out, the *Enfermos* claimed a monopoly over revolutionary authenticity and portrayed themselves as the vanguard that guided the proletariat in the realization of its historical class objectives, which through their deeds demonstrated their commitment to their class brothers.[55] This sense of political purity determined that the *Enfermos* saw everyone with whom they disagreed—mainly the PCM and the *Chemones*—as opportunists, traitors, and obstructionists who were only seeking positions in the university or the government (see appendix 3, image 3).

The *Enfermos* also criticized "intellectualism as a pathology that was infecting the social body of the Mexican left."[56] If for the democrats the far-left was the infantile sickness of communism, for the radicals the illness of intellectualism on the left distanced the presumed leaders from the social base. The activist "Alejo" argued: "It is a shame to see some comrades forming an elite, floating on useless theory, citing Marx and Lenin. It is common to hear them [say] the following: 'you, comrade, are misinterpreting our country because Marx already said in chapter 25, on page 70, in line 17, in his book…'"[57] Thus, *Caminemos* made evident a salient characteristic of the left-wing, which was its infinite capacity for division and exclusion.

---

[54] Mungarro, "Nosotros hijos de parias, obreros y campesinos, debemos seguir luchando," *Caminemos*, No. 12, (June 1972): 5.

[55] Sánchez Parra, "*Caminemos, un periódico enfermo?*": 109.

[56] Sánchez Parra, "*Caminemos, un periódico enfermo?*": 110.

[57] Alejo, "La Enfermedad del 'intelectualismo' en la izquierda," *Caminemos*, no. 13 (July 1973): 10.

In short, *Caminemos* gathered together the influences that the student movement had assimilated during its period of radicalization; its expressions of identity and class solidarity with peasants and day laborers; the *Enfermos*' ideological struggle against the rest of the left, and its physical struggle against the state. The bulletin was one of the central instruments in forming the identity of student-guerrillas, which combined the local and the global. For that reason, it can be defined as "glocal."

Interplays Between Guerrillas and Drug-Traffickers

Since his first state of the union address (1971), President Luis Echeverría suggested that drug trafficking and "terrorism" were transnational enemies and implied that they were interconnected:

> The social phenomena characterizing the contemporary world frequently surpass the borders. Some crimes cannot be pursued merely at a local level, given the propaganda that fosters them and the concrete interests that stimulate them from abroad. This is the case with crimes against [public] health that stem from the [illegal] drug use and it is also the case of the assaults carefully organized and perpetrated [by terrorist groups], which intend to create a state of distress and social unease.

Echeverría delved into the actions his administration took against both drug traffickers and alleged terrorists.[58] He followed the same discursive strategy of conflating both issues for his second and third addresses, and in his fourth one he overtly asserted that mentally retarded (sic) homosexuals from dysfunctional families, who consumed narcotics and were manipulated by foreign interests or domestic provocateurs, made up the terrorist groups.[59]

---

[58] Informes de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos Luis Echeverría Álvarez, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-14.pdf, 7, accessed May 3 2017.

[59] Informes de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos Luis Echeverría Álvarez, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-14.pdf, 126, 180, accessed May 3 2017.

In states like Sinaloa, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Guerrero, which had significant rural and urban guerrilla movements, both state and federal authorities launched a psychological war to associate guerrillas to drug trafficking. Media outlets usually concealed the political nature of rural guerrillas and portrayed them as raiders or cattle rustling gangs.[60] As it was saw in chapter two, the media did not expose the counterinsurgency campaigns in the Sierra Madre Occidental, instead it claimed that the military was pursuing drug smugglers. Thus, the drug war was used as a smokescreen to cover up the dirty war, and drug lords benefited from this situation because they were not targeted.[61]

Beyond official propaganda, one of my research questions dealt with the actual relationship between guerrillas and drug traffickers in Sinaloa, where both groups shared the same spaces. I have found that even though guerrillas and drug-traffickers were largely independent actors, both of them intersected in random ways. Within the popular-student base that made up the *Enfermo* movement, some came from rural communities where growing marijuana and poppy was a normal practice, consequently they did not share the Liga's strict anti-drug stance. The *Enfermo* leaders labeled those people as "lumpenproletariat" and suggested that given the massive nature of the movement they could not control everyone.[62]

In general, the narrative centered around guerrilla heroism usually hides the occasional contact between guerrillas and drug-traffickers. One of the most renowned *Enfermo* leaders, Camilo Valenzuela, has been reluctant to mention drug-related issues in his personal testimonies

---

[60] Alexander Aviña, "A War Against Poor People;" Jorge Mendoza, "Los medios de información y el trato a la guerrilla. Una mirada psicopolítica", in *Movimientos armados en México, siglo XX*, vol. 1, Verónica Okión and Marta Eugenia García, eds. (Zamora: CIESAS/El Colegio de Michoacán, 2006), 145-180.

[61] Smith, "The Rise and Fall", 126.

[62] José Luis López Duarte, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

and interviews.[63] However, other ex-*Enfermos* have been more vocal about this topic, and their testimonies are the most important source to understand these random interplays.

Some students were equally influenced by both guerrilla culture and narco-culture, but the experience of belonging to the UAS, the FEUS, or the different student houses determined their decision to become guerrillas instead of drug traffickers. Also, radical activists made an outstanding job at individual recruitment, while narco-culture was predicated on the belonging to specific family networks or vicinity. Guerrillas' testimonies reveal that their movement failed to perceived drug traffickers as rivals or as a threat to their social utopia because a socialist world would not leave room for "petit bourgeois" drugs; therefore, *narcos* would automatically vanish.

Another crucial observation is that drug traffickers did not despise guerrillas but saw them as followers of a cause that was doomed to fail. It is quite possible that some drug traffickers and gunmen were hired to chase guerrillas, as some DFS reports indicate, but there is no further evidence that they had participated in a systematic way in counterinsurgency operations.[64] The competition between guerrilla culture and narco-culture to capture the "hearts and minds" of people occurred largely in the symbolic realm, more than in the public sphere.

Life Stories

During his years at a high school in Guasave, Sinaloa, José Francisco Rivera Carvajal, "El Chicano" (1954-?) spent time with his friends smoking *mota* (pot) and taking *pastillas* (amphetamines). Unlike other Sinaloan youth of his same low-class origins, "El Chicano" had long hair, listened to rock music, and was immerse in the hippie culture. When he moved to

---

[63] C. Valenzuela, "El movimiento de *Los Enfermos*."

[64] I did not locate those reports but B. Smith quoted them in "The Rise and Fall," 149-150.

Culiacán to study Economy at the UAS, the radical climate of the student movement flipped his interests and tastes. Gonzalo Inzunza recalled how his friend shifted from recreational drugs to political concerns after the massacres of 1968 and 1971.[65] "El Chicano" then began to read the Marxist-Leninist classics and became a leader in the FEUS. After two years of participating in radical politics, he was invited to act as Sinaloa's representatives during the clandestine meeting in Guadalajara, Jalisco that led to the founding of the Liga.

"El Chicano" won the dispute over the Liga's regional leadership by mid-1973 but was arrested shortly after, in September 1973. The DFS tortured him and learned that he was one of the Liga's leaders.[66] However, authorities released him after a few months in jail, probably to follow him and infiltrate the organization.[67] "El Chicano" was demoted in the Liga's hierarchy, although he was allowed to return to Guasave as a medium-rank leader. The continuous loss of militants to police raids on safe houses or street shootings led the Liga's leadership to believe that the organization had been infiltrated. "El Chicano" was marked as suspect because of his short time in prison while other Liga detainees were given longer sentences or were even disappeared. The Liga allegedly kidnaped him and kill him in mid-1974, and secretly buried his

[65] Melchor Inzunza & Andrés Montoya, "Dos testimonios y otro al margen. Entrevista con Cástulo Anselmo Alejo Armenta y Gonzelo Inzunza Cervantes," Culiacán Sinaloa, 1979 or 1980, https://sinaloatv.mx/?p=2679, accessed September 10, 2018.

[66] AGN, DFS, "José Francisco Rivera Carbajal," public version.

[67] "El Chicano" was detained along with Gustavo Hirales, who spent seven years in prison. Hirales suggested that the DFS deputy director, Miguel Nazar Haro, spread rumors that he had coopted guerrilla prisoners to be his informants in exchange for their freedom. Hirales, *Memoria de la Guerra de los justos*.

body nearby Los Mochis, El Fuerte.[68] As Camilo Vicente underscored, the generalized climate of violence enabled both state and non-state actors to easily disappear people.[69]

"El Chicano's case is representative of the complex processes that impacted an average student during Cold War Sinaloa. "El Chicano" embraced the U.S. inspired counterculture and had friends who embodied narco-culture, but he ended up adopting the guerilla culture because of the pervasiveness of political repression. Ultimately, he was a two-fold victim of counterinsurgency and extremism. Nevertheless, contrary to the Mexican government's depiction of the Liga as a movement committed to execute and disappear their own renegades, internal executions were rather exceptional.[70]

Some Sinaloan youth grew up surrounded by narco-culture, but as soon as they came into contact with communist ideas, they made a conscious choice to become militants as was the case of Saúl Armando Alarcón Amézquita (1956). He was born in the neighborhood of Tierra Blanca, Culiacán, a known drug traffickers' bastion and epicenter of narco-culture that is widely mentioned in narco-corridos and narco-literature. As a child, he played with kids that later were embroiled in the drug trade. Alarcón Amézquita followed a different path because when he was twelve years old his stepfather, who was a communist, introduced him to leftist literature.

---

[68] The authorities never investigated "El Chicano's disappearance, and guerrillas who supposedly eliminated him were either killed or disappeared by the security forces, like Alicia de los Ríos Merino, detained-disappeared in 1978. Several sources refer to the possible execution of "El Chicano" by the Liga. José Luis López Duarte claimed that another militant from Sonora, "Alejo," was executed along with "El Chicano." López Duarte, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017. See also Inzunza & Montoya, "Dos testimonios," and María Magdalena Pérez Alfaro, "Violencia política, guerrilla e historia oral. Entrevista con la historiadora Alicia de los Ríos Merino," *Testimonios. Revista científica de publicación periódica de historia oral de AHORA*, no. 4, (2014), http://testimonios.historiaoralargentina.org/download/n4/testimonios04.pdf, accessed September 10, 2017.

[69] Vicente, "Estado y represión en México," 446-446.

[70] I have only found evidence of internal executions in two cases, Manuel Gámez and "El Chicano." Both of them were executed at a time were security forces were shattering the Liga, causing the guerrilla leaders to become paranoid. There were other cases of disappeared militants during 1973-1974, in which there were contradictory versions and hearsay about possible internal executions, but not compelling evidence.

Alarcón Amézquita claimed that given his political training, he saw his narco-neighbors as lumpenproletariat, "a product of the lack of employment and adventurous spirit. The former was not their fault, the problem was their desire to make easy money." Nevertheless, he recalled that "when I joined the guerrilla movement in 1973, we needed weapons and I knew that I could purchase them from my acquaintances in Tierra Blanca."[71] In June 19, 1974, he was arrested, tortured, and imprisoned. He was sent to the Social Rehabilitation Institute of Sinaloa (IRSS), another space where he coexisted with drug traffickers and respected them "as a matter of self-protection."

Alarcón Amézquita was not the only former guerrilla who pointed at instrumental contacts between the *Enfermos* and drug traffickers. "El negro" León Mendívil, who belonged to the first generation of *Enfermos'* leaders, recalled that by 1970, when the student movement began to radicalize, they were unfamiliar with how to use weapons, but because the security forces targeted the leaders, they obtained .38 super and .22 pistols to defend themselves. León Mendívil asserted that in the land seizures "we learned more about how to handle weapons, [although] there was such a level of unawareness—I can say it now—that we were trained by people linked to delinquency, wicked people, but we thought that by being in contact with us they would be enlightened. They taught us how to use the M-1 and I discovered the M-2 and the Garand for the first time, that was in 1971."[72]

Unlike León Mendívil and Alarcón Amézquita, whose relationship with *narcos* was circumstantial, other *Enfermos* came from *serrano* drug cultivating families. Maricela Balderas Silva (1955), a former *Enferma* from Guasave, Sinaloa, recalled the case of her comrade Amador

---

[71] Saúl Armando Alarcón Amézquita, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 3 2017.

[72] Guillermo Manzano, "Toño Mendívil: de guerrillero a diputado."

Quintero Montijo, a high-school student who during his vacations travelled to the highlands of Sinaloa de Leyva to work with his *gomero* relatives to support his studies.

Amador's family had originally fled the highlands because of a violent family feud and settled in Guasave. However, Amador's father was followed and killed. As it was customary among highlanders, Amador planned to take revenge, but the *Enfermos* he met at school explained to him that the violence in the highlands had to do with the class struggle and the exploitation of the peasantry that pushed people to grow illegal drugs. "Amador turned his hatred towards his father's murderers into courage to struggle to change the country and decided to become a guerrilla." [73] Amador dropped out of school and joined the Liga. In June 1974, as he handed out the Liga's propaganda to construction workers in Mazatlán, the policed arrived and shot him dead. He was only twenty years old.

Balderas believed that if Amador had not met the *Enfermo* movement he would have become a poppy grower.[74] She also met other students who consumed drugs, but after receiving the *Enfermos*' message they became politically aware and changed their habits given that guerrillas deemed drugs, alcohol, and even smoking to be "a petit-bourgeois deviation; a way in which the capitalist class alienated the proletariat to prevent it from struggling for its rights."[75]

The final space where guerrillas and *narcos* intermingled was prison. Some of the guerrillas jailed at the IRSS met Manuel Salcido Unzueta "El Cochiloco," (1946-1991) likely the

[73] Maricela Balderas Silva, interview with the author, Mazatlán, Sinaloa, May 7 2017.

[74] A similar case was that of the famous Liga's middle rank leader Tomás Lizárraga Tirado, "El Tom de Analco," who was born in Sinaloa but moved to Guadalajara, Jalisco. He was a drug dealer in his teens, before meeting the student activists of the FER. Miguel Topete told this anecdote in conversation with the author.

[75] Balderas also acknowledged with embarrassment that the Liga opposed homosexuality and asked their gay supporters to give up their "petit-bourgeois deviation." Maricela Balderas Silva, interview with the author, Mazatlán, Sinaloa, May 7, 2017.

most dangerous drug lord at the time. Former political prisoner, José Luis López Duarte (1953) remembered that as a child in Guamúchil, he polished the shoes of the soldiers carrying out anti-drug operations in the area. When López entered the IRSS in late 1973, he witnessed that "El Cochiloco" and his brother Gabino Salcido received protection from six PJS agents. During his lifespan, López verified that the government never gave the same treatment to drug traffickers and guerrillas.

López depicted the relationship between the *Enfermos* and *narcos* as respectful but distant and claimed that guerrillas disavowed drug consumption inside prison or any deal with drug traffickers. He claimed: "while drug traffickers used stashes to hide drugs, we used them to keep communist books."[76] Alarcón Amézquita confirmed that political prisoners were the only ones who did not smoke marijuana, and also asserted that "*narcos*, even *El Cochiloco*, admired us because they saw us like heroes who were at war against the government and its army, even if they thought it was a lost cause. They did not mess with us." Despite the incidental crossings between guerrillas and *narcos*, they never formed an alliance. The purported "drugged terrorists" who sought the destruction of society only existed in psy-war propaganda as the perfect internal enemy that epitomized social fears and whom society should oppose.

Narco-Culture: From Sinaloa to the World

The foundations of what would become narco-culture developed between the 1940s and 1960s, the period in which Sinaloa became the national leader in drug production. Narco-culture began to express itself forcefully from the 1970s onward. Unlike the security forces and guerrillas, drug traffickers did not elaborate their cultural framework in ideological terms, even

[76] José Luis López Duarte, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

though narco-culture also had multiple dimensions—economic, political, social and cultural—, similar to a total ideology. Without explicitly proposing it, narco-culture contained a de facto political project that originally targeted the drug-producing regions. Since the 1970s, narco-culture has had great success, not only because it managed to build strong collective identities around drug trafficking, but also because it gradually influenced other social groups that were not involved in this activity, such as sectors of the rural population.

Narco-culture's main objective was to build the social legitimacy of the illegal drug industry to ensure the continuity and expansion of the business. The increase in demand made it necessary to incorporate more people who neither feared nor morally opposed doing illegal work. However, the families who controlled the drug-trafficking networks needed workers, not drug traffickers who would compete with them. This tension between the need for more workers but fewer bosses was one of the axes around which narco-culture was shaped.

From its inception, narco-culture sold the discourse that any peasant turned into drug grower who was capable and dominant, could get rich and acquire status quickly by bribing the authorities and overpowering competitors.[77] Narco-corridos worshipped the victorious "bosses." In this way, narco-culture played with the social aspirations of the rural poor and offered them hope for a better life. However, as soon as the people working in the drug-trafficking industry wanted to grow in the business, violent wars between clans or gangs broke out for control of the *plazas* and smuggling routes. Narco-corridos also gave accounts of these wars, thus creating a vicious cycle of seduction, entrapment, elimination of the weak, and praise for the winners. As a result, the most catastrophic effects of drug culture did not occur in the consumption phase, but during the production and circulation of the merchandise. This type of drug-related violence

---

[77] Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*, (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 171.

began in the highlands of Sinaloa and descended into Culiacán in the mid-1970s. For that reason, the press described the city as "a new Chicago with gangsters in *huaraches*."[78]

Given that gang wars over the drug market are at the core of narco-culture, most of its symbolic references are associated with the cult of violence and money. However, narco-culture was also forged through the absorption of other influences from the environment, especially the social markers of clothing and music from the sierra, the cult of official history's "great men," and the capitalist values of the "American way of life" imbued with the local bourgeoisie's touch.

A member of the powerful Carrillo drug-trafficking family, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, "El señor de los cielos," ("The lord of the skies," 1954-1997) was born in Guamuchilito, Sinaloa in a *ranchería* of two hundred inhabitants. He studied at a public school with free textbooks that were distributed nationwide. According to Carrillo's biographer, José Alfredo Andrade, he "assimilated the official truth: the conception of a triumphant and smooth Revolution that had a clear and firm road to prosperity. He immersed himself in the [same] official and monopolistic vision of national consciousness for which supporters of pluralistic and critical education had criticized Torres Bodet."[79]

The official truth, based on a deeply patriarchal vision, included the cult of men like Álvaro Obregón, who reached the executive office after having eliminated all of his adversaries. The revolutionary corrido directly inspired how narco-corridos recounted the exploits of "great men." The instruction of history in Sinaloa also highlighted nineteenth-century social bandits

---

[78] *Huaraches* are the characteristic footwear of Mexican peasants. Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas*, 87.

[79] Jaime Torres Bodet was Secretary of Education in the López Mateos administration (1958-1964). Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco,* 48.

like Heraclio Bernal, known as *El Rayo de Sinaloa* (the "Lightning of Sinaloa") and Jesús Malverde, Mexican incarnations of the legendary Robin Hood. During the 1970s, a popular cult arose around Jesús Malverde, and it gradually made him the patron saint of drug trafficking, with its own chapel and rituals. To this day, he is one of narco-culture's best-known symbols.[80]

Drug trafficking caused Carrillo Fuentes—like any businessperson faced with a lucrative activity—to discard the nationalism that he learned in primary school and to believe that his only territory was the transnational free market for drugs. Carrillo said, "if they [foreigners] buy, I sell. In this business, there are no borders or nationalities."[81] In a sense, the drug traffickers of the 1970s were the precursors of neoliberal subjectivity.

Far from imitating the social bandits of the past, drug traffickers established relationships of patronage with their communities of origin, which in many cases were also drug producers.[82] Legend says that in his hometown Carillo "took charge of the State's tasks himself: he ordered the construction of the plaza, the church, the lighting; he helped those who were in desperate situations. He brought work, money, health, and prosperity to that corner of the world."[83]

The myth of the "drug-trafficking benefactor" is the backbone of narco-culture. It disguises exploitative relationships between the drug lords and producing communities, and it

---

[80] Despite the fact that we know very little about the historical Jesús Malverde, many myths and fictionalized biographies circulate. See, for example, Manuel Esquivel, *Jesús Malverde, El santo popular de Sinaloa* (Mexico City: Jus, 2009).

[81] Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco,* 25.

[82] However, as Mark Edberg points out, the representation of drug traffickers has contrasting regional variables, for instance, in the sierra and on the border. Drug traffickers are not necessarily seen as social bandits, since narco-culture's messages are interpreted according to the social class of the receiver. See Mark C. Edberg, "Drug Traffickers as Social Bandits," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17, no. 3, (August 2001): 259-277 and Edberg, *El Narcotraficante. Narcocorridos & the Construction of a Cultural Persona on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

[83] Andrade Bojorges, *La historia secreta del narco,* 25.

justifies the excessive accumulation of wealth by one family or one individual based on the argument that they help and protect the community. In fact, the patronage of drug traffickers was similar to the clientelism of the PRI: both gained popular support through gifts and concessions, but without any long-term project to lift the communities out of poverty.

The communities have given more to the drug traffickers than they have received. The *narcos* extracted low-cost drugs from the communities and recruited their workers there. In addition, the communities provided their purported benefactors with a context of security and gratitude. The communities also admired the drug traffickers for their courage in confronting the government and the DEA. Nevertheless, when anti-drug campaigns attacked the communities, the drug lords did not do anything to defend them; on the contrary, they sought their own agreements with the authorities to obtain immunity.

The social markers with which drug traffickers identified also came from the communities. These included, for example, *banda* music and hats, shirts, pants, belts and cowboy boots, adapted to an ostentatious aesthetic. The hybridization of rural and urban elements is one of narco-culture's most characteristic aspects. During the 1970s, urban elites viewed social markers of rural origin with contempt, until drug traffickers demonstrated their ability to emulate the former's conspicuous consumption.[84] At the ideological level, legal and illegal elites shared the same capitalist values concerning the exaltation of successful entrepreneurs and the accumulation of wealth as an existential goal. Paradoxically, while the counterculture and student movements of the 1960s rejected consumerism and the "American way," drug traffickers incorporated these elements into their culture.

---

[84] A phenomenon that appeared in Sinaloa toward the end of the 1980s was that of the so-called "buchones" (*big-mouthed people*), men and women who personified the rural-urban hybridization of narco-culture through their social markers. Ioan Grillo, *El Narco*, 180.

Narco-corridos began to be produced systematically in the 1970s. They emerged as the initiative of an economically powerful but clandestine group in order to legitimize itself and leave a record of its historical memory. While the media stigmatized them, drug traffickers defended themselves through popular music. There are many types of narco-corridos; some are spontaneous, and others are commissioned, but most of them share an eagerness to build the mythology of drug traffickers or to describe important episodes.[85] As Ioan Grillo points out:

> Following a centuries-old tradition, the ballads bring news to the street, describing prison escapes, massacres, new alliances, and broken pacts to a public that reads few newspapers. While minstrels of nineteenth-century Mexico toured town squares, the contemporary balladeers emit their messages from pickup-trucks stereos…[86]

Narco-corridos are one of the most direct sources for learning about the clandestine life of drug traffickers, and some of them even give voice to the direct testimonies of drug lords, using coded language or double meaning.[87] Narco-corridos employ a very basic lexicon and its musical structure is usually very poor; nevertheless, their content is clever, and some draw attention for their veiled critiques of the Mexican and United States governments.[88]

Despite their common origins, there is a major contrast between narco-corridos and guerrilla corridos, in which figures like northwestern composers Judith Reyes, José de Molina, and Ignacio Cárdenas stand out. The musical quality, usage of lexicon, and political message of guerrilla corridos denote the high level of education of both the sender and the recipient of the

---

[85] Luis Astorga was one of the first to study narco-corrido with his work, *Mitología del "narcotraficante" en "México* (1995). Also see José Manuel Valenzuela Arce, *Jefe de jefes. Corridos y narcocultura en México* (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2010).

[86] Ioan Grillo, *El Narco*, 170.

[87] Juan Antonio Fernández Velázquez, *Los sinaloenses: entre gustos musicales, gozos y representaciones. De los corridos sobre narcotráfico y narcotraficantes a los narcocorridos* (1970-2000) (M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2011).

[88] See the examples of narco-corridos in appendix 2.

message. Although the guerrilla corrido also venerates heroes fallen in the struggle, it emphasizes the collective subject. Also, most guerrilla corridos aim at raising social awareness and condemning repression.[89]

Starting with the coca boom of the 1980s, narco-culture began to expand to other areas beyond music and clothing, principally cinema and architecture. The first films about narco-culture were low cost and generally lacked aesthetic value, but they had a captive audience. Decades later, this cinema would give rise to lucrative *narco*-themed television series. Regarding architecture, the most notable expression has not been the drug traffickers' mansions, replete with pieces of gold, diamonds, and other eccentricities, but rather their mausoleums. The "Jardines del Humaya" cemetery in Culiacán houses some of the most luxurious and extravagant mausoleums on the planet, a reflection of the fact that, for drug traffickers, death is just as important as life.[90] This cemetery represents a grotesque counterpoint to the dozens of Sinaloan youths "buried" in the Pacific Ocean in the 1970s, who have never been memorialized.

Drug traffickers knew about the guerrillas because they shared public and carceral space with them, but they did not adopt any feature of the revolutionary beliefs and values. The only aspect that drug traffickers admired about guerrillas was that they used their weapons against the government, adopting violence as a common language. The reason that both drug traffickers and guerrillas were impervious to mutually influencing each other is because their projects were completely antagonistic, and they were in a constant competition. Neither of the two actors

---

[89] See the examples of guerrilla corridos in appendix 2. Also see Elijah Wald, *Narcocorrido: A Journey into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas* (New York: Rayo, 2002).

[90] During my fieldwork in Culiacán, I visited this cemetery and found out that there are academics who study the architecture of the mausoleums for the complexity of their eclecticism, since they mix different styles from the Renaissance through the present time. The mausoleums reflect the level of power of the deceased; some have interior chapels, rooms, kitchenettes, and air conditioning, and they are guarded 24 hours a day.

seems to have noticed the competition at the time because it occurred exclusively in the symbolic-imaginary realm.

Conversely, security forces and drug traffickers had a similar subjectivity. They did not employ violence as a mere instrument of dominion but wielded sadistic violence to cause the extreme degradation of their enemies. During the 1970s, if civilians randomly found tortured, shot, and disfigured cadavers in the streets of Culiacán, they could think that the perpetrators had been members of the security forces or drug traffickers because both options were equally possible. In fact, it was not unusual that both sides worked together. The violent practices of the security forces and drug traffickers reached their peak with the intersection of the counterinsurgency and the war on drugs, which led to the establishment of a permanent de facto state of siege in Culiacán between 1974 and 1982 (or beyond).

At the start of the 1980s, while guerrilla culture had been extirpated from the social body, narco-culture began the vertiginous process of expanding from Sinaloa to the rest of the northwest, then to the rest of Mexico, and finally to some immigrant communities in the United States.[91] The Sinaloan composer of narco-corridos, Chalino Sánchez (1960-1992), is a highly esteemed musical reference in Mexican peasant communities on both sides of the border. This does not mean that narco-culture's followers are directly involved in the drug-trafficking industry, but it is an indication that narco-culture has achieved cultural hegemony over a part of Mexico's rural population. In the twenty-first century, new generations are barely familiarized with the counterculture of the 1960s, let alone with guerrilla culture, but few can escape narco-culture's significance. Most do not know that narco-culture was a byproduct of the Cold War.

[91] Mexican narco-culture has also been well received in some parts of Latin America. On the introduction of Mexican narco-culture in Colombia, see Luis Astorga, "Los corridos de traficantes de drogas en México y Colombia," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. 59, no. 4 (October-December 1997): 245-261.

Finally, it is important to underscore that since the 1970s, narco-culture became an expression of what Achilles Mbembé coined as "necropolitics," defined as "the contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death," that account for "the various ways in which weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon the status of living dead."[92] A research that delves into the necropolitical aspects of narco-culture from the 1970s to present-day is yet to be done.

Conclusions

One of the most notable characteristics of the Liga in Sinaloa was its social composition. Unlike other states, where the Liga was made up of middle-class students, in Sinaloa they were predominantly the children of peasants and workers. While the agro-industrial model, proletarianization, and the demographic explosion caused a surge in urban growth, free education allowed thousands of low-income families to send their children to college for the first time to improve their chances of social mobility. However, a combination of common low-class origins, the influence of socialist ideas, and the radicalism of the post-1968 generations, inspired thousands of students to join the armed struggle. Sinaloa witnessed one of the most radical and longest student movements in the country, lasting ten years.

The students of Sinaloa did not feel different in class or status to their families, but they saw themselves as their political vanguard. Sinaloa was the only place where the university-factory thesis, which compared students to workers, was successful among students given their class identity. However, after their fusion with the Liga, the *Enfermos* experienced both gains and losses.

---

[92] A. Mbembé, *Necropolitics*, Public Culture, vol. 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11-40.

Although they benefited from the ideological, human, and material resources of the organization, the Liga implemented political-military strategies that did not correspond to Sinaloa's context.

The radicalism of the *Enfermos* was predicated on their class identity and their capacity for self-defense in the face of repression. Yet, by assimilating the guerrilla culture, the student-guerrillas acquired a platform to place their struggle in a broader context. The assessment of the revolutionary struggle at the local, national, and global levels caused the *Enfermos* to embellish their chances of success. Moreover, while they showed their willingness to confront security forces systematically, they did so without fully realizing that state terror only diluted and crippled their movement.

The guerrilla culture of Sinaloa was conceived from a long-standing socialist tradition in the university, which added new revolutionary currents to its repertoire. Given its geographical position—between the border with the United States and the Pacific Ocean—Sinaloa was a place well suited to adopt the ideologies circulating globally. The global revolutionary culture was a warehouse without geographical location, from which anyone could extract knowledge, ideas, and political practices. However, the counterinsurgency not only liquidated the *Enfermos*' movement, the Liga, and other social movements—it also rooted out guerrilla culture and put an end to the left's hegemony at the UAS. The right took full command of the institution in the eighties.

Narcoculture was the evil twin of guerrilla culture. It was also a clandestine current that incorporated aspects of popular culture, but it was created to favor the drug-trafficking elite, manipulating the desires and aspirations of the poor workers of the drug industry. Since its inception, narco-culture has nurtured several myths that contribute to the social legitimization of drug traffickers. Narco-corridos have advanced false or exaggerated claims about drug trafficking as the only means for upward social mobility for poor peasants. Their portrayal of

drug traffickers as social bandits or community benefactors aimed at counteracting official propaganda depicting them as merciless criminals. In some cases, the narco-corridos also spread the view that drug traffickers were popular heroes because they challenged the government, or even patriots because they opposed the presence of the DEA in Mexico.

These ideas have become common currency in some sectors of the Mexican society and it is normal to hear their iterations in different spaces, including academic ones. Thus, narco-culture contributed to symbolically pull out drug traffickers from their hideaways in the Golden Triangle to place them into the public sphere. Narco-culture was socially accepted in the countryside because it emphasized the positive features of drug traffickers and minimized the most transgressive ones.

The contempt for human life that drug lords have manifested virtually since the beginning of the drug trade was the seed of the necropolitical regime that criminal sovereignty established first in the Golden Quadrilateral and later across Mexico. In the early twenty-first century, necropolitics has become pervasive in large portions of Mexico and beyond. Although narco-culture is a result of the history of the Mexican drug trade, not its cause, since the 1970s it has provided the cultural framework that legitimizes drug-related violence. The twenty-first century Mexican youth, which is the chief target of violence, still endures the consequences of the victory of narco-culture over social utopias.

Chapter Four: The War on Drugs, Counterinsurgency, and the De Facto State of Siege in the Golden Triangle (1977-1982)

"Operation Condor favors agents for their brutality. If you objected, Garza and Alcalá ridiculed you for 'acting like a priest.' The worst torturers were promoted. This is *la verdad*!"
Interview of Craig Pyes with Agent *Equis*.[1]

During the twentieth century, Mexico-U.S. anti-drug policy evolved from occasional disagreements and clashes during the first decades after the Mexican Revolution to full cooperation from the 1970s onward.[2] The surge in demand for Mexican heroin and marijuana in the United States in the late 1960s, caused by the interruption of the so-called French Connection that supplied heroin from Turkey to the United States, marked a watershed in the binational relationship. The Nixon administration coerced Mexico to change its anti-drug strategy through Operation Intercept (1969), which required a thorough inspection of all vehicles at the U.S.-Mexico border during a time when unregulated air traffic and sea routes were becoming the primary ways of smuggling drugs.

Given both the economic and political impact of the unilateral measure, the Mexican government gradually accepted the United States' anti-drug agenda until reaching a point of total collaboration through the binational operations called Canador (1970-1975), Trizo (1975-1976), and Condor (1977-1987). Operation Condor was not only the longest and most ambitious anti-drug campaign of the Cold War period, but also the first spearheaded by the Drug Enforcement

---

[1] Craig Pyes, "Legal Murders. Mexico's War on Drugs, Operation Condor, is Responsible for Torture, Murder, and Extortion" *Village Voice*, June 4, 1979, 14.

[2] For the history of the anti-drug policies in Mexico see Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*; Campos, *Home Grown: Marijuana*; Toro, *Mexico's "War" on Drugs;* Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica;* Pérez Montfort, *Tolerancia y Prohibición*; Carlos A. Pérez Ricart, *Las agencias antinarcóticos de los Estados Unidos y la construcción trasnacional de la guerra contra las drogas en México* (PhD diss., Freien Universität Berlin, 2016); Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, *Historia del narcotráfico en México* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 2013), and Peter Watt & Roberto Zepeda. *Drug War Mexico. Politics, Neoliberalism, and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

Administration (DEA) in Mexico. Although the DEA only played a leading role from 1977 to 1978, it established the standards and practices that the Mexican security apparatus should meet, especially concerning to the implementation of a cutting-edge aerial defoliation program.

The scholarship on the Mexican anti-drug efforts has typically characterized Operation Condor as another failed campaign, but a closer analysis of its origins shows that it represented a turning point in the militarization, modernization, and centralization of the anti-drug policy.[3] The first stage of Operation Condor developed in Sinaloa and the Golden Triangle, a region with minimal state presence, the largest production of marijuana and poppy nationwide, and the setting of anti-drug campaigns since the 1940s. One major aspect of the operation was the creation of the Task Force "Condor" (FTC), a detachment that periodically entered drug production areas to help eradicate plants in conjunction with the aerial defoliation program.

This chapter argues that Operation Condor seized upon the counterinsurgency framework forged during the dirty war to secure social control over drug growers and traffickers.[4] In essence, both the dirty war and the war on drugs were intertwined conflicts given that security forces viewed both political opponents and *narcotraficantes* as the twin-headed enemy scattered among the population that they had to track down and overpower with ruthless methods. The administrations of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo embraced the U.S. anti-drug agenda as part of their efforts to foster the PRI's hegemony in the aftermath of the Tlatelolco massacre

---

[3] The overall scarcity of sources about the war on drugs of the 1970s had discouraged research on this topic, but the declassification of archives in both Mexico and the United States had changed this trend in recent years. However, the historiography of the drug trade still lacks a major work about the 1970s.

[4] For a comparative perspective on how state territorial control, insurgent movements, and anti-drug policies overlap, see Daniel Weimer, *Seeing Drugs. Modernization, Counterinsurgency, and U.S. Narcotics Control in the Third World, 1969-1976* (Kent: Kent State University, 2011).

that had shattered the social consensus around the ruling party.[5] With the substantial U.S. financial and technical support, the government enlarged its counterinsurgency infrastructure to suppress unrest. Also, during Operation Condor the national security apparatus broadened the concept of "internal enemy" to include all peasant communities from the Golden Triangle municipalities and imposed a de facto state of siege on them (see appendix 1, map 3).

Sinaloa was the economic hub of the drug industry. By the early 1970s, there were several competing drug clans fighting for their share in the market under the protection of high-level authorities. The gang wars descended from the highlands to Culiacán, reaching their peak in 1976.[6] The Mexican government introduced Operation Condor in the city as its alleged response to put an end to drug-related violence. This chapter shows that the campaign's dramatic measures did not aim to remove the illegal drug trade or the gang wars, but to enforce the political-military control of the population and eliminate independent local powers. Operation Condor attacked traditional drug clans to reorganize the drug industry and advance its decentralization from the northwest. It served as a strategy to curb the participation of local police agencies in the drug trade, namely the Sinaloa Judicial Police (PJS) and the Municipal Police of major cities. At the same time, the government allowed the the DFS, the Federal Judicial Police (PJF), and the military to take over the drug trade networks to limit the power of drug lords and subject them to the *priísta* clientelist regime.[7]

---

[5] For the aftermath of the Tlatelolco massacre see Louise Walker, *Walking from the Dream*.

[6] Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 128.

[7] The PRI's clientelism was a system where patrons provided benefits to their clients including protection, support in the struggles with rivals, and opportunities for political ascendancy or economic prosperity. In exchange, clients gave in loyalty, money, or useful services to the government. Peter Watt & Roberto Zepeda. *Drug War Mexico,* kindle edition. For the formation of narco-clientelist networks during the post-revolutionary period see Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism," 129-132.

This chapter provides examples of the implementation of Operation Condor in Sinaloa and the Golden Triangle, spanning from the first to the ninth task forces (1977-1983). From 1983 to 1988 there were eight task forces, but unlike his predecessor, President Miguel de la Madrid managed the anti-drug campaign with a low profile. During the first period, the DEA's aerial defoliation program against marijuana and poppy growers accomplished the temporary destruction of the only cash crops in the highlands and wreaked havoc on the local economy, while the FTC wielded extreme violence against dozens of hamlets, whose dwellers were ransacked, extorted, tortured, raped, killed, or disappeared. Violence displaced thousands of peasants to other regions as well as the United States. In the meantime, the government kept announcing the detention of drug traffickers and the seizures of tons of drugs, and invited journalists to watch agents burn the narcotics—a meaningless yet didactic spectacle to make stand out the alleged victory of good over evil.[8]

It would not be far-fetched to depict Condor as a half-real, half-simulated campaign to terrorize the population to ensure the ruling party's dominion not only in the political field but also in what Alfred McCoy coined the "covert netherworld," an autonomous clandestine realm where organized crime, the secret services, and other elements of the ruling elite compete for economic power and sovereignty.[9] Violence mediated the relations between the Mexican state and organized crime in the twentieth century but the anti-drug policies guaranteed that drug lords played under the non-written rules of the ruling party.

---

[8] As several DFS documents related to drug distribution show, authorities burnt a small part of narcotics and stored the rest in unsafe facilities where corrupted civil servants stole them in order to sell them to drug gangs. "Narcotráfico, 1954-1985," 3 volumes, AGN, DFS, public version.

[9] Alfred McCoy, "Covert Netherworld: Clandestine Services and Criminal Syndicates in Shaping the Philipine State", in *Government of the shadows,* Eric Wilson, ed., 228.

This chapter does not focus on the transnational dimension of Operation Condor. I did have access to documents by the Department of State, the DEA, and the CIA, which show that the White House knew about the mafia-state links and the violations of the rule of law by the Mexican government, yet never reprehended its neighbor for its rampant corruption or its gross human rights abuses. As Carlos Pérez R. points out, curtailing the corruption levels of the Mexican authorities was never a goal for the U.S. foreign policy.[10]

The Beginning of a U.S. War on Mexican Soil

The history of the Mexican illegal drug trade and prohibitionist policies in the twentieth century is interwoven with the state formation.[11] As Luis Astorga has shown, the drug trade was born inside the state's power structures.[12] Hence, the major paradox of the anti-drugs policies is that the same security apparatus that benefited from the drug industry was in charge of its disruption. The Mexican state had both international and domestic grounds to embrace a prohibitionist approach, like the U.S. pressure, the moral concerns and social fears about drug use, and the urge to maintain the military active for national security reasons. From the late 1930s through the 1960s, the military had a leading role in the anti-drug campaigns, and the Mexican state was generally satisfied with its anti-drug efforts.

---

[10] Pérez, *Las agencias antinarcóticos*, 441-442.

[11] Wil G. Pansters analyzes how both political and drug-related violence were key in the state-making process in post-revolutionary Mexico. Pansters, "Zones and Languages of State-Making" in Jaime Pensado and Enrique C. Ochoa eds. *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018), 33-52.

[12] Luis Astorga, "Drug Trafficking in Mexico: A First General Assesment", Management of Social Transformation, Discussion paper no. 36: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001176/117644Eo.pdf, accessed February 10, 2017.

President Richard Nixon (1969-1974) used the war on drugs as a campaign pledge to win the support of the conservative electorate, and once in power he made the narcotics problem the top priority of his U.S.-Mexico agenda. In September 1969, the U.S. government launched Operation Intercept to force Mexico into more effective law enforcement.[13] The Díaz Ordaz administration was determined to maintain a sovereign anti-drug policy, but after Operation Intercept wreaked havoc on the border economy, it had to accept larger U.S. intervention in its domestic affairs. By mid-October 1969, both countries announced Operation Cooperation as a joint strategy to reduce the production and smuggling of narcotics.[14] The Mexican government coded-named it Operation Canador (a short-hand for *Cannabis-Adormidera*), which was its official name until 1975. Canador intensified the manual eradication campaign and for the first time U.S. law enforcement monitored Mexican troops.[15]

Nonetheless, Díaz Ordaz was reluctant to accept the technicalization of the war on drugs that the U.S. government advocated for, which included the use of remote sensing equipment and aircraft to spread herbicides, the destruction of laboratories and warehouses, and the utilization

---

[13] Kate Doyle, "Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism", April 13, 2013, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB86/, accessed January 26, 2017; Richard B. Craig, "Operation Intercept: The International Politics of Pressure," *The Review of Politics* 42, no. 4 (October 1980): 556-580.

[14] The Mexican government managed to impede public opinion from perceiving Canador as a sign of weakness or submission to the White House, and it underscored in media outlets that it was a victory because it had turned a unilateral operation into a binational initiative. Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía, "Operación Interceptación", *La Revista de El Universal*, 2005.

[15] Around five thousand soldiers participated in Canador. The scholarship has neglected a specific analysis of this operation. It is worth mentioning that the military developed a plan that combined both counterinsurgency and Canador called Joint Plan DN-PR1 or Plan Tecpan, implemented in Guerrero. "Plan Conjunto, Plan Tecpan DN-PR-1," 1975, AGN, SEDENA, Box 101, File 301, 1-153. The United States also launched eradication programs with their own brands, like the Special Enforcement Activity in Mexico (SEAM, 1974) and SEAM CLEARVIEW (1975). For a detailed analysis of these programs see Carlos Pérez R., *Las agencias antinarcóticos,* 375-380.

of enforcement personnel to expand undercover operations and conspiracy-type investigations.[16] Conversely, during his last years as president, Luis Echeverría gave up any margin of sovereignty. Notwithstanding his public discourses against U.S. imperialism, Echeverría became the first president to apply the U.S. national security doctrine to anti-drug policy since his administration bore witness to a major shift in the transformation of the drug industry. While in 1965 Mexico's opium production was minuscule, by 1975 the country was supplying up to 87% of the heroin entering the United States.[17] But as long as the U.S. demand fueled the poppy production, Operation *Canador* and its successors were doomed to fail.[18]

In 1975, the Mexican government dealt with a considerable pressure to eradicate the opium production given that President Gerald Ford had expressed on various occasions that the illegal export of opium to the United States would be considered a national security threat.[19] Thus, for the first time the Mexican government agreed on an aerial defoliation program coordinated by the DEA, the new U.S. anti-drug agency founded in 1973. Edward Heath was appointed to run the DEA office in Mexico.[20]

---

[16] This proposal was outlined before Operation Intercept began. "Task Force Report, Narcotics, Marijuana, and Dangerous Drugs. Findings and Recommendations", June 6, 1969, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB86/intercept01.pdf

[17] Edward Heath, *Mexican Opium Eradication Campaign* (MA thesis, California State University, 1981), 5. Heath believed that the Mexican opium threat grew exponentially because law enforcement and intelligence agencies underestimated Mexico's potential to convert opium to heroin.

[18] In his thesis, Heath explains how during the manual eradication campaigns the military only cut down the larger poppy plants while leaving the budding crops, thus allowing farmers for salvaging part of their crops. Heath, *Mexican Opium*, 23.

[19] "Letter written by President Ford to the Honorable Charles B. Rangel, House of Representatives, re: 'Foreign Producers of Opium,'" July 31, 1975, Washington, D.C., cited by Heath, *Mexican Opium*, 30.

[20] Peter B. Bensinger served as Acting Administrator of the DEA from early 1976 to mid-1981. During his tenure were developed the operations Trizo and Condor. For an in-depth analysis of the trajectory of the U.S. anti-drug agencies and the role of the DEA in Mexico see Carlos Pérez R., *Las agencias antinarcóticos.*

The Joint Opium Poppy Eradication-Interdiction Campaign known as Trizo (*Tri-zone*) was inaugurated on November 15, 1975. It comprised the three major drug production zones in the country. Zone I encompassed the Golden Quadrilateral (Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango); zone II the states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima, Zacatecas, and Michoacán, and Zone III Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Morelos. The DEA sent to Mexico several agents and Evergreen Corporation contract pilots who had prior experience in Vietnam and the Southeast Asian Golden Triangle.[21] It also provided financial and technical assistance and help with gathering intelligence.[22]

Trizo used helicopters to airlift Mexican troops to destroy illegal crops and apprehend growers, but its most significant innovation was spraying herbicidal solutions like paraquat and 2.4-D. Both contract and local pilots conducted the spraying missions and the DEA agents/pilots focused on reconnaissance flights to evaluate the success of the campaign.[23] While previous anti-drug efforts with a dual civil-military command were actually led by the military, Trizo contributed to strengthening the leadership of the Attorney General's Office (PGR). The interagency friction between the PGR and SEDENA was a recurring problem, in addition to the disdain of the military towards the DEA. The phase I of the campaign came to an end on April 15, 1976, and the phase II ran from early September to late November 1976. Trizo might have

[21] Evergreen International Aviation was closely related to the CIA, and in 1975 put George Doole—who was head of CIA air operations until 1971—on its board of directors. Marshall, "CIA assets," 90.

[22] Heath, *Mexican Opium*, p. 41. The DEA was authorized to interrogate farmers and financers arrested by the PJF. Given that the PJF used torture as a standard investigative method, the DEA agents bore witness to that practice and might have occasionally intervened in the sessions. Pyes, "Legal Murders": 11-15. Also see Jesús Esquivel, *La DEA en México* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2013).

[23] For the depiction of the remote sensing technology and the type of helicopters employed by Trizo see Carlos Pérez R., *Las agencias antinarcóticos*, 362-385. Despite Trizos's accomplishments, in 1975 Mexico sent 6.5 tons of pure heroin to the United States, which in that year recorded 1,789 heroin-related deaths. Heath, *Mexican Opium,* 31.

caused that the military sought to retake the control of the campaign by increasing the military personnel and expanding their functions.[24]

In the last months of their respective terms, presidents Echeverría and Ford agreed on an ambitious binational operation that continued with the permanent aerial defoliation and manual eradication as well as the military's control of the drug grower communities. The DEA continued to refer to it as Trizo, but in Mexico the operation was code-named Condor, even though this bird of prey was not an endemic species in the country.[25] The operation dismissed the tri-zone division and established thirteen zones instead. It launched an all-out attack against the Golden Triangle or Zone VI, the region where more than 20,000 highlanders produced 70% of the illegal drugs.[26] Except for the U.S. assistance which continued to providing human, technical, and financial resources, Condor lacked conditions to remove drug production entirely—its main obstacle to overcome was the generalized corruption of the Mexican state at all levels, which was part of a de facto policy to underpin the PRI's regime.

State Collusion with Drug-Trafficking Networks on the Eve of Operation Condor

By the mid-1970s, the extreme U.S. pressure against Mexico to intensify its anti-drug policy contradicted the ruling party's drive to continue benefiting from the drug trade through the generalized practice of extortion. The Mexican government solved the contradiction in a cunning

---

[24] Richard B. Craig, "La Campaña Permanente: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and world Affairs* 20, no. 2 (May 1978), 117-118.

[25] "Condor" seems to be a code-name for military operations that are conducted in mountains or rugged terrain. It has been used for operations by different armies around the world, including the famous Operation Condor of South America.

[26] Richard Craig, "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs,* vol, 22, no. 3 (August 1980), 352.

way, one that proved satisfactory for the United States and allowed for the advancement of the PRI's political agenda. It is clear that the Mexican government did not launch Operation Condor to dismantle the drug-trafficking networks because that would have stood against the country's financial needs. In 1976, Mexico underwent its worst economic crisis since 1954, which entailed a drastic devaluation of the peso against the U.S. dollar. The federal government did not have real grounds to prevent the massive wealth of the drug sales in the United States from entering Mexico.[27] Given that the northwestern *narco-elite* was the major profiteer, the federal government might have aimed to diminish the power of Sinaloan kingpins by decentralizing the drug industry from the Golden Triangle for it to flourish in other regions under the control of the PJF, the DFS, and the military. Notwithstanding the absence of evidence demonstrating such a master plan existed, the state's strategies suggest otherwise.

By 1977, media outlets reported that the clans that controlled the heroin trade in Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Durango were the families Favela, Macías, Herrera, Valenzuela, Avilés-Quintero, Romero, and Sicilia Falcón, and to a lesser extent the Leyva, Aispuro, Alvarado, Jasso, and Hernández.[28] A couple of years later, only a few of those families were of any importance in the drug trade.[29] It seems that the federal government sought to regulate the competition among drug clans by eliminating the weakest links, while at the same time protecting the most

---

[27] The journalist José Luis García Cabrera also believes that Operation Condor resulted from the decision by the López Portillo administration to increase its participation in the articulation of the drug trade given the unprecedented inflow of illegal money during the past administration. García Cabrera, *El Pastel! 1920-2000*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Palibrio, 2012), kindle edition.

[28] "12 clanes Mexicanos en el tráfico de heroína," *Proceso*, June 25, 1977, https://www.proceso.com.mx/4453/12-clanes-mexicanos-en-el-trafico-de-heroina, accessed February 10, 2018.

[29] Sicilia Falcón, the Herrera family, and Jorge Favela Escobar were overtly targeted and forced out of business. Toro, *Mexico's War on Drugs*, 27. More research is needed to understand how Condor transformed the landscape of drug production in the Sierra Madre Occidental, as well as to identify local winners and losers. For an overview of the rise and fall of drug clans in the Sinaloa highlands see Fernández Velázquez, *El narcotráfico en los Altos de Sinaloa*.

successful entrepreneurs. According to Moisés Salcido, a former paratrooper who directly witnessed the havoc caused by Operation Condor in Sonora, the *vox populi* rumored that the winners in the drug trade "claimed that the government had accomplished something good with this operation, because… it was not possible to work with so many wretches who overnight obtained money and weapons aiming to put an end to competitors."[30]

However, it would be simplistic to assume that the state exercised a Leviathan-like-control of drug traffickers, even though that might have been the intent. The *narco*-struggle for hegemony was rather contingent, since having protection from the highest echelons of power did not secure ever-lasting immunity to drug lords. That was the case of the Cuban national Alberto Sicilia Falcón, who became one of the first cocaine kingpins in Mexico in the early 1970s and established his headquarters in Tijuana, Baja California. There are leads suggesting that President Echeverría's in-laws, the Zuno Arce brothers, the Secretary of the Interior Mayo Moya Palencia, and other top officials were involved in the protecting of Sicilia Falcón, but at the end, the same Echeverría administration had to put him in jail.[31]

Sicilia was a transnational smuggler, who ran drugs and weapons throughout Europe and North America. Despite Sicilia's top connections, the U.S. government put enough pressure on its Mexican counterpart to have him arrested in early July 1975. U.S. agents who participated in Sicilia's detention found that he had a special agent badge (the famous *charola*) signed by Moya Palencia, which led the U.S. embassy to believe that Echeverría had discarded his loyal friend Moya as presidential candidate to avoid a scandal, having chosen José López Portillo instead.[32]

---

[30] Francisco Moisés Salcido, *Zafarrancho de combate en Tlatelolco*, (Caborca: n. p., 2005), 356.

[31] Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 116. The Zuno Arce brothers were identified as heroin traffickers by the DEA. Rubén Zuno's case will be tackled in chapter five.

[32] In 1976, Sicilia escaped with some of his partners through a tunnel they had built inside the Lecumberri penitentiary, but he was recaptured a few months later. Sicilia's jailbreak embarrassed the Mexican government by

A salient aspect of Sicilia's trajectory was his relation to the CIA. Sicilia told police that he was "a CIA protégé, trained at Fort Jackson as a partisan in the secret war against Castro's Cuba. In return for helping the CIA move weapons to certain groups in Central America… the Agency facilitated his movement of heroin and other drugs."[33] One of Sicilia's associates in arms trafficking was José Egozi Béjar, a CIA-trained operative and Bay of Pigs veteran of the Brigade 2506, "who inhabited the twilight world where intelligence agencies, private armies, and organized crime intersect."[34] As a DFS contact, Egozi had introduced Sicilia to the Mexican political elite.[35] Echeverría, Moya, and the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, portrayed themselves as close friends of the Castro regime, while in the covert netherworld they allied with anti-Castroist operatives funded by the CIA.[36]

The evidence is not sufficient to affirm that Echeverría or his wife Esther Zuno had a direct or indirect participation in the drug and weapons trade, but in the case of several state

---

exposing the corruption of the penitentiary's authorities. Lecumberri was closed in 1977, but Sicilia would be transfer to other prison and released in 1999. James Mills, *The Underground Empire: Where Crime and Governments Embrace* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986).

[33] Jonathan Marshall, "CIA assets and the rise of the Guadalajara connection," in *War on Drugs. Studies in the Failures of U.S. Narcotics Policy*, Alfred W. McCoy & Alan A. Block eds. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 198. It seems that Sicilia was a gun dealer of paramilitary groups in Central America, although Mills sustains that he probably worked for both sides, handing weapons to both guerrillas and paramilitary.

[34] Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press* (London: Verso Books, 1998), 355. Several members of the Brigade 2506 became a CIA-sponsored group that participated in all major covert operations in Latin America from the 1960s through the 1980s.

[35] According to James Mills, when Sicilia Falcón was arrested in 1975, among his belongings he had a letter about U.S.-Mexico commercial transactions regarding silver, mercury, concrete, iron, and oil products, which had been authorized by Antonio Buch, the legal representative of María Esther Zuno de Echeverría. Sicilia Falcón likely invited the first lady to become his co-investor in a project by the Morgan Arms Company to manufacture a laser weapon. It is worth mentioning that Irma Serrano, the former lover of president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, was also lover of Sicilia Falcón and threatened the Mexican authorities to reveal what she knew about the true drug lords in order to avoid arrest. Mills, The Underground Empire. Mills, *The Underground Empire*, 515; Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 115.

[36] Egozi Béjar allegedly committed suicide in 1978, shortly after DEA agents visited him in prison. Bernardo de Torres, another Cuban-American who worked as a DEA informant, supplied weapons to the DFS and was a tolerated drug trafficker. Marshall, "CIA assets…", 199.

governors the sources are compelling. The best known cases of such involvement concern the governors of Sinaloa, especially Gabriel Leyva Velázquez (governor in 1935-36 and 1957-1962), Leopoldo Sánchez Celis (1963-1968)—a powerful *narcocacique* with a lingering influence in state politics—and Antonio Toledo Corro (1981-1986).[37] The cases of Chihuahua's governors are lesser known despite their old partnership with illegal actors. According to the DFS, Oscar Flores Sánchez (1968-74), who followed a hard line against both guerrillas and social movements, protected a group from Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua that controlled the state's opium industry. While the DFS had reservations about Flores personal involvement in the drug trade, it emphasized that officers of his administration like the State Attorney General, Antonio Quezada Fornelli, were directly connected to it.[38]

In late 1976, when Flores Sánchez became the new Attorney General of Mexico (PGR), he appointed his former collaborator, the controversial General Raúl Mendiolea Cerecero as Chief of the PJF, and Quezada Fornelli as Deputy of the PGR in Chihuahua.[39] Flores also boosted the career of the *Taumalipeco* Carlos Aguilar Garza by appointing him as Coordinator of the Public Prosecutor's Office in the northwest. The DFS identified both Mendiolea and Garza as

---

[37] "Leopoldo Sánchez Celis", files 1 (1952-1966) and 2 (1966-1985), AGN, DFS, public version. Sánchez Celis became partner of Miguel Angel Félix Gallardo, who was member of his personal guard when he was governor. Félix Gallardo would become the most powerful kingpin of the 1980s. Carlos Flores Pérez, *Historias de Polvo y Sangre. Génesis y Evolución del Tráfico de Drogas en el Estado de Tamaulipas* (Mexico City: CIESAS, 2013): 211-213.

[38] "Narcotráfico", August 1978, AGN, DFS, public version, 64. According to Pyes, the DEA was also aware of Flores Sánchez's connections to class one drug traffickers. Pyes, "Legal murders,": 12.

[39] Flores Sánchez and Mendiolea Cerecero had worked together in the Secretariat of Livestock in the campaing against the aphtouse fever in the late 1940s. Mendiola was the Subchief of the Preventive Police of Mexico City during the 1968 student movement.

protectors of drug traffickers.[40] Nevertheless, this group of officials would have a leading role in Operation Condor.

DFS reports also show that authorities had detailed knowledge of the drug-trafficking networks that went from the Golden Triangle to the U.S.-Mexico border. A mid-1976 investigation traced the circuit that began with poppy production in Guadalupe y Calvo, distribution in Ciudad Juárez, and smuggling into the United States.[41] Authorities identified the names of the four families that made up the two principal groups of drug traffickers in Guadalupe y Calvo.[42] "Group number one" had the support of state authorities, such as the Chihuahua Judicial Police (PJC), while "group number two" worked with Sinaloan drug traffickers, in particular Pedro Avilés Pérez, "El licenciado," a major heroin trafficker in Baja California and Sonora. Avilés was one of the oldest and most successful *narcocaciques* in the Golden Triangle and would become one of the targets of Condor.

A 1977 DFS report reveals telephone communication between PJF commanders and a major group of drug traffickers in Ciudad Juárez. Carmelo Avilés, Rafael Aguilar, and Rafael Muñoz reported the exact amount of drug that they smuggled from Juárez to the United States and the commanders extorted them in proportion to their sales. The agents who sold intelligence and protection were José Hipólito Magaña, a PJF commander from Juárez; Héctor del Castillo, the Federal Public Prosecutor and Coordinator and head of the campaign against drug-trafficking

---

[40] Flores, Historias de polvo…, 215-216.

[41] "Pedro Avilés," AGN, DFS, Public Version, 10-13.

[42] A questionable interpretation of the Freedom of Information Act led the AGN authorities to delete all names in the public version of Pedro Avilés. However, the report hints that the family Chávez that controlled the local politics of Guadalupe y Calvo by choosing its municipal authorities was the head of one of the groups. The Fontes family likely was the other group.

in Juárez, and Jaime Alcalá, the PJF Chief of Services in Sinaloa, who became a key player in Operation Condor.[43]

As Condor began, the interweaving between the Sinaloan political establishment and *narcocaciques* made it impossible to strike one side without hurting the other. The Mexican government sought to control both legal and illegal actors through the PGR-PJF, the DFS, and the military to reach new arrangements with locals. This process was ridden with interagency conflicts, contradictions, and unpredictable situations that raised questions about whether military power was above the civilian one. Furthermore, Operation Condor was not only intended against drug traffickers, for its general tactics of population control served to contain the agrarian, guerrilla, and human rights movements taking place in Sinaloa during the 1970s.

Operation Condor as a Watershed in the Conflict Between Sinaloa and the Federation

In 1976, Culiacán, which had around 250,000 inhabitants, experienced an unprecedented number of 543 homicides, for which it became the most violent city in Cold War Mexico.[44] In the majority of cases, murderers used automatic weapons, a popular firearm in drug-related violence. The local population was upset by the state government's passiveness towards the unprecedented wave of violence, caused by its widely known links to drug traffickers.[45] The so-called *gente de bien* organized into business, merchant, farm, and other professional associations to pressure the government to call in the military to protect public security because they did not

[43] "Narcotráfico," AGN, DFS, former public version in one volume, 69-79. Carmelo Avilés Labra was probably related to Pedro Avilés, given that both were relatives of Joaquín Guzmán Loaera, the most renowned Mexican drug lord of the early 21st century. Rafael Aguilar Guajardo was simultaneously a DFS commander and a drug lord.

[44] Ricardo Urioste, "543 crímenes por la droga en Culiacán," *El Sol de México,* December 21, 1976, 1.

[45] "Estado de Sinaloa", November 12, 1976, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1707 B, File 8, 145-149.

trust in the corrupted Sinaloa Judicial Police (PJS), whose chiefs either used their position to become drug traffickers themselves or to protect drug lords.[46] On December 7, 1976, the state congress demanded the federal government the intervention of the military and the PJF in the state. Then, the Sinaloa's government announced Operation Condor as its alleged sympathetic response to the society's claims.[47] The Mexican media did not mention the U.S. involvement in the operation nor the DEA's role.

Operation Condor went into effect in Culiacán, Sinaloa on January 16, 1977, only a month and a half after President López Portillo took office. Although Condor first targeted the Golden Triangle, it quickly expanded to other states experiencing an upward surge in guerrilla movements in 1977, like Oaxaca and Guerrero. Operation Condor began with a military parade in Culiacán, Sinaloa to symbolize the recapturing of the territory by the Mexican state.[48] Lieutenant General José Francisco Hernández Toledo, the General Coordinator of the operation, led the parade. Sinaloa's governor, Alfonso G. Calderón, and Major General Ricardo Cervantes, Commander of the 9th Military Zone headquartered in Culiacán, along with other top federal and state officials also attended the event.

Operation Condor had both a civil and a military command. Alejandro Gertz Manero was the PGR National Coordinator of the campaign, while Carlos Aguilar Garza and Cruz López

---

[46] "Estado de Sinaloa," April 7, 1976, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12, 107-108 and May 24, 1976, 125; "A la opinión pública", *El Heraldo de México*, February 23, 1978, 7. As the DGIPS files show, virtually all the PJS chiefs and subchiefs were involved in the drug industry, especially since the 1960 onward. It is worth mentioning that in the early 1970s the PJS agents were already smuggling cocaine into the United States, although heroin had a higher demand. Colonel Jesús Quintanar Romero, who was appointed PJS chief in 1975, resigned to the position a couple of months later because of his failure to fight against corruption. He sent to the SEDENA an accurate diagnosis of the situation of public security in Sinaloa concerning drug gangs and the role of the PJS. He concluded that the upper-echelons of power hold up the corruption of the police command. "Estado de Sinaloa," June 16, 1975, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12, 31-34.

[47] "Estado de Sinaloa, November 10, 1972, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 10, 185.

[48] "Estado de Sinaloa", January 16, 1976, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12, 258.

were respectively the PGR Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator in the northewst.[49] However, the military component overshadowed the aerial defoliation program controlled by the PGR. Also, the military authority superseded the public prosecutor's law enforcement duties in the Golden Triangle and became the actual sovereign power in the region.

Roughly 1200 regular troops and paratroopers comprised the Task Force Condor (FTC).[50] Troops served six months on a rotational basis, while the Parachute Fusiliers Brigade (BFP), the elite counterinsurgency unit in the countryside, participated in the campaign from time to time at request of the high command. The FTC set up its military base in the municipal head of Badiraguato and had jurisdiction over other municipalities in the highlands of Chihuahua and Durango. The zone consisted of an area approximately 80, 000 km^2 and originally included Choix, Sinaloa de Leyva, Badiraguato, and Culiacán in Sinaloa, Guadalupe y Calvo, Morelos, and Batopilas in Chihuahua, and Tamazula and Canelas in Durango.[51] The decision to turn Badiraguato into the command center made political sense since the majority of drug lords who controlled the Golden Triangle operated in that municipality.

From 1977 to 1983, the FTC operated with eleven commanders and during its second stage (1983-1987) it had eight.[52] Significantly, these commanders had prior field experience in counterinsurgency campaigns across Mexico. As a member of the BFP, Hernández Toledo had

---

[49] At least 250 PGR agents participated in Operation Condor and most of them were sent to the northwest. Craig, "Operation Condor," 348.

[50] The number of 1,200 troops provided by Edward Heath responds to the first phase of the operation. Other sources claim that up to 10,000 troops participated in the FTC. Heath, *Mexican Opium*, p. 35.

[51] That area would later comprise more municipalities in the three states. Tomás Guevara, "Operación Condor. Compilación de artículos del *Noroeste*" Culiacán, January-December 1977, 1-5.

[52] "Comandantes de la Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor", SEDENA, http://www.sedena.gob.mx/leytrans/petic/2005/may/20052005a3.html, accessed 10 February 2017.

fought the Popular Guerrilla Group in Chihuahua in 1965. He also led the military assaults on the public universities in Michoacán and Sonora in 1966 and 1967 respectively, and was one of the commanders of Operation Galeana, the military assault on the Plaza de Tlatelolco on 2 October 1968.[53] Toledo's chief collaborators were the BFP commanders General Edmar Euroza Delgado and Lieutenant Colonel Gregorio Guerrero Caudillo. Euroza was well-known for his participation in the repression of social movements.[54]

Major General Roberto Heine Rangel, who had received counterinsurgency training in U.S. military schools and had taken part in the extermination of the guerrilla of Lucio Cabañas, succeeded Hernández Toledo from September 1977 through March 1978. Brigadier General Manuel Díaz Escobar Figueroa, better known for having created a paramilitary group known as Los Halcones (*The Hawks*), commanded the FTC-III from September 1978 to June 1979.[55] Brigadier General Jesús Gómez Ruiz, commander of the FTC-IV, had also been a part of Operation Spider, the military campaign against Lucio Cabañas. Infantry Colonel Ricardo Careaga Estrambasaguas, who led the FTC-IX (December 1981-May 1982) had belonged to the *Olimpia Battalion*, which participated in the Tlatelolco massacre.[56] The background of these top officers foreshadowed the counterinsurgency tactics against peasant communities.

---

[53] Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda, *El policía: la Guerra sucia no se olvida* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 2013), Kindle edition.

[54] Euroza conducted the most emblematic attacks against the 1968 student movement in Mexico City. For instance, he commanded the blasting of the main door of the National Preparatory School in San Ildefonso with a bazooka, led the occupation of both Ciudad Universitaria and the Casco de Santo Tomás, and ordered the troops to return fire as snipers began to shoot activists in the Plaza de Tlatelolco. Gregorio Guerrero Caudillo was promoted to Brigadier General given his performance in the drug war and commanded the FTC from late 1984 to mid-1985. Julio Scherer & Carlos Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra. Tlatelolco 1968* (Mexico City: Nuevo Siglo/Aguilar, 1999).

[55] The *Hawks* were the paramilitary group responsible for attacking protestors in San Cosme, Mexico City on June 10, 1971.

[56] For the trajectories of these officers see: Roderic Ai Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Juan Veledíaz, *El General sin memoria: una crónica de los*

On February 9, 1977, Hernández Toledo claimed that in the highlands there were as many weapons to make a "little revolution," yet the military had eradicated 720 illegal crops and seized 121 tons of marijuana, thus anticipating the success of Operation Condor by May of that year.[57] Triumphalist statements constantly repeated, and on many occasions, authorities affirmed that the problem was nearly solved. The DEA reached the same conclusion given its faith in the aerial defoliation program. During the first months, the mainstream public opinion backed Condor, but after months of systematic abuses, they proved disappointed with its outcomes.[58]

From January 1977 onward, troops of the 9th military zone patrolled the streets of Culiacán and its surroundings, established random checkpoints, and carried out disarmament campaigns. However, as early as April 1977, the authorities realized that bank robbery, kidnapping, schoolgirl rape, car theft, and assault on tourists had increased as a result of Condor.[59] Besides social violence, the state of siege brought about military violence. In 1977 alone, there were more than four hundred complaints against troops by peasants, cattle ranchers, and professionals.[60] In the highlands, several mass killings took place but went undenounced. For instance, on 31 October 1977, thirteen alleged drug traffickers and one soldier died in Las Juntas,

---

silencios del ejército mexicano (Mexico City: Debate, 2010); and Veledíaz, *Jinetes de Tlaltelolco: Marcelino García Barragán y otros retratos del ejército mexicano* (Mexico City: Proceso, 2017).

[57] Roberto Martínez Montenegro, "Fin al narcotráfico en mayo: Gral. H. Toledo," *Noroeste*, February 10, 1977, 1; "Estado de Sinaloa", February 9, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12.

[58] "Estado de Sinaloa", March 15, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 24.

[59] When the drug sales were disrupted, gangs switched to alternative criminal activities. "Estado de Sinaloa," April 12, 1977, AGN, DFS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 56.

[60] Governor Calderón admitted that the military was perpetrating abuses against innocent civilians, but the 9th military zone did not receive well his criticism. AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, [Penitenciaría del Estado de Sinaloa, November 18, 1977, and Instituto de Readaptación Social del Estado de Sinaloa, December 19, 1977], 127-137.

La Noria, Mazatlán.[61] No investigation was ever carried out to determine whether the FTC had shot the civilians or those were combat deaths.

While the FTC had territorial control over the highlands, the intricate dynamics of violence in the Culiacán Valley resulted from the participation of several entities: the Municipal Police, the PJS, the PGR-PJF, the DFS, the White Brigade, and the 9th Military Zone. The FTC, the 9th Military Zone, the PJF, and the PJS experienced regularly commander turnovers, allegedly to prevent corruption. However, that practice made it difficult to reach long-lasting agreements among actors and added to the growing political instability. The level of disarticulation between different branches of the government was dramatic. During the Calderón term (1974-1980), the state's Attorney and the PJS did not collaborate with each other because of their mutual accusations of drug-related corruption, yet the governor did not intervene to put an end to dual command.[62]

The DEA agents who worked in the headquarters in Culiacán might have shared a similar mindset with the Mexican security forces, but they distrusted them. Nonetheless, given that the DFS had a closer relationship to the CIA, the DEA ended up favoring the PGR-PJF. The coordination among both domestic and foreign agencies proved to be a failure, and in some cases the internecine strife impeded any institutional functioning.

Despite the astounding number of security agents in the streets of Culiacán, there were several high-profile killings and jailbreaks during 1977 and 1978. On 3 March 1977, the PJS

---

[61] "Estado de Sinaloa," October 31, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 176. During the anti-drug campaigns of previous years there were similar internal reports of massacres in the Sinaloan highlands. For instance, in 1971, in El Realito, Badiraguato, the military killed elders, women, and children. On November 2, 1976, in a skirmish in Santiago de los Caballeros, Badiraguato the military killed ten alleged drug traffickers and wounded several civilians. AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12, "Estado de Sinaloa," November 3, 1976.

[62] "Estado de Sinaloa", March 31st, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 48; "Estado de Sinaloa," January 29, 1979, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 238.

sub-chief, Alfredo Reyes Curiel, was shot for having extorted several drug traffickers.[63] At the end of that month, Major Gustavo Sámano, a military advisor for the FTC, was assassinated allegedly for pointing out police officers linked to drug traffickers as well as drug cultivation areas.[64] However, Sámano was not an untainted officer. On 10 November 1975, at a time when Sámano was head of the prison guards at the infamous Social Rehabilitation Institute of Sinaloa (IRSS), one of the most important heroin traffickers of southern Sinaloa, Manuel Salcido Uzeta (a) *El Cochiloco* ("Crazy Pig") and six of his men escaped. Sámano was removed from that position but managed to evade the PJF's investigation.[65] There is no doubt that the highest echelons of power protected Manuel Salcido to the extent that he was one of the Operation Condor's survivors.

The state attorney suspended the investigation of Sámano's case, but the military accused the PJS of being the perpetrator. Prior to Sámano's execution, the relationship between the 9th Military Zone and the PJS was strained because the military carried out law enforcement functions while the police took part in the drug trade and smuggled weapons.[66] As soon as Condor began, the military disarmed the PJS agents.

Sámano's death was a point of no return and Major General Cervantes handled it as a personal matter, exerting a ruthless revenge against the PJS. On 1 May 1977, he called in governor Calderón to his office in the 9th Military Zone to force him to listen to the recorded

---

[63] Reyes was one of several officers from both the PJS and the Municipal Police who were killed during the Condor years for drug-related issues. "Estado de Sinaloa", March 3, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 20.

[64] "Estado de Sinaloa", March 25, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 45.

[65] Manuel Salcido was imprisoned in early 1974. "Estado de Sinaloa," November 10, 1975, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 12, 73-74.

[66] "Estado de Sinaloa", February 23, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1707-B, File 9, 6; "Estado de Sinaloa," March 31, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 48-49.

interrogation of a PJS agent who had confessed that his unit killed Sámano.[67] After the meeting, the military detained Calderón's PJS security guards and escorted Calderón to the Government Palace to ensure that he would formally dismiss the culprits. The military detained, tortured, and disappeared at least seven PJS agents.[68] Cervantes humiliated Calderón and sent a terrifying message to the PJS: no one was above the military. Shortly after, Gral. Alberto Quintanar replaced Cervantes, even though the latter had only been in the position for five months. The message from the presidency had been made clear: no one was above the PRI's civilian elite.[69]

On 13 February 1978, Roberto Martínez Montenegro, a journalist for the *Noroeste* and correspondent for *Excélsior,* who had written news reports on the relationship between PJS agents and drug traffickers in Sinaloa, was shot dead. Unlike other journalists such as José Guadalupe Mendívil Payán and Carlos Rodríguez Falcón who were killed in Culiacán in 1977, Montenegro's case incited national uproar and galvanized several media outlets from different states to demand justice for him and protection for freedom of expression—an unusual demand in the largely state-controlled media landscape. [70]

The DGIPS reported that the PJF had killed Montenegro because he had planned to write about the widespread practice of extorting drug traffickers by PJF commanders.[71] The execution

---

[67] The state Attorney, the Chief of the PJS, and the Director of Government spent one night in the 9th military camp. "Elenco Político", Proceso, June 4, 1977, http://www.proceso.com.mx/7212/elenco-politico-no-31.

[68] "Estado de Sinaloa", May 6, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 70. The wives of the disappeared agents became human rights activist. One of them, Martha Vega, is one the current leaders in the movement to search for clandestine graves in Sinaloa.

[69] "Estado de Sinaloa", May 31, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 78.

[70] [Assassination of Roberto Martínez Montenegro], February and March 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 240-280.

[71] "Estado de Sinaloa," April 13, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 37-38. Pyes also collected this version, specifying that Montenegro would charge Alcalá and other agents with extorting millions of pesos from narcotics suspects through the use of torture. Pyes, "Legal Murders": 12.

marked a turning point in the relationship between the PGR and Sinaloa's authorities. The DFS sub-chief Miguel Nazar Haro traveled to Sinaloa to investigate the case and back the governor, which in turn infuriated the PJF. In retribution, the PJF tortured several PJS agents and forced them to self-incriminate for the homicide.[72] Jaime Alcalá along with Gral. Alberto Quintanar went one step further and detained the Commander of the State Government's Special Group (GEGS), Víctor Gómez Vidal for his involvement with the DFS. Quintanar's troops were also on the verge of assaulting the PJS headquarters.[73] The military joined the PJF's operations given its conflict with the state government regarding Sámano's case.

The PJF took advantage of the situation to crack down another of its traditional enemies: the Sinaloa's Bar Association "Eustaquio Buelna" (CAEB), the only NGO that spoke out against the massive human rights abuses carried out by both the police and the military. On 14 April 1978, the CAEB vice-president and former student leader Jesús Michel Jacobo was detained and tortured during four days as part of a ploy to bring charges against Alfonso Calderón and Miguel Nazar Haro for Montenegro's execution. Michel identified Carlos Aguilar, Jaime Alcalá, and Pablo Hernández as the agents who assaulted him and other detainees along their families.[74]

During its investigation, the DFS attempted to smear Montenegro's image by stating that he was an informant (*madrina*) for the Federal Public Prosecutor and was on the drug trafficker's

---

[72] "Estado de Sinaloa," February 14, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 247. The former PJS chief, Alejandro Valenzuela Chávez was also interrogated because Martínez Montenegro's articles had played a role in his indictment. The journalist had revealed that as police chief back in 1973, Valenzuela participated in the drug trade and was protected by governor Alfredo Valdéz Montoya. Martínez also caused the destitution of other officials of the Calderón administration.

[73] Gómez was tortured in front of Gral. Mendiolea, and his family was also detained; his pregnant wife and his 3-year old son were tortured next to him. "Estado de Sinaloa," April 15, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 42-44. Pyes also recorded the brutal testimonies of torture by Gómez and Michel. Pyes, "Legal Murders": 13-15.

[74] "Colegio de Abogados 'Eustaquio Buelna'," AGN, DFS, public version of, 2-4.

payroll, serving as a mediator for releasing criminals. The DFS also prevented the PJF from making a public statement accusing the GEGS of Montenegro's killing, while Calderón and Leopoldo Sánchez Celis went to Mexico City to negotiate with the federal government.[75] The terms of the conversations remain secret, but the balance of power favored the DFS. The GEGS agents were released on April 18, and the next day Nazar Haro declared that *madrinas* had killed Montenegro over a dispute about money distribution.[76] The murder was never clarified.

On 15 September 1978, PJF agents seemingly ambushed and killed Pedro Avilés and his seven companions in Loma de Rodriguera, Sinaloa.[77] Notwithstanding that Carlos Aguilar and Jaime Alcalá received bribes from the Avilés' clan, the PJF followed orders from a top authority that deemed the veteran drug lord was disposable.[78] Aguilar and Alcalá were sent to Tijuana after the operation and Cruz López assumed the position of PGR coordinator in the northwest. Whether Avilés' execution was intended to allow the growth of other drug traffickers or to serve as a state performance to prove the efficacy of Condor is hard to determine. However, chief drug traffickers associated with Avilés as well as other kingpins of the Golden Triangle survived Operation Condor.[79] The removal of Avilés brought about the reorganization of criminal

---

[75] "Estado de Sinaloa," April 17, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 64, 68.

[76] The imprisoned PJS agentes were not released, and Gral. Quintanar was sent to another military zone two months and a half later. The PJS was the major loser of the political chess.

[77] The official version stated that Avilés was killed by accident because he did not stop his car in a PJF checkpoint, but this was clearly a cover-up. "Pedro Avilés Pérez," September 16, 1978, AGN, DFS, public versión, 14.

[78] Juan Veledíaz, "La muerte de 'El León de la Sierra', el primer Padrino del narco", http://laparednoticias.com/la-muerte-de-el-leon-de-la-sierra-el-primer-padrino-del-narco/, accessed March 12, 2017.

[79] Jaime Herrera Nevarez, the most powerful heroin kingpin according to the DEA, was detained in 1978 but unlike Avilés, the DEA and the PJF gave him the opportunity to negotiate his surrender. Eduardo Fernández, the Sinaloan drug lord who introduced the cocaine trade to Sinaloa, fled to Puebla in the late 1970s. Pedro Avilés worked with some of the drug traffickers that would dominate the drug scene during the early 1980s: Ernesto Fonseca, Rafael Caro Quintero, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, Manuel Salcido, Juan José Esparragoza, Juan Matta Ballesteros, Javier Barba, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, and the brothers Rafael and Juan Quintero Payán. Juan Carlos Reyna suggests that during the 1976 gang wars some drug traffickers had become independent from Pedro Avilés and made new

networks, and from late 1978 to 1982 it was not so clear what organization would hegemonize the narcotics field.

The recurring high-profile assassinations of the period make evident the lack of governance and the difficulties of the many actors on the stage to reach long-lasting agreements. In their government reports, both Calderón and López Portillo reproduced triumphalist statements about drug eradication but silenced the social cost of Operation Condor.[80] They also avoided any reference to the clashes between the state and the federation and stuck to the myth of the *pax priísta*. Nonetheless, year after year society continued to complain about both social and state violence. There was not an active opposition to Condor; it prevailed a passive resistance instead. During the state elections of November 1977 to elect representatives, mayors, and council members, the voter turnout was 18%, the lowest in the electoral history of the state.[81] This percentage brought into question the legitimacy of the PRI's rule.[82] In Sinaloa violence rather than consensus underlay the regime.

Sinaloa's popular culture memorialized Operation Condor through *narco-corridos*. In 1978, *La mafia muere* ("The mafia dies"), composed by Pepe Cabrera and performed by the band Los Porteños from Badiraguato, became one year's greatest hits. It captures the essence of

arragements with the PJF, among them Ernesto Fonseca and Rafael Caro Quintero. Juan Carlos Reyna and Farrah Fresnedo, *El Extraditado* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 2014).

[80] "Informes de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos José López Portillo," http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-15.pdf, accessed March 10, 2017. Calderón claimed that Operation Condor had left Sinaloa almost cleaned of drug crops, and the remaining 12% of production was located in the limits with Chihuahua and Durango. "Tercer Informe que rinde al H. Congreso del Estado el C. Gobernador Constitucional de Sinaloa, Alfonso G. Calderón", December 1st, 1977.

[81] "Estado de Sinaloa", November 6, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1707-B, File 9, 104-106.

[82] Regarding the local elections, authorities deemed that in municipalities like Badiraguato, where the majority of the population worked in the drug industry and had endured the economic consequences of Condor, there would not be political problems for the PRI. "Panorama político", AGN, DGIPS, Box 1763-B, File 7, 269.

how society remembers Operation Condor as an episode in which the government struck a blow to the mafia and hundreds of people were either killed or disappeared.[83]

> Culiacán, the Sinaloan capital,
> turned into a real inferno
> bore witness to so much slaughter.
> How many brave men have died
> some of them belonged to the mafia
> some others too to the government.
>
> Gunmen that became famous
> have gone little by little
> some dead, other imprisoned,
> the mafia is coming to an end.
> For the blood that was shed
> there is bereavement and families sweeping.
>
> Tierra Blanca is deeply sad
> its streets are desolated
> the cars of the year do not run
> the roar of the machine guns is silenced
> the mansions that had belonged to kings
> today remain empty.
>
> Whole families were wiped out
> hundreds of men lost their lives
> the story is certainly sad
> many others were disappeared
> no one knows if they are alive
> or maybe they died burnt.[84]

---

[83] Tomás Guevara Martínez, et. al., "La Operación Cóndor en la memoria colectiva de los sinaloenses," in *La investigación científica, tecnológica y social en la UAS* (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2008), p. 206-210.

[84] Pepe Cabrera, "La mafia muere", 1978, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeLTm5WA2ss, accessed March 31, 2017. See the Spanish original in the appendix 3, no. 5.

Condor's Attacks Against Social Movements in Sinaloa

The 1970s was the most politically active decade in Cold War Sinaloa. Besides the guerrilla movement, there were continuous mobilizations by students, peasants, laborers, workers, squatters, and human rights activists. Peasant organizations carried out systematic land seizures from 1974 to 1978, but given the political instability, the state government either yielded to the demands of the invaders or resorted to extreme violence.[85] The political context changed radically during the late seventies. After the political reform of 1977 that allowed the participation of opposition parties in elections, traditional left-wing organizations like the PCM reduced their efforts to organize mass mobilizations and focused on electoral campaigns. Additionally, by the 1980s the combination of the dirty war with the war on drugs had nearly accomplished the total annihilation of the revolutionary left in the northwest.

During his asylum trial in Canada in 1988, Zacarías Osorio Cruz, a deserter of the Mexican army, explained that as a paratrooper he contributed to the elimination of the regime's foes. Osorio stated that in 1979 three sections of his brigade, made up of 105 elements commanded by lieutenant colonel Ramón Arrieta Hurtado, went to Guamúchil, Sinaloa to repress a protest in front of the Municipal Palace, as well as to pick up about 20 prisoners detained by the local battalion to transfer them to the secret military prison in the Campo Militar No. 1 in Mexico City. Osorio described this procedure as being part of Operation Condor, even though it was unrelated to drug trafficking.

---

[85] The DGIPS files regarding Sinaloa contain an astonishing wealth of information about popular mobilizations during the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Osorio also asserted that the high command chose him to kill clandestine prisoners in the military shooting camps of San Miguel de los Jagüeyes and San Juan Teotihuacán, State of Mexico, from 1977 to 1981. Furthermore, Osorio revealed that José Hernández Toledo and Edmar Euroza Delgado were part of the high command that gave orders to the BFP to kill those prisoners.[86] The fact that the BFP was in charge of the repression of social movements, anti-guerrilla and antidrug operations, as well as the physical elimination of clandestine prisoners, suggests that the government regarded the paratroopers as the most reliable unit within the military.

In the same asylum trial, the former guerrilla Antonio Hernández testified that he was detained in Guerrero in 1978 and sent to the secret prison of Military Camp No. 1. He learned that not only activists but also drug traffickers were in the area. The latter were tortured until they paid to be brought before a judge.[87] The military would have killed those who lacked resources to pay for their public presentation. An unknown number of clandestine prisoners, either activists or criminals, were disappeared but the Mexican government never provided an official explanation of their whereabouts.

In Sinaloa, from 1972 to 1974 the security forces usually sent guerrillas to public prisons and there was a seeming low rate of disappearances given that the counterinsurgency infrastructure was predominantly directed to Guerrero. In 1976, however, that pattern shifted.[88] From the forty-two forced disappearances that human rights organizations recorded in Sinaloa

---

[86] Enrique Maza, ed., *Obligado a matar. Fusilamiento de civiles en México*, (Mexico City, Proceso, 1993), 8.

[87] Maza, *Obligado a matar*, 71.

[88] As I explained in chapter three, the number of victims of the death flights in 1974 is unknown.

from 1976 to 1979, twenty-five corresponded to guerrillas.[89] The remaining seventeen cases were policemen, soldiers, and civilians related to Operation Condor. Clearly, the counterinsurgency infrastructure expanded by Operation Condor favored the forced-disappearance of clandestine prisoners.

Despite the astounding record of human rights violations during his administration, López Portillo boosted his image as the president of reconciliation. In 1978, he announced the Amnesty Law to benefit political prisoners and fugitives, as well as exiles. López Portillo not only did not mention anything about the more than six hundred disappeared civilians, but his administration continued perpetrating forced disappearances.[90] Furthermore, the amnesty was arbitrarily applied because the majority of the 1,539 beneficiaries of the Amnesty's first stage were not political prisoners, but drug growers.[91] The reasons why López Portillo decided to release hundreds of drug growers amidst the most critical Condor years remain unclear.

The State of Siege in the Sierra Madre Occidental

Journalist Francisco Ortiz Pinchetti, one of the first to conduct investigative journalism on Operation Condor, defined Sinaloa as a "transplant of South America," where state-terror regimes prevailed.[92] Ortiz Pinchetti disregarded the fact that the counterinsurgency campaigns had ravaged the Sierra Tarahumara and the Sierra Madre del Sur pursuing guerrillas since the

---

[89] Loza Ochoa, *Tiempo de Espera*, 132.

[90] "Ley de Amnistía", 28 de septiembre de 1978, http://www.memoriapoliticademexico.org/Textos/6Revolucion/1978-LA-JLP.html, accessed April 10, 2017; Simón Hipólito, *Guerrero, amnistía y represión* (Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1982).

[91] I read this information in a DFS document before the DFS archive was reclassified. I have not located yet an alternative source about the identity of the amnestied.

[92] Francisco Ortiz Pinchetti, ed., *La Operación Cóndor* (Mexico City: Proceso, 1991), 13.

mid-1960s. Thus, although Operation Condor in South America began in 1975, the Mexican Operation Condor belonged to an older tradition—it was not a transplant of South America, but the peak of the violent rule of the PRI.

The worst human rights abuses of the Mexican war on drugs occurred during the Carter administration, who expressed his concerned about the atrocities committed by the Argentinian dictatorship but showed little interest in the Mexican case. Richard B. Craig summarized the most significant human rights charges against Operation Condor: 1) the use of dangerous herbicides; 2) the failure or inability to protect those who attacked drug-related corruption; 3) the abuse of fundamental rights during arrest, detention, and imprisonment for narcotics violations; and 4) the disregard of *campesino* rights during drug-related maneuvers in the countryside.[93]

In the highlands of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua the military committed systematic illegal detentions, executions, forced disappearances, torture, rape, pillage, and extortion. By following a scorched earth policy, the troops destroyed both illicit and livelihood crops, plundered stored harvests, and burnt the homes of poor peasants. In consequence, the regional economy was devastated, and thousands of *serranos* had to flee the region.[94] The municipalities that stand out in the sources as the most affected were Badiraguato, Guadalupe y Calvo, Tamazula, Morelos, Urique, Batopilas, Topia, Canelas, and Guanaceví (see appendix 1, map 3).

Security forces had enough intelligence to direct their assaults against drug clans, but the FTC targeted peasant families and innocent civilians indiscriminately. In their testimonies, highlanders depict how soldiers put marijuana in their trucks to fake evidence to arrest them and

---

[93] Richard B. Craig, "Human Rights and Mexico's Antidrug Campaign", *Social Science Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (March 1980): 691-701.

[94] Ortiz et al., *La Operación Cóndor,* 68; AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, "Estado de Sinaloa," 13; Pyes, "Legal murders,": 11-15.

stole their money and their vehicles. All detainees were sent to the IRSS, where they received sentences of up to five years.[95] It would not be inaccurate to claim that virtually all detainees were tortured, notwithstanding that the majority lacked any relevant information to confess. Not even drug growers had information that authorities could not find out by employing professional investigation. Torture did not serve as an investigative method but as a tactic to spread terror among the population and yield hundreds of detentions to simulate the success of Operation Condor.

In 1978, the CAEB conducted a survey between 457 out of 1300 prisoners in the IRSS; 85% of them were poor peasants and laborers and the 15% remaining was predominantly urban youth. The report shows that the PJF and troops based in Sinaloa carried out all detentions, but they incurred in illegal deprivation of freedom in 90% of the cases because detainees were not caught in flagrante delicto nor had an arrest warrant or a search warrant. In all cases, the arrests were performed with excessive violence and were followed by intense torture sessions, although detainees were unarmed and compliant. The agents also sacked the belongings of the victims as spoils of war.[96] Families were not notified about the whereabouts of the detainees and had to travel to town to search for them.[97]

The CAEB report detailed the different torture techniques that peasants experienced. Some techniques followed alleged scientific procedures—deadly blows, electric shocks in the

---

[95] Interview of the author with a group of peasants from Mocorito, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

[96] "Estudio practicado por el Colegio de Abogados 'Eustaquio Buelna' de Culiacán, auxiliado por el Comité de defensa de los derechos de los internos del IRSS del Edo. de Sinaloa," May 31, 1978, AGN, DFS, public version of the "Colegio de Abogados 'Eustaquio Buelna'," 18, (hereafter CAEB report). According to Pyes, the CAEB published a second report containing 110 more prisoners' testimonials, but none of the archives I consulted had it. One of those testimonies included an eyewitness account of a crucifixion. Pyes, "Legal murders": 11.

[97] "Para informar a la superioridad", June 1st, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 44, File 1012-1979, 31.

genitals, suffocation, waterboarding, reverse hanging, induced dehydration and starving, burns, isolation, blindfolding—but others had a gendered dimension and exhibited sheer brutality. Women were raped "in normal and unnatural ways," and babies and children were also tortured in front of their parents. Some female prisoners underwent forced abortions. For instance, in September 1977, the PJF detained the peasant Rita Villa López. As agents beat her, she warned them that she was pregnant. Then, one man jumped onto her belly and caused her to have an abortion.[98] Notwithstanding those abuses, a judge issued a prison sentence against her for possession and sale of heroin. Many victims died due to the lack of medical care after being tortured, while others suffered mutilations, fractures, tumors, hearing loss, teeth loss, and post-traumatic stress disorder.[99]

The surviving detainees remained isolated for a period of twenty up to forty days in the Badiraguato's military prison or the PJF's cells in Culiacán, with the approval of the public prosecutor. After signing self-incriminating confessions, they were transferred to the IRSS, without having an adequate defense nor a fair trial. In sum, authorities violated due process in every way. The unnecessary pressure that Condor put on the Sinaloa's judicial system to deal with prisoners from Chihuahua and Durango might be another expression of the conflict between Sinaloa and the federal government.

The CAEB was able to identify some direct perpetrators, among them the PJF commanders Manuel Arreguín and Jaime Alcalá.[100] Finally, the CAEB pointed at the prosecutors

---

[98] CAEB report, 22, and Ortiz et al. *La Operación Cóndor*, 20.

[99] CAEB report, 20-22. The CAEB detailed ten cases of executions, forced disappearances, and people who passed away after being tortured, underlying that there were many more cases where victims did not want to denounce because they were afraid of retaliation by the authorities.

[100] CAEB report, 19. The CAEB provided the name and plate number of agents José de Jesús Gerardo Serrano, Antonio Pérez Medrade, Raúl Fuentes López, Carlos Pérez Díaz, Ismael Calderón Calderón, Fernando Eguiarte

Carlos Aguilar Garza, Pablo Hernández Garza, Cruz Garza, Humberto Dávila, and others as accomplices of those violations. There are no official figures over the abuses because the majority of victims either remained silent, went into exile or denounced their cases to the Attorney General, the same institution that had struck them.[101] The only NGO that received denunciations for Operation Condor was Amnesty International, but no domestic or international organization had enough leverage to hold the Mexican government accountable.

Another key source to understand the dimensions of Operation Condor are the declassified files by the SEDENA, which include a series of complaints by *serranos* from 1977 to 1986 against the FTC based in Badiraguato. Arrests occurred on a regular basis in groups of ten up to seventy detainees in each community. The SEDENA followed entangled bureaucratic procedures to investigate the complaints, transmitting information to different sections. Every single case was notified to the Defense Secretaries, Félix Galván López (1976-1982) and Juan Arévalo Gardoqui (1982-1988).

The standard responses by the FTC command were that troops unrelated to it committed such abuses; soldiers were not in service when they misbehaved; resentful drug growers made fake complaints to discredit the military and have it removed from the region; and greedy lawyers advised peasants to sue the military to make a living; therefore, their claims were dismissed and filed.[102] Also, when the military returned to the assaulted communities to

---

Aceves, Arturo Robles Díaz, Sergio Moreno, and Gerardo Sánchez González, but there were many perpetrators who went unidentified.

[101] A considerable portion of the reports about Operation Condor in the DGIPS archive is related to complaints of civilians against Condor, but officials rarely wrote about individual cases.

[102] AGN, SEDENA, Boxes 15 and 44, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas.

investigate the facts, terrorized peasants were usually denied the opportunity to complain or fled to the mountains to avoid any contact with soldiers.

On November 14, 1978, a squad detained Gerónimo Díaz García, from the ranch El Infiernito, in Tohayana, Guadalupe y Calvo, when he was working on his corn plot. He was part of a group of twelve peasants taken to Tohayana to be tortured to confess that they were drug growers and dealers. Díaz would later declare that a lieutenant required him to pay $250,000 pesos in exchange for his release, but given that he could not meet that demand, he remained tied and blindfolded in Tohayana for twenty days. Then, he was transferred to Badiraguato, where he was again tortured to sign a self-incriminating confession.

On January 10, 1979, Díaz was sent to a "dungeon" at the PJF and was later imprisoned in the IRSS. On July 17, 1979, he wrote to president López Portillo claiming that he was a poor peasant, head of his family, and that despite his innocence he was the only one in a group of twelve detainees from his community to be imprisoned.[103] Like Díaz, other complainants revealed that the FTC never disturb the genuine drug lords.[104] They also asserted that the FTC massively extorted highlanders.[105] Regardless of whether they participated in the drug business, those who met the monetary demands by officers were released, while the poor ones remained in prison. There is no evidence to determine what officers did with the extortion money, but given

---

[103] "Para informar a la superioridad", August 4, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 44, File 1012-1979, 32-34.

[104] "Para informar a la superioridad", October 19, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1298-1979, 101-103; "Hoy se presentó en esta Secretaría de Gobernación un grupo de pequeños propietarios y comuneros del sur de Chihuahua y norte de Durango, quejándose del desvío de poder de elementos de 'Operación Cóndor'", February 28, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1747-C, File 9, 62.

[105] Officers did not ask for a standard ransom. For instance, in San Javier de Abajo, Potrerillo, and Rancho Viejo, in the municipality of Badiraguato, the charges amounted from $10, 000 up to $50, 000. Many peasants had to sell their cattle to be released. In this particular case, the SEDENA accepted the veracity of the complaints. "Para atención de la superioridad", October 12, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, 83.

that it was a widespread practice, the FTC command likely had to share profits with the superior authorities.

Baltazar Ayón, farmer and rancher, complained that on 19 September 1982, a military squad assaulted his house in Los Remedios, Chacala, Tamazula and arrested him and his cousin Jaime Ayón. Baltazar Ayón claimed that the soldiers stole eighty thousand pesos and other valuables and attempted to rape their wives. Jaime was wrapped in a jute mesh blanket and dipped multiple times in a river until he drowned. When a sergeant realized that the farmer had died, he ordered his men to shoot his corpse and execute Baltazar, who received five shots in his crotch and legs. Left for dead, Baltazar crawled to the closest ranch for help. Days later, the squad return to the victims' houses and threatened their relatives. Afraid for their lives, the families left Chacala and sought shelter in Culiacán.[106]

Rare cases existed in which the military recognized the abuses, but the institution never admitted they were part of a state terror policy. For instance, the Municipal Board of Tamazula denounced that on 25 July 1983, in the ranch Cueva del Gallo, the FTC tortured and killed a farmer named José Sánchez Aragón and secretly buried him. The military investigation demonstrated that Lieutenant Arturo Saucedo Garzón and a six-member squad were responsible for Sánchez Aragón's death. In addition, the squad's superior, Captain Alejandro Méndez, was found guilty of concealing a crime. All of them were sent to the Military Prison at the Military Camp No. 1 in Mexico City.[107]

---

[106] Given that the complainants did not know the names of the officers, the military justice did not investigate the case. [Letter of Baltazar Ayón Ayón to President José López Portillo], September 29, 1982, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1299-1980, 12-13.

[107] "Asunto: Relacionado con la investigación practicada en jurisdicción de la Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor I-83," September 3, 1983, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1299-1980, 131-132.

One of the FTC's recurring targets were the pilots of both commercial and private flights. The military indiscriminately accused the pilots of the Sierra Madre of drug smuggling without evidence beyond confessions obtained under torture. The case of the pilot Manuel Atilano Escandón from Chihuahua became a memory knot of the abuses of Condor in the four-state region.[108] On 4 March 1979, Atilano's Piper Cherokee aircraft experienced a mechanical failure in midair, which forced him to land in Santiago de los Caballeros, Badiraguato. Atilano traveled to Chihuahua City to find a replacement for the damaged pieces, but two days later, as he returned to Santiago de los Caballeros by plane, the Piper Cherokee was no longer in the same place where he had parked it. When he flew to Guachochi to fill the fuel tank, a squad arrested him shortly after landing and took him back to Badiraguato.[109]

After seven days of continuous torture, the military asked Atilano to pilot a survey flight to the highlands. In midair, Atilano sent a radio message: "They already screwed me, but they are not going to torture me anymore. They are going to die with me." Then, as the plane made a sharp turn, the pilot crashed it killing three soldiers. Pilots of the five airlines of the region listened to Atilano's last message and protested against military's systematic human rights abuses, but the media neither covered Atilano's case nor the complaints. Nevertheless, Atilano

[108] Steve J. Stern defines memory knots as the events that interrupt the normal flow of "unthinking" reflexes and habits. "They force charged issues of memory and forgetfulness into a public domain. They make claims or cause problems that heighten attention and consciousness, thereby unsettling reflexive everyday habits and euphemisms that foster numbing". Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile. On the Eve of London 1998* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 120.

[109] The squad also arrested Atilano's two companions and falsely accused them of homicide and damage to private property. The detainees bore witness to Atilano's stay in the military barracks of Badiraguato as well as the shock that the military experienced after Atilano's defiance. Miguel Cabildo, "Un piloto Estrella su avión para matar a sus torturadores" in *La Operación Cóndor,* Francisco Ortiz Pinchetti, ed. (Mexico City: Proceso, 1991), 55-63.

became a popular symbol of resistance in the highlands, given the generalized interruption of the rule of law by security forces.[110]

School teachers were also one of the FTC targets. Soldiers seemed to have a Pavlovian response against teachers stemming from their fight against the *normalista* movement and the guerrilla teachers. On July 22, 1978, the troops killed a teacher by the name of Gualberto Carrillo Ceceña in Badiraguato.[111] On May 13, 1982, in Ciénega de Araujo, Guadalupe y Calvo, three members of the FTC killed another teacher, Saúl Anchondo Lozoya, because he intervened during the attempted kidnapping of a female student.[112] One year later, on April 28, 1983, in Ciénega de Silva, Guadalupe y Calvo, another Condor squad of fifteen soldiers led by Lieutenant Jorge Luis Márquez—a former member of the Presidential Guards—tortured a rural teacher named Abraham Porres Martel. The soldiers savagely beat Porres, burned his face, arms, and feet, and hanged him by the neck until he nearly died. During the torture sessions, Márquez told Porres that all teachers were communist dogs plotting against the government and that the teachers' union could kiss his ass.[113] He also accused Porres of being an opium dealer related to a bandit known as *El Chuma*.[114]

---

[110] The locals I interviewed about Operation Condor in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Chihuahua singled out Atilano's case as an example of extreme abuse by the military during the Condor years, noticing the bravery of the pilot.

[111] "Estado de Sinaloa", July 28, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 14, 165.

[112] Given the uproar that followed the case, the three soldiers defected but were located, turned in to civilian authorities, and imprisoned. The three soldiers originally belonged to the 19o Infantry Battalion of Petatlán Guerrero, which was also involved in counterinsurgency and antidrug campaigns. "Para informar a la superioridad," May 15, 1982, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1299-1980, 86.

[113] The lieutenant Márquez used the expression "me la pela," which literally means the act of being masturbated. It entails the male domination of the enemy by forcing him to do something unpleasant but does not necessarily have a sexual connotation. It is a common insult between men, but it is never used towards women.

[114] [Declaración de Abraham Porres Martel ante el Ministerio Público de Guadalupe y Calvo, Chihuahua], April 27, 1983, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1299-1980, 108-110. *Chutamero* in the Sierra

National media published Porres' case as well as a claim by the official National Educational Workers Union (SNTE) demanding abusive soldiers who had assaulted seven teachers over the past three years be punished. In the municipality of Guadalupe y Calvo, teachers went on a work stoppage to protest for the lack of security conditions. [115] In response to the SNTE's pressure, Márquez was sent to the Military Prison of the Military Camp No. 1 in Mexico City.

In a shocking turn, the SEDENA's high command proposed to the outraged leaders of the SNTE that teachers who worked in the "Condor Sierra" and the drug-producing municipalities in Sinaloa become FTC informants for the sake of society. The SEDENA offered the collaborators a special ID that protected them against troops, as well as support to improve their schools—a common tactic in civic action programs that accompanied counterinsurgency campaigns.[116] The opportunistic way in which the SEDENA compelled teachers to become spies brings into question the notion that assaults on educators were isolated incidents. Those attacks were a major component of the state terror used by the military to subject civil institutions during the de facto state of siege, which also prevented the formation of new social or armed movements.

The FTC also hassled workers of the timber companies Maderera Chihuahua Industrial and La Ponderosa, which had supported the military's counterinsurgency campaigns against the Liga. In 1979, in the municipality of Urique, La Ponderosa's workers complained that the

---

Tarahumara is a synonym of marijuana (*chuta*) grower. I believe the correct spelling of the nickname could be chuta instead of chuma.

[115] "Se recupera el maestro torturado por militares," *El sol de México*, May 5, 1983, 3.

[116] "El Comandante de la Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor I-83 expide tarjetas de identificación a los profesores que habitan en la jurisdicción bajo su mando," August 11, 1983, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1299-1980, 99-111. It is worth mentioning that the SNTE was a clientelist organization loyal to the PRI, unrelated to the left-wing union of teachers called National Coordinator of Educational Workers (CNTE).

unauthorized use of the company's dump trucks to transport military personnel interfered with their productivity.[117] In Morelos, soldiers entered houses without warrants, carrying out arbitrary detentions, and torturing innocent workers. The administrators of Chihuahua Industrial claimed that the company had always supported military personnel in the region by providing lodging, vehicles, gas, and even blankets, thereby they were entitled to demand punishment for soldiers who misbehaved.

The FTC-IV denied the abuses against civilians, accused local authorities of being servants of the timber companies, and asserted that Chihuahua Industrial reacted against the military investigations because of its several offenses, such as clandestine airstrips, illegal logging, illegal sale of alcohol, and drug trafficking. [118] Certainly, both municipal authorities and the Chihuahua Judicial Police (PJC) supported the timber companies in many ways, for instance, by repressing peasant activists who fought to protect the woods. However, given that the timber companies, their allies, and the military broke the law altogether, the plea by these actors to preserve the legal order only masked their contest to define who would be the actual sovereign in the highlands.

The FTC assaulted impoverished Rarámuri and Tepehuan communities for their alleged participation in the drug production. Rarámuri ejidos sent letters to the SEDENA and the PGR to explain how military abuses prevent them from working and holding ejido meetings.[119] Media

---

[117] "Asunto Relacionado con la queja presentada por el C. Manuel Vega Aguilera," December 21, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1298-1979, 162-163.

[118] Chihuahua Industrial specifically complained about the case of its manager, Gonzalo Ceballos Quiñonez, who was illegaly arrested. The military claimed that Ceballos was a drug trafficker and received protection by the PJC. However, the FTC recognized that it lacked grounds to prove Ceballo's accountability because locals refused to testify against him. "Para informar a la superioridad," November 6, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1298-1979, 119-121.

[119] "Se informa sobre investigación realizada en la población de Guachamoachi, Mpio. Balleza, Chih." October 20, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1298-1979, 128-129; "Ejido de Pino Gordo,

outlets reported on the climate of terror that prevailed in the highlands of Chihuahua, where gangs of drug traffickers allied to traditional caciques and municipal authorities bribed the forces in charge of the fight against drugs. Newspapers suggested that corruption had provoked the indiscriminate assaults on indigenous communities instead of the investigation of the actual criminals, neglecting that state violence was a de facto policy.

While in the early seventies some indigenous communities were forced to collaborate with either the guerrillas or the military, at the end of the decade they were caught between drug traffickers and authorities who demanded their cooperation to track down criminals. For instance, on 8 June 1979, an armed command abducted and disappeared Valente Quintero, a peasant who served as guide for the military, helped them locate poppy crops, and denounced the misdeeds of the cacique Eleuterio Córdova Espino from Guadalupe Coronado, Urique.[120]

Indigenous peasants made efforts to show the authorities who were the real lawbreakers. On 26 July 1985, the League of Peasant Communities of Chihuahua (LCA) wrote a complaint to the 5th Military Zone of Chihuahua concerning abuses against the Coloradas de la Virgen ejido, in the municipality of Guadalupe y Calvo. The LCA explained that Candino Fontes and Ever Fontes grew marijuana in the Bordo de los Pinos and Mesa de la Ciénega, Guadalupe y Calvo, and were the heads of the major cattle rustling band in the region. Cattle rustling was widespread because it served to support marijuana growers from the planting to the harvest season. Nonetheless, the Fontes enjoyed protection under their relative Rogelio Fontes, the commander

---

Mpio. De Guadalupe y Calvo, Chih.," November 28, 1979, AGN, SEDENA, Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor: quejas, Box 15, File 1298-1979, 159.

[120] Jaime Pérez Mendoza, "Los indígenas, víctimas de narcotraficantes y cómplices," *El Heraldo de Chihuahua,* June 17, 1979: 1, 5.

of the Municipal Police of Morelos. Two policemen from that corporation involved with the Fontes band were known to be serial rapists of Rarámuri women.[121]

Although there were indigenous communities unrelated to the drug industry, many of them were key in the production chain. The Chihuahua's branch of the National Indigenist Institute addressed the problem of Rarámuri and Tepehuan drug growers from Guadalupe y Calvo, the municipality with the largest rate of imprisoned Indians. In a research project from 1985, the INI claimed that hired peons were the worst paid in the drug production line and were the ones who faced more risks to go to jail. Nevertheless, by growing poppy for a short period, Indians earned more than they could make in three years of cultivating basic crops. The drug industry provided the only steady income for them in the highlands.[122]

However, the FTC did not have any social consideration when incarcerating Indians at a disproportionate rate compared to *mestizos*. According to the INI, the chances of Indians obtaining legal defense were inexistent, given language and cultural barriers. During the first stage of the judicial process, Indians were sent to the IRSS despite their lack of familiarity with Culiacán, a predominantly *mestizo* city. In case they were brought to a local judge in Sinaloa, they could later be sent to Chihuahua to be tried in court, but it was a delayed process with devastating economic losses for their families.

---

[121] The LCA also mentioned Inario (sic) Ramírez Carrillo from Baborigame as one of the chief drug traffickers of the region. It is possible that the Fontes were related to the commander of the PJC, Alejandro Fontes Lugo, whose brother Artemio was a renowned drug trafficker. [Carta de la Liga de Comunidades Agrarias y Sindicatos Campesinos del Estado de Chihuahua al Gral. Adolfo Hernández Razo, Comandante de la Quinta Zona Militar," July 26, 1985, Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla", Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, 4-5.

[122] "Institutio Nacional Indigenista, Coordinadora Estatal Chihuahua," Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla", Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, 1-10. The research project was anonymous. Their authors reproduced long-standing stereotypes against indigenous as people who wasted money instead of had it invested it in productive activities, and who had higher levels of social disintegration, alcoholism, and violence than *mestizos*. It does not come as a surprise that the INI lacked a policy to effectively protect indigenous communities from military abuses.

The protracted terror policy caused a massive exodus from Badiraguato, Guadalupe y Calvo, and Tamazula to Culiacán and the United States. In fact, as a result of Operation Condor, Los Angeles has the largest community of *Badiraguatenses* outside Sinaloa.[123] Oscar Loza Ochoa, one of the oldest human rights activists in Sinaloa, estimates that during the Operation Condor years up to 2,000 hamlets were abandoned in the Golden Triangle.[124] Former-guerrilla José Luis López Duarte claims that the depopulated hamlets amounted to 8,000.[125] By taking the case of Badiraguato as a reference, Loza's estimation might be more accurate. The Sierra Madre Occidental had a low population density before Condor, with hamlets or *rancherías* from 20 to 100 inhabitants. The 1970 census showed that Badiraguato had 29,252 inhabitants dispersed in 325 localities. In the 1980 census, this figure was reduced to 23,742 inhabitants.[126] Considering the relative balance between births and deaths, in ten years Badiraguato had a roughly population loss of 5,500 inhabitants.

Regardless of these estimations, the demographic statistics of the Golden Triangle municipalities did contradict the exponential demographic growth in the rest of the country during the 1970s.[127] The available sources do not suggest that there was a deliberate plan to depopulate the Golden Triangle, yet they show that the government was totally careless about the

---

[123] The history of the Condor diaspora has never been investigated, but I thank Adèle Blazquez for providing me information about the *Badiraguatense* community in California.

[124] Oscar Loza Ochoa, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 2, 2017.

[125] José Luis López Duarte, interview with the author, Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017. In 1985, López Duarte wrote a report about Sinaloa's political affairs where he included a chapter on Operation Condor based on official information, although he did not keep a copy of the manuscript.

[126] Censos y conteos del Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía: http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/proyectos/ccpv/cpvsh/default.html, accessed March 13, 2018.

[127] From 1970 to 1980 Guadalupe y Calvo, Chihuahua went from 29, 053 to 30, 231 inhabitants, while Tamazula, Durango, went from 18, 315 to 20, 647. For other municipalities in Sinaloa, see Juan Antonio Fernández, *El narcotráfico en los Altos de Sinaloa*, 31-32.

forced displacement of thousands of rural residents. Notwithstanding that the gross human rights abuses of the war on drugs were similar if not worse than the dirty war, there was never a truth commission to investigate the social costs of Operation Condor nor the number of civilians who were victims of atrocious crimes.

The Spectre of an Ecocide

During the initial year of Operation Condor, U.S. researchers expressed concern over the paraquat contamination of up to a quarter of the Mexican marijuana that entered the United States and the health damage it caused.[128] Conspiracy theorists then accused the U.S. government of deliberately poisoning marijuana plants to discourage its consumption. In Mexico, researchers warned that the herbicide could contaminate food crops as well as poison water. Journalists observed the paradox of the government's damage to health in the name of public health.[129]

Given the secrecy of the aerial defoliation program, the exact concentration of paraquat and other herbicides sprayed on crops was unknown, unleashing speculations about permanent soil damage. However, in an interview with the author, the authorities at the Badiraguato council claimed that they had never heard that land became useless as a result of aerial defoliation in their municipality, thereby they never entertained the possibility of suing the Mexican state for

---

[128] Jeffrey Smith, "Spraying Herbicides on Mexican Marijuana Backfires on U.S.," *New Series* 199, no. 4331 (February 24, 1978), 861-864; Jeffrey Smith, "Poisoned Pot Becomes Burning Issue in High Places", *Science* 200, no. 4340 (April 28, 1978), 417-418; "Paraquat Contamination of Marijuana", *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 28, no. 8 (March 2, 1979), 93-94; L. Garmon, "Pot-Smokers May Be Imperiled by Paraquat-Spraying Program, *Science News* 124, no. 4 (July 23, 1983), 55.

[129] Ortiz, *La Operación Condor*, 48

ecological damage.[130] Their unawareness of the problem suggests that no one has ever investigated the environmental consequences of Operation Condor.[131]

An anonymous PGR-PJF informer interviewed by journalist Anabel Hernández asserted that when drug growers paid informal "taxes" to security forces, they were allowed to put colored flags in their crops, depending on the arrangement. Thus, when helicopters flew over the fields, instead of fumigating they sprayed them with water.[132] The evidence regarding the massive extortion of peasants backs the claim that drug growers that met the authorities' demands had their crops untouched. However, there were also dozens of drug growers who had their crops defoliated. News reports made constant references to peasants who attempted to defend their crops by shooting up at the Bell-206 and -212 helicopters.

According to Heath, 1977 was the most effective year for the eradication campaign.[133] Despite this alleged success, the Mexican government called off the participation of the DEA in 1978 purportedly to reduce social upheaval, even though the state of siege curbed the possibility of a backlash.[134] Pyes suggested that the State Department squeezed the DEA out of its supervision's role because it was alarmed that DEA's investigations of high Mexican officials

---

[130] Discussion of the author with the authorities of the Badiraguato City Hall, Badiraguato, Sinaloa, May 10, 2017.

[131] The only research I have found so far is related to the adverse effects of pesticides in the Culiacán valley, including paraquat. Angus Wright, "Rethinking the Circle of Poison: The Politics of Pesticide Poisoning among Mexican Farm Workers," *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 4, (Autumn, 1986): 26-59.

[132] It is even possible that the Mexican government had accepted the DEA's defoliation program as a mechanism to increase the extortion to drug lords. Anabel Hernández, *Los señores del narco* (Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2010), 120.

[133] Heath, *Mexico Opium,* 41

[134] "Drug Enforcement Administration, 1975-1980", https://www.dea.gov/about/history/1975-1980.pdf, accessed November 10, 2017. For a quantitative analysis of the results of Trizo see James Michael Van Wert, "Government of Mexico Herbicidal Opium Poppy Eradication Program: A Summative Evaluation" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1982).

would jeopardize the cooperation of the Mexican government.[135] Finally, the military pressure might have also contributed to put the DEA aside the aerial defoliation program.

After the DEA quit, the amount of opium poppy hectares destroyed fell to 1,819 from 9,311 hectares in 1977, which represented 80.4% less.[136] Heath observed that the fall was also due to the fact that drug traffickers switched from heroin to cocaine but did not bring into question the success of the aerial defoliation program. On the contrary, he asserted that a private firm from the United States operating under a U.S.-Mexican contract monitored the effectiveness of the program. The company Aviation Associates International (AAI), which had also worked in Southeast Asia, was in charge of the surveillance flights since April 1978. Nevertheless, if Mexican pilots knew what crops they should spray with water, the Mexican government could easily circumvent the certification. It seems that the entrenched corruption of Mexican authorities prevented the Golden Triangle from experiencing an ecocide similar to that in Vietnam.

According to the DEA's official version, the defoliation program was a major success because by 1979 it had lessened the demand for Mexican heroin in the U.S.[137] There was a dramatic drop in heroin's purity as well as a decrease in U.S. heroin-related deaths, which went from 1,455 in 1974 to 471 in 1978. The Mexican government also promoted its program as the most successful eradication effort in the world.[138] However, Heath acknowledged that major drug lords responded to the scarcity of opium by switching to cocaine. As early as 1977, up to

---

[135] Pyes, "Legal murders": 11.

[136] In 1980 less than 900 opium poppy hectares were destroyed. Heath, *Mexico Opium,* 37, 67.

[137] I entertain that DEA officials stuck to a narrative of success to justify their expenses even though they internally acknowledged the program's shortcomings. Marshall, "CIA assets," 90.

[138] Heath, *Mexican Opium*, 76.

30% of Peru's annual production of thirty-two tons of pure cocaine were smuggled into the United States through Mexico.[139]

Surprisingly, in 1983 the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control praised the Mexican government for its success in building "the world's finest aerial crop-eradication program. Its size, professionalism, competence, performance, and experience make it the world leader in this technique."[140] Marshall sustains that such assessments represented one of the greatest coverups in the history of U.S. drug enforcement, given that the U.S. officials knew that Operation Condor was a sham but hid this fact from the public opinion, allegedly for a combination of diplomatic and propagandistic reasons.

During the last years of the López Portillo administration, the DEA was confined to the U.S. Embassy and the aerial eradication program was transferred to the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM), which set a Narcotics Assistance Unit (NAU) in Mexico. In 1985, a congressional staff study mission presented the report "U.S. narcotics control programs overseas: an assessment (August 1984-January 1985)" to the House of Representatives. The report admitted that the NAU narcotics control program was in a shambles, notwithstanding that it had invested $115 million to maintain seventy six planes and six airbases throughout Mexico.[141]

The report claimed that the Mexican government corruption was the "single biggest obstacle to effective anti-narcotics efforts;" every agency has been accused of corruption,

---

[139] Heath, *Mexican Opium*, 36

[140] Cited by Marshall, "CIA assets," 89.

[141] "U.S. narcotics control programs overseas: an assessment (August, 1984-January 1985)," Report of a staff study mission to Southeast Asia, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, February 22, 1985, 37-40, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000013383244;view=1up;seq=7, accessed March 14, 2018.

especially the DFS, and drug traffickers had exploited government's corruption and inefficiency to their advantage. Mexican official statistics on production and eradication were probably inflated and unreliable. The same "plots of land were being eradicated over and over again;" and even though more plants were destroyed, even more were produced. Furthermore, "Mexican heroin purity is going up, while the price is going down." The report also observed that Mexico was increasingly a point of transshipment for cocaine and marijuana from Central America and Colombia.[142] The fact that the DEA presence in Mexico was the largest in the world, with over thirty agents in six offices throughout the country had yielded poor results.

Finally, the report acknowledged that thirty-three narcotics families had organized themselves to control most of the drug growing areas in Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Sonora, Durango, and Jalisco; they had taken over the city of Guadalajara and had managed to convert non-traditional areas into alternative growing areas as necessary. As we shall see in the next chapter, this report had little impact because the Contra war in Central America changed the geopolitics of the Americas and drug traffickers became a geostrategic actor as never before.

The Outcomes of Operation Condor

The SEDENA's final figures on Operation Condor from 1977 to 1987 indicate that 224,252 illegal crops were destroyed and that 2,019 presumed criminals were indicted. In addition, 27 civilians and 19 soldiers died.[143] The PGR also reported the loss of thirty four

---

[142] "U.S. narcotics control programs overseas," 34-35.

[143] "Resultados de la Fuerza de Tarea Cóndor": http://www.sedena.gob.mx/leytrans/petic/2005/may/20052005a4.html, accessed May 20, 2017.

agents, pilots, and mechanics from 1977 to 1979.[144] But Mexico's official figures are clearly incorrect. Intelligence reports show that the death toll was much higher, and Heath mentioned two DEA agents and fifty-eight Mexican officials who died in the course of the eradication program until 1980.[145] Furthermore, the DEA sustained that four thousand members of illegal drug organizations had been arrested by 1979.[146]

The Amnesty Law enacted in September 1978 as a sign of reconciliation and political openness was intended for political prisoners but also benefited hundreds of drug growers—all together amounting to 1,539 amnestied persons. It was an odd move, one that reaffirmed the military assertion that subversives and *narcos* could be conflated in the same category as internal enemy. In its report of activities concerning the López Portillo administration, the PGR stated that from 1976 to 1980 it had promoted the withdrawal from prosecution in more than two thousand drug-related cases.[147] The PGR did not mention the hundreds of U.S. citizens detained for drug-related crimes or the number of U.S. inmates extradited back home.[148]

---

[144] "Periodo del presidente José López Portillo", PGR, http://pgr.gob.mx/que-es-la-pgr/Documents/XIV.pdf, accessed March 15, 2018.

[145] Heath, *Mexican Opium,* III. Heath omitted the names of the DEA agents Ralph N. Shaw and James T. Lunn, both killed in a plane crash in the northwestern highlands on May 14, 1976.

[146] "Drug Enforcement Administration History, 1975-1980," https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/1975-1980%20p%2039-49.pdf, accessed November 10, 2017. The constant detention and release of prisoners turn difficult to have a record of all drug-related cases, but the figures regarding the prosecution of 2,019 cases fall short considering the ten years of Condor activity.

[147] "Periodo del presidente José López Portillo", http://pgr.gob.mx/que-es-la-pgr/Documents/XIV.pdf, accessed March 15, 2018. It is possible that more than two thousand detainees were released. As early as March 1978, the PGR had released 325 peasants through withdrawal from prosecution. "El Lic. Carlos Aguilar Garza, Coordinador de la campaña contra el narcoráfico, informó que 325 campesinos alcanzarán el desistimiento de la acción penal," March 29, 1978, AGN, DGIPS, Caja 1711-C, File 14, 45

[148] On late 1977, twenty-seven U.S. inmates in Sinaloa's prisons were sent to the United States. Craig claims that by mid-1977 there were around 600 U.S. inmates in Mexican prisons, 85% of them for drug-related charges. The Mexican authorities gave them the same ill-treatment than to local detainees. "Estado de Sinaloa," December 16, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Box 1711-C, File 13, 203-204; Craig, "La Campaña Permanente," 125.

In any case, official figures are far from grasping the political significance of Operation Condor. It not only reinforced the PRI's hegemony in the public space but also in the "covert netherworld," the clandestine realm intersecting with and influencing the visible surface of society in ways that elude existing models of politics or political economy.[149] Operation Condor is a blatant example of how state actors and crime syndicates either formed alliances or competed over the control of the drug market. This chapter barely addressed the role that the DFS played in Operation Condor, but that agency is key to understand the final arrangements between drug lords and the Mexican government.

Condor consolidated the intermingling of federal security forces, the political elite, and the organized crime. A considerable number of officers who participated in both the dirty war and the war on drugs became involved in drug-trafficking or controlled other illegal business.[150] State agents directly related to Operation Condor used the campaign's resources to increase their power and expand their criminal networks. PJF commander Jaime Alcalá sold protection to drug traffickers in Jalisco until 1979, when Manuel Salcido, *El Cochiloco* killed him in Guadalajara in revenge for his participation in the Avilés' execution.[151] According to DEA reports, he left a estate of ten million pesos, even though he had no money when he joined the PJF.[152] Authorities detained former PGR coordinator Carlos Aguilar Garza for drug-related activities, first in

[149] McCoy, "Covert Netherworld," 228.

[150] I have consulted FOIA documents of both the FBI and the CIA at the National Security Archive (NSA) related to the cases of Miguel Nazar Haro, Javier García Paniagua, Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, Francisco Quirós Hermosillo, Manlio Fabio Beltrones, and other Mexican officers and officials involved in the drug industry and illegal business. I analyze some of those cases in chapter five.

[151] Reyna & Fresnedo, *El Extraditado*, kindle edition.

[152] Cited by Pyes, "Legal Murders": 12.

Tamaulipas in 1984 and later in Texas in 1989; he was killed in 1993 in a score-settling.[153] The DEA pointed to Antonio Toledo Corro, governor of Sinaloa from 1980 to 1986, as a collaborator of Manuel Salcido and other drug lords.[154]

The evidence suggests that the participation of state agents in the counterinsurgency wars along the 1970s functioned as a filter to become a member of an elite with dual privileges. As I will explore in depth in chapter five, the government gave those state agents medals and awards in public and paid them off with the opportunity to partake in illegal activities in the "covert netherworld." Both public and secret rewards were due to their contributions to consolidating the PRI's hegemony, limiting local powers, decentralizing the drug industry from the Golden Triangle, and reinforcing a federal overseeing of drug trafficking networks.

Condor favored the removal of the less successful drug clans and the control of the drug market by fewer hands. This allowed for the growth of a new generation of drug lords who formed centralized crime syndicates. In the Golden Triangle, where the majority of state institutions continued to be absent, during the early 1980s emerged a type of hybrid control or shared sovereignty between the new crime syndicates and the military, the only federal institution that has never left the region since the beginning of the war on drugs.

The most popular interpretation about the outcomes of Operation Condor sustains that the partial destruction of the Golden Triangle provoked the increase of drug production in other Mexican states and caused a "cockroach effect," whereby criminals spread and then regroup in other regions. Major drug traffickers moved to Guadalajara because of their close relationship

---

[153] Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas*, 119.

[154] Hernández, *Los señores del narco*, 230.

with the DFS chiefs Javier García Paniagua (1977-1978) and Miguel Nazar Haro (1978-1982).[155] The history of the formation of the Guadalajara cartel is well-known, but it has overshadowed how the cartel rebuilt its networks in the northwest and coexisted with the military while Operation Condor continued.

In a paradoxical way, the removal of the Sinaloan drug lords from their base and their transplant to Jalisco signaled the triumph of the federal government over local powers. As Peter Watt and Roberto Zepeda showed, the PRI accomplished the subjection of drug lords to its clientelist regime.[156] Operation Condor was not a façade to please the U.S. government as many speculated, instead it was a counterinsurgency war whose ultimate payoff was the consolidation of a narco-clientelist regime.

Pyes' investigation found out that U.S. authorities acknowledged that Mexican federal narcotics agents used access to comprehensive intelligence data, including what U.S. law enforcement supplied, to run a sophisticated protection racket based on 'selective enforcement,' arresting only traffickers who would not pay the extortion.[157] Other reports by the CIA, the DEA, and the FBI demonstrate the U.S. awareness about the complicity of the Mexican government with drug traffickers, but there are no leads to suggest that the U.S. government aimed at punishing the Mexican government for its bogus drug policy.[158]

The U.S. government assisted Mexico with training, technical assistance, and the sale of military equipment, but those resources proved insufficient to fight guerrillas and drug traffickers

---

[155] Valdés, *Historia del narcotráfico*, 175-176.

[156] Watt & Zepeda, *Drug War Mexico*, 58.

[157] Pyes, "Legal murders": 11-15.

[158] Pérez R., *Las agencias antinarcóticos*, 442.

simultaneously. It seems that Mexican security forces resorted to illegal proceeds to finance their counterinsurgency campaigns. Anabel Hernández's informer claimed that both the PJF and the DFS used the "drug tax" to purchase safety houses, weapons, and equipment, as well as to fund their spy networks.[159] In the global context, the Mexicans were mere apprentices of the CIA, which funded its global proxy wars against Communism through the drug trade, as McCoy and other authors have demonstrated.[160]

Pyes, who was reporting in the frontline of Operation Condor, proved that this campaign of systematic torture and extortion of Mexican citizens to enrich Mexico's federal authorities had "occurred while American agents stood by without protest, even though the program is subsidized by American funds and violates legislative constraints on foreign appropriations, international law, and Mexican constitutional law."[161] Given that the elimination of communism in the Americas was a U.S. top priority, the U.S. government indulged the corruption of its Mexican counterpart, as long as it succeeded in containing the Communist threat.

Conclusions

The anti-drug operations of the late 1970s in Mexico were based on the use of cutting-edge technology for the aerial defoliation programs and the application of a counterinsurgency framework to overpower traditional drug clans. Operation Condor served an array of purposes that were beneficial for both the U.S. and the Mexican governments. On the U.S. side, it fostered

---

[159] Hernández, *Los señores del narco*, 119.

[160] Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin. CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade. Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Colombia* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003). Also see Peter Dale Scott, "Drugs, Anti-Communism, and Extra-Legal Repression in Mexico" in *Government of the shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty,* Eric Wilson, ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 173-194.

[161] Pyes, "Legal Murders": 11.

the perception that the U.S. government had obliged Mexicans to take stronger action against the illegal drug trade by welcoming the DEA leadership and the full-fledged militarization of the drug producing zones. In Mexico, Condor served to crack down on social and revolutionary movements, and to establish a state of siege in the countryside to prevent the emergence of independent actors, either political or criminal. The Mexican government used the Golden Triangle as a showcase of the alleged success of the joint drug eradication campaign, concealing the destruction of thousands of peasant communities.

Guerrillas, activists, *gomeros,* and *marihuaneros* were the internal enemy that justified the seeming submission of the Mexican government to the United States and the involvement of the PRI in the drug trade for the sake of national security and sovereignty. The Mexican case also stands out in the Latin American context given that the "internal enemy" proved to be an expansive concept, not reduced to the Cold War's ideological framework based on the opposition between capitalism and socialism. While in the Southern Cone the transnational Operation Condor targeted left-wing groups, the Mexican Condor took aim at any threat to the PRI's political legitimation or its access to illicit economic resources.

The intertwined fight against drug traffickers and political opponents was one of the legacies of the Condor years, one that reactivated during the 2006 Mexican war on drugs. The Golden Triangle's peasants have never received official recognition as victims of state terror, but the seeds of violence sowed by Condor guaranteed that a youth generation from the ravaged communities became drug traffickers and hitmen willing to exert extreme violence to preserve their criminal sovereignty. They would define not only the criminal but also the political history of Mexico's twenty-first century.

Chapter Five: Counterinsurgency as the Foundation of the Deep State and the Payoff System

From 1975 through 1979, the Mexican government used Air Force aircraft to toss more than one thousand five hundred clandestine prisoners (guerrillas, social activists, drug dealers, and civilians from all over the country) into the Pacific Ocean.[1] After spending long periods in Military Camp No. 1 in Mexico City—the largest clandestine prison and torture center—groups of detainees were taken to Military Air Base No. 7 in Pie de la Cuesta, Acapulco. To prevent any escape attempt, the officers told male prisoners that they would be soon released and solicited sex from female prisoners in exchange for their freedom. Prisoners were photographed individually, shot in the head, put inside sacks filled with stones and loaded onto an Arava aircraft. Pilots then flew a couple of hours off the Oaxaca coast before they dumped their human cargo into the ocean.[2]

There were a handful of officers in charge of the "death flights," among them: Brigadier General Francisco Quirós Hermosillo, Infantry Major Mario A. Acosta Chaparro-Escapite, Captain Francisco J. Barquín Alonso, and officers Alfredo Mendiola, Alberto Aguirre Quintanar, Humberto Rodríguez Acosta, and Gustavo Tarín Chávez.[3] It appears that the Mexican

---

[1] Gustavo Castillo García, "Acosta y Quirós ordenaron asesinar a más de 1500, dice testigo protegido," *La Jornada*, November 18, 2002: https://www.jornada.com.mx/2002/11/18/012n1pol.php?printver=0, accessed October 10, 2018.

[2] José Sotelo Marbán, ed., *La verdad negada. Informe histórico sobre la Guerra Sucia del Estado mexicano entre los años '60 a los '80* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de los Movimientos Sociales A.C., 2012), 352-353; Comisión de la Verdad del Estado de Guerrero, "Informe final de actividades," October 15, 2014, 37-43, http://www.cedema.org/uploads/Comverdad_1.pdf, accessed October 15, 2018.

[3] Abel Barajas, "Recibían sobresueldos ejecutores de guerrilleros," *Reforma*, October 28, 2002, 6A. In 2002, military pilots Apolinar Ceballos Espinoza and Margarito Monroy Candia revealed in a military court that they had received orders to conduct those flights. The existence of "death flights" was not denied by Mexican authorities, but it was not investigated either.

government suspended its clandestine program of "death flights" in November 1979, when the high command discovered that an Arava aircraft had taken off from Pie de la Cuesta loaded with marijuana en route to Laredo, Texas and returned with weapons.[4] As it turns out, the same high-ranking officers who disappeared clandestine prisoners had teamed up with local drug lords to benefit from the illegal drug trade.[5] There is perhaps no other episode in Mexico's Cold War years that so powerfully exposes the intertwined nature of the dirty war and the first war on drugs.

In this chapter, I argue that the counterinsurgency doctrine provided a justification for both civil and military agents to participate in anti-guerrilla and anti-narcotics operations as well as benefit from illegal activities. I use the concept of deep state to refer to this illegal violent rule of state agents allied to drug lords. The customary perception about *priísta* corruption that began during the Cold War period presupposes that state agents were driven by greed and hunger for power but overlooks the fact that they were trained to carry out the mission of saving the country from communism. Counterinsurgency indoctrination inhibited legal and moral constraints in order to achieve an alleged superior good, which was a communist-free homeland.

The official PRI's ideology claimed that the party was not rightist or leftist, but it had developed its own brand: revolutionary nationalism. The notion that the PRI was at the center of

---

[4] In 2002, Gustavo Tarín stated in a court against the so-called "narco-officers" that during the 1970s Quirós had led an operation for smuggling marijuana into the United States from the Military Air Base No. 7 and pointed to Barquín Alonso as the officer who made several flights with bales of marijuana, bringing weapons back to drug traffickers. Tarín also claimed that the Secretary of Defense, Félix Galván López, knew about Quirós' misdeeds but protected him given his counterinsurgency activities. Tarín did not mention anything related to the U.S. accomplices of "narco-officers". Jesús Aranda, "Sabía el alto mando de los ilícitos de Quirós", *La Jornada,* August 12, 2002, http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/08/12/012n1pol.php?origen=index.html

[5] For the overlapping of dirty war and drug war in Guerrero see Alexander Aviña, "A War Against Poor People," in *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies,* Jaime Pensado and Enrique Ochoa eds. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018), 134-152.

the political spectrum has proven very influential in the historiography. However, it has played down the counterinsurgency mindset that informed both the national security apparatus and law enforcement, aligning these actors with global right-wing anticommunist forces. The first part of this chapter examines why the concept of national security gradually became synonymous with anti-communism even though the ruling party was also opposed to domestic right-wing currents. Anti-communism never reached the status of an official state ideology, but it was pervasive within *priísta* administrations who cracked down on social movements as if they were incarnations of the red threat.

The logical sequel of anti-communism was the counterinsurgency doctrine embraced by the ruling party in the 1960s. When counterinsurgency overlapped with revolutionary nationalism, the latter remained in the public sphere as an umbrella that encompassed any repressive measure taken in the name of the *raison d'état*. No authority ever employed the word "counterinsurgency" in an official discourse, and the victims of state terror did not have it in their lexicon either, but they certainly knew about the "principle of authority."

While the Mexican government subscribed to progressive policies at home and abroad, its security forces became allies of foreign actors like the CIA and anti-Castro Cuban exiles because of their common understanding about anti-communism. This chapter addresses episodes where the agenda of the deep state contradicted official policies, especially the foreign policy of non-interventionism and respect to the self-determination of all nations represented by the Estrada Doctrine, which the Mexican government took so much pride in flaunting.[6] This

[6] Genaro Estrada, *La doctrina Estrada* (Mexico City: Instituto Americano de Derecho y Legislación Comparada, 1930).

argument does not imply that the deep state truly reflects the essence of the Mexican state. The chapter does contend that the Mexican state was multilayered, and their components performed conflicting functions. But how contradictory were those functions?

During the Cold War, left-wing forces usually portrayed the Mexican government as a puppet of U.S. imperialism for mimicking its anti-communist policies. Those who disagreed with that vision, foregrounded Mexico's refugee policy to welcome exiles regardless of their political affiliation; the fact that Mexico was the only country in the Americas that refused to break diplomatic relations with Cuba after the island was suspended from the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1962; Mexico's engagement with the Non-Aligned Movement during the 1960s and 1970s; and Mexico's diplomatic relations with Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

This chapter reveals that the Mexican government neither was a U.S. servant nor a genuine adherent of the Estrada Doctrine. Mexican presidents from López Mateos to De la Madrid enacted public and secret policies that were seemingly contradictory, but in fact were mutually reinforcing from an anticommunist perspective. The Mexican government was more anti-communist than believed, and the counterinsurgency framework connected the realms of both the state and the deep state. The state party did not make a replica of U.S. anti-communism and counterinsurgency but developed its own strains by blending local political traditions with global influences. In this way, Mexico was able to preserve a margin of independence from its northern neighbor.

The previous chapter showed how Operation Condor helped to forge a synergy between counterinsurgency, anti-drug efforts, and organized crime, which led to the formation of the deep state. This chapter tackles the consolidation of the deep state in Jalisco, the new hub of the drug

economy during the early 1980s. Both security forces and Sinaloan kingpins reorganized the drug industry to form what the DEA called the Guadalajara cartel, which proved to be the most successful criminal enterprise in modern Mexican history, and also the first of its kind with a transnational projection. As Peter Dale Scott noticed, there was a triarchic situation in which the DFS protected drug lords and the CIA backed the DFS.[7] While these facts are well known, scholars have neglected the role of counterinsurgency in the formation of such a network of state agents and criminals.

I sustain that the skyrocketing demand for illegal drugs in the United States since the 1960s lured a large number of members of both police agencies and the military into the drug trade, but the Mexican government allowed state agents to participate in it only if they contributed to the preservation of the PRI's hegemony by eliminating political threats. Operation Condor not only wiped out weak drug clans to consolidate the drug trade into fewer hands. It also facilitated that federal agencies like the DFS, the Federal Judicial Police (PJF), and sections of the military involved in counterinsurgency monopolized understandings with drug lords about turf, smuggling routes, protection rackets, and bribes to local, state, and federal authorities.

I also argue that the Mexican government created a payoff system for officers with remarkable counterinsurgency merits, granting them with public and confidential rewards. Thus, from the 1970s onward, several state agents were simultaneously involved in repressive actions and the drug trade. Given that the political regime was a de facto one-party state, the payoff system solved state agents' contradiction between their loyalty to the state and collaboration with drug lords. Official rhetoric framed narcotics as a social danger and drug growers and traffickers as an internal enemy, but the PRI actually failed to perceive drug trafficking as a national

---

[7] Scott, "Drugs, Anti-Communism," 173.

security threat; on the contrary, the party secretly encouraged officers to take advantage of illegal networks as a payoff and also as a way to consolidate its clientelist regime over kingpins.

Finally, the evidence shows that the U.S. government was aware of the Mexican state-mafia nexus, but let it thrive for the sake of the continental fight against communism. This chapter explores one of the most consequential episodes of the participation of the Mexican deep state in the transnational arena, when the DFS and its creation, the Guadalajara cartel, seconded the CIA's initiative to fund the Nicaraguan *contra* with drug proceeds. The highlights of this passage were the murders of Mexican journalist Manuel Buendía (1984) and undercover DEA agent based in Guadalajara, Enrique "Kiki" Camerana (1985), while they were investigating such connections. As we shall see, evidence strongly supports the idea that the CIA and the DFS planned both executions to prevent Buendía and Camarena from publicizing their findings.

The DEA and U.S. media outlets exposed the deep-rooted corruption of the Mexican government in the wake of Camarena's murder in early 1985. Despite public outrage and the prosecution of alleged murders in both Mexican and U.S. courts, it has yet to be clarified who were the masterminds behind the hit against the DEA agent. At the deep state level, the U.S. government acknowledged the cooperation of Mexican security forces in the anti-communist cause, but in the public sphere the White House disagreed with Mexico's official non-interventionist policy. Therefore, the U.S. government used Camarena's case to deepen its meddling into Mexico's affairs. This episode exposed some of the consequences of the lack of separation between the PRI and the state, for the decisions by the group in charge of national security compromised the sovereignty of the whole state.

The Camarena affair also demonstrated that when drug-trafficking tainted the Mexican government's international image, the ruling party willingly eliminated drug lords, regardless of

the status of their power and wealth. Contrary to journalists and scholars who claim that the power of drug cartels has surpassed the state since the 1980s, creating a narco-state or narco-system, the analysis of this episode demonstrates that the PRI did not lose its clientelist control over drug-traffickers.[8] On the contrary, the PRI established a pattern of drawing on drug lords and later disposing them. After all, the PRI understood counterinsurgency as a crusade that justified any enterprise, from crushing communist subversion to waging a bogus war on drugs to remain indefinitely in power.

The Military Mindset Across the Dirty War and the War on Drugs

This section explores the relationship between the military and the civilian power to elucidate why the former—which had liberal, revolutionary and popular origins—played a leading role in the counterinsurgency wars and became a cornerstone of the deep state.[9] After a string of rebellions by high-ranking officers in the 1920s, the Mexican government gradually put limits on the military's power by focusing on its professionalization and depoliticization. Also, in 1946, Alemán became the first civilian head of state elected in the post-revolutionary era.

According to Aaron Navarro, from the 1930s through the 1950s the military lost the preeminence it had enjoyed since the 17th century, which represented a genuine overcoming of

[8] "Sayak" Valencia is one of the authors who popularized the concept of narco-state. Margarita Valencia Triana, *Capitalismo gore* (Mexico City: Paidós, 2016). Peter Dale Scott uses the concept of "narcosystem" and argues that by the 1980s this came close to controlling the Mexican government. Scott, "Drugs, Anti-communism," 173.

[9] Tracing the history of the Mexican armed forces before and after the Cold War is beyond the scope of this chapter, but for a detailed analysis of the evolution of the military see Roderic Ai Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: the Military in Modern Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Thomas Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico 1920-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Javier Ibarrola, *El ejército y el poder: impacto e influencia política en el México moderno* (Mexico City: Océano, 2003); Jorge Alberto Lozoya, *El ejército mexicano* (Mexico City: COLMEX, 1965); and Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968).

the caudillo era.[10] Nevertheless, the transition to civilian rule did not create a sharp military/civil separation. The standard narrative of transference of power to civilians overlooks the fact that it did not entirely undermine the power of the armed forces. As Thomas Rath argues, "the rhetoric of civilianism aimed to camouflage the priísta state and the military's continuing autonomy, corruption and repression."[11]

Furthermore, many presidents were familiar with the military sphere. Alemán himself was the son of Miguel Alemán González, a general who was killed during the rebellion of Gral. José Gonzalo Escobar in 1929. President Ruiz Cortines was the last head of state who participated in the 1910 revolution and was active in the military until 1926. Díaz Ordaz did not have a personal connection to the military but gave an unusual amount power to the Presidential Guards (the *Estado Mayor Presidencial*, the group in charge of the president's safety, composed by several battalions). Echeverría's father, Rodolfo Echeverría Esparza, was a paymaster for the military. López Portillo's father, José López Portillo y Weber, graduated from the Heroic Military College.[12]

Alemán, Ruiz Cortines, Díaz Ordaz, and Echeverría had all held the position of Secretary of Interior—the ministry that controlled the national security apparatus along with the Secretariat of National Defense—which implies that they were in charge of top affairs longer than other presidents. Another aspect of the intertwined paths between civilian rule and the military was the militarization of public security. Under the *priísta* era, it was commonplace for high-ranking

---

[10] Navarro, *Political Intelligence*, 79.

[11] Thomas Rath, "Camouflaging the State. The Army and the Limits of Hegemony in PRIísta Mexico, 1940-1960," in *Dictablanda*, Gillingham & Smith, eds., 90. Also see Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*. Both Navarro and Rath describe the resistance to demilitarization at local and regional level.

[12] Gloria Fuentes, *El Ejército Mexicano* (Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1983), 294-299.

officers to be chiefs in the PJF, the State Judicial Police, and other local police agencies. Top officers had seats in the Congress or became governors of their states. Their presence in those spaces was not incidental but an acknowledgment of the actual power of the armed forces.

Beyond the distinction in their functions, civilian rulers and the armed forces did not belong to different spheres; the national security doctrine unified their mindsets and bestowed the military—above law enforcement authorities—with the two-fold mission of saving the homeland from communism and suppressing drug growers, as chapters two and four foregrounded. The classic imagery of the Mexican military during the Cold War portrays soldiers either cracking down protestors or destroying marijuana fields, as if that were their reason for being.

The armed forces were very satisfied with their dual mission because it allowed them to exert and expand their power and influence in society, to a level where they established a permanent de facto state of siege in regions of the countryside like the Golden Triangle and the Guerrero highlands. The permanent mobilization of the military since the late 1950s has provided a justification for the Mexican state to increase the budget for the military industrial-complex.[13] The extra-legal power of the military was not a temporary situation, as the state of exception became the rule.[14] From the civilian turn to present-day, the military have had a critical participation in Mexico's political life as one of the most powerful and feared actors.

---

[13] According to Fuentes' figures, there was a continuous and remarkable increase in the military budget from the 1960s through the 1980s. During the first year of the Echeverría administration there was a military spending of $1,797,790,000 pesos, while in its last year it amounted to $5,876,720,000. The total spending of the *sexenio* was $19,067,666,000. In 1976, Mexico dealt with the worst devaluation of the peso in years. Thus, the first year of the López Portillo administration there was a military spending of $7,948,675,000. It amounted to $32,764,200,000 for its last year, with a six-year total of $101,808,918,000. Fuentes, *El ejército mexicano*, 239.

[14] For the juridical implications of state of exception as the rule see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). In the conclusions I shall deepen the analysis of the state of siege.

The Mexican military did not bear much resemblance to its Latin American counterparts during the Cold War years because high-ranking officers had no reason to usurp power. The civilian rule and the armed forces forged a shared horizon by embracing a secular-liberal ideology, anti-communism, and counterinsurgency. Civilian rulers did not attempt to diminish the power of the military, on the contrary, they enabled the armed forces to become a parallel power with an array of extra-legal prerogatives, like a great deal of autonomy, the lack of accountability and transparency, and the participation in profitable illegal activities. Counterinsurgency fostered military drug-related corruption, but it seems that it was a Mexican phenomenon, as no other military in Latin America had such a close-knit relationship with drug lords, except for Colombia. However, Mexico and Colombia represent two distinct models of the state-mafia nexus. In the Colombian case, crime syndicates coopted the state, while in Mexico state corporatist structures engendered crime networks.[15]

Although the Mexican military used the same counterinsurgency framework as its Latin American peers, their ideological and political drives were contrasting. For instance, the military in countries like Chile and Argentina were informed by Catholic ultra-nationalism, adopted anti-communism as their official ideology, and aimed at taking power to impose their project to the rest of the society.[16] Those armies also justified their intervention in politics as a saving mission from the communist menace, although in Chile this rhetoric was grounded on the fact that the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of the Popular Unity coalition had actually assumed

---

[15] See the comparative analysis by Luis Jorge Garay Salamanca and Eduardo Salcedo Albarrán, *Narcotráfico, corrupción y estados*.

[16] For a comparative vision of armed forces in Latin American countries which had dirty wars or civil wars (except for Mexico) see Brian Loveman & Thomas M. Davies, Jr., *The Politics of Antipolitics. The Military in Latin America* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1997).

power in 1970.[17] Chile then became the worst-case scenario of a communist takeover for the military in the region.

In 1961, the U.S. national security apparatus officially adopted counterinsurgency as a state policy.[18] That same year, in Mexico the López Mateos administration built the most emblematic clandestine detention center at the Military Camp #1 to confine suspected enemies of the state with extensive conditions of security and isolation.[19] The Mexican security apparatus was somehow synchronized with its U.S. counterpart, even though Mexico was very far away from having the same financial, technical, and human resources.

Among the first detainees sent to the secret prison were the *Federacionistas Leales* (Loyal Federationists), whose leader, Gral. Celestino Gasca, had planned an uprising in September 1961. Also, followers of Major Jesús Barragán Leñero, who attempted at organizing the right-wing to stage a coup in 1962, were arrested and sent to that prison.[20] At some point in the late 1960s, the military began to retain prisoners who would never be released or brought to a judge, persons referred to as the detained-disappeared in the human rights lexicon in Spanish.[21]

---

[17] For an in-depth analysis of the salvation framework in the Chilean case see Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds. Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile 1973-1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For the Argentinean case see Margaret Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror. Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[18] As former CIA-agent Douglas S. Blaufarb made it clear, the term counterinsurgency was coined in the Kennedy administration, but its practices had a precedent in the 1950s. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

[19] Juan Veledíaz, "El hoyo sin fondo de la prisión militar", *Proceso*, no. 1456, September 26, 2004: 72.

[20] Gasca's movement incorporated thousands of peasants across the country, discontent with the counter-agrarianist policies of the "Mexican miracle." Both Gasca and Barragán Leñero were the last military who planned on taking up arms against the PRI. Elisa Servín, "Reclaiming Revolution in Light of the 'Mexican Miracle': Celestino Gasca and the Federacionistas Leales Insurrection of 1961," *The Americas* 66, no. 4 (April 2010): 527-557. For Barragán's case see Benjamin T. Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism in Mexico. Catholicism, Society, and Politics in the Mixteca Baja, 1750-1962* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012).

[21] For a history of forced disappearance in Mexico see Camilo Vicente, *Estado y represión en México*.

The dirty war was a turning point as it represented a major upgrade of the military-industrial complex. There was a notable development in the domestic industry of weapons and war equipment, and the building of military facilities including hospitals, schools, warehouses, and farms.[22] Moreover, the Mexican government purchased weapons, tanks, aircrafts, and other military gear to the United States, as José Luis Piñeyro and Jorge Luis Sierra documented.[23] The increase in the number of troops, especially for infantry battalions and cavalry regiments, was also remarkable. By the late 1960s, there were 40, 200 soldiers while by 1976 there were 87, 571.[24]

Until the mid-1960s, the Mexican military had employed inchoate methods of repression, like indiscriminate shootings, massive detentions, raw torture, and unprofessional espionage, but the dirty war boosted the professionalization of the military. The national security apparatus required a new generation of cadres trained in the counterinsurgency doctrine; therefore, Mexican officers enrolled in courses at the US Army Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, NC; the US Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, GA; the US Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, KS, and the US Military Academy at West Point, NY.[25] In addition, from 1953 to 1988, hundreds of officers attended the United States Army School of Americas at

[22] Fuentes, *El ejército mexicano*, 216-256.

[23] Piñeyro, "Las fuerzas armadas y la guerrilla rural" in *Movimientos armados en México, siglo XX, vol. 1,* Oikión & García, eds., 69-90;" Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán, *El enemigo interno: contrainsurgencia y fuerzas armadas en México* (Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés, 2003).

[24] In the late 1960s, the whole Mexican population was about thirty-five million people, and the proportion was one soldier for every 869 civilians; in 1976, with about sixty million people, there was one soldier for every 685 civilians. Fuentes, *El ejército mexicano*, 273.

[25] Darrin Wood, "La conexión de EU con la "guerra sucia"", *La Jornada,* November 2, 2002, http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/11/02/017a1pol.php?origen=opinion.html, accessed December 30, 2018. According to Piñeyro, from 1950 to 1972, 659 military officers and 65 police were trained in the United States. Piñeyro, "Las fuerzas armadas y la guerrilla rural en México," 71.

Fort Gulick in the Panama Canal Zone,[26] from which several graduates would become notorious after being investigated for drug-trafficking in the 1990s.[27]

A few police agents attended the International Police Academy at New York, among them the most famous dirty war torturer, Miguel Nazar Haro. Both police and military officers took courses in France, Great Britain, Israel, Japan, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and South Korea, among other countries. When graduates returned to Mexico, they became instructors or used unconventional warfare tactics in the "theater of operations." As early as 1969, the SEDENA began to produce its own counterinsurgency manuals, like the anonymous *Manual de guerra irregular* (*Manual of irregular warfare*). This manual outlined the preventive nature of anti-subversion by stating that "it is easier to avoid the formation of a resistance movement than to suppress it once it has gained strength."[28] Such logic underlaid the assaults on unarmed social movements by the military.

The *Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar* (*Journal of the Military, Military Diffusion Media*), edited by the Second Section of the Defense Staff (S-2), which was also in charge of intelligence, provides important insight into the military mindset. The *Revista* recorded a moment in the late 1960s, when the revolutionary nationalism based on the evocation of Mexico's historical episodes and military civic duties began to coexist with the

---

[26] In 1984 the SOA changed its headquarters to Fort Benning, Georgia. For the COIN training at the SOA see Lesley Gill, *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[27] "SOA Students and Instructors from Mexico 1953-1996," http://www.derechos.org/soa/mx5396.html; "Notorious Mexican School of the Americas Graduates," http://www.derechos.org/soa/mx-not.html; accessed December 28, 2018. I thank Benjamin T. Smith for having shared with me an updated list of 1764 Mexican SOA graduates from 1953 to 2004.

[28] *Manual de guerra irregular* (Mexico City: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1969), 63.

counterinsurgency doctrine, as if there were no contradiction among these ideologies.[29] The *Revista* introduced topics on both domestic unarmed and armed movements and portrayed counterinsurgency as an extension of the battles that the Mexican military had undertaken in the past. It also included articles over insurgent movements in other countries; translated papers about counterinsurgency doctrine by U.S. and British officers; references to the social danger represented by drugs; and the anti-drug campaigns carried out by Mexican troops (CANADOR and Condor).

In the September 1968 issue, the journal reported the elimination of the "Arturo Gámiz" Popular Guerrilla Group (GPGAG) by the Rural Defense of Tesopaco during an alleged shooting—a cover-up story to hide the fact that the guerrillas had been arrested and later executed by the army. Secretary of Defense Marcelino García Barragán "congratulated the Rural Defense of Tesopaco for their efficient collaboration in the extermination of those disrupters of the order;" and the journal joined in the recognition of the "honorable and selfless servers of the nation."[30] The article also referred to guerrillas as *gavillas* (gangs), denying them their political identity. Nevertheless, in the January 1969 issue, the *Revista* depicted the guerrilla and anti-guerrilla training that the cavalry performed in late 1968 in Madera, Cebadilla, Tutuaca,

---

[29] For instance, in the issue of November 1968, there is an article about the exploitation of the vulnerability of guerrillas next to an article of Mexican military medals named after historical battles of the nineteenth century. Editors presented the information to convey the idea that both topics were legitimate military affairs.

[30] "Noticias," *Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar,* (September 1968): 43-44. The journal also changed its standard cover of a military helmet to show an illustration of a rank-and-file soldier with a quote of president Díaz Ordaz rendering thanks to the heroic *Juanes* (privates), who did not have access to education unlike the privilege ones but risked their lives for others lived in peace. This image created an antagonism between the military and the 1968 student movement.

Yepachic, Maicova, Yégora, and Nuri in the Alta Sierra Tarahumara, defined as the region with the toughest geographical conditions to wage war in the country.[31]

That January 1969 issue also published the first military account over the 1968 student movement in Mexico City, putting the blame on students allegedly manipulated by domestic and international communists to overthrow the government. According to the official narrative, the military had to intervene to thwart the conspiracy because communist countries had a police state that contrasted with Mexico's "democratic system of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice that we enjoy thanks to the conquests achieved by our Revolution, which was seven years ahead of the 1917 Russian Revolution."[32] The apocalyptic vision of a communist takeover coupled with the image of students as dangerous terrorists who served foreign powers, justified their physical elimination.

The author of the article, Inf. Col. Bruno Galindo, went into a detailed analysis of Mexico's legal framework in order to demonstrate the legality of deterrence operations by the armed forces to fulfill their mission of "defending the integrity and independence of homeland; maintaining the Constitution and law empire, and preserving the internal order." The major failure of Galindo's reasoning though is the lack of evidence to prove that students were an internal enemy manipulated by an external enemy.

Galindo applied the same analysis to armed movements and also concluded that the military had the legal capacity and the obligation to repress them because they posed a national security threat. However, he invited readers to not overlook that "the current military was born

---

[31] Juan A. de la Fuente Rodríguez, "Ejercicio táctico en el terreno 'Francisco Villa' realizado por la E.M.A.C. entre el 20 de noviembre y el 16 de diciembre de 1968," *Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar,* (January 1969): 13-22. Social assistance to local population in the region was coupled with tactical exercises.

[32] Bruno Galindo Trejo, "El ejército y los disturbios del dos de octubre," *Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar,* (January 1969): 3-12.

from the Mexican Revolution (on February 19, 1913 according to our law), and must respect and make others respect the life and interests of the population, providing them with the necessary guarantees."[33] Galindo ignored that revolutionary principles contradicted the counterinsurgency core, which seeks to drain the water to expose the fish (assault the population to find the insurgents).

The interpretation of the Mexican legal framework to adjust it to the national security doctrine became common sense within the armed forces, as no officer overtly rejected that their mission was the suppression of social unrest. Nevertheless, according to the constitutional article 129, in time of peace the military should not perform unrelated functions to the military discipline; it could only intervene in public affairs if the government declared a state of exception within the terms of article 29. Officially, Mexico never had a state of exception during the Cold War. Thus, the national security doctrine was clearly opposed to the constitution and served to impose a de facto state of siege.

In early 1970, the retired Brig. Gral. Jesús de León Toral explained to the *Revista*'s readers how the counterinsurgency was essentially a war against the people, which "comprises a variety of military operations and orders of various kinds directed not only to defeat and break the armed resistance of guerrillas or combatants, but all opposition by civilian population; hence, those operations… mix the war activity with measures of socioeconomic, political, and psychological order aimed at deterring the resistance either active or passive of that population, and still gain support, sympathy, or at least popular neutrality, taking into account that irregular warfare is invincible when is well conducted, sufficiently spread and supported by the people." For Toral, one of the primary goals of counterinsurgency was "the reduction, until elimination,

---

[33] Galindo, "El ejército y los disturbios," 8.

of spaces dominated or occupied by irregular combatants." He concluded that irregular warfare was "the most important resource for national defense." [34]

The most significant transformations in the military occurred precisely in the early 1970s, when the ruling party launched a full-fledged low intensity war in Guerrero and the Golden Quadrilateral. The Echeverría administration adopted counterinsurgency tactics as part of a confidential state policy that, on the one hand, produced populist initiatives delivered through civic action programs and the military special brigades of social action, and on the other hand, promoted the annihilation of "subversives" through ruthless methods. Echeverría's two-fold policy proved successful, given that he virtually eradicated guerrillas in the countryside.

Military facilities across the country served as prisons for the detained-disappeared as well as torture centers.[35] The security forces had not been alien to the use of torture before the dirty war, but traditional techniques were replaced by scientific methods taken from interrogation manuals and torture was massively applied. Mexican perpetrators also added their own methods, for instance, introducing "Tehuacán" carbonated water with chili pepper into the victims' noses, the so-called *tehuacanazo* that virtually every detained experienced during those years. Not only was this method particularly cruel, but also had a symbolic dimension, given that chili pepper was a referent of national identity and masculinity.

Systematic forced-disappearance was linked to the "death flights" and the clandestine massacres in military shooting facilities mentioned in chapters three and four. While not everyone inside the Mexican government was personally involved in these extra-legal practices,

---

[34] Jesús de León Toral, "De la guerra irregular," *Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar,* (March 1970): 57-58. Toral's article reveals an extensive knowledge about unconventional warfare within the army.

[35] Gladys McCormick, "Torture and the Making of a Subversive During Mexico's Dirty War," in *México Beyond 1968*, Pensado & Ochoa eds., 256-257.

it was publicly known that security forces employed terror methods. Notwithstanding the differences between the political, economic, and cultural elites, all of them agreed upon a tacit pact of silence regarding the dirty war and the war on drugs.[36] It appears that the PRI interpreted this silent consensus as an approval of its counterinsurgency policies, which also legitimized its rule.

As chapter four explored, the counterinsurgency infrastructure was expanded through Operation Condor. During the López Portillo administration there were thousands of victims of gross human rights abuses, albeit the official discourse promoted reconciliation and political reform. In the late seventies, the intersections between the dirty war and the drug war were more frequent than in any other period, but there was a marked decline of subversive activity and a rise of drug-related violence. During the De la Madrid term, the socialist armed movement was practically defeated and no longer represented a national security concern, but Cold War warriors continued to profit from their salvation's discourse.

In 1990, Gral. Acosta Chaparro produced an army field manual entitled, *Movimiento Subversivo en México* (*Subversive Movement in Mexico*) for high and mid-range officers, in which he laid out the history of the guerrilla organizations from the 1960s to the 1980s and overviewed the current situation of the anti-subversive struggle. The manual is poorly written and structured, and Acosta revealed a misleading understanding of the causes of the socialist armed struggle. He reduced the issue to a series of social problems: poverty, unemployment, low wages, lack of services, illiteracy, absence of democracy, injustice, corruption, delinquency, conurbation, peasant problems, high foreign investment, and so on.

---

[36] I will not delve into this topic, but I prepare an article about the cultural dirty war titled "Galio's Fifth Column: Cultural Struggles Over the Meaning of the Mexican Dirty War." I presented a first draft of this paper at the LASA Congress, 2018.

Nonetheless, there are three salient points in Acosta's narrative. First, Acosta provided a chronology of "subversion" since the 1940s, where he included armed and unarmed movements regardless of their political leanings.[37] Hence, "subversive" was a label that the military applied on any movement that opposed the PRI's monopoly of power, or the capitalist system. From Acosta's vantage point, the anti-subversive movement began when president Ruiz Cortines directed the army to quell protests in 1956.

The second point is Acosta's identification of *foquismo* as the chief cause of the "failure and weakening of the seditious contingents, a factor that facilitated the repressive forces dispersal and, in some cases, extermination groups that had strong political and operational discrepancies among them." Acosta's balance of the anti-subversive struggle claimed that "until the year 1981, investigative and security forces… performed an effective neutralization task, whose outcomes were notable and worthy of admiration, given that the hotbeds of insurrection that represented a major problem from 1973 to 1977 were virtually exterminated," especially the Liga and the Party of the Poor.[38] Acosta also dedicated his book to the high-ranking officers, rank-and-file soldiers, and detectives who died in the war against subversion, claiming that "their lives delivered to serve the army were not in vain." Acosta implied that surviving officers deserved a compensation for such outstanding work and sacrifices.

The last point is Acosta's reiteration of the outdated Soviet-Cuban conspiracy theory to explain the subversive movement and its possibilities of being re-launched in the 1990s, disregarding the history of the Mexican left, Mexico's special relation with Cuba and, above all,

---

[37] Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, *Movimiento Subversivo en México* (Mexico City: n. p., 1990), 11, 78.

[38] Acosta Chaparro, *Movimiento Subversivo en México*, 13.

the demise of the socialist bloc taking place at that time.[39] Acosta conveyed an almost paranoid fear that both civil and armed leftist forces conflated in a political-military front similar to those operating in Central America. Based on intelligence information of the early 1980s, Acosta foretold the re-emergence of the subversive movement in the 1990s; he misidentified the actors, but his diagnosis proved correct.

Acosta's work may have been partially correct about the reemergence of guerrillas, but it did not address drug trafficking as one of the greatest national security armed threats. I sustain that Acosta's whole project of reinforcing the image of the "subversive" as the principal enemy of the nation, many years after the dirty war had come to an end, served the purpose of emphasizing his lingering work against "subversives" to prevent criticism for his personal involvement in the drug trade.[40] Acosta Chaparro would live long enough to bear witness to a new period of intersections between the drug war and the repression of social movements, and he would also continue benefiting from that process, as if it were business as usual.

The Guadalajara Cartel and the Consolidation of the Deep State

Notwithstanding the salient role of the military in the counterinsurgency wars, it was not the only actor that participated in the formation and consolidation of the deep state. The DFS, the PJF, and top officials also played a major role. In the wake of Operation Condor's first stage, DFS chiefs Javier García Paniagua (1977-1978) and Miguel Nazar Haro (1978-1982) helped successful drug lords like Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, Ernesto Fonseca, Rafael Caro, Manuel

---

[39] Acosta Chaparro, *Movimiento Subversivo en México*, 45.

[40] Acosta's involvement in drug trafficking is analyzed in the section "The Formation of the Payoff System" in this chapter.

Salcido *El Cochiloco*, and Juan José Esparragoza Moreno—a former DFS agent—relocate from Sinaloa to Guadalajara, Jalisco. For the DFS, taking the drug lords out of the military-controlled highlands to settle them in the town proved to be its most gainful deal.[41]

The location was not randomly chosen given the power that the García family had in Jalisco. García Paniagua was the son of Gral. García Barragán, former governor of Jalisco and Secretary of Defense during Díaz Ordaz administration. The DFS connected the Sinaloan kingpins to the social and political elite of Jalisco, including governors Flavio Romero de Velasco (1977-1983) and Enrique Álvarez del Castillo (1983-1988), and the commander of the 15th Military Zone, Gral. Vinicio Santoyo Feria.[42] This network of drug lords, state agents, and wealthy people compounded the Guadalajara cartel, which virtually came to monopolize drug smuggling into the United States from Mexico.[43] The Guadalajara cartel network reached the highest echelons of power, but only for one *sexenio*. The rise and fall of the post-Condor drug lords occurred exactly within the years of De la Madrid term (1982-1988).

Guadalajara was fertile ground to give birth to a drug cartel and a money laundering empire given that its geographical position had helped it become a major trade hub. Moreover, during the 1960s and 1970s, Jalisco experienced a history similar to Sinaloa. A mafia-like group related to the PRI called the Guadalajara Student Federation (FEG) controlled the politics of the University of Guadalajara. The FEG was made up by lumpen youth who acted as a shock group

---

[41] Some sources point at Fonseca or Caro as the heads of the group, but it was Félix Gallardo who had the connections with high-ranking officials. As a PJS agent, he had been bodyguard of the family of former Sinaloan governor Leopoldo Sánchez Celis and had become his political protégé. See Osorno. *El Cártel de Sinaloa*.

[42] Valdés, *Historia del narcotráfico*, 175-176.

[43] P. D. Scott, "Drugs, Anti-communism," 173-194.

(the so-called "*porros"*) and also as drug dealers.[44] The violent climate fostered by *porros* caused the radicalization of a youth sector, which formed the Revolutionary Student Front (FER).[45] The clashes between the FEG and the FER between 1970 and 1972 aroused the interest of guerrilla leaders from other states, who chose Guadalajara to establish the Liga in 1973. The FER split into three distinct guerrilla groups, and one of them became the Liga's second largest front after the Sick Ones. The intense guerrilla activity in Jalisco favored not only the development of the counterinsurgency apparatus (security houses, vehicles, weaponry, specially trained officers), but also the alliance between security forces and drug traffickers.

As Sergio Aguayo shows, both the 15th military base in Jalisco and the DFS recruited informants and hitmen within the FEG and people with criminal backgrounds. In the early 1980s, the same counterinsurgency agents responsible for the extermination of guerrillas welcomed the runaway drug lords of Sinaloa. Lawyer Javier Barba Hernández is an emblematic case. As a FEG gangster, Barba executed several political opponents. He later became a warlord of the Guadalajara cartel and participated in the assassination of Camarena and other U.S. citizens mistaken as DEA agents. When the U.S. authorities began to investigate Barba, the PJF allegedly killed him in a shooting in 1986.[46] The ruling party used individuals like Barba for both political and economic purposes but was willing to eliminate them when they became a nuisance.

The transfer of the drug scene from the Golden Triangle to Guadalajara took the structure created by Condor to a higher level, with the near to total collaboration of Mexican authorities with drug lords given the exorbitant profitability of cocaine, which surpassed marijuana and

---

[44] Sergio Aguayo, *La Charola*, 145-165.

[45] For the social origins of the FER, see Fernando Herrera Calderón, "Working-Class Heroes: Barrio Consciousness, Student Power, and the Mexican Dirty War," *México Beyond 1968*, Pensado and Ochoa, eds., 155-174.

[46] Aguayo, *La Charola*, 223.

heroin. The military, the DFS, and the PJF organized extorsions against drug-traffickers at the local, state, and federal level, while drug lords were entitled to wield extreme violence to protect their businesses with total immunity. Journalist Jesús Esquivel interviewed one former DFS agent and two from the Jalisco Judicial Police (PJJ), who verified that security forces had worked to wipe out independent drug traffickers (especially *marihuaneros*) and to protect the Guadalajara cartel kingpins. Dozens of civilians were killed and clandestinely buried whenever *narcos* or authorities suspected that they were DEA informants or independent smugglers.[47]

The unprecedented flow of cocaine into the United States in the early 1980s caused the DEA to increase pressure on the Mexican government to clamp down on the Guadalajara cartel. In a subtle acknowledgement of the shortcomings of Condor, the PGR launched Operation Pacific in 1984. The head of the operation, Miguel Aldana Ibarra, had been a former DFS agent and in 1982 became first commandant of the PJF in charge of Mexico's Interpol office. After the DEA discovered aerial evidence of a ranch owned by Caro Quintero in the semi-desert lands of Allende, Chihuahua, Aldana had no choice but to lead the raid on the plantation, even though he was on the Guadalajara cartel's payroll.[48]

In November 1984, the PJF, the DEA and the military carried out an assault on the "El Búfalo," the largest marijuana plantation at the time, with more than one thousand hectares, a cutting-edge irrigation system and about ten thousand peasants working under forced labor

---

[47] Jesús Esquivel, *La CIA, Camarena y Caro Quintero. La historia secreta* (Mexico City: Proceso, 2014), 113. Bartley & Erickson Bartley disputed the quality of Esquivel's reporting, which is ridden with inaccuracies and sensationalists statements. Also, given that the names of his witnesses have always been public, there was no reason to use pseudonyms. The interviewees were Enrique Plascencia Aguilar, Jorge Godoy López, and Ramón Lira. Given that the CIA paid them to testify in the Camarena probe, I use their testimonies only when other sources corroborate them. Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 425.

[48] Elaine Shannon, *Desperados*. *Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can't Win,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 228.

conditions—many of them indigenous from the SMO and seasonal workers from all over the country. For several days, authorities seized more than ten thousand tons of marijuana at different stages of production.[49] The fact that such large-estate was designated to cultivate a single illegal staple blatantly proved the farcical nature of Operation Condor. According to a DEA informant, Caro Quintero had organized the Chihuahua complex with the help of the DFS and the military.[50] It seems clear that the elimination of competitors in the four-state region and the establishment of a de facto state of siege gave impulse to the industrialization of the drug trade.

In January 1985, Aldana quit the PJF after the DEA began an investigation on him to find out if he had leaked the information on the raid to drug lords, given that among the 1,800 detainees in the ranch, there was no one of importance. But Aldana was far from being a key figure in the Guadalajara cartel network. Different sources agree that the Secretary of Interior Manuel Barlett Díaz, the Secretary of Defense, Juan Arévalo Gardoqui, the Director of the Federal Judicial Police, Manuel Ibarra Herrera, and the Director of the DFS, Juan Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, were also on the Cartel's payroll.[51]

Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez belonged to the criminal network either directly or indirectly. According to an anonymous ex-PJF agent, the PJF regional coordinators became

---

[49] Juan Pablo Becerra Acosta, "El imperio que construyó Caro Quintero en Búfalo," *Milenio*, August 21, 2013, https://sipse.com/mexico/plantio-descomunal-comparado-a-una-planta-de-mota-por-mexicano-47449.html, accessed November 10, 2018. Some witnesses claimed that not all the marijuana was incinerated and drug traffickers picked it up in the aftermath of the assault.

[50] Rafael Aguilar, a DFS commander and founder of the Juarez Cartel, had distributed DFS badges among the plantation's security guards. Shannon, *Desperados,* 223.

[51] Shannon (1989); Hernández (2010); Bartley & Eriksson (2015); and Esquivel (2016). Juan Arévalo Gardoqui was the highest-ranking officer involved in the scandal. Michael Isikoff, "Informer Ties Top Mexican to Drug Deals," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1988, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/06/04/informer-ties-top-mexican-to-drug-deals/2331f9b9-61dd-4875-9a59-d2725d05ed42/?utm_term=.653a99543fac, accessed November 10, 2018.

drug-traffickers themselves with the approval of the Attorney General.[52] García had been Deputy Secretary of Interior during the Echeverría administration and had held several positions during the López Portillo term; it would have been impossible for him to be unaware of the peculiarities of trans-sexennial institutional corruption. President De la Madrid could not be oblivious of this problem either.

In May, 1984, in the context of an official visit of De la Madrid to the White House, journalist Jack Anderson revealed that the Mexican president had funneled a minimum of $162 millions of unknown origin to a Swiss bank account, based on CIA and NSA classified reports.[53] The article did not mention any connection to narcotics traffickers, but in those years drug bribes were one of the most straightforward ways for a public servant to amass fabulous wealth in a short time. By generating suspicion towards the Mexican president, the U.S. intelligence community intended to put pressure on Mexico to give up its non-interventionist policy towards Central America, which included recognition of the Sandinista government. Mexico filed a diplomatic protest demanding that the U.S. government refuted the existence of such data. The State Department complied with a rather weak statement. [54]

---

[52] Hernández, *Los señores del narco*, 126 and Shannon, *Desperados,* 261-276. Supposing, without conceding that García Ramírez was unaware of his subalterns' criminal activities, there is evidence about his participation in other cover-ups, like the obstruction of the Camarena probe by the DEA.

[53] Jack Anderson, "Mexico Makes Its Presidents Millionaires," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1984, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00965R000100130103-6.pdf, accessed November 10, 2018.

[54] "Mexicans File Protest Against Press Report On Leader's Finances," *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1984, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/05/29/mexicans-file-protest-against-press-report-on-leaders-finances/9344eefc-2c47-4752-b064-52e66bb1ec86/?utm_term=.f5c5197eb83e, accessed November 10, 2018.

The Mexico-Contra Connection

From 1982 to 1985, the few surviving Mexican guerrilla groups began a strategic retreat, leading the Mexican government to believe that the conflict had concluded.[55] Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the dirty war, the whole state apparatus responsible for national security and law enforcement remained attached to the illegal drug trade not only for economic interests, but also because drug proceeds continued serving counterinsurgency purposes. The security forces took their alleged saving mission to another level by collaborating with the U.S. proxy *contra* war, notwithstanding that the Mexican government had established diplomatic relationships with the Sandinista government in 1979. Also, in 1983, Mexico, Colombia, Panamá, and Venezuela launched the Contadora Group in the hopes of finding a peaceful solution to the instability in Central America, at odds to U.S. militarism.

By becoming a CIA associate, the DFS contradicted Mexico's official stance on the matter. President De la Madrid was certainly informed about the DFS-CIA liaison, but he opted for conferring secret services a great deal of autonomy. Gral. Jorge Carrillo Olea, Deputy Secretary of Interior (1982-1988), admitted that the DFS acted as a CIA front during the early 1980s, and that both agencies collaborated with the Guadalajara cartel. Carrillo claimed that Barlett Díaz was the only one who oversaw the DFS relation to the CIA and the cartel.[56]

Journalist Manuel Buendía and undercover DEA agent Enrique Camarena never crossed paths, although both were investigating the support given by the Guadalajara cartel to the U.S. backed *contra*. What sources have revealed thus far is that the DFS served as the broker between

---

[55] Sotelo, ed. *La verdad negada.*

[56] Jorge Carrasco Araizaga, "La Federal de Seguridad y la CIA colaboraban con Caro Quintero," *Proceso*, no. 1930, October 26, 2013, 8-11.

the CIA and the Guadalajara cartel through CIA agent Félix Ismael Rodríguez Mendigutia, who also bore a DFS badge.[57] Rodríguez introduced Honduran cocaine kingpin, Juan Mata Ballesteros to the Guadalajara cartel. In turn, Mata connected the Guadalajara cartel with the cartels of Cali and Medellín.[58] The Guadalajara cartel set up *contra* training camps in the state of Veracruz, in a ranch owned by Caro Quintero. In exchange, the CIA sold weapons to drug traffickers and helped Colombian cartels to send cocaine transshipments to the Guadalajara cartel to be smuggled into U.S. military bases. With its share of the profits for drugs and weapons sales, the CIA purchased military supplies for the *contras*.[59] Mata Ballesteros owned the cargo firm SETCO Air, which was the primary airline used for smuggling drug and delivering arms to the counterrevolutionary Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FND) from 1983 to 1985.[60]

The DFS had Manuel Buendía executed on May 30, 1984, sparking a greater uproar than the crime against Roberto Martínez Montenegro in 1978, given Buendía's privileged position in

---

[57] The Cuban exile Félix Ismael Rodríguez was one of the most valuable CIA assets. He participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion with the Brigade 2056; the operation to trace and execute Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967; Operation Phoenix in Vietnam, and the organization of the proxy *contra* army in Nicaragua. Félix I. Rodríguez & John Weisman, *Shadow Warrior: The CIA Hero of a Hundred Unknown Battles* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).

[58] Esquivel, *La CIA, Camarena y Caro Quintero*, 47; Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*.

[59] The CIA laundered drug and weapon funds via the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). Peter Dale Scott & Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 67.

[60] Scott & Marshall, *Cocaine Politics*, 10. The context of the CIA cover war in Nicaragua was the Boland Amendment (1982) that prohibited the use of U.S. funds to overthrow the Sandinista government. In 1984, other U.S. congress initiatives reinforced the prohibition of all direct or indirect support from any U.S. agency for the *contra*. The Reagan administration violated such ban and by means of "Project Democracy" built a global surrogate network to provide funds, training, and armament to back the *contra*, which included countries like Iran and Israel. The Mexico-*contra* connection was nothing but a small fraction of that transnational racketeering empire. Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention, Reagan's War Against the Sandinistas* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987).

the public sphere as an officially allowed critic of power structures.[61] This assault on freedom of expression also conveyed the message that no critical journalist would be safe. The DFS managed to cover up the crime, but increasing public pressure propelled an investigation that partially revealed the truth. In 1989, former DFS director José Antonio Zorrilla was arrested for having planned the execution, along with half a dozen perpetrators. This was an unprecedented trial, considering the lack of accountability for state crimes during the PRI era, yet the Buendía probe left a trail of doubts about the involvement of high-level authorities and the CIA.[62]

In the Camarena case, according to insiders, drug lords' primary objective was not taking their revenge from DEA agents who participated in the *El Búfalo* assault, as the official version sustains.[63] Camarena had been one of the proponents of targeting *narcos'* financial structure. The DEA then launched *Operation Padrino* to intercept communications of several Latin American drug traffickers, which enabled the agency to carry out more than two hundred seizures of illegal profits from 1984 to 1985.[64] The Guadalajara cartel and their accomplices responded with a counterintelligence operation intended to find out the identity of the DEA informants and how much the DEA knew about the Mexico-*contra* connection. This led to the conspiracy by the DFS, Rodríguez Mendigutia, Mata Ballesteros, Caro Quintero, Fonseca Carrillo, and Félix

---

[61] The *vox populi* speculated that Buendía had been killed because of his investigative journalism about the CIA in México. See a compilation of his articles in Buendía*, La CIA en México* (Mexico City: Océano, 1984).

[62] The most complete investigation about Buendía's assassination was made by Bartely & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*. For an analysis of Buendía's critical journalism and his complex relation to the DFS, see Vanessa Freije, "Exposing Scandals, Guarding Secrets: Manuel Buendía, Columnism, and the Unraveling of One-Party Rule in Mexico, 1965-1984," *The Americas*, vol. 72, no. 3, July 2015: 377-409.

[63] Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 224. Luis Chaparro and J. Jesús Esquivel, "A Camarena lo ejecutó la CIA, no Caro Quintero," *Proceso*, October 12, 2013, https://www.proceso.com.mx/355283, accessed November 12, 2018.

[64] Jesús Esquivel, "El thriller Camarena," *Proceso*, October 19, 2013, https://www.proceso.com.mx/355856/el-thriller-camarena, accessed November 12, 2018.

Gallardo against Camarena, once he was singled out as a potential sneak, given his widespread network of informants.

On February 7, 1985, a group of agents kidnapped and tortured Camarena using the same techniques the DFS had employed against guerrillas, including the practice of medical intervention in order to keep him alive and conscious throughout the torture sessions. The DFS recorded his interrogatory, in which perpetrators asked him how much he knew about top-level Mexican officials like Manuel Barlett, Juan Arévalo Gardoqui, and Miguel Aldana.[65] Camarena and one of his Mexican collaborators, the pilot Alfredo Zavala, were murdered on February 9, 1985, but the disappearance of their bodies was poorly managed and they were found on March 5 along a roadside next to the town of La Angostura, Michoacán, shortly after the PJF had perpetrated a shooting that had left ten civilians dead in a nearby ranch.[66] That slaughter was forgotten, but Camarena's death provoked a binational crisis. The U.S. government shut down the border like it had done in 1969 and reacted with extraordinary zeal to investigate the case.

On February 26, 1985, the Mexican authorities arrested former DFS agent turned drug trafficker Tomás Morlet Bórquez and presented him as the purported mastermind of the Camarena kidnapping; he was released soon after given the lack of evidence.[67] The Mexican government attempted to solved the case by capturing Fonseca Carrillo and Caro Quintero in April, 1985—a fundamental step considering that law enforcement authorities had failed to put

---

[65] Shannon, *Desperados*, 319-340.

[66] Esquivel, *La CIA, Camerana y Caro*, 122-123. The owner of the ranch "El Mareño" was related to the Guadalajara cartel. The victims were members of the same family except for a PJF agent who was killed for having opposed the extrajudicial execution of a child with Down Syndrome.

[67] Morlet was killed in 1987; neither his involvement in Camarena's kidnapping nor his own murder were solved. Marty Thornton, "Three Held in DEA Agent's Disappearance," The Washington Post, February 26, 1985, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1985/02/26/three-held-in-dea-agents-disappearance/0ef53994-dc56-470e-a582-e72ff2e0b038/?utm_term=.df08543a4a6e, accessed November 13, 2018.

down a major drug lord since Pedro Avilés.[68] Caro initially had bribed the PJF to escape to Costa Rica along with his lover Sara Cosío Vidaurri, and they flew in an aircraft owned by the Cordero Stauffer brothers.[69] After intense pressure by the Reagan administration, Caro was arrested in Alajuela, Costa Rica and extradited to Mexico. However, the Mexican government turned down the drug lord's extradition to the United States.

A couple of months after Camarena's murder, the DEA began its greatest homicide investigation in history in order to take the case to U.S. courts. The operation, eventually code-named "Leyenda", revealed to some extent the corruption in Mexican institutions, exposing the names and features of the deep state. However, U.S. prosecutors also employed dubious methods to search for the truth. In January 1989, DEA agent Hector Berrellez was assigned to lead the operation. Berrellez had extensive field experience in Mexico and through Antonio Gárate Bustamante—a commandant of the Jalisco State Police (PJJ) associated to the Guadalajara Cartel, who became a DEA informant—recruited protected witnesses among policemen who worked for kingpins and were responsible for several crimes.[70] Two witnesses, René López Romero and Jorge Godoy López had taken part in Camarena's kidnapping; yet, the DEA payed thousands of dollars to them to testify against Mexican officials in a district court in Los Angeles.

---

[68] Esquivel, *La CIA, Camerena y Caro,* 127.

[69] Both the Cosío-Vidaurri and Cordero-Stauffer families were la crème de la crème in Jalisco's society and also belonged to the political elite. Carlos Monsiváis, *Los mil y un velorios: Crónica de la nota roja en México* (Mexico City: Debate, 2010).

[70] Charles Bowden and Molly Molloy, "Blood on the Corn," 1-3, *Medium*, https://medium.com/matter/blood-on-the-corn-52ac13f7e643, accessed November 17, 2018.

The jury was not informed about the extent of financial support provided to prosecution witnesses, and their credibility has been brought into question.[71] In addition, some defendants were abducted in Mexico, violating the existing extradition treaty and inciting a diplomatic predicament.[72] Berrellez was removed from the case in 1994 and the Camarena probe officially closed in 1995. The District Court of L.A. prosecuted twenty-two suspects while Mexican tribunals prosecuted about thirty. At both sides of the border the cases were politically compromised, and the proceedings fell short of solving Camarena's murder. Both proceedings and journalistic investigations rendered plenty of versions about the case, given that compelling evidence was either destroyed or tainted by Mexican authorities and the DEA.[73]

The U.S. prosecution went as far as sentencing Rubén Zuno Arce—the brother-in-law of former president Echeverría and alleged member of the Guadalajara cartel—to two life terms.[74]

---

[71] In 1997, Héctor Cervantes Santos, a key prosecution witness, claimed that he perjured himself after U.S. law enforcement officials coached him into falsely accusing three Mexican officials (Zuno, Barlett, and Arévalo Gardoqui). Frederic N. Tulsky, "Evidence Cast Doubt on Camarena Case Trials," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1997, http://articles.latimes.com/1997/oct/26/news/mn-46907; Jim Newton, "U.S. paid millions to witnesses in drug-agent killing. Some recipients have criminal past," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 1992 https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1992-11-08-1992313028-story.html, accessed November 9, 2018.

[72] The DEA orchestrated the abduction of Humberto Alvarez Machaín by Mexican nationals on April 2, 1990. Alvarez Machaín was one of the two physicians who checked Camarena after his torture session. The case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that the respondent's forcible abduction did not prohibit his trial in a U.S. Court for violations to the U.S. criminal law. However, Machaín's trial resulted in an acquittal because it was not a prima facie case. "United States v. Alvarez Machaín," 505, U.S. 655, June 15, 1992, http://cdn.loc.gov/service/ll/usrep/usrep504/usrep504655/usrep504655.pdf , accessed November 17, 2018.

[73] Some sources allege that several key witnesses were murdered, disappeared or silenced in some other way to prevent them from revealing the truth. William Branigin, "Trial in Camarena Case Shows DEA Anger at CIA," The Washington Post, July 16, 1990, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1990/07/16/trial-in-camarena-case-shows-dea-anger-at-cia/e91baa2d-7231-47c3-94f4-30196209ecd0/?utm_term=.f55ead4da5dc, accessed November 17, 2018; Cockburn & St. Clair, *Whiteout*, 277-316.

[74] "UNITED STATES of America, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Ruben ZUNO-ARCE, Defendant-Appellant, No. 93-50311," January 11, 1995, https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-9th-circuit/1432523.html, accessed November 8, 2018. One of the arguments against Zuno was that he had owned the house where Camarena and Zavala were tortured. The DEA had identified Zuno as a heroin trafficker since the mid-1970s. However, while it was demonstrated that Zuno mingled with Guadalajara drug lords, evidence about his participation in the complot against Camarena was rather feeble. In an interview with Bartley and Erickson Bartley, Lawrence Harrison sustained that Zuno was a CIA asset like Luis Echeverría, and that his trial was due to a CIA cleansing; the authors speculate that the CIA used Zuno as a pretext to break with former allies from Echeverría's faction. This interpretation is problematic because since 1977

Juan José Bernabé Ramírez and Javier Vásquez Velasco, two low-profile policemen who were bodyguards of Fonseca and Caro, were also sentenced to many life terms. Other minor characters were convicted in the late 1980s.[75] Manuel Ibarra Herrera, Miguel Aldana Ibarra, and the former head of the DFS in Jalisco, Sergio Espino Verdín, were found guilty but remain as DEA fugitives to this day.[76] Mata Ballesteros was arrested in 1988 in Honduras and extradited to the United States, where judges imposed him multiple life sentences.[77] Although official and unofficial investigations exposed the name of Rodríguez Mendigutia—including the Iran/Contra committees and the Kerry's subcommittee where he testified—no authority associated him with Camarena's plot.[78]

In fact, the U.S. justice system failed to bring to trial any important individual directly linked to the murder. It did not indict secretaries Manuel Barlett or Juán Arévalo, even though protected witnesses revealed their names. Former DFS director Javier García Paniagua was also

---

the López Portillo administration had curtailed the power of Echeverría's faction. I believe that Zuno Arce was an easy target to send a hostile message to the Mexican government, but his imprisonment was not as important as to create a severance of the U.S.-Mexico relations. Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 240.

[75] One of the convicted to multiple life sentences was René Verdugo Urquidez. He was kidnapped by the DEA and Mexican police agents in Mexicali, Baja California in January 1986. He belonged to the Guadalajara cartel, but evidence against his involvement in Camarena's murder was insufficient. Verdugo's family built a digital archive of his case to demonstrate his innocence, which gives further insight about the prosecutors' twisted procedures: http://www.reneverdugo.org/index.html, accessed November 10, 2018.

[76] It is worth mentioning that Aldana was convicted in Mexico in 1990 for his protection to drug traffickers, but he was not extradited to the United States. "DEA most wanted fugitives," https://www.dea.gov/fugitives/miguel-daniel-aldana-ibarra, https://www.dea.gov/fugitives/manuel-ibarra-herrera, and https://www.dea.gov/fugitives/sergio-espino-verdin, accessed November 10, 2018.

[77] Mata Ballesteros has never acknowledged his ties to the CIA, on the contrary, he still denies the charges against him and portrays himself as a scapegoat of the U.S. government and a victim of human rights abuses. "Sitio oficial de Juan Ramón Mata," http://www.juanramonmata.org/, accessed November 10, 2018.

[78] In 1976, Félix Rodríguez was recipient of the rare CIA award Intelligence Star for valor, which made him famous in the intelligence community. In the early 1980s, he established a personal relationship to Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Oliver North regarding their collaboration with the Contra. In his autobiography, Rodríguez dismissed his involvement with drug traffickers and did not mention anything about his deep-cover work in Mexico. Rodríguez, *Shadow Warrior*.

mentioned as someone who was present during Camarena's interrogation, but he was never subpoenaed. Jalisco Governor Álvarez del Castillo and Gral. Vinicio Santoyo Feria, members of the network of accomplices of the Guadalajara cartel, did not face any charges. In a decision possibly made to affront the DEA, president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) appointed Álvarez del Castillo Attorney General of Mexico.[79]

One of the multiple consequences triggered by the murders of Buendía and Camarena was the official disbandment of the DFS on November 29, 1985. Its replacement was the Direction of National Security and Investigation (DISEN), a secret police agency that combined the functions of the DFS and the DGIPS but did not have their unchecked power. DFS director Zorrilla Pérez had taken criminal activities to a higher level, creating a structure for his personal benefit and that of a reduced group of commandants.[80] The closure took place only two months after the earthquake that partially destroyed Mexico City, unleashing a crisis in the federal government.

As Aguayo asserted, the De la Madrid administration failed to classify drug-trafficking as a national security threat until the whole Mexican state was compromised.[81] Given his shortsightedness, De la Madrid could not understand the conflicting messages of the Reagan administration and reacted in contradictory ways, oscillating between anger and compliance. The closure of the DFS intended to send a message to the CIA, asserting that the Mexican government would no longer tolerate its meddling into Mexico's top affairs.[82] However, De la

---

[79] Hernández, *Los Señores del Narco*, 34.

[80] Humberto Padgett, "Caro, el hombre que compró al Estado," *Sin Embargo*, September 2, 2013, https://www.sinembargo.mx/02-09-2013/739592, accessed November 15, 2018.

[81] Aguayo, *La charola*, 238.

[82] Carrasco, "La Federal de Seguridad y la CIA," 10.

Madrid also took a major step between 1985 and 1986, with the institutionalization of a neoliberal political economy. Paradoxically, technocrats at both sides of the border advocated for a model that resembled the practices of smuggling: free market competition, no tariffs, and strategic deregulation.[83] Some critics interpreted the structural shift as a surrender of the national sovereignty, the end of the Mexican Revolution as state ideology, and the alignment of Mexico to U.S. economic interests.[84]

There are not enough elements to sustain that U.S. agencies used their knowledge about illegal practices by Mexican top officials as part of a broader strategy to force them to accept the neoliberal turn. However, it is noteworthy that at the beginning of the De la Madrid term, the predominant group within the PRI were the so-called nationalists led by Barlett Díaz, notwithstanding that López Portillo's nationalist policies had provoked a deep economic crisis in 1982. The exhaustion of the developmentalist model favored the rise of neoliberal technocrats, who prevailed over nationalists in less than three years. I believe that the accelerated weakening of the nationalist group was also related to DFS abuses, drug-related corruption, and Camarena's case.[85]

Yet, the confidential neoliberal agenda did not include to cut off ties with the drug trade. On the contrary, there was an unprecedented expansion of the illegal drug industry under

---

[83] In 1985, Mexico signed the "U.S. Mexican Understanding on Subsidies and Countervailing Duties" and the following year it acceded to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Arturo Ortiz Wadgymar, *El fracaso neoliberal en México: 6 años de fondomonetarismo, 1982-88* (Mexico City: Nuestro Tiempo, 1988), 67-68.

[84] Ortiz Wadgymar, *El fracaso neoliberal*; Marcos Roitman, "Treinta años de neoliberalismo en México: los orígenes de la narcopolítica," *Contrapoder*, November 23, 2014, https://www.eldiario.es/contrapoder/neoliberalismo-Mexico-narcopolitica_6_327277272.html, accessed November 20, 2018.

[85] Bartley and Erickson Bartley believe that although the U.S. authorities protected Barlett from indictment, they also aimed at curtailing his presidential aspirations in order to underpin neoliberal technocrats. Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 424.

neoliberalism, which is key to understand the origins of the elite that has ruled over Mexico since the late 1980s. Peter Dale Scott suggested some entry points to analyze how the combination of drug trafficking, market ideology, and crony capitalism has caused the illegal trade to be the only part of economy that has flourished under neoliberal administrations, but this topic would deserve further examination.[86]

The narco-clientelist regime created by Operation Condor was temporarily disrupted in 1985, but it was immediately reorganized under the same principles. The Guadalajara cartel's surviving drug lords Félix Gallardo, *El Cochiloco*, and Esparragoza continued to trade cocaine, and the military and the PJF took the place of the DFS in the management of the drug protection circuit. In 1986-87, as chief of the DEA office in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Berrellez found out that next to the ranch "Las Cabras" owned by Sinaloa governor Antonio Toledo Corro (1981-86) there was a *contra* training camp with clandestine airstrips that U.S. aircrafts used to smuggle cocaine into the United States.[87] Camarena's murder did not impact the CIA's entanglement of counterinsurgency and drugs, but it did serve as a smoke screen for the Reagan and the Bush administrations to humiliate and blackmail the Mexican government for the entrenched corruption that had cost the life of a devoted U.S. agent.[88]

In 1990, the involvement of the U.S. intelligence in Camarena's case was brought up in trial by former CIA contractor Lawrence Victor Harrison, *Torre Blanca*, who became a DEA

---

[86] Scott, "Drugs, Anticommunism…," 184-188.

[87] Berrellez also found out that *contra* training camps existed in other Mexican states.Jesús Esquivel, "El thriller Camarena," *Proceso*, October 19, 2013, https://www.proceso.com.mx/355856/el-thriller-camarena, accessed November 12, 2018.

[88] Camarena's case has received a great deal of media attention over the years through magazine articles, books, and T.V. series. In 2018, it was released the Netflix series *Narcos Mexico* based on Camarena's undercover work in Guadalajara. It follows the DEA's version and insinuates the Mexico-*contra* connection without mentioning the CIA brokering.

witness. During trial, Harrison did not disclose that he had worked for the CIA, although he admitted having worked as a communications technician for the Guadalajara cartel, the DFS, and the DGIPS from 1982 to 1984.[89] In that capacity, he bore witness to CIA's collusion with Mexican narcotics traffickers and claimed that the CIA used Caro Quintero's ranch in Veracruz to train *contras*.[90] Harrison confirmed to journalist Bartley and Erickson Bartley what he had confessed to DEA debriefers in 1989, namely, that Rodríguez Mendigutia had taken part in the recorded interrogation of Camarena. "Rodríguez's presence was a message to the Mexicans that this was a priority CIA operation and the Americans wanted Camarena eliminated," he stated.[91]

Harrison's revelations were explosive, but they were largely overlooked. However, they were recently confirmed by two former U.S. agents and a former CIA contractor in an interview to Fox News in 2013.[92] Berrellez declared to media for the first time that he had gathered a significant amount of evidence that pointed to the CIA, but his supervisors ordered him to stop pursuing that line of inquiry. Phil Jordan, former director of DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center,

---

[89] Digital National Security Archive collection: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013, Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, "Debriefing of [Lawrence Harrison]," September 27, 1989.

[90] A U.S. district judge first curtailed attempts by Zuno's defense lawyers to question Harrison about the CIA's role. The defense obtained a voire dire examination of Harrison, but his revelations were deemed based on rumor and hearsay and without merit. Harrison would later acknowledge that in the trial he intentionally used a language to make his testimony unreliable because he was under threat. Henry Weinstein, "Witness who tied CIA to traffickers must testify anew," *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-07-06/local/me-260_1_drug-trafficker; Henry Weinstein, "Witness Says Drug Lord Told of Contra Arms," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-07-07/news/mn-149_1_drug-lord; accessed November 13, 2018; Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 230-239.

[91] Bartley & Bartley, *Eclipse of the Assassins*, 434.

[92] Willian La Jeneusse, "US intelligence assets in Mexico reportedly tied to murdered DEA agent," Fox News, October 10, 2013, https://www.foxnews.com/politics/us-intelligence-assets-in-mexico-reportedly-tied-to-murdered-dea-agent, accessed November 12, 2018. Berrellez was an example of a DEA field agent resented against the CIA for having protected drug traffickers and corrupted authorities against the DEA's mission. Furthermore, Berrellez's career at the DEA was over after he discovered the CIA brokering between the Guadalajara Cartel and the *contra*. There are some inaccuracies in his testimony, but what he claimed about the CIA was confirmed by other sources.

claimed that Mexican authorities told him about both the CIA's involvement in the movement of drugs from Latin America to the United States, and the participation of CIA operatives in Camarena's interrogatory. Pilot Robert "Tosh" Plumlee stated that U.S. intelligence hired him to fly covert missions. He flew for SETCO in-and-out of Caro Quintero's ranch in Veracruz and Central America airports to transport drugs and weapons. Plumlee asserted that "our operations were sanctioned by the federal government, controlled out of the Pentagon. The CIA acted in some cases as our logistical support team."[93] The three interviewees agreed that a CIA contract pilot (Werner Lotz), who worked for the *contras* and drug cartels, had flown Caro to Costa Rica.

The CIA cover-up of the Mexico-*contra* connection had proven successful since it never became a media scandal, unlike the Iran-*contra* affair that shook the U.S. political scene in 1986.[94] Nevertheless, in 1985, press accounts had linked the *contra* to drug trafficking, stirring a U.S. Senate investigation that resulted in the *Kerry Committee Report,* released on April 3, 1989.[95] Although the report mentioned Camarena's case, it overlooked the Mexican connection and minimized the extent of the *contra'*s drug trafficking activities.[96]

---

[93] La Jeneusse, "US intelligence assets"

[94] From 1985 to 1986, senior officials of the Reagan administration sold weapons to Iran, violating the U.S. arms embargo against the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime. The proceeds of the arms sale were used to fund the Nicaraguan *contra*. As a result of investigations by the Tower Commission and independent counsel Lawrence Walsh, fourteen Reagan administration top officials were indicted, including Caspar Weinberg, Secretary of Defense; Lt. Col. Oliver North, deputy director of political-military affairs at the National Security Council; William Casey, Director of the CIA; Duane Clarridge, CIA chief of the Latin American division; Alan Fiers, CIA chief of the Central American Task Force; and Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter, National Security Advisors. President George H. Bush issued a pardon for most of them. Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout*.

[95] Brian Barger & Robert Parry, "Reports Link Nicaraguan Rebels to Cocaine Trafficking," *Associated Press*, December 20, 1985, https://www.apnews.com/c69eaf370de9884f907a39efd90337d3, accessed December 1st, 2018.

[96] "Drugs, Law Enforcement, and Foreign Policy. A report prepared by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate," (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000014976124;view=1up;seq=3, accessed December 1st, 2018.

Félix Gallardo was conveniently arrested on April 8, 1989, after the Sandinista government called for a dialogue that put an end to the civil war and demobilized the *contra*. Like Caro and Fonseca, Félix honored a seeming pact of silence about the Mexico-*contra* connection (see appendix 2, no. 7). While these events cannot be linked in a cause-effect sequence, there is definitely a correlation between the end of the conflict in Nicaragua and efforts by the U.S. government to hide evidence of its participation in the *contra*-drug trafficking affair.[97]

The history of the Mexican deep state became cyclical from 1977 onward. Mexican authorities secretly benefited from the illegal drug industry, but periodically launched anti-drug campaigns to address the U.S. pressure. The Mexican government used the counternarcotics policy to artificially control the drug market and eliminate drug lords for political gains. However, after 1985, there would never emerge a secret police service as powerful as the DFS nor a drug enterprise with the monopolist features of the Guadalajara cartel. Despite the rise and fall of different drug lords and state agents, the Mexican deep state has overcome all conflicts and crisis, becoming a truly parallel structure to the Mexican state.

---

[97] Fragments of this episode were tenuously unveiled in 1996, when journalist Gary Webb published the "Dark Alliance" series in the *San Jose Mercury News*, claiming that Nicaraguan drug traffickers who operated a drug ring in the San Francisco Bay Area had sold tons of Colombian cocaine to the gangs of Los Angeles, and had funneled millions in drug profits to the *contra* army protected by the CIA. Webb asserted that as a result of the cocaine flood there was a crack epidemic among African-American communities. The series prompted official investigations by the CIA, the House of Representatives, and the Department of Justice, which rejected most of Webb's claims. There was also a concerted effort by corporate press to discredit Webb's series, but later research demonstrated that while Webb overstated the magnitude of the San Francisco Bay Area ring in the crack epidemic, he was right about the CIA protection to Nicaraguan drug traffickers and the drug money funneled to the *contra*. However, the core of the public discussion in the United States was whether the CIA had purposely fostered the crack epidemic to prevent African-American communities from advancing, and the CIA-*contra* connection was rather neglected. Gary Webb, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Explosion* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998); McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 487-500; Ryan Grim, Matt Siedge, and Matt Ferner, "Key Figures in CIA-Crack Cocaine Scandal Begin to Come Forward," *Huffington Post*, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/10/gary-webb-dark-alliance_n_5961748.html?ec_carp=7354930658827409657, accessed November 13, 2018.

In the 1990s, a new generation of drug lords, mostly related to Félix Gallardo, agreed to form new crime syndicates with well-defined operation zones throughout the country. Tijuana, Sinaloa, Juárez, and El Golfo were the names of the new cartels that would dominate the drug scene and, along with new splinter groups, would become the protagonists of the second drug war that began in 2006. It is not coincidental that the majority of new drug lords were born in the municipalities targeted by Operation Condor. Amado Carrillo Fuentes, Ismael Zambada García, Joaquín Guzmán Loera, Héctor Palma Salazar, the Arellano-Félix brothers, and the Beltrán-Leyva brothers from the valleys and highlands of Sinaloa, and the Salazar-Zamorano brothers from Chínipas, Chihuahua, experienced the height of state terror as youngsters. Although they harvested the profits of the state-mafia nexus, they also wielded violence to a greater degree than Operation Condor. Indeed, the Mexican government sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind, as "Oseas" had envisioned.

The Formation of a Payoff System

A large part of the state agents allied to the Guadalajara cartel had participated in either anti-guerrilla or anti-drug operations. The distinctive feature of the Guadalajara complex was the seeming fusion between criminals and state agents. From 1982 to 1984, the Guadalajara cartel had no restraints to eliminate rivals, expand their business to other countries, and intervene in transnational politics. Drug lords might have wrongly assumed that their power was equal if not superior to Mexican institutions, but the Camarena's case blatantly showed that they were mere subjects of the PRI's clientelist regime. It was also clear that the PRI could use and dispose drug lords and top level officials, but not the heads of the state or the deep state. During the PRI era,

former presidents, secretaries of state, and high-ranking officers were never prosecuted; on the contrary, they were rewarded.

There is compelling evidence to sustain that the participation of state agents in the counterinsurgency wars along the 1970s functioned as a filter to become a member of an elite with dual privileges. The government gave those state agents medals and awards in public and paid them off with an opportunity to partake in illegal activities in the cover netherworld. Both public and secret rewards were due to state agents' contributions to consolidating the PRI's hegemony, curtailing independent powers, decentralizing the drug industry from the Golden Triangle, and reinforcing a federal overseeing of drug trafficking networks. But not all members of the national security apparatus and law enforcement who intervened in the defeat of guerrilla movements and the reorganization of the drug industry could benefit from illegal activities.

The pattern clearly shows that only officials and officers who stood out in the counterinsurgency campaigns could join the deep state—even though not all entitled agents chose that path. Given their field experience, COIN agents had a first-hand knowledge of the public sphere and the covert netherworld. Both DFS and PJF commandants and high-ranking officers led rings of drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling, smuggling of weapons and goods, car theft, and both domestic and transnational human trafficking. Scholars who believe that Mexico began to turn into a "narco-state" or "narco-economy" during the early 1980s, neglect that although the drug industry played a central role, it was never an isolated activity since illegal economy comprised a bundle of criminal activities that were mutually reinforcing and state agents overseen them all.[98]

---

[98] Scott, "Drugs, Anti-communism…," 188.

This section refers to public servants who had a prominent position in the counterinsurgency apparatus and became white-collar criminals. Notwithstanding that evidence exists about the enrichment by Echeverría, López Portillo, and De la Madrid during their terms, it is unclear how they profited from illegal activities. James Mill claimed that DEA's Central Tactic Program (CENTAC, initiated in 1973) uncovered evidence against Echeverría and López Portillo, who reportedly amassed hundreds of millions of dollars in criminal profits.[99] Without further proof, it would be sketchy to assume that as commanders-in-chief of the counterinsurgency wars, presidents were the ones who benefited the most from the drug trade. A similar argument can be applied to ministers of Interior and Defense.

The DFS was the institution that largely controlled Mexico's criminal networks in major cities since its foundation in 1947. As Shannon exposed in *Desperados,* since the 1970s virtually every DFS agent was involved in racketeering. DFS directors García Paniagua and Nazar Haro took criminality to a higher, even transnational, level. Nazar was a counterinsurgency mastermind and a CIA asset, but his role has been overstated given his ubiquitous presence throughout the 1970s. Whenever a scandal broke out, media outlets spotlighted Nazar, disregarding that the actual leader of Nazar's group was García Paniagua. As the liaison between the PRI, the military, the DFS, and the criminal underworld, García Paniagua accumulated a great deal of power and built an economic empire based on graft and money laundering.[100]

---

[99] Mills, *The Underground empire*, 1082.

[100] Juan Veledíaz, *Jinetes de Tlatelolco. Marcelino García Barragán y otros relatos del ejército mexicano* (Mexico City: Proceso, 2017), 190-192; Sam Dillon, "Javier García Paniagua, 61, Mexican Ruling Party Loyalist," *The New York Times*, November 28, 1998, https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/28/world/javier-garcia-paniagua-61-mexican-ruling-party-loyalist.html, accessed December 30, 2018.

Nazar Haro's illicit activities were finally exposed in 1981 when he was pointed as "protector" for a car theft ring that smuggled luxury cars from the United States into Mexico.[101] In 1980, the FBI launched Operation Cargo to investigate the case and found out that over a period of years, the ring had stolen four thousand cars worth more than $30 million. By mid-1981, several Mexican agents were indicted, among them Esteban Guzmán Salgado, DFS commandant in Sinaloa; Javier García Morales, the son of the then president of the PRI García Paniagua; and Jaime Alcalá, the former co-coordinator of Operation Condor executed by the *Cochi Loco* two years ago.[102]

According to Shannon, the case provoked a discussion about Nazar Haro's indictment between the FBI criminal and counterintelligence divisions. The latter backed the petition by Gordon McGinley, FBI legal attaché of the U.S. embassy in Mexico City to protect Nazar. In August 1981, McGinley wrote that both the CIA station and legat believed that the security of the United States concerning "terrorism, intelligence, and counterintelligence in Mexico, would suffer a disastrous blow if Nazar were forced to resign."[103] U.S. Attorney William Kennedy leaked to the U.S. press that the CIA was blocking Nazar's indictment because he was an

[101] The unclassified FBI files regarding Operation Cargo censored the names of DFS agents under investigation, turning information useless. National Security Archive, Mexico Documentation Project, [Unclassified file of Operation Cargo], Box 39.

[102] Other Mexican defendants were the car theft band leader Gilberto Peraza Mayén; DFS commandants Ramón Peseros and Guillermo Lira; DFS agents or members of the White Brigade Ricardo Rodríguez, Juventino Prado, Marín Arrambide Dávila, Jaime Garza Garza, Raúl Pérez Carmona, Santiago Torres, Enrique Castillo, Cipriano Rodríguez, Jorge Fernández, Javier Bustos Alcalá, Amado Cruz; PJF agents Carlos and Ernesto Otal; highway patrol commandant Carlos Solís; customs officials Francisco Arredondo and Veytia, and an official of the Federal Register of Motor Vehicles, Ramón Rangel. The only defendant who spent prison time in the United States was Peraza Mayén. Prado and Pérez Carmona would be later involved in the assassination of Manuel Buendía. Shannon, *Desperados*, 204-205.

[103] Shannon, *Desperados*, 206.

indispensable source of intelligence in Mexico and Central America; in consequence, Kennedy was fired.

Nazar resigned his position as DFS director in January 1982.[104] He was overconfident about his immunity and in April 1982, traveled to Los Angeles, CA to file an $11 million defamation lawsuit against *Time* magazine for claiming he was a key figure in the car theft ring. In a surprising turn, Nazar was indicted and arrested, but only spent twenty-seven hours in prison given that the Justice Department managed to set his bail at two hundred thousand dollars. Nazar returned to Mexico and the U.S. justice system listed him as fugitive along other Mexican officials.[105] The car theft ring was the lesser of Nazar crimes, yet he was never investigated by U.S. authorities for being colluded with drug lords. In 1989, when García Paniagua served as Mexico City's chief of police, he invited Nazar to become his Intelligence director, but human rights organizations intervened to prevent his appointment. Nazar never held a government position again, although he became an extraofficial consultant for national security affairs through the late 1990s.

Arturo Durazo Moreno, the Police Chief of Mexico City (1976-1982) who became extremely powerful because of his close-knit friendship with president López Portillo, was recognized for having disarticulated the Liga through the Brigade 15, better known as the Jaguar Group. But in the public sphere, Durazo was more famous for having created a racketeering

---

[104] The magazine *Proceso* revealed Nazar's case for the first time in Mexico in August 1981, but such exposure did not cause Nazar's resignation as Shannon assumed. García Paniagua's group suffered a major defeat when president López Portillo declined to choose García as presidential candidate. García resigned to his position as Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare in late December 1981 and Nazar was asked to resign on January 13, 1982. Aguayo, *La Charola*, 236.

[105] Shannon, *Desperados*, 208. For Nazar's personal account of the case see Rodríguez Castañeda, *El policía*.

empire, which included a widespread cocaine ring.[106] Francisco Sahagún Baca, the Judicial Police chief who hunt down the Liga in Sonora and, as Director of Investigations for the Prevention of Crime (DIPD) in Mexico City, was responsible for the extermination of the last Liga's cells and the Massacre of the Tula River (1982), sold protection to crime syndicates and became a drug trafficker himself.[107]

As soon as De la Madrid took office, he ordered the investigation of the Tula River slaughter as a symbol of a new era of "moral renovation," and Durazo Moreno and several members of his group were arrested in 1984. Sahagún was also indicted but became a fugitive. The official version states that Sahagún was killed during a police assault in Michoacán in 1989, though journalist accounts reported that he was arrested, tortured, and executed. Another popular version is that Sahagún pretended to be a detained-disappeared in order to continue his criminal activities.[108]

Generals Quirós Hermosillo and Acosta Chaparro are among the cases that best exemplify the dual nature of the payoff system. During the counterinsurgency campaigns in Guerrero, officers appointed to special missions to the Military Air Base No. 7 received a 50%

---

[106] The demise of Durazo as a cocaine kingpin coincided with the rise of the Guadalajara cartel. Dennis Wagner, "Arturo Durazo Moreno: The story of 'El Negro's' secret, corrupt life dug up by Prescott man," *The Republic*, February 11, 2018, https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-investigations/2018/02/11/arturo-durazo-moreno-story-el-negros-secret-corrupt-life-dug-up-prescott-man/700687001/, accessed November 29, 2018.

[107] In 1982, Arturo Durazo ordered the capture and torture of twenty Colombians who belonged to a gang of bank robbers and cocaine smugglers. Twelve detainees were released after bribing the police with money and cocaine, but DIPD agents killed the rest along with other criminals. Later on, thirteen decomposing bodies showed up in Hidalgo's Tula River that served for sewer discharge, triggering public outrage. "Durazo ordenó la matanza de Tula, decía Sahagún Baca," *Proceso*, August 4, 1984, https://www.proceso.com.mx/139188/durazo-ordeno-la-matanza-de-tula-decia-sahagun-baca, accessed November 29, 2018.

[108] Sahagún lacks a death certificate and the PJF failed to give certainty about his whereabouts. This case has remained as an issue of public interest because Sahagún Baca was cousin of Marta Sahagún, the wife of president Vicente Fox (2000-2006). "Ocupa ahora el lugar donde él colocaba a sus víctimas," *Proceso*, August 12, 1989, https://www.proceso.com.mx/153324/ocupa-ahora-el-lugar-donde-el-colocaba-a-sus-victimas,; "Un muerto que podría estar vivo," *Proceso*, November 11, 2017, https://www.proceso.com.mx/92692/un-muerto-que-podria-estar-vivo, accessed November 29, 2018.

bonus over their salary as well as other benefits.[109] On top of that, Acosta, Quirós, and Barquín became accomplices of local drug lords in Guerrero, and when the Guadalajara cartel split in several groups, they sided with the Juárez cartel. They were also close—or maybe belonged—to the group led by García Paniagua. A closer look at their individual trajectories reveal other aspects of their participation in both the national security apparatus and the deep state.

Francisco Quirós Hermosillo (1935-2006) was Infantry Major and assistant of the Secretary of Defense Gral. García Barragán in 1968. In the mid-70s he was appointed First Commander of the Second Battalion of Military Police, another major unit specialized in counterinsurgency. In 1976, Quirós was promoted to Brigadier General, became First Commander of the Military Police Brigade and Director of the Special Brigade.[110] That same year he received the Military Merit Award. In 1980, Quirós was again promoted to Brigade General and two years later to Divisional General, the highest rank within the military.

There is a striking annotation in Quirós' record: on October 27, 1979, he accompanied the Secretary of Defense Gral. Félix Galván to an official visit to Argentina, attending an invitation by Gral. Roberto Eduardo Viola, Commander in Chief of the Army and one of the participants in the 1976 military coup.[111] Quirós gave lectures to the army about anti-subversive

[109] Barajas, "Recibían sobresueldos ejecutores de guerrilleros."

[110] The Special Brigade, also known as White Brigade, was a multi-agency organization created in 1976 with the mission to exterminate urban guerrillas. Despite its extraordinary importance to explain the annihilation of guerrilla movements from 1976 to 1982, there are very few scholarly works about the White Brigade. See Rubén Ortiz Rosas, "La Brigada Especial, un instrumento de la contrainsurgencia urbana en el Valle de México (1976-1981)" (BA thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014).

[111] "C. Francisco Quirós Hermosillo, Ratificación de su grado de General de División D.E.M.," 3 de diciembre de 1982, Archivo Histórico y Memoria Legislativa del Senado de la República (herafter AHS), Ramo Público, Comisión Segunda de la Defensa Nacional, Exp. 3, f. 2.

struggle.[112] The Argentinean Military Junta might have been interested in how other countries had secretly eliminated their clandestine prisoners.

In 1970, Acosta Chaparro (1942-2012) received COIN training at the US Army Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, NC, and the US Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, GA. After his training as Green Beret, Acosta became a member of the Fusilier Parachute Brigade (BFP) and was recognized as one of the officers who annihilated the guerrilla movement led by Lucio Cabañas in 1974.[113] Acosta's most important contribution to the dirty war was orchestrating the "death flights" alongside Quirós Hermosillo. In the late 1970s, the governor of Guerrero, Rubén Figueroa, appointed him as commander in chief of every police agencies in the state. Acosta used his immunity to plant his own poppy crops in the Guerrero highlands, while at the same time he was promoted to brigadier general.[114]

Acosta Chaparro continued to serve as security advisor of the Guerrero government during the 1990s, as some media outlets pointed at him as one of the masterminds of the massacre of seventeen peasants in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero, in 1995—one of the many counterinsurgency episodes during the Zedillo administration (1994-2000) that disturbed the public opinion. Although the Mexican state rewarded Quirós and Acosta in both legal and covert realms for their services to defeat social and guerrilla movements, since these officers were part

---

[112] Jesús Aranda, "Sabía el alto mando de los ilícitos de Quirós." In his memoir, López Portillo described the officers' trip as an operation to obtain a safe conduct to former Argentinean president Héctor J. Cámpora to travel to Mexico. The Military Junta denied the Mexican request but allowed Cámpora to fly to Mexico in November 1979. López Portillo failed to mention the reasons for which the Secretary of Defense invited the number one counterinsurgency expert in Mexico to join him in such a delicate mission. Ibarrola, *El ejército y el poder*, kindle edition.

[113] "C. Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro Escapite, Ratificación de su grado de Coronel de Infantería," 28 de septiembre de 1984, AHS, Ramo Público, Comisión Segunda de la Defensa Nacional, Exp. 137, f. 19; "Mario C. Escapite (sic)," National Security Archive, Mexico Documentation Project, [Unclassified documents from the United States Department of State], Box 39.

[114] Humberto Padget, "Guerrero: caminando por los campos de la goma," *Sin Embargo*, February 16, 2015, http://www.sinembargo.mx/16-02-2015/1244681, accessed October 30, 2018.

of the struggles for hegemony within the deep state, they suffered the consequences of the reorganization of crime syndicates in early 2000, when the PRI finally accepted the victory of an opposition party—the National Action Party (PAN)—in the presidential elections.

Div. Gral. José de Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, who was appointed in 1996 as head of the National Institute to Fight Illegal Drugs, reportedly used official intelligence information for selling protection and weapons to the Juárez cartel. In early 1997, Rebollo became one of the highest-ranking officers ever convicted to a long prison sentence. Later that year, Amado Carrillo Fuentes, "The lord of the skies," leader of the Juárez cartel and the most powerful cocaine kingpin in the Americas at the time, allegedly died during a medical procedure. Brig. Gral. Arturo Cardona Pérez, who had participated in the counterinsurgency campaign against the Liga in Sonora, was also indicted for being the liaison between Gutiérrez Rebollo and Carrillo Fuentes.[115]

Quirós and Acosta, who were close to Gutiérrez Rebollo and Carrillo Fuentes, were also investigated and prosecuted by a military court. Shortly after the 2000 elections, the so-called "narco-officers" were arrested and imprisoned at the Military Camp No. 1 in a special section for military personnel, away from the abject cells that were used to hold guerrillas and drug traffickers. In 2002, a new military trial began against "narco-officers" for aggravated homicide, after DEA protected witness, Gustavo Tarín Chávez, revealed his own involvement in anti-

---

[115] Carlos Fazio, "Mexico: The Narco-General Case," *Transnational Institute*, December 1st, 1997, https://www.tni.org/en/article/mexico-the-narco-general-case#10b, accessed December 15, 2018. Journalist Isabel Arvide, an unofficial spokesperson of the military since the 1970s, reconstructed an alternative version based on interviews with Gutiérrez Rebollo and other witnesses. She suggests that the Secretary of Defense, Enrique Cervantes Aguirre, was the actual protector of Amado Carrillo and imprisoned Gutiérrez Rebollo to prevent him from leaking that information. Arvide, *Mis generales. Una crónica de amor y desamor sobre el poder militar en México* (Mexico City: Planeta, 2012), 99-126.

subversive and drug smuggling activities in the 1970s and 1980s as a subordinate of Quirós and Acosta.[116]

Tarín did not become a whistle blower for the sake of human rights and transparency, but likely because he was following a secret agenda to assure the conviction of his former bosses.[117] Moreover, the second trial against "narco-officers" violated several legal principles, as they should have been prosecuted by civil courts and for gross human rights abuses like torture, forced disappearance, and extrajudicial executions.

Quirós and Acosta were convicted for drug smuggling but were exonerated for aggravated homicide; they also had their military ranks removed. It is unclear what political group, domestic or foreign, was behind the strike against "narco-officers," but it does not seem coincidental that the weakening of the Juárez protection network led to the strengthening of the Sinaloa cartel, which was the most favored by the Fox administration (2000-2006), according to media reports.[118] It is worth mentioning that in 2001, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán bribed the Mexican authorities to escape from a maximum-security prison in Jalisco and resumed the leadership of the Sinaloa cartel. Twenty-five years after Operation Condor, Sinaloa became anew the most important hub of the drug-related economy in the country.

---

[116] Francisco Gómez Flores, "Declararán testigos de DEA en caso Quirós Hermosillo," *El Universal*, March 30, 2001, 1.

[117] Tarín was the only witness who attributed hundreds of executions to Quirós and Acosta, while other witnesses claimed that these officers were instructors about how to perform the "death flights," rather than executioners. Luis Alegre y Abel Barajas, "Asegura tener pruebas la Procuraduría militar," *Reforma*, September 28, 2002, 4A; Abel Barajas, "Abren por 'guerra sucia' juicio a Quirós y Acosta," *Reforma*, October 2, 2002, 4A.

[118] The discussion about whether the PAN administrations favored the Sinaloa cartel has not reached a conclusion. For the two sides of the controversy see John Burnett, Marisa Peñaloza, and Robert Benincasa, "Mexico Seems to Favor Sinaloa Cartel in Drug War: NPR," *National Public Radio*, May 19, 2010, https://www.npr.org/2010/05/19/126906809/mexico-seems-to-favor-sinaloa-cartel-in-drug-war, accessed December 15, 2018; and Malcolm Beith, "A Broken Mexico. Allegations of Collusion between the Sinaloa Cartel and Mexican Political Parties," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22, 5 (November 2011): 787-806.

Quirós Hermosillo died in 2006 without having retrieved his military rank. However, in 2007, the Felipe Calderón administration (2006-2012) took the unprecedented step of releasing Acosta Chaparro and restoring his grade, adding insult to injury.[119] The following year, Acosta retired in a ceremony at the Military Camp No. 1, where the SEDENA's high command awarded him for forty five years of service to the homeland.[120] Acosta then became a national security consultant for the war on drugs, a position he held until 2012, when he was shot dead.[121] Law enforcement authorities scapegoated a civilian for this crime, failing to provide a convincing explanation about his motive.[122] Acosta had accumulated a great deal of top intelligence and secret power, but also a long list of enemies. The highs and lows in Acosta's trajectory show the conflictive dynamics inside the deep state.

Acosta Chaparro was not an exceptional case of a Cold Warrior refunctionalized in the twenty-first century. Francisco Arellano Noblecía, the head of the anti-subversive campaign against the Liga in Sonora, had a similar recycling. After his participation in the slaughter of peasants in San Ignacio Río Muerto in 1975, Arellano became a member of the Presidential Guards and had an upward career in the public security service. In 1999, Arellano was appointed Director of Federal Support Forces (FFA) to the Federal Preventive Police (PFP), a military

---

[119] Mexican human rights organizations condemned Acosta's release and relatives of the detained-disappeared express their outrage. Gustavo Castillo, "Acosta Chaparro libre; recobrará grado militar," *La Jornada*, June 30, 2007, https://www.jornada.com.mx/2007/06/30/index.php?section=politica&article=007n1pol, accessed December 20, 2018.

[120] Silvia Otero, "Fue acusado de narco, hoy se retira con honores," *El Universal*, http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/159037.html, accessed December 20, 2018.

[121] Icela Lagunas, "Mataron a mi general," *Reporte Índigo*, https://www.reporteindigo.com/reporte/mataron-mi-general/, accessed December 20, 2018.

[122] It is possible that a crime syndicate had settled scores with the group to which Acosta belonged. On September 6, 2011, Javier García Morales, son of Javier García Paniagua, was killed. Eight days after Acosta's murder, his grandson Hugo Barquín, the son of Francisco Barquín Alonso, was assassinated. As a striking coincidence, Miguel Nazar Haro passed away also in early 2012, reportedly of depression.

branch of the police that became publicly known after its participation in cracking down the student strike at the UNAM in 2000. In 2009, Arellano was appointed Director of Internal Affairs of the Secretariat of Public Security in Mexico City, and one year later Chief of Police Staff.[123] He was never held accountable for his multiple human rights abuses.

Manuel Barlett Díaz represents one of the most astonishing cases of a multidecade survivor of the deep state. Despite his role as Secretary of Interior (1982-1988) that had him involved in repression of social movements, the assassinations of Buendía and Camarena, and the 1988 electoral fraud that helped Carlos Salinas de Gortari to allegedly usurp the presidency, Barlett was never charged with any of those offenses. In the early twenty-first century, he left the PRI's ranks to team with center-left parties and became an ally of the populist leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Barlett was appointed director of the Federal Electricity Commission in the López administration (2018-2024). That administration also appointed Federal Attorney Alejandro Gertz Manero, the first PGR National Coordinator of Operation Condor.[124] Other state agents who belonged to the entanglement of counterinsurgency and drugs since the 1970s were not necessarily "recycled" but remained active in Mexican politics decades later; their stories should be disclosed.[125]

---

[123] Arvide, *Mis generales*, 66-67.

[124] On many occasions, Gertz has referred to Condor as one of the highlights of his career. Gertz is likely the only politician who has collaborated with virtually all political parties. It seems clear that one of the reasons because he has been systematically appointed to top positions in both the national security apparatus and law enforcement has to do with his knowledge about the covert netherworld. Elías Camhaji, "Fiscal General: Alejandro Gertz Manero: el fiscal que supo esperar," *El País*, January 19, 2019, https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/01/18/mexico/1547826190_621298.html, accessed January 19, 2019.

[125] Among top politicians who belonged to both the state and the deep state since the 1970s onward, managing top intelligence or serving as powerbrokers and middlemen between the mafia and the state were Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios (1927-2000), Carlos Hank González (1927-2001), Manlio Fabio Beltrones (1952), Jorge Carrillo Olea (1937), and Manuel Mondragón y Kalb (1936). Carrillo Olea and Mondragón y Kalb became unofficial national security advisors of the López administration, and Beltrones remains as one of the most powerful figures within the PRI.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided evidence about the consolidation of the Mexican deep state during the early 1980s, as a result of the convergence between counterinsurgency and anti-drug efforts. The order that emerged from Operation Condor expanded criminal sovereignty to other Mexican regions and reinforced state control over drug lords. That statement might seem contradictory, but it actually reflects the contingency of struggles for hegemony. Drug lords accumulated vast power, which led them to believe that they were the actual sovereigns; however, whenever they "crossed the line" or became a hindrance to the Mexican state, they proved expendable. The PRI harbored the fantasy of holding a Leviathan-like control of drug lords but had to deal with a fusillade of unexpected events that resulted from the blending of security forces and the mafia. The Buendía and Camarena affairs compromised the Mexican ruling party and provided an unpleasant radiography of the deep state.

Despite increasing cooperation between Mexico and the United States during the De la Madrid administration, the U.S. government took advantage of intelligence data to curtail Mexico's sovereignty. U.S. agencies consistently put pressure on the Mexican government to change its official non-interventionist policy; it was not sufficient for them that the DFS followed CIA instructions. It must be acknowledged that the ruling party went to great lengths to preserve a margin of independence after U.S. officials denounced its top officials for conspiring with criminals. Mexico did not change its policy towards Central America, but the neoliberal turn occurred in a moment of great tension in the relation with the United States after Camarena's murder, and a domestic multifactorial crisis. Customary interpretations explain the emergence of the Mexican neoliberalismo as a result of the 1982 economic crisis and the exhaustion of the

developmentalist model. It is necessary to do further research to find out whether the dynamics of the deep state played a role, even if marginal, in the neoliberal turn.

For members of the Mexican security forces, saving the homeland from communism and maintaining political stability were not easy tasks. As Acosta Chaparro implied in *Movimiento subversivo*, state agents believed that they were heroes because they were putting their lives at risk. Their political subjectivity made them feel entitled to both public and confidential rewards, notwithstanding the gross human rights violations they had perpetrated. After all, they only had epitomized the *raison d'état*. The participation of state agents in the counterinsurgency wars, their support to the Nicaraguan *contra*, and the payoff system they benefited from, make evident that their master framework during the Cold War was not revolutionary nationalism but anti-communism *a la mexicana*.

In 1985, the SEDENA authorized the producers of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*—a commercial film related to the Vietnam War—to shoot inside the Military Air Base No. 7, as if Pie de la Cuesta had not been a hotspot for death flights and drug smuggling. The film likely served as a distractor to hush haunting rumors about the military base. This episode demonstrates how far the military authorities went to cover up its crimes. By raising the counterinsurgency doctrine, the Mexican state broke fundamental principles, like the people's right to bury their dead and honor their memory.[126] Such rupture would have nefarious consequences during the second war on drugs, as disappearance and desecration of corpses were taken to a massive level and turned into every day practices. Despite the infighting among factions of the deep state, all of them agreed on impeding that their members were brought before a judge for human rights

[126] For an analysis in depth of the rights of the dead and the politics of grief see Adam Rosenblatt, *Digging for the Disappeared. Forensic Science after Atrocity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

abuses related to either the dirty war or the drug war. Immunity was a key element of the payoff system. In 2001, the Fox administration created the Special Prosecutor's Office for Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP), which had a major focus on the dirty war period but ended up being a short-live simulacrum of transitional justice. While there were a few indictments of top-level officials like Luis Echeverría, Luis de la Barreda Moreno and Nazar Haro, all cases were overturned on technicalities. In other cases, the FEMOSPP failed to investigate officials like Sergio García Ramírez, the renowned jurist and member of the PRI, who held several positions during the worst years of the dirty war and the first war on drugs. Oddly enough, García became President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2004-2007). The FEMOSPP was closed in 2006 without having convicted any state perpetrator.[127]

Mexico is probably the only Latin American country which has failed to achieve a transitional justice policy. Also, unlike other countries in the region that experienced military dictatorships and dirty wars, in Mexico human rights organizations were the only ones who entered the fray to demand truth and justice. Regardless of the victims' identities—ordinary civilians, alleged drug-related workers or guerrillas—relatives of the detained-disappeared have converged in the same struggle. Nevertheless, both rulers of the dual state and their victims have been largely forgotten by Mexican society. This may not be a case of social negligence, but rather the result of a prolonged *de facto* state of siege, which has led to an extended rupture of ethical principles and has plunged the society on fear. Terror, secrecy, immunity, and top-level complicity with one of the most profitable illegal businesses in history proved a solid foundation for the deep state.

---

[127] For a depiction of the FEMOSPP's shortcomings see Javier Treviño Rangel, "Policing the Past: Transitional Justice and the Special Prosecutor's Office in Mexico, 2000-2006," (PhD diss., The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012).

Conclusions: The De Facto State of Exception as the Exception of the Mexican State

Key Findings

This project analyzed how state terror by the *priísta* regime created a new chapter of the long history of violence in the Golden Quadrilateral, affecting principally the rural residents of the Sierra Madre Occidental. During the 1970s, Mexico's national security apparatus aimed to eliminate an "internal enemy," a malleable label that the ruling party used conveniently to target all guerrilla movements and selected drug growers and traffickers. Terror methods against both groups were identical, but state intentions were different regarding each one: the security forces wiped out guerrillas while regulated drug traffickers. Some interpretations have drawn a linear progression from the dirty war to the drug war, but my work shows that both conflicts overlapped, and the PRI benefited from their intersections to strengthen its hegemony.

This dissertation provided an analysis of guerrilla movements, which showed that the causes of collective insurgent action in the northwest were endemic and fueled a period of armed mobilization from 1964 to 1981. This region was a pole of attraction to radical activists because of the organic roots of social unrest. The Liga's militants aimed to implant their *sui generis* revolutionary project in the Golden Quadrilateral and their call to arms proved to be successful among the radicalized student movement and some politicized day laborers and peasants. It was not a coincidence that the last Liga's militants who were either killed or disappeared between 1979 and 1981 were from Sinaloa and Sonora, nor that after their elimination the Liga was dissolved.

By comparing the activity of the Liga in both the Sierra Madre and Sinaloa, it is noticeable that while the *Enfermos*' movement reached a wider scale of population, the small "Arturo Gámiz" Political-Military Committee (CPMAG) had a deeper impact on the lives of the downtrodden in the highlands. In the case of Guarijío people, the "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando unwittingly helped them to win land and break their reliance on caciques. The guerrilla commandos of Chínipas and Urique taught the Rarámuri people political-military strategies, and peasants formed an independent guerrilla after the Liga split with them. This guerrilla movement was the last Rarámuri insurgency in their multi-centennial tradition of uprisings. Both military and social counterinsurgency campaigns weakened indigenous communities to the point that they could not defend themselves from the predatory advancement of the drug industry onto their territory. However, it is not possible to assume that their defeat disarticulated indigenous resistance in a permanent fashion. The Cahíta peoples have demonstrated an unusual capacity to overcome the toughest challenges.

My work is one of the first to focus on the simultaneous formation of guerrilla culture and narco-culture as antagonistic subjectivities predicated on violence. Given their different ideologies, values, and mores, the Liga's militants did not forge any type of alliance with drug traffickers. The interactions between guerrillas and *narcos* were pragmatic and sporadic. Some *Enfermos* purchased weapons from drug traffickers and received training on how to use them, but drug traffickers did not draw anything from guerrillas. There are references about drug-traffickers snitching on armed activists, but they are insufficient to prove that *narcos* had been part of the counterinsurgency campaigns. Nevertheless, *narcos* indirectly benefited from the dirty war because the Mexican government used the rhetoric about the drug war as a smoke screen to target guerrilla and social movements instead of drug lords.

Notwithstanding the separation between *Enfermos* and *narcos*, they also had some commonalities stemming from the fact that they grew up in the same milieu. Both guerrillas and *narcos* drew on narratives of regional history that framed violence in terms of the exaltation of masculinity and heroism and not as a social disgrace. The *Enfermos* appropriated socialist values of justice, equality, and solidarity with the oppressed, and also adapted the guerrilla culture to their local codes and artistic tastes. The Liga also represented a new model of socialism and the utopian face of Mexican modernity, yet their authoritarian hue caused the rest of the left to perceive it as a dangerous enemy.

Drug traffickers built a collective identity based on a hybrid of cultural referents from the highlands and the valleys. Narco-culture extolled the immediacy of upward social mobility, conspicuous consumption, and social markers to emphasize belonging to drug gangs, and it also spread the idea that individuals must achieve power and wealth at any cost, including through systematic killing and other atrocities. Thus, narco-culture departed from its regional dimensions to appropriate global capitalist values and render an extreme version of them. In a bizarre way, narco-culture blended the individualistic and consumeristic side of the American way of life, the ostentation of wealth of the Mexican upper class, highlanders' tastes, and necropolitics.

In the environment of extremes so prevalent in the 1970s, the Sinaloan youth was pushed to pick a side among those competing subjectivities. However, the Mexican state intervened to root out the guerrilla utopia. While the guerrilla culture survived in Guerrero, in the northwest the security forces eliminated every aspect of the guerrilla movement until prevent its reproduction. After the dirty war, no collective identity has ever been associated with the *Enfermos* or the Liga. Conversely, narco-culture was one of the winners of the Cold War

struggle for cultural hegemony and expanded far beyond the Golden Triangle and drug-traffickers.

The annihilation of the most radical generation of Cold War Mexico thus contributed to the formation of a regime of institutionalized criminality dominated by the alliance between top state agents and drug lords. Even if the Mexican government simulated a war on drugs to comply with the global prohibitionist regime, top officials were systematically involved in the drug trade. Paradoxically, state agents who participated in both anti-guerrilla and anti-drug campaigns used their counterinsurgency merits to justify their participation in the illegal drug trade, as part of a covert payoff system sanctioned by the Mexican government.

My research is not the first to claim that the drug war was an instrument that the Mexican state has used not to put an end to drug production and smuggling, but to artificially control the drug market. Yet, my work demonstrates that such control did not began in the 1980s, as most authors have sustained, but in the 1970s with the counternarcotics policy that reached its peak with Operation Condor.[1] This anti-drug operation implied the reorganization of the drug industry by decentralizing the Golden Triangle as the largest drug producing region. Its most profound result was the formation of a state-backed crime syndicate with monopolist features, which fostered the consolidation of the the deep state.

The *priísta* regime accomplished those results by carrying out massive human rights violations. The Task Force "Condor" (FTC) made inroads into drug grower communities to rape women, kill or abduct men, plunder their belongings, torched their legal or illegal cash crops,

---

[1] Carlos Resa Nestares used compelling evidence to show how the Mexican state regulated the drug market from the 1980s onward. Carlos Resa Nestares, "El Estado como maximizador de rentas del crimen organizado. El caso del tráfico de drogas en México," Biblioteca del Instituto Internacional de Gobernabilidad, Document No. 88, October 2011.

and beat everyone in the hamlets, as if they were dangerous criminals. No one investigated whether peasants had committed a major offense, the military assaults were indiscriminate. The victims' isolation, coupled with the characteristics of the authoritarian regime, guaranteed secrecy about the everyday development of the drug war and unaccountability for perpetrators of abuses.

There were favorable circumstances in the Golden Triangle for state terror to thrive, for example, the asymmetry of power between state and non-state actors; the antecedent of successful counterinsurgency campaigns against the Liga in the same region, and the fact that highlanders—who had been unfairly stigmatized and had their humanity denied—lacked external allies or brokers who made their complaints significant in the public sphere or abroad. With the exception of the *Colegio de Abogados Eustaquio Buelna* (CAEB), no human rights or civil rights organization ever defended the victims of Operation Condor.

Most statistics about Operation Condor focused on drug seizures, but no study has quantified its human costs. The available sources suggest that there were thousands of victims of bodily harm and the Golden Triangle experienced the largest amount of internal displacement nationwide during the late 1970s. However, the implementation of the FTC in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Jalisco, and Michoacán has yet to be studied, and such data is needed to build a comparative analysis.

Besides the lack of quantitative studies, there is also a dearth of ethnographic research on highlanders who were either drug growers or regular farmers—the sole topic that has stirred up academic interest is narco-culture. I believe that an ethnographic study of Golden Triangle communities would trace more direct connections between children and youth who were victims of Operation Condor and other anti-drug campaigns and the twenty-first century *sicarios* who

have nourished the ranks of paramilitary armies—they embody the complexity of simultaneously being victims and victimizers. That study would show that other sets of victims remained silent and focused on surviving without any state or social support. Both the victim-victimizers and the invisibilized victims deserve to be heard.

In my journey through the highlands of Sinaloa and Sonora I gained a better understanding of why some peasants persisted in taking part in the drug production chain despite the mayhem that anti-drug campaigns caused to their communities. Drug growing was not only a matter of seizing on opportunities to overcome extreme poverty, it had also to do with a subjectivity shaped by state violence. Peasants realized that the distinction between legality and illegality was irrelevant because their lives were worthless for the state. They epitomized what Agamben called the *nuda vita* (bare life). Being a legal or illegal grower led to the same dead end, but at least illicit drugs provided a living as long as there was an international demand, because if peasants relied exclusively on the domestic market, drug growing would not be a profitable activity.

Both drug demand and peasant subjectivity explain why drug growing continued in the Golden Triangle after the most violent stages of Operation Condor. By 1982, the landscape of drug production changed, and crime syndicates began to use coerced labor. Caro's *El Búfalo* ranch employed ten thousand peasants who were forced to stay on the plantation. In the years to come, coerced labor would evolve into slavery in the Golden Triangle plantations. Those labor systems, recycled from the past, did not eliminate the voluntary participation of highlanders in drug growing, thereby different types of production relations overlapped. A study of the history of drug-related labor systems in the Sierra Madre would clarify how those systems coexist.

Another of the most important consequences of Operation Condor was the subjection of drug traffickers from all levels to the *priísta* clientelist regime. My work sides with authors who have refuted the popular idea that Mexico became a narco-state, given that during the one-party state era crime syndicates never surpassed the state in financial or military power.[2] On the contrary, Operation Condor created a pattern through which the state used and disposed drug lords at its political or economic convenience. The new *narco-pact* that arouse out of Operation Condor outstripped earlier arrangements of drug lords with local authorities. From 1978 onward, federal authorities have overseen drug-related networks.

Given that drug lords and state agents did not trust each other nor had a loyalty bond despite their collusion, the exponential increase of graft was the chief mechanism to balance the mafia-state relationship. While state agents might have heard the famous criminal warning "silver or lead" (*plata o plomo*), top officials displayed a more powerful threat: graft or extermination. Counterinsurgency operations in the northwest offered blatant evidence of the state's capacity to wipe out an armed threat, a caveat that did not escape those involved in the drug trade.

Studies on Mexican drug trafficking for this period usually disregard the impact that state violence had on the actors who developed this activity, whose agency should not be downplayed. Similar to activists who became revolutionary guerrillas because of state repression, the extreme violence of anti-drug campaigns transformed illegal actors by making them more defensive and militaristic. In the early 1980s, the surviving drug lords underwent a process similar to

---

[2] Resa Nestares crossed data of different decades, particularly from the 1990s and the 2000s. Although his work was prior to the 2006 drug war and some of his theses proved wrong, he demonstrated that the misnamed "drug cartels" never had the power to challenge the state. Resa, "Nueve mitos del narcotráfico en México (de una lista no exhaustiva)," https://www.casede.org/index.php/bibliotecacasede/crimen-organizado/narcotrafico/245-nueve-mitos-del-narcotrafico-en-mexico-de-una-lista-no-exhaustiva, accessed February 11, 2019.

radicalization, but instead of striving for political utopia they opted to achieve the monopolistic control of the drug market.

The character who best incarnated the rationality of the *narco* project was Félix Gallardo, immortalized by *corridos* as the boss of bosses (*jefe de jefes*)—a wordplay that implied that he ruled over political bosses too.[3] The *narco* project, in fact, had inadvertent political intentions as it entailed a de facto territorial hegemony. The Guadalajara Cartel sought to control *plazas* and destroy competitors by employing disturbing methods that they had learned from the state's pedagogy of terror. Drug lords correctly assumed that their vast concentration of power would shield them against the violence of anti-drug campaigns. As clients of the PRI, they maximized the benefits of this relationship to turn the Guadalajara Cartel into the most important illegal enterprise in Mexico.

While the capacity of illegal actors to exert extreme violence resulted from local processes, circumstances beyond them like the rampant corruption of the *priísta* regime, the unending U.S. demand for drugs, the coca boom, and the U.S. proxy war in Nicaragua, boosted the *narco* project in a way that not even Félix Gallardo could have envisioned when he was bodyguard of Leopoldo Celis' family. International conditions made the illicit drug industry even more profitable that in the pre-Condor years, turning drug lords into clandestine members of Mexico's political and economic elites. Under no other circumstances would have Badiraguato's drug lords beco transnational kingpins.

None of these processes was linear or straightforward. Different agencies of the federal government—the PGR-PJF, the DFS, and the SEDENA—were involved in a genuine competition to devise how to tackle the drug problem nationwide, and illegal actors had to come

---

[3] See the lyrics of the *narcocorrido Jefe de Jefes* in the appendix 2, no. 8.

to terms on how to resist state pressure. It is possible that some Mexican agents participated in the anti-drug campaigns with the sincere conviction that they were fighting a social ill, but there is no evidence that they had any influence in fashioning how the Mexican state managed the problem. At the end, drug profits fueled corruption at all levels.

Moreover, the ruling party had to deal with the meddling of U.S. agencies in Mexico's affairs. Those agencies not only had conflicting agendas but chose different teams: the DEA sided with the PGR-PJF and the CIA with the DFS. There is evidence to show that the U.S. government was aware of the gross human rights violations by Mexican security forces and their practice of "selective enforcement" and extensive graft yet opted for dissimulation because those were important allies in the continental fight against communism.

My dissertation described the extreme complexity of the first drug war as it expanded from the northwest to Jalisco, but since my focus was the Golden Quadrilateral, I did not provide a detailed history of the Guadalajara Cartel. However, I had to include the making of the cartel to support my argument about the deep state as a structure that emerged within the Mexican state to comprise crime syndicates, illicit commodities for the global market, and the national security apparatus. The Guadalajara Cartel partially disintegrated after the Camarena's case, but the deep state prevailed as a secret site of interwoven institutionality and illegality. Future research about the deep state should focus on the instability of this structure, given the turnover of illegal actors who made agreements with top officials.

The stunning wealth that the illegal drug trade has generated from the 1960s onward has benefited corrupted top officials, money launderers, and banks more than drug lords. While the latter created racketeering empires that proved unsteady and transitory, the former flourished from a position of impunity. State agents and money launderers have rarely been investigated or

prosecuted, their fortunes have gone unchecked, and they have been able to continue their activities in the political or financial realm throughout the years, despite occasional accusations against them in media outlets.[4]

The U.S. trial of "El Chapo" Guzmán between 2018 and 2019, was the last episode to confirm this pattern. In 2016, Mexican authorities captured and later extradited "El Chapo" to the United States, after decades of receiving bribes from the Sinaloa Cartel as testimonies in the court revealed.[5] "El Chapo" was sentenced to life imprisonment, while other lawbreakers have never been indicted. The troops from the CANADOR operation who ravaged Guzmán's village, La Tuna, Badiraguato in 1975;[6] the officials who took drug money for years; and the owners of banks who laundered the Sinaloa Cartel's profits remain in the shadows. Both the U.S. and the Mexican governments have constructed drug lords into fearsome public enemies, an imagery that serves as a smoke screen for the complex entanglement of political and financial institutions and organized crime.

What We Should Know About the Secret Wars, But Still Do Not Know

The fact that neither the dirty war nor the drug war have been the focus of a genuine transitional justice policy has been a major source of opaqueness. Although there have been a few official initiatives to investigate Mexico's dirty war in the early twenty-first century, they

---

[4] Resta, "El Estado como maximizador."

[5] Alan Feuer, "El Chapo Jury Hears About Bribes to Mexico's Public Security Secretary," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/nyregion/el-chapo-jury-hears-about-bribes-to-mexicos-public-security-secretary.html; Alan Feuer, "Former Mexican President Peña Nieto Took $100 Million Bribe, Witness at El Chapo Trial Says," *The New York Times*, Jane 15, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/15/nyregion/el-chapo-trial.html, accessed February 20, 2019.

[6] Enciso, *Nuestra historia narcótica*, 123-126.

have only rendered general estimates regarding executions, disappearances, and torture. Victims of forced displacement and sexual violence have been disregarded and no initiative has ever included the victims of the first drug war.[7] There is no official account of human rights violators, whether in the lowest or the highest ranks of the military or in the police agencies. Only a handful of well-known perpetrators have been singled out by media outlets.

The lack of research that meticulously analyzes the victims of state terror turns insubstantial the claims that minimize the ruling party's violence during the Cold War. An honest intellectual perspective must admit that we still do not know how many victims there were or in what regions state terror caused more havoc beyond the case of Guerrero, which is the only state that has had a truth commission. I believe that the Golden Quadrilateral could have experienced even more violence than Guerrero, but my study did not include a quantitative approach.[8]

No official explanation or academic research has ever addressed how the long-standing dirty war was funded. When did the Mexican security forces begin to use drug proceeds in counterinsurgency campaigns? Only the full-fledged declassification of SEDENA, PGR, SEGOB, and Hacienda archives could provide information about such funding and hints about the secret "drug tax." Another topic that I regularly came across in the sources concerned gun trafficking, which was inextricably related to the drug trade. As far as I know, there is no research about gun trafficking rings operating in Mexico in the 1970s. Traffickers sold weapons

---

[7] See Sotelo Marbán, ed., *La verdad negada.* Fernando Calderón and I calculated that during the dirty war there were at least 3,000 victims of executions and forced disappearance but did not take into account the victims of counternarcotics operations. Our estimation was based on official reports, although the DFS, the DGIPS, and the SEDENA did not report on every victim. Calderón & Cedillo, "Introduction," 8.

[8] My reference point about Guerrero is the official report by the Comisión de la Verdad del Estado de Guerrero, "Informe final de actividades," October 15, 2014, http://congresogro.gob.mx/files/InformeFinalCOMVERDAD.pdf, accessed March 1st, 2019.

indistinctly to *narcos* and guerrillas, and the DFS, the CIA, and the FBI were particularly interested in tracing those dealers. It would be hard to estimate how many illegal weapons entered Mexican territory, but this problem began in the 1970s, not in the 1980s or 1990s as newspapers usually point out.

Within the ample scholarship on the drug trafficking and the smaller repertoire on the dirty war, very few works have highlighted the continuum of violence from the 1960s to the present. Scholarship has yet to work on a comprehensive cartography of Cold War violence to spot other possible regions where guerrillas, activists, drug traffickers, and counterinsurgency agents crossed paths. The cases of Oaxaca, Morelos, Veracruz, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas would be good starting points.

Tackling the 2006 drug war without examining the Cold War background would constrain the discussion to the faulty arguments that have dominated the literature on this topic, centered on the intent by Felipe Calderón to legitimize his presidency. Conversely, a whole new overview of the Mexican Cold War that foregrounds the covert netherworld might shed light on the regional processes of the second drug war, its social actors, and the type of global-local (or "glocal") contradictions that were the breeding ground for the development of hyper-violence and its public display.

State of Exception as the Rule

In his work *State of Exception*, Giorgio Agamben reflected on the state of exception, defined as "a space devoid of law, a zone of anomie in which all legal determinations—and

above all the very distinction between public and private—are deactivated."[9] Agamben did not include in his analysis the distinction between the *de jure*/*de facto* state of exception. The de facto state of exception works by subverting and suspending the law at the same time. The overlapping of the dirty war and the drug war in Culiacán is one of the cases that best exemplifies this ambiguity. The rule of law was seemingly in force, but the national security apparatus created a lawless space to impose its violent rule. Given that the Mexican government denied the existence of an internal war, the state of exception was part of a confidential policy, which has never been officially recognized.[10]

Before Operation Condor, the Golden Triangle was a virtually stateless region dominated by *caciquismo* and, to some extent, *narco-caciquismo*. The national security apparatus pretended to ignore that the highlands were a lawless space and criminalized their population. Through the development of permanent military campaigns, criminal sovereignty began to coexist with the military rule, producing a dual governance that was a keystone for drug market regulation. The de facto state of exception operated not as a measure to suspend the rule of law, which was already inexistent, but as a mechanism to subject the population to political and social control.

The institution customarily in charge of anti-drug campaigns was the military, despite the constitutional article 129 that prohibited their intervention in civil affairs. High-ranking officers decided on whether to chase or protect narco-caciques, assault drug grower communities or let them thrive. The de facto state of exception engendered a climate of social fear and compliance

---

[9] As Agamben maintained, this is a paradoxical articulation because what must be inscribed within the law is something that is essentially exterior to it. Agamben, *State of Exception*: 50.

[10] In his book, *The Mexican Exception* (2011), Gareth Williams offered a totally different perspective about the state of exception based on Foucault and Rancière and a critique of Agamben. This thought-provoking work is an indispensable source for anyone interested in analyzing topics of sovereignty, police state, and state of exception in twentieth century Mexico.

with the capricious military authority. Although military incursions into communities were occasional and not so violent after 1985, the fact that troops had authorization to randomly go in-out normalized the siege until it became the rule rather than the exception. Other Mexican stateless regions impacted by Operation Condor, like the Guerrero highlands, might have also suffered a permanent state of exception since the 1970s to present-day, but more research is needed to explore life under such a long-lasting siege.

During the Southern Cone dirty wars—which were also interconnected through an operation called Condor—dictatorships officially declared a state of exception. It became a permanent technique of government instead of an exceptional measure, giving way to national security states.[11] After the democratic turn of the 1980s, the state of exception only remained as a legal instrument intended for a time of armed conflict, civil unrest, natural or human-caused disaster. Conversely, when the dirty war and the first drug war concluded in Mexico, the government could not declare the end to something that never had a legal formalization, thereby the de facto state of exception remained as an available instrument of illegal state power. That situation has been rather exceptional in the Latin American landscape.

The government ended the first drug war between 1987 and 1989, with the official ending of Operation Condor and the capture of Félix Gallardo, although other anti-drug campaigns were immediately set in motion.[12] But while the first stage of Condor concentrated

---

[11] Joseph Comblin, *Le pouvoir militaire en Amérique Latine, l'idéologie de la sécurité national* (Paris: Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1977).

[12] The progression of the counternarcotics campaigns was: Force Task Marte (1987-1995); Force Task Aztec (1996-1997); Operation Guardian (1988-1999); Aztec Directive XXI (2000); "Milenio" General Plan against Drug Trafficking (2001-2003); Strategic Plan to Fight Drug Trafficking (2004-2006); War on Drugs (2006-2018). "Sedena restringe información acerca de estrategia antinarco en México," *Aristegui Noticias*, October 10, 2012, https://aristeguinoticias.com/1010/mexico/sedena-restringe-informacion-sobre-estrategia-antinarco-en-mexico/, accessed March 1st, 2019.

the Sinaloan drug lords in a major city, the end of the first drug war spread drug lords all over the country. The phenomena that had been constrained to the Golden Quadrilateral began to be replicated on a national scale. New layers of atrocities were added to old traditions of obliteration.

The meteoric rise of what media dubbed narcopolitics—which I refer to as the deep state—occurred during the Salinas (1988-1994) and Zedillo (1994-2000) administrations. Media attention focused principally on drug lords and top officials, but it would be more interesting to understand the impact of neoliberalism on the covert netherworld. Through the 1990s, thousands of people—largely from the underclass and the peasantry—joined the drug industry chain; the priísta narco-clientelist regime began to fracture, and competition among drug cartels intensified. Also, a new wave of guerrilla movements emerged, and a de facto state of exception was imposed in insurgent territory.

During the early twenty-first century, a whole new geopolitical context dominated by the U.S. War on Terror, coupled with domestic causes, determined that Mexico underwent a second drug war. Yet another de facto state of exception was established in the majority of Mexican states. Since President Felipe Calderón declared the war on drugs on December 10, 2006, the quotidian life of Mexicans had revolved around insecurity and violence. It is not that the society was not exposed to those evils before, but the levels of extreme violence that the war unleashed were unprecedented for the vast majority. Clashes between rival forces, shootings in public places, massacres, beheadings, chopping of corpses, hangings in bridges, femicides, torture, kidnappings, forced disappearances, executions of officials from low to high ranks, elimination

of critical journalists, forced displacement of villagers, human trafficking, and the finding of clandestine graves and killing fields have become part of Mexico's ordinary landscape.[13]

At different moments since the launch of the 2006 drug war, human rights advocates and other experts emphasized that even though Mexico was not officially at war, it had more killings per year than countries with long-lasting armed conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq.[14] The *Army Conflict Survey* asserted that in 2017 Mexico was the most violent country only after Syria.[15] To 2019, the estimates are roughly 250,000 executions and more than 40,000 forced disappearances. Although not all crimes were related to the drug war, the failed Mexican security strategy fostered the climate of violence.[16] Those figures do not include thousands of Central American immigrants who have been either killed or disappeared in Mexican territory, for which there are

---

[13] There are dozens of works by both scholars and journalists that deal with the 2006 drug war but there is not a general history of the conflict yet. Javier Valdez (+), Jesús Blancornelas (+), Charles Bowden (+), Anabel Hernández, Diego Osorno, Marcela Turati, Patricia Mayorga, Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, Ioan Grillo, José Reveles, Jesús Esquivel, Molly Molloy, Dawn Paley, John Gibler, the *Colectivo Periodistas de a Pie*, are among the journalists who have done the most extensive reporting and analysis of the conflict.

[14] Jason M. Breslow, "The Staggering Death Toll of Mexico's Drug War," *Frontline*, July 27, 2015, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-staggering-death-toll-of-mexicos-drug-war/, accessed March 1st, 2019.

[15] "Armed Conflict Survey," International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017, https://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-survey/2017/armed-conflict-survey-2017, accessed February 20, 2019.

[16] "Hay más de 40 mil desaparecidos y 36 mil muertos sin identificar en México, reconoce Gobernación," *Animal Político*, January 17, 2019, https://www.animalpolitico.com/2019/01/40-mil-desaparecidos-mexico-victimas-sin-identificar/, accessed March 1st, 2019; Galindo Carlos, Alejandra Huerta, and Juan Manuel Rodríguez, "Mapas y tendencias de los homicidios en México," in *Temas Estratégicos*, no. 54 (Mexico City: Senado de la República-Instituto Belisario Domínguez, 2018); Manuel Hernández Borbolla, "Estrategia fallida: 250.000 asesinatos en México desde el inicio de la 'guerra contra el narco'," *RT*, May 24, 2018, https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/272788-mexico-llega-250000-asesinatos-inicio-guerra-narcotrafico, accessed March 1st, 2019.

no official statistics, although immigrants' rights activists estimate more than 70,000 disappeared.[17]

Given the old Mexican tradition of unaccountability, there is an unknown number of casualties that families do not denounce. Either they dismiss in advance any possibility of justice or they do not know what channels follow to make a complaint. Many victims have very limited access to institutional services or ignore that their relatives have human rights, even if they might have been involved in illegal activities. Similar reasons prevented many Cold War victims from denouncing their cases decades ago, which makes evident the little progress that Mexico has made in the professionalization of law enforcement and a human rights culture.

***

At the beginning of his term (2018-2024), President López Obrador announced the end of the drug war, raising questions among experts whether an irregular warfare with blurred antagonists could be ended by decree. Moreover, the López Obrador administration has suggested the lessening of the prohibitionist regime regarding marijuana and poppy. However, while I write these lines, the Mexican Congress is discussing the creation of a National Guard with military capacities traditionally considered extra-legal. Legalizing the militarization of public security would entail the first official recognition of the state of exception, and the armed forces would have a legal framework to dismiss accusations about human rights abuses.

Assuming without conceding that the Mexican government will no longer apply a military strategy against drug growing and trafficking, and that the National Guard will mark the

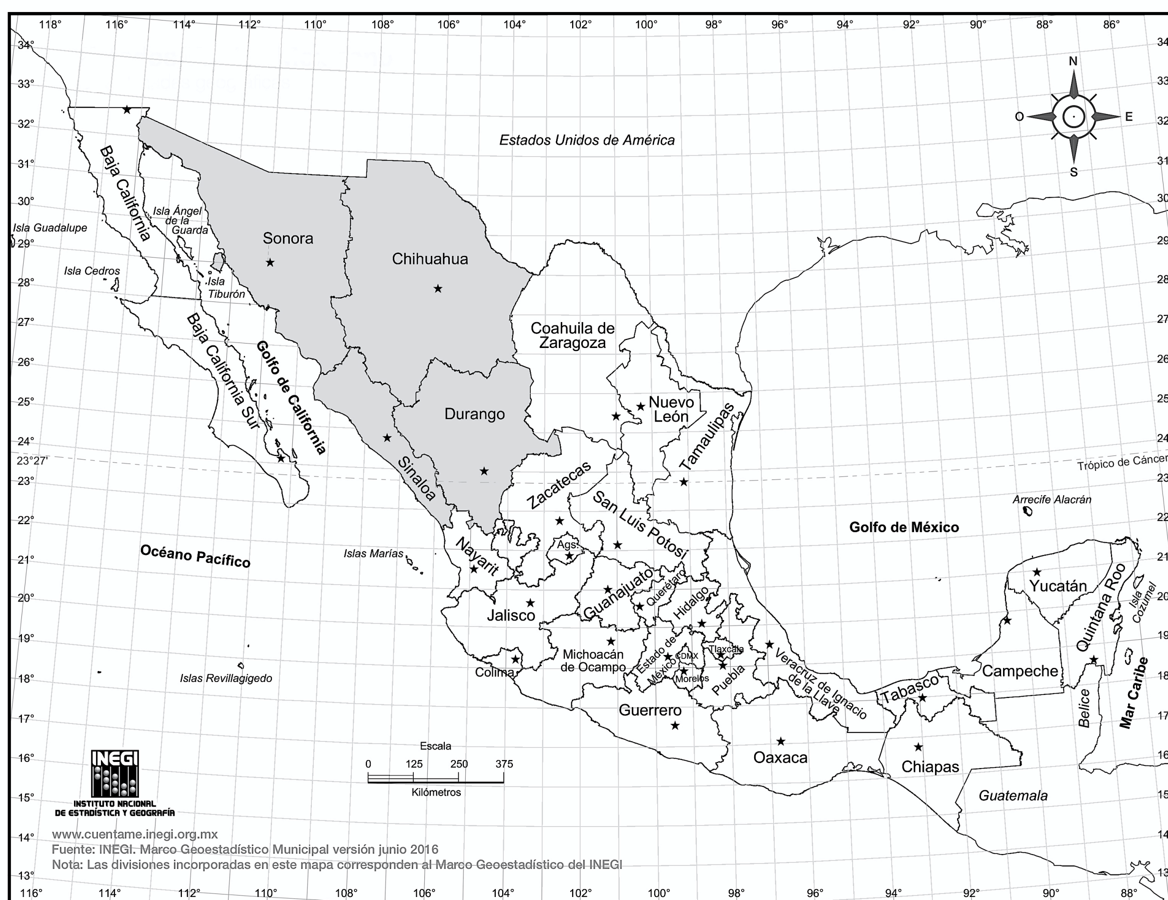
[17] Julio Manuel Guzmán, "Suman más de 70 mil migrantes desaparecidos en México: activistas," El Universal, November 25, 2016, https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/estados/2016/11/25/suman-mas-de-70-mil-migrantes-desaparecidos-en-mexico-activistas, accessed March 1st, 2019.

beginning of a new era—for better or worse—there is a monumental work that the Mexican government should undertake to address themes of truth, justice, memory, and reconciliation. Among official duties, the reckoning of victims of the first drug war should no longer have to wait. If the legalization of marijuana and poppy growing for at least medical and scientific uses comes to fruition, perhaps the Mexican society will be able to understand the gravity of the systematic killings of outlaw peasants by the state since the 1970s. [18]

The global prohibitionist regime and the entrenched corruption of the Mexican political system have proven to be a drastic combination that has only fostered long-lasting violence. As this dissertation suggests, the militarization of public security and the establishment of a de facto state of siege were never an adequate response to solving the crisis of insecurity that plagued specific regions, like the northwest. Although it is clear that the end of drug-related violence is contingent upon the dynamics of the global drug market and geopolitical currents, at the domestic level, any policy to tackle this issue should entail the elimination of the deep state and any type of graft or pay-offs in the highest echelons of power as well as the creation of a justice system free of corruption. Mexico still has a long way to go to break away from the triarchy of drugs, corruption, and massive human rights violations initiated with the intersection of the dirty war and the war on drugs in 1969.

[18] Currently, the Mexican Supreme Court has only authorized a limited use of marijuana for personal use, but no its commercial production. "El camino hacia la legalización de la marihuana en México," *Letras Libres*, November 7, 2018, https://www.letraslibres.com/mexico/politica/el-camino-hacia-la-legalizacion-la-marihuana-en-mexico, accessed March 1st, 2019.

Appendix 1: Maps

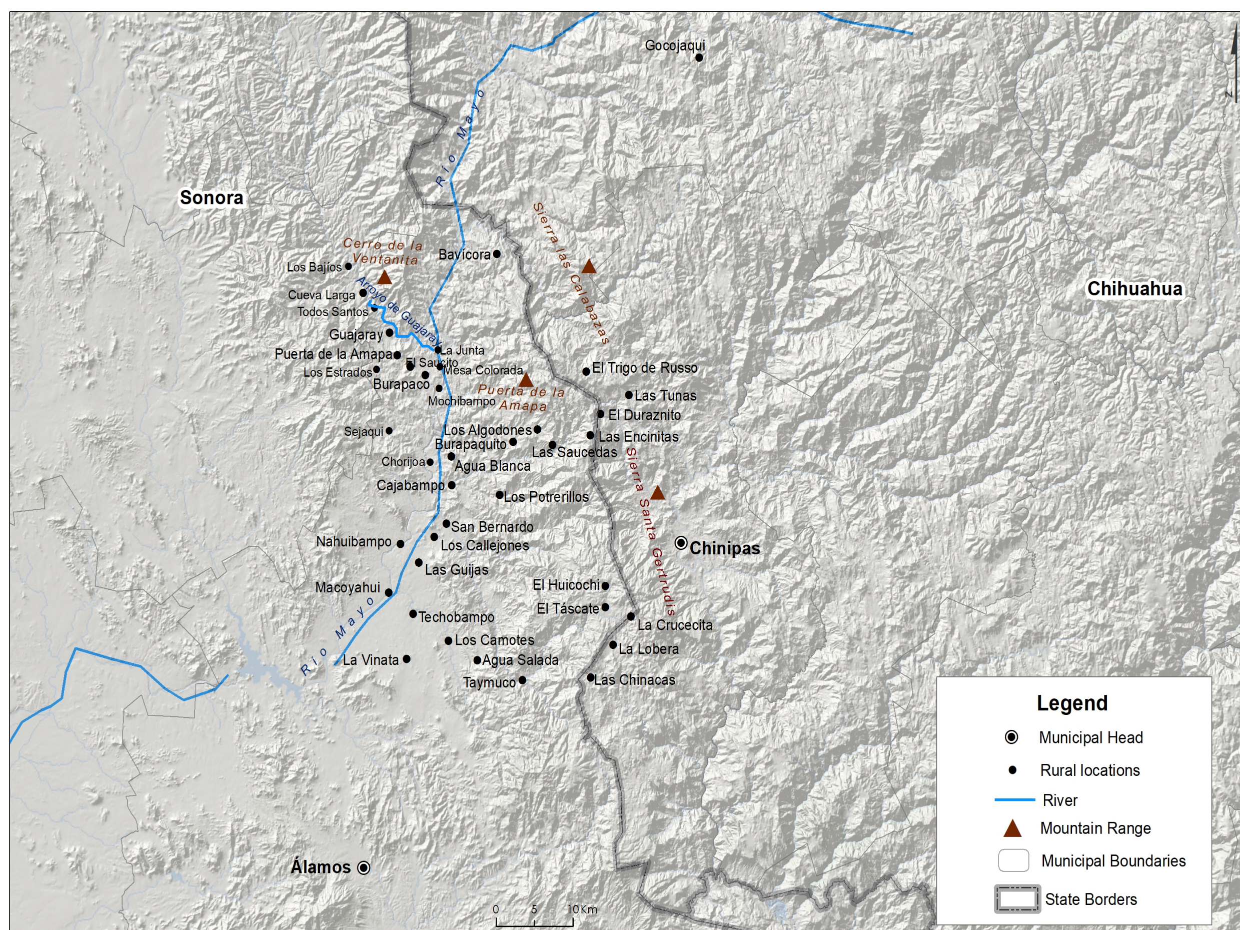


Map 1: The four-state region of northwestern Mexico. Source: INEGI and author’s elaboration.

Map 2: Twentieth-century municipalities that make up the Golden Quadrilateral by sharing a common history of indigenous rebelliousness, social and armed movements, and drug-trafficking. Map by Araceli Ruiz.

Map 3: The Golden Triangle and municipalities targeted by Operation Condor. Map by Araceli Ruiz.

Map 4. Guerrilla movements in the northwest. The GPG emerged in the municipality of Madera, Chihuahua. The GPGAG had a presence in the area from Tomóchic to Uruachi, Chihuahua, and Tesopaco, Sonora. The Liga had commandos, brigades, or supporters in the municipal heads and rural locations showed in the map, except for Madera. Map by Araceli Ruiz.



Map 5: Theater of operations of the “Oscar González” Guerrilla Comando in the Sierra Baja Tarahumara. Map by Araceli Ruiz.

Appendix 2: Corridos and Narcocorridos

1. Arriba de Guajaray[1]

By Miguel Topete Díaz

Pájaro correcaminos
Venadito del breñal
El viento se ha entristecido
Llora como el vendaval

El viento se ha entristecido
Llora como el vendaval

El viento no es el que llora
Trae el llanto nadamás (sic)
Son aires de una pascola
Pesares de un funeral

Son aires de una pascola
Pesares de un funeral

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Venadito del breñal

Ay! Ay ay ay!

---

[1] "Upward Guajaray" narrates the ambush and assassination of Gabriel Rodríguez "El Cholugo" and Severo Zazueta by the army on November 24, 1974, in the highlands of Álamos, Sonora. Contrary to narco-corridos, the guerrilla corrido extolls the collective subject, that is why Topete did not include the names of the fallen. The corrido asks Guarijío and Yoreme peoples to be the chorus. The lyrics also depicts the landscape of the Sierra Baja Tarahumara, mentioning the most representative animals and vegetation of the region like deer, roadrunner bird, chachalacas, amapas, and bainoros, as well as the "pascola," one of the principal festivities among Cahíta peoples.

Pesares de un funeral

Venticuatro de noviembre
Cuando el sol iba a salir
La aurora besó la frente
De los que iban a morir

La aurora besó la frente
De los que iban a morir

Cerro de La Ventanita
Campamento del cantil
Cercaron a la guerrilla
A fuego de bomba y fusil

Cercaron a la guerrilla
A fuego de bomba y fusil

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Cuando el sol iba a salir

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Fuego de bomba y fusil

Mataron dos guerrilleros
Tras la emboscada mortal
Nomás zumbaban las balas
Arriba de Guajaray

Nomás zumbaban las balas
Arriba de Guajaray

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Tras la emboscada mortal

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Arriba de Guajaray

Que revienten los fusiles!
Compañeros, a pelear!
Muchachos, rompan el cerco!
Cuesta arriba hay que luchar

Las amapas florecieron
Porque el invierno llegó
La sangre del guerrillero
Es un crepúsculo en flor

La sangre del guerrillero
Es un crepúsculo en flor

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Cuando el invierno llegó

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Se hizo el crepúsculo en flor

Chachalaca del bainoro
Yuremito Guarijío
Háganme ustedes el coro
Cuando cante este corrido

Háganme ustedes el coro
Cuando cante este corrido

Ay! Ay ay ay!
Cuando cante este corrido
Cuando cante este corrido.

2. Corrido de Pedro Rodríguez [and Nicho][2]
By Maurilio Velducea S.

Un veinticinco de marzo
Presente tengo la fecha
Muy cerca de este poblado
Llegaron en avioneta
Cinco guerrilleros juntos
Armados con metralleta.

Al bajarse del avión
Huyeron a la montaña
Pues eran de esta región
No eran de Lucio Cabañas
Hombres que han sido rebeldes
Y que han cometido hazañas.
Fueron fuerzas federales
Otro día en la madrugada
Fue una gran casualidad
Que a esas horas se encontraran

[2] Corrido of Pedro Rodríguez and Nicho Trillas (April 1976), peasant guerrillas who died in a clash with the army on March 26, 1976 in the highlands of Chínipas, Chihuahua. Velducea provided a very realistic depiction of the facts, which coincides with other testimonies. He did not focus on the guerrilla movement, but on the collective memory around the fallen.

Dos guerrilleros murieron
Combatiendo en Tierra Blanca.

Los trajeron a este pueblo
Como los más desdichados
Traían sus cuerpos sin vida
Sobre animals atados
Para escarmiento en la vida
Por todo lo que ha pasado.

Pues muchas madres lloraron
Al ver esta situación
Por no saber si sus hijos
Sean de noble corazón
Que no sean capaces nunca
De practicar la traición.

Tendidos en la alcaldía
Todo el pueblo fue a mirarlos
Gente de San Rafael
Fueron a identificarlos
Es Nicho y Pedro Rodríguez
Pa' qué vamos a negarlo.

Ya me voy a despedir
De todos los que aquí viven
Esta misión se ha cumplido
Con los hombres que persiguen
Ya les canté este corrido
De Nicho y Pedro Rodríguez.

3. Escondida[3]

By Leopoldo Angulo Luken

En la Sierra de Chihuahua
Anda escondida una historia
El tarumari la guarda
Y espera llegue la hora.

La guarida de los leones
A veces fue su morada
Mahueches sus almacenes
Y las cumbres su mirada.

En Sonora comenzó
Y se convirtió en Estrella
La rosa se la quedó
Y espera vayan por ella.

Yori, Rarámuri, Guarijío,
Y de los montes la bruma
Las veredas y los ríos
Y el zumbido de las cumbres,
Los silenciosos aguajes

Y el rumor de aquellos montes
Recordando aquellas tumbas
Alrededor de una lumbre

---

[3] "Hidden" (1979) is not a corrido but a poem by one of the last survivors of the guerrilla movement in the Golden Quadrilateral. It talks about a story hidden in the highlands that began in Sonora and extended to Chihuahua; only Rarámuri and Guarijío peoples who were their protagonists knew it, but they could not tell it yet. Angulo used the code names of guerrilla camps.

Se la cuentan a la luna.

De lo que aquí les hablaba
Nadie quiere hacer memoria
Que en la Sierra de Chihuahua
Anda escondida una historia.

4. El jardincito prohibido[4]
By Númen Navarro

Voy a cantar el corrido, porque ha llegado la hora
Oigan lo que ha sucedido, al sur de Álamos Sonora
Dos lugares conocidos, el Cajón y Huirocoba.

El Cajón y Huirocoba, tienen de amigo al potrero,
Judicial y federales, dicen que se siente feo
Que al pisar esos lugares, se les enchina el cuero.

El dinero es muy bonito, no se le puede quitar
Dicen los de Huirocoba, nos pondremos a sembrar
Un jardincito prohibido, que nos pueda alivianar.

Los del Cajón les contestan, le vamos a entrar también
Nos traeremos del potrero, hombres fuera de la ley
Y aquí bien escondiditos, formaremos un vergel

Cuando el jardín estaba grande y comenzaba a florear
Quince son los federales, que lo fueron a tumbar
Arrancan cincuenta hectáreas y siguen buscando más.

---

[4] "The Little Forbidden Garden" (1971) is a narcocorrido about poppy cultivation in the southern part of the of Álamos, Sonora—the same municipality where the Liga had a presence in its northern part. It describes the tribulations of the Judicial Police as it goes after drug growers, and how once it has them arrested, they are released. All narco-corridos's lyrics were founded on the internet.

Los yerberos enojados, no se podían controlar
Al pobre del comisario, todos lo querían matar
La casa se la quemaron, pero él se pudo escapar.

Ya son muchos los malvados, que agarró la judicial
Son tantos los que agarraron, que ni parece verdad
La cárcel ya la llenaron, ¿Dónde los irá a echar?

Pero hay algo que es muy cierto, que dijo la judicial
Tanto trabajo que dieron, pa´ poderlos agarrar
Pa´ que de un momento a otro, los dejen en libertad.

5. La mafia muere[5]
By José Cabrera

Culiacán capital sinaloense,
Convirtiéndose en el mismo infierno,
Fue testigo de tanta masacre,
Cuantos hombres valientes han muerto
Unos grandes que fueron del hampa,
Y otros grandes también del gobierno

Pistoleros que fueron famosos,
Poco a poco se han ido acabando,
Unos muertos, otros prisioneros,
Ya la mafia se esta terminando
Por la sangre que fue derramada
Solo el luto y familias llorando

[5] "The mafia dies" (1978) is a narcocorrido that depicts the consequences of the implementation of Operation Condor in Culiacán in 1977.

Tierra blanca, se encuentra muy triste,
Ya sus calles están desoladas,
No transitan los carros del año,
Ni se escucha el rugir de metrallas,
Las mansiones que fueron de reyes
Hoy se encuentran muy abandonadas

Se acabaron familias enteras,
Cientos de hombres la vida perdieron,
Es muy triste de veras la historia
Otros tantos desaparecieron,
No se sabe si existen con vida,
O tal vez en la quema murieron.

Tierra blanca, se encuentra muy triste,
Ya sus calles están desoladas,
No transitan los carros del año,
Ni se escucha el rugir de metrallas,
Las mansiones que fueron de reyes
Hoy se encuentran muy abandonadas.

6. Corrido a Pedro Avilés[6]

By Guillermo Lugo

Lo apodaban licenciado!!!.
Dicen que era muy valiente.

[6] This corrido honors the memory of Pedro Avilés, the Sinaloan drug lord targeted by Operation Condor. The lyrics emphasize that he was murdered treacherously and that the era inaugurated by the hitman "El Gitano" came to an end with Avilés's death. Such vision reveals that drug traffickers have their own periodization of historical events.

Lo mataron por la espalda,
Nunca pudieron de frente,
Porque Pedro se paseaba,
Donde quiera con su gente.

Cruzó todas las fronteras,
Por el lado Americano,
Lo mismo entraba por Texas,
Que por avión a Chicago.

Hizo historia en California,
Porque Pedro si era bravo.
Gitano ya mataron a tu jefe,
Culichi ya mataron a Pedro,
Tus amigos te recordarán por siempre,
Porque fuiste un gran amigo sinaloense.

Con los Mina se paseaba por Sonora,
Era amigo de los Monte y los Martínez.
De Cruz Frías y del güero compañero,
Porque Pedro siempre fue un hombre sincero.

La leyenda del Gitano y de su gente,
Con la muerte de Avilés se ha terminado
Porque Pedro siempre fue considerado,
El más grande de los reyes que ha reinado.

Gitano ya mataron a tu jefe,
Culichi ya mataron a Pedro,
Tus amigos te recordarán por siempre,
Porque fuiste un gran amigo sinaloense.

7. El número 1[7]

By Guillermo Lugo García

Yo no maté a Camarena
les dijo el número uno
Rafael Caro Quintero
fue un traficante sin nombre
ejecutor de los narcos
que andan en nuestros terrenos.

Búsquenlo y den con su pista
eso es problema de ustedes
les doy sólo una semana
para que aclaren el caso
y me den la libertad
quiero que empiecen mañana.

Paloma blanca paloma
vuela por todos mis campos
búscame a todos mis hombres
diles que estoy prisionero
que vengan a liberarme
quiero morirme con ellos.

Aquí ya traigo en mi lista
nombres de 10 comandantes

[7] "The Number 1" (1989) is a narcocorrido dedicated to Rafael Caro Quintero, dubbed "R-1". The lyrics claim that Caro did not killed Enrique Camarena, the murder was "a trafficker without name, an executioner of drug traffickers who are in our land." This might be a veiled reference to U.S. agents and their involvement in cocaine smuggling. Caro Quintero, Ernesto Fonseca, and Félix Gallardo never disclosed their connection to the CIA or the Contra, as though they honored a silence pact. However, the corridos usually express the authorized version by drug traffickers.

para cuando salga libre
muchos agentes traidores
que se decían sus amigos
van a empezar a morirse.

Voy a ocupar mil fusiles
quien quisiera acompañarme
a liberar a un amigo
en la celda de castigo
le dicen número 1
quién se la juega conmigo.

Y si logramos sacarlo
va comenzar la pelea
y no va quedar ninguno,
sé que recuerdas a Borja
hombre nacido en la gloria
Rafael número 1.

8. Jefe de Jefes[8]
By Teodoro Bello

Soy el Jefe de Jefes señores,
Me respetan a todos niveles,
Y mi nombre y mi fotografia,
Nunca van a mirar en papeles,

---

[8] "Boss of Bosses" (1997) is a narcocorrido to extoll the leadership of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the most important kingpin of the Guadalajara cartel. This piece is peculiar because for the first time a major band in the cultural industry, Los Tigres del Norte, made a song to a drug lord, contributing to the normalization of narco-corridos in the realm of popular culture.

Porque a mi el periodista me quiere,
Y si no mi amistad se la pierde.

Muchos pollos que apenas nacieron,
Ya se quieren pelear con el gallo,
Si pudieran estar a mi altura,
Pues tendrían que pasar muchos años,
Y no pienso dejarles el puesto,
Donde yo me la paso ordenando.

Mi trabajo y valor me ha costado,
Manejarlos con tantos que tengo,
Muchos quieren escalar mi altura,
No mas miro que se van cayendo,
Han querido arañar mi corona,
Los que intentan se han ido muriendo.

Yo navego debajo del agua,
Y tambien se volar a la altura,
Muchos creen que me busca el gobierno,
Otros dicen que es pura mentira,
Desde arriba no' más me divierto,
Pues me gusta que así se confunda.

En las cuentas se lleva una regla,
Desde el uno llegar hasta el cien,
El que quiera ser hombre derecho,
Que se enseñe a mirar su nivel,
Sin talento no busques grandeza,
Porque nunca la vas a tener.

Soy el Jefe de Jefes señores,

Y decirlo no es por presunción,

Muchos grandes me piden favores,

Porque saben que soy el mejor,

Han buscado la sombra del árbol,

Para que no les de duro el sol.

9. Tierra de Jefes[9]

By Manuel Antonio Fernández

Estado de Sinaloa, tú tienes muchos valientes

Con gusto vengo a cantarte, porque eres tierra de jefes

De gente muy importante

Que no le teme a la muerte.

Desde la sierra a la costa

Se han dado hombres verdaros

Como Pedrito Avilés.

Don Neto y Caro Quintero

Pedrito se encuentra muerto

Neto y Rafa prisioneros.

Ha sido Félix Gallardo

Uno de los grandes jefes

Primero él entró a Colombia

Controlando los cárteles

También él es Sinaloense

[9] "Land of Bosses" (2014) is a narcocorrido to praise the power of Sinaloan drug lords. It does not follow a chronological order but mentions all major kingpins.

Hombre de muchos poderes.

Pero cayó prisionero
y eso provocó una guerra
Para controlar las plazas
Del centro y de la frontera
Y aunque repartió la carne
No se conforman la fieras.

Los hermanos Arellano
El Chapo y el Güero Palma
Han peleado a sangre y fuego
Por Jalisco y por Tijuana
Todos son de Sinaloa
y también saben jugarla.

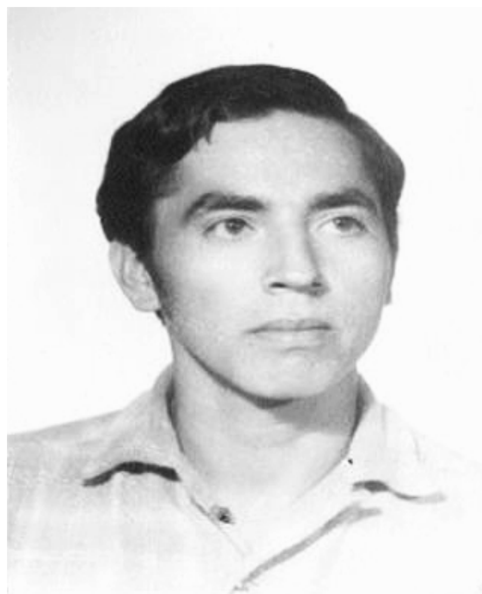
También el Jefe de Jefes
Arturo el de Culiacán
Astuto y escurridizo
Valiente a carta cabal
El famoso Cochi Loco
Muere en su tierra natal.

Otros jefes importantes
Son Balta Díaz y el Mayo
Miguel Caro y el Azul
Carrillo Fuentes Amado
Aquel Señor de los Cielos
Que fuera tan respetado.

Mi linda tierra de jefes

Cantando ya me despido
Que me disculpen aquellos
Que no nombré en el corrido
Pero siéntanse orgullosos
Si en Sinaloa han nacido.

Appendix 3: Figures

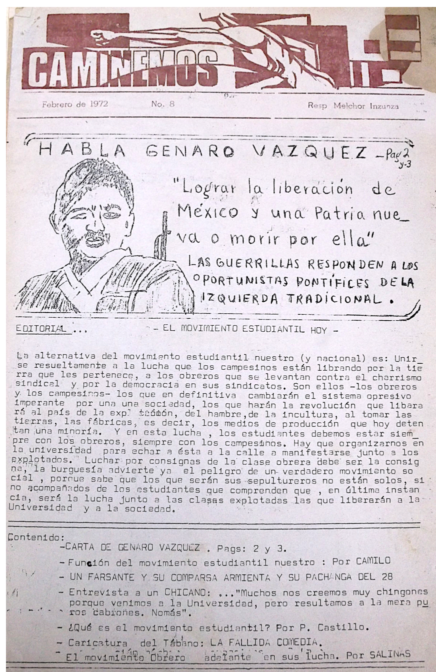


Figures 1 (left) and 2 (right): Brothers Gabriel and Plutarco Domínguez Rodríguez. The first one was executed during a military ambush to the "Oscar González" Guerrilla Commando in November 1974, and his corpse was disappeared. Plutarco was disappeared the same day and his whereabouts are unknown to present-day. Source: Alberto Domínguez's personal archive (used with owner's permission).

Figures 3 (left) and 4 (right): The official version claimed that Gabriel Rodríguez and "a local" died in a shooting, but the stiff position of Rodríguez's arm in the photo 3 confirms that a grenade blasted next to them. The military took a headshot of Rodríguez for identification purposes but dismissed to identify the indigenous Severo Zazueta. Source: Liga's public version, AGN, DFS, file 3, 305-306.

Figure 5: In 2006, the Domínguez family located the mass graves of Gabriel Domínguez and Severo Zazueta in the cemetery of San Bernardo, Sonora for the first time, given that Esteban Vega watched over them since the mid-1970s. Source: Alberto Domínguez's personal archive (used with owner's permission).

Figures 6 (left) and 7 (right): In 2014, the Domínguez family accomplished that a PGR's office exhumated the mass graves of Gabriel Rodríguez and Severo Zazueta for their forensic identification. Alberto Domínguez received the remains of his brother and incinerated them in Ciudad Juárez, while Zazueta's remains were sent back to the cemetery of San Bernardo. In conversation with the author, Alberto claimed that his brother was given the coup the grace, as showed in the picture. Photos: "Especialidad de fotografía forense. Anexo fotográfico," November 19, 2014, PGR, SIEDF, 37, 43. Source: Alberto Domínguez's personal archive (used with owner's permission).



CAMINEMOS

Febrero de 1972 No. 8 Resp. Melchor Inzunza

HABLA GENARO VAZQUEZ - Pag 2 y 3

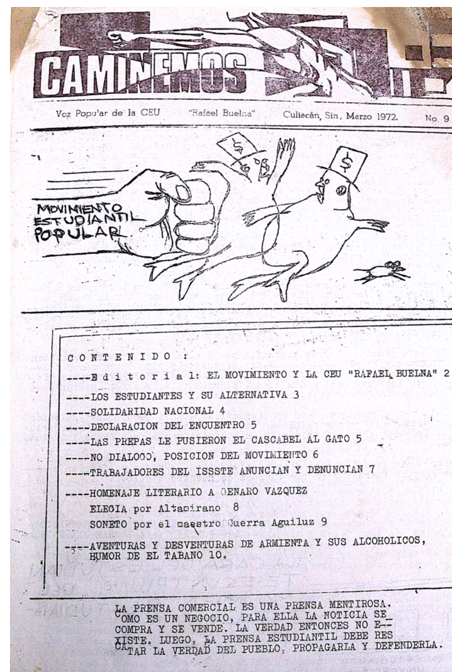
"Lograr la liberación de México y una Patria nueva o morir por ella"

LAS GUERRILLAS RESPONDEN A LOS OPORTUNISTAS PONTÍFICES DE LA IZQUIERDA TRADICIONAL.

EDITORIAL ... - EL MOVIMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL HOY -

La alternativa del movimiento estudiantil nuestro (y nacional) es: Unirse resueltamente a la lucha que los campesinos están librando por la tierra que les pertenece, a los obreros que se levantan contra el charrismo sindical y por la democracia en sus sindicatos. Son ellos -los obreros y los campesinos- los que en definitiva cambiarán el sistema opresivo imperante por una una sociedad, los que harán la revolución que libara rá al país de la exp[illegible], del hambre, de la incultura, al tomar las tierras, las fábricas, es decir, los medios de producción que hoy detentan una minoría. Y en esta lucha, los estudiantes debemos estar siempre con los obreros, siempre con los campesinos. Hay que organizarnos en la universidad para echar a ésta a la calle a manifestarse junto a los explotados. Luchar por consignas de la clase obrera debe ser la consigna, la burguesía advierte ya el peligro de un verdadero movimiento social, porque sabe que los que serán sus sepultureros no están solos, sino acompañados de los estudiantes que comprenden que, en última instancia, será la lucha junto a las clases explotadas las que liberarán a la Universidad y a la sociedad.

Contenido:
- CARTA DE GENARO VAZQUEZ. Pags: 2 y 3.
- Función del movimiento estudiantil nuestro : Por CAMILO
- UN FARSANTE Y SU COMPARSA ARMIENTA Y SU PACHANGA DEL 28
- Entrevista a un CHICANO: ..."Muchos nos creemos muy chingones porque venimos a la Universidad, pero resultamos a la mera puros cabrones. Nomás".
- ¿Qué es el movimiento estudiantil? Por P. Castillo.
- Caricatura del Tábano: LA FALLIDA COMEDIA.
- El movimiento Obrero adelante en sus lucha. Por SALINAS



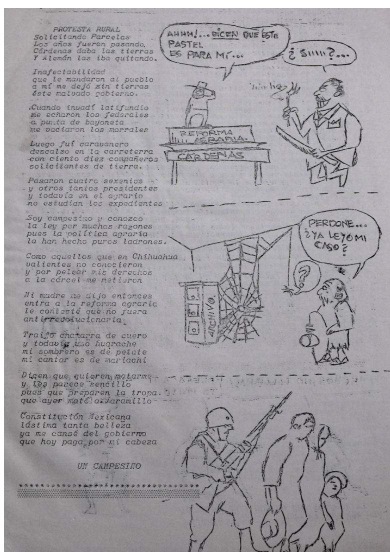
CAMINEMOS

Voz Popular de la CEU "Rafael Buelna" Culiacán, Sin. Marzo 1972. No. 9

CONTENIDO :
- ----Editorial: EL MOVIMIENTO Y LA CEU "RAFAEL BUELNA" 2
- ----LOS ESTUDIANTES Y SU ALTERNATIVA 3
- ----SOLIDARIDAD NACIONAL 4
- ----DECLARACION DEL ENCUENTRO 5
- ----LAS PREPAS LE PUSIERON EL CASCABEL AL GATO 5
- ----NO DIALOGO, POSICION DEL MOVIMIENTO 6
- ----TRABAJADORES DEL ISSSTE ANUNCIAN Y DENUNCIAN 7
- ----HOMENAJE LITERARIO A GENARO VAZQUEZ
  ELEGIA por Altamirano 8
  SONETO por el maestro Guerra Aguiluz 9
- ----AVENTURAS Y DESVENTURAS DE ARMIENTA Y SUS ALCOHOLICOS, HUMOR DE EL TABANO 10.

LA PRENSA COMERCIAL ES UNA PRENSA MENTIROSA. COMO ES UN NEGOCIO, PARA ELLA LA NOTICIA SE COMPRA Y SE VENDE. LA VERDAD ENTONCES NO EXISTE. LUEGO, LA PRENSA ESTUDIANTIL DEBE RESCATAR LA VERDAD DEL PUEBLO, PROPAGARLA Y DEFENDERLA.

Figures 8 (left) and 9 (right): Covers of the magazine *Caminemos* in early 1972, numbers 8 and 9, in which the FEUS showed their sympathy for the socialist armed struggle. The magazine reveals how the identity of the student-guerrilla was on the making. Source: AHUAS, "Cesar Cristerna" collection.



PROTESTA RURAL

Solicitando Parcelas
Los años fueron pasando.
Cárdenas daba las tierras
Y Alemán las iba quitando.

Inafectabilidad
que le mandaron al pueblo
a mí me dejó sin tierras
éste malvado gobierno.

Cuando invadí latifundio
me echaron los federales
a punta de bayoneta
me vaciaron los morrales

Luego fuí caravanero
descalzo en la carreterra
con ciento diez compañeros
solicitantes de tierra.

Pasaron cuatro sexenios
y otros tantos presidentes
y todavía en el agrario
no estudian los expedientes

Soy campesino y conozco
la ley por muchas razones
pues la política agraria
la han hecho puros ladrones.

Como aquellos que en Chihuahua
valientes no conocieron
y por pelear mis derechos
a la cárcel me metieron

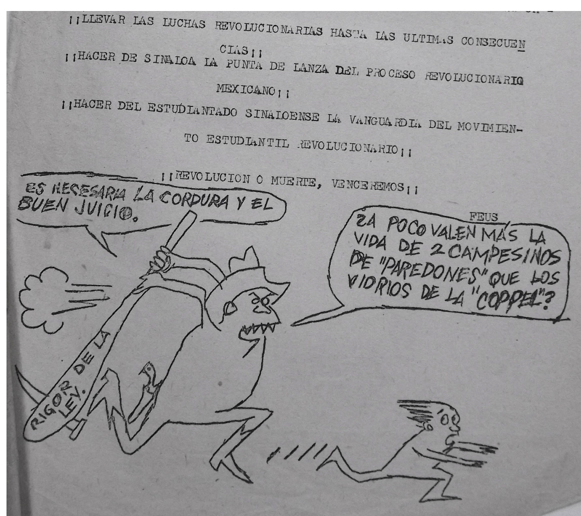
Mi madre me dijo entonces
entra a la reforma agraria
le contesté que no fuera
antirrevolucionaria.

Traigo chamarra de cuero
y todavía uso huarache
mi sombrero es de petate
mi cantar es de mariachi

Dicen que quieren matarme
y les parece sencillo
pues que preparen la tropa
que ayer mató a Jaramillo

Constitución Mexicana
lástima tanta belleza
ya me cansé del gobierno
que hoy paga por mi cabeza

UN CAMPESINO



¡¡LLEVAR LAS LUCHAS REVOLUCIONARIAS HASTA LAS ULTIMAS CONSECUENCIAS!!

¡¡HACER DE SINALOA LA PUNTA DE LANZA DEL PROCESO REVOLUCIONARIO MEXICANO!!

¡¡HACER DEL ESTUDIANTADO SINALOENSE LA VANGUARDIA DEL MOVIMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL REVOLUCIONARIO!!

¡¡REVOLUCION O MUERTE, VENCEREMOS!!

Figures 10 (left) and 11 (right). The *Enfermo* movement's propaganda fostered a solidarity link with peasant movements before its incorporation into the Liga. In the figure 10, there is a land petitioner who is repressed after he asks for his case progress. In the figure 11, the rule of law is represented as a cacique who goes after a student that had protested for the killing of two peasants by storming a store of the Sinaloan chain Coppel. Source: AHUAS, "Cesar Cristerna" collection.

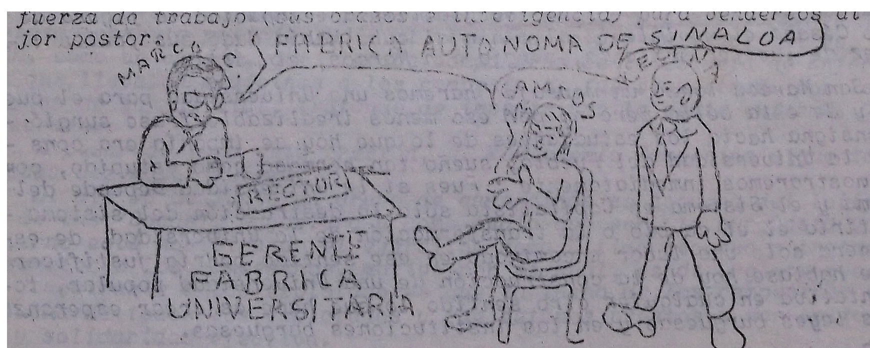


Figure 12: This vignette of the magazine *Caminemos* is representative of the university-factory thesis. The chancellor is portrayed as a manager who talks to businesspeople and the UAS is called "Autonomous Factory of Sinaloa." Source: *Caminemos*, no. 13, July 1972. AHUAS, "Cesar Cristerna" collection.

Figure 13. The *Enfermo* movement's propaganda criticized the democratic left on a regular basis. Criticism revolved around their incongruence between their purported ideology and their political positions as well as their opportunism. The cartoon depicts the leftists like dogs fighting for bones. In Mexican slang, a "bone" is a position in the government. Source: *Caminemos*, no. 16, January 1973: 15, AHUAS, "Cesar Cristerna" collection.

Bibliography

Archival sources

Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa

Archivo Histórico General del Estado de Sinaloa

Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Mexico

Fondo Secretaría de Gobernación

Dirección Federal de Seguridad

Dirección General de Investigaciones políticas y sociales

Fondo Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional

Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca "Juan Rulfo", Mexico City, Mexico

El Colegio de Mexico, "Biblioteca Daniel Cosío Villegas," Mexico City, Mexico

Escuela de Antropología e Historia del Norte de México, Biblioteca "Guillermo Bonfil Batalla," Colección del Centro para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Chihuahua, Mexico.

National Archives and Record Administration. Washington, D.C.

National Security Archive, Mexico Project, Washington, D.C.

Universidad de Sonora, Biblioteca "Fernando Pesqueira," Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

Digital Archives

Archivos de la Represión (https://archivosdelarepresion.org/)

Archivo Memoria de la Resistencia en Jalisco

Comité Primeros Vientos (www.madera1965.com.mx)

Digital National Security Archive

Juan Ramón Mata Ballesteros (http://www.juanramonmata.org/)

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)

Memoria Política de México (https://memoriapoliticademexico.org/)

Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios (PHINA)

René Verdugo (https://reneverdugo.org)

Wikileaks

Personal Archives

Alberto Domínguez Rodríguez

Ignacio Lagarda Lagarda

Miguel Topete Díaz

Interviews by the Author

Alarcón Amézquita, Saúl Armando. Interview with the author. Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 3, 2017.

Ávila Sosa, Alejandrina. Interview with the author. Mexico City, August 3rd, 2018.

Balderas Silva, Maricela. Interview with the author. Mazatlán, Sinaloa, May 7, 2017.

Cristerna, César. Interview with the author. Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 6, 2017.

Interview of the author with a group of peasants from Mocorito, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

López Duarte, José Luis. Interview with the author. Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

Loza Ochoa, Oscar. Interview with the author. Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 2, 2017.

Medina Quiñones, Audor. Interview with the author. Culiacán, Sinaloa, May 8, 2017.

Topete Díaz, Miguel. Interview with the author. Guadalajara, Jalisco, July 15, 2011

Valenzuela Taya, Hermenegildo. Interview with the author. Guajaray, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

Valenzuela Vega, Manuel. Interview with the author. Guajaray, Sonora, May 16, 2017.

Vega Zazueta, Esteban. Interview with the author. San Bernardo, Álamos, Sonora, May 17, 2017.

Newspapers and Magazines

Caminemos

Diario Oficial de la Federación

El Heraldo de Chihuahua

El Informador del Mayo

El Reforma

El Sol de México

El Universal

La Jornada

L.A. Times

Nexos

Noroeste

Periódico Madera

Revista del Ejército. Órgano de divulgación militar

Semanario Proceso

Sin Embargo

The New York Times

The Village Voice

The Washington Post

Other Primary and Secondary Sources

Aboites, Luis. *Breve historia de Chihuahua*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994.

Acosta Chaparro Escapite, Mario Arturo. *Movimiento Subversivo en México*. Mexico City: n. p., 1990.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Agee, Philip. *Inside the Company. CIA Diary.* New York: Penguin Books, 1975.

Aguayo Quezada, Sergio. *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México.* Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2001.

Aguayo Quezada, Sergio. *El '68. Los estudiantes, el presidente y la CIA*. Mexico City: Gandhi, 2018.

Aguilar Camín, Héctor. *La frontera nómada. Sonora y la Revolución Mexicana.* Mexico City: SEP, 1977.

Aguilar Terrés, María de la Luz, ed. *Guerrilleras. Antología de testimonios y textos sobre la participación de las mujeres en los movimientos armados socialistas en México.* Mexico City: n. p. 2014.

Aguilar Zeleny, Alejandro & José Luis Moctezuma. *Los pueblos indígenas del noroeste: atlas etnográfico.* Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2013.

Ai Camp, Roderic. *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Ai Camp, Roderic. *Mexico's Military on the Democratic Stage.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005.

Alanís López, Gilberto & José María Figueroa, eds. *Badiraguato. 18 Encuentros con la historia*. Vol. 1. Culiacán: Gobierno del Estado de Sinaloa-Revista Cultural Presagio, 2002.

Alegre, Robert F. *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico: Gender, Class, and Memory*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Alfaro, Leónidas. *Tierra Blanca*. Culiacán: Fantasma Editorial, 1996.

Almada, Ignacio. *Breve historia de Sonora.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica-COLMEX, 2000.

Almada, Francisco R. El *ferrocarril de Chihuahua al Pacífico*. Mexico City: Editorial Libros de México, 1971.

Alonso Vargas, José Luis. *Los guerrilleros mexicalenses*. Ecatepec: Rival Ediciones, 2004.

Alvarado, Carlos. *La Tarahumara: una tierra herida.* Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos de Chihuahua, 1996.

Andrade Bojorges, José Alfredo. *La historia secreta del narco. Desde Navolato vengo.* Mexico City: Océano, 1999.

Angulo Luken, Leopoldo. *Apuntes para el desarrollo teórico del marxismo. Proyecto político de la Organización de Revolucionarios Profesionales (ORP)*. Mexico City: n.p., 2015.

Angulo Luken, Leopoldo. *Nos volveremos a encontrar.* Guadalajara: La Casa del Mago, 2011.

"Armed Conflict Survey," International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017, https://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-survey/2017/armed-conflict-survey-2017, accessed February 20, 2019.

Armendáriz Ponce, Minerva. *Morir de sed junto a la fuente.* Mexico City: Universidad Obrera de México, 2001.

Arvide, Isabel. *Mis generales. Una crónica de amor y desamor sobre el poder militar en México*. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012.

Astorga Almanza, Luis. *Drogas sin fronteras.* Mexico City: DeBolsillo, 2015.

Astorga Almanza, Luis. *El siglo de las drogas: el narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio.* Mexico City: Plaza & Janés, 2005.

Astorga Almanza, Luis. "The Limits of Anti-drug Policy in Mexico." *International Social Science Journal* 53, 169 (2001): 427-434.

Astorga, Almanza, Luis, "Drug Trafficking in Mexico: A First General Assessment", Management of Social Transformation, Discussion paper no. 36, 1999, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001176/117644Eo.pdf, accessed February 10, 2017.

Astorga Almanza, Luis. "Arqueología del narcotráfico." *Nexos*, July 1st, 1995, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=7451, accessed June 3rd, 2017.

Astorga Almanza, Luis. *Mitología del "narcotraficante" en México.* Mexico City: UNAM-Plaza & Valdés Editores, 1995.

Aviña, Alexander, "Guerrilla Movements and Armed Struggle in Cold War Mexico," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History, http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-387, accessed September 1st, 2017.

Aviña, Alexander. *Specters of Revolution. Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Bailey, John and Roy Godson, eds. *Organized Crime and Governability: Mexico and the U.S. Borderlands.* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2000.

Bantjes, Adrian, A. *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution.* Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Press, 1998.

Bartley, Russell H. & Sylvia Erickson Bartley. Eclipse of the Assassins. *The CIA, Imperial Politics, and the Slaying of Mexican Journalist Manuel Buendía.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

Bassols Batalla, Angel. *El Noroeste de México*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1972.

Basurto, Jorge. *La clase obrera en la historia de México: En el régimen de Echeverría: rebelión e independencia,* vol. 14. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores-UNAM, 1983.

Beith, Malcolm. "A Broken Mexico. Allegations of Collusion between the Sinaloa Cartel and Mexican Political Parties." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22, 5 (November 2011): 787-806.

Bellingeri, Marco. *Del agrarismo armado a la guerra de los pobres. Ensayos de guerrilla rural en el México contemporáneo: 1940-1974.* México: Casa Juan Pablos-Secretaría de Cultura del DF, 2003.

Blancornelas, Jesús. *Biébrich, crónica de una infamia*. Mexico City, Edamex: 1978.

Blaufarb, Douglas S. *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.

Block, Alan A. & Alfred W. McCoy, eds. *War on Drugs. Studies in the Failure of U.S. Narcotics Policy.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992.

Branfman, Fred. *Voices from the Plain of Jars. Life Under an Air War*. San Francisco: Harper Colophon Books, 1972.

Bowden, Charles. "Blood on the Corn: A DEA Agent is Tortured and Killed in Mexico." *Medium*, November 17, 2014, https://medium.com/matter/blood-on-the-corn-52ac13f7e643, accessed December 20, 2018.

Buchenau, Jürgen. *The Last Caudillo: Álvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Buchenau, Jürgen. *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Buendía, Manuel. *La CIA en México*. Mexico City: Océano, 1984.

Bunck, Julie Marie & Michael Ross Fowler. *Bribes, Bullets, and Intimidation. Drug Trafficking and the Law in Central America*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2012.

Burgos, Rubén, ed. *Movimientos sociales en el Noroeste de México*. Culiacán: UAS, 1985.

Cajas Castro, Juan. *La sierra tarahumara o los desvelos de la modernidad en México*. Mexico City: CONACULTA, 1992.

Calderón, Fernando H. *Laboratories of Dissent: Student Power, Memory, and the Urban Guerrilla Experience During the Mexican "Dirty War"* (forthcoming).

Calderón, Fernando H. & Adela Cedillo, eds. *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the "Dirty War", 1964-1982*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Calderón, Fernando H. & Adela Cedillo, "Análisis de la producción historiográfica en torno a la guerra sucia mexicana", in Verónica Oikión, Eduardo Rey, and Martín López, eds. *El estudio de las luchas revolucionarias en América Latina (1959-1996). Estado de la cuestión.* Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán & Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2014.

Calderón Viedas, Carlos, Jorge Medina Viedas, & Liberato Terán. *La utopía corrompida. Radicalismo y reforma en la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa*. Mexico City: Océano, 2009.

Camacho Navaro, Enrique, ed. *El rebelde contemporáneo en el Circuncaribe: imágenes y representaciones*. Mexico City: UNAM, 2006.

Cámara de Diputados, "Informes de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos Luis Echeverría Álvarez," Centro de documentación, información y análisis, 2006, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-14.pdf, accessed May 3, 2017.

Cámara de Diputados, "Informes de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos José López Portillo," Centro de documentación, información y análisis, 2006, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/re/RE-ISS-09-06-15.pdf, accessed March 10, 2017.

Campos, Isaac. *Home Grown Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

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

Carey, Elaine. *Women Drug Traffickers: Mules, Bosses and Organized Crime.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014.

Campos, Fabián, Yllich Escamilla, Rodolfo Gamiño, & Rigoberto Reyes. *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: cuatro décadas a debate: historia, memoria, testimonio y literatura* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2015).

Carr, Barry. *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Carton de Grammont, Hubert. *Los empresarios agrícolas y el Estado. Sinaloa, 1893-1984*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1990.

Castañeda, Jorge. *La utopía desarmada.* Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1993.

Castañeda, Salvador. *La negación del número. La guerrilla en México 1965-1996, una aproximación crítica.* Mexico City: CONACULTA, 2006.

Castellanos, Laura. *México armado. 1943-1981.* Mexico City: Era, 2007.

Castorena-Sáenz, Nithia. "El Grupo Popular Guerrillero 'Arturo Gámiz'," https://memoriassubalternas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/nithia-castorena-sc3a1enz1-2015-09-23-gpgag.pdf, accessed December 11, 2017

Cockburn, Alexander & Jeffrey St. Clair. *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press*. London: Verso Books, 1998.

Comblin, Joseph. *Le pouvoir militaire en Amérique Latine, l'idéologie de la sécurité national.* Paris: Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1977.

Comisión de la Verdad del Estado de Guerrero, "Informe final de actividades," October 15, 2014, http://www.cedema.org/uploads/Comverdad_1.pdf, accessed October 15, 2018.

Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, "Informe especial sobre las quejas en materia de desapariciones forzadas ocurridas en la década de los '70 y principios de los '80," 2001, http://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/doc/informes/especiales/2001_desapariciones70y80.pdf,

Condés Lara, Enrique. *Represión y rebelión en México (1959-1985)*, vol. 1-3. Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2007-2009.

Condés Lara, Enrique. *Los papeles secretos del 10 de junio*. Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2003.

Condés Lara, Enrique. El *10 de junio ¡no se olvida!* Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2001.

Contreras, Javier. *Los informantes: documentos confidenciales de la guerrilla en Chihuahua.* Chihuahua: Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, 2007.

Córdova, Nery. *La narcocultura: Simbología de la transgresión, el poder y la muerte.* Sinaloa y la "leyenda negra." Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2011.

Craig, Richard B. "Operation Intercept: The International Politics of Pressure." *The Review of Politics* 42, no. 4 (October 1980): 556-580.

Craig, Richard B. "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era", in *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22, no. 3 (August 1980): 345-363.

Craig, Richard B. "Human Rights and Mexico's Antidrug Campaign", *Social Science Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (March 1980): 691-701.

Craig, Richard B. "La Campaña Permanente: Mexico's Anti-Drug Campaign." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 20, 2 (May 1978): 107-131.

Cruz Pacheco Rojas, José de la. *Durango, historia breve*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica-COLMEX, 2010.

Davies Jr., Thomas M. & Brian Loveman. *The Politics of Antipolitics. The Military in Latin America*. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1997.

Dawson, Alexander. *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004.

Dawson, Alexander S. *The Peyote Effect. From the Inquisition to the War on Drugs*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

Debray, Régis. "Revolución en la revolución", *Punto Final*, March 1967, http://pf-memoriahistorica.org/PDFs/1967/PF_025_doc.pdf, accessed September 12, 2017.

DeLay, Brian. *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the US–Mexican War*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

Delgado, Héctor. "Recordando Madera, orígenes de la Liga 23 de Septiembre." *Unomásuno,* September 21, 2011: 14.

Dios Corona, Sergio René de. *La historia que no pudieron borrar: la guerra sucia en Jalisco, 1970-1985*. Guadalajara: La casa del Mago, 2004.

Domínguez, José. "Cuatro hermanos en la guerrilla." *Nexos*, July 1st, 2004, http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=11194, accessed September 2, 2016.

Duarte Rodríguez, Rubén. *Días de fuego. El movimiento universitario sonorense de los años 70*. Hermosillo: Universidad de Sonora, 2003.

Edberg, Mark C. "Drug Traffickers as Social Bandits," Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice 17, no. 3, (August 2001): 259-277.

Edberg, Mark C. *El Narcotraficante. Narcocorridos & the Construction of a Cultural Persona on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.

Enciso, Froylán. *Nuestra historia narcótica: Pasajes para (re) legalizar las drogas en México.* Barcelona: Debate, 2015.

Enciso, Froylán. "Los fracasos del chantaje. Régimen de prohibición de drogas y narcotráfico." In *Los grandes problemas de México, seguridad nacional y seguridad interior*, edited by Arturo Alvarado & Mónica Serrano. Mexico City: COLMEX, 2010, 61-104.

Enciso, Froylán, "Régimen global de prohibición, actores criminalizados y la cultura del narcotráfico en México durante la década de 1970", in *Foro Internacional* 49, no. 3, (July-September 2009): 595-637.

Esteve Díaz, Hugo. *Amargo lugar sin nombre. Crónica del movimiento armado socialista en México (1960-1990)*. Guadalajara: La casa del mago, 2013.

Estrada, Genaro. *La doctrina Estrada*. Mexico City: Instituto Americano de Derecho y Legislación Comparada, 1930.

Esquivel, Jesús J. *La CIA, Camarena y Caro Quintero.* Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2016.

Esquivel, Jesús J. *La DEA en México: Una historia oculta del narcotráfico contada por los agentes.* Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2013.

Esquivel, Manuel. *Jesús Malverde. El santo popular de Sinaloa*. Mexico City: Jus, 2009.

Fazio, Carlos. "Mexico: The Narco-General Case." *Transnational Institute*, December 1st, 1997, https://www.tni.org/en/article/mexico-the-narco-general-case#10b, accessed December 15, 2018.

Feitlowitz, Margaret. *A Lexicon of Terror. Argentina and the Legacies of Torture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Felbab-Brown, Vanda. *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.

Fernández Velázquez, Juan Antonio. "El narcotráfico en Los Altos de Sinaloa 1940-1970." PhD, Universidad Veracruzana, 2016.

Fernández Velázquez, Juan Antonio. "Las mujeres en el narcotráfico," *Revista Clivajes*, no. 1 January-July, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/34970558/204121326-Las-mujeres-en-el-narcotrafico-Clivajes-UV.pdf, accessed October 10, 2017.

Fernández Velázquez, Juan Antonio. "Los sinaloenses: entre gustos musicales, gozos y representaciones. De los corridos sobre narcotráfico y narcotraficantes a los narco-corridos (1970-2000)." MA thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2011.

Flores Pérez, Carlos Antonio. *Historias de polvo y sangre. Génesis y evolución del tráfico de drogas en el estado de Tamaulipas*. Mexico City: CIESAS, 2013.

Fraenkl, Ernst. *The Dual State. A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*. New York: Octagon Books, 1969.

Freije, Vanessa. "Journalists, Scandal, and the Unraveling of One-Party Rule in Mexico, 1960-1988." PhD diss., Duke University, 2015.

French, David. *The British Way in Counter-insurgency, 1945-1967.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fuentes, Carlos. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970.

Fuentes, Gloria. *El Ejército Mexicano*. Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1983.

Gaitán, Mercedes. *El movimiento de los mineros en el alemanismo*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1987.

Galindo Carlos, Alejandra Huerta, & Juan Manuel Rodríguez, "Mapas y tendencias de los homicidios en México," in *Temas Estratégicos*, no. 54. Mexico City: Senado de la República-Instituto Belisario Domínguez, 2018.

Gámez Rascón, Jesús Manuel. "A la luz de esta historia de batallas", 1969. Unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

Gamiño Muñoz, Rodolfo. Memorias fragmentadas de una guerra sucia. El caso del Colectivo Rodolfo Reyes Crespo. Tlaxcala: Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, 2016.

Gamiño Muñoz, Rodolfo. *Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario. Antecedentes, nacimiento y represión.* Guadalajara: La casa del mago, 2016.

Gamiño Muñoz, Rodolfo. *Guerrilla, represión y prensa en la década de los setenta en México: invisibilidad y olvido* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 2013).

Gamiño Muñoz, Rodolfo & Jesús Zamora. *Los Vikingos, una historia de lucha política y social.* Guadalajara: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Colectivo Rodolfo Reyes Crespo, 2011.

Garay Salamanca, Luis Jorge et al. *Narcotráfico, corrupción y estados: cómo las redes ilícitas han reconfigurado las instituciones en Colombia, Guatemala y México.* Mexico City: Debate, 2014.

García Aguirre, Aleida. *La revolución que llegaría: Experiencias de solidaridad y redes de maestros y normalistas en el movimiento campesino y la guerrilla moderna en Chihuahua, 1960–1968*. Mexico City: n.p., 2015.

García Cabrera, José Luis. *El Pastel! 1920-2000*, vol. 1. Bloomington: Palibrio, 2012.

García Ibarra, Abraham. *Oligarquía sí! Sinaloa: Estado torpe o reino de la barbarie? Cuando los latifundios se fertilizan con sangre.* Culiacán: n. p., 1974.

García Ramírez, Sergio, "Campaña contra el narcotráfico y la farmacodependencia. Balance de trabajo," Procuraduría General de la República, May 14, 1985.

Garmon, L. "Pot-Smokers May Be Imperiled by Paraquat-Spraying Program, *Science News* 124, no. 4 (July 23, 1983), 55.

Garrido, Luis Javier. *El Partido de la Revolución Institucionalizada. Medio siglo de poder politico en México: la formación del nuevo estado (1928-1945).* Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1995.

Gentry, Howard Scott. "The Warihío Indians of Sonora-Chihuahua: an Ethnographic Survey." *Anthropological Papers* 65, Washington, D.C., Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, 1963: 61-154.

Gill, Lesley. *The School of the Americas. Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Gillingham, Paul, Michael Lettieri, & Benjamin T. Smith, eds. *Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018.

Gillingham, Paul & Benjamin T. Smith, eds. *Dictablanda: Politics, Works, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Gingeras, Ryan. Heroin, *Organized Crime, & the Making of Modern Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

González Casanova, Pablo. *La democracia en México*. Mexico City: Era, 1983.

Gootenberg, Paul. *Andean Cocaine. The Making of a Global Drug*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Grandin, Greg and Gil Joseph. *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counteinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Griffen, William B. "A North Mexican Nativistic Movement, 1684." Ethnohistory 17, no. ¾ (Summer-Autumn 1970): 95-116.

Grillo, Ioan. *El Narco. Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011.

Guevara de la Serna, Ernesto. "Guerra de guerrillas: un método", September 1963, http://juventudguevarista.cl/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GUERRA-DE-GUERRILLAS.pdf, accessed September 12, 2017.

Guevara Martínez, Tomás, et. al., "La Operación Cóndor en la memoria colectiva de los sinaloenses." In *La investigación científica, tecnológica y social en la UAS.* Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2008.

Hall, Linda B. *Alvaro Obregón, Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981.

Heath, Edward. *Mexican Opium Eradication Campaign*. MA thesis, California State University, 1981.

Henson, Elizabeth. *Agrarian Revolt in the Sierra of Chihuahua, 1959-1965*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019.

Henson, Elizabeth. "The 1965 Agrarian Revolt in Madera, Chihuahua." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History,* April, 2017, *http://latinamericanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-381?rskey=Vysfpf&result=14*, accessed April 30, 2017.

Hernández, Anabel. *Los señores del narco.* Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2010.

Hernández, Carlos A. "Narcomundo: How Narcotraficantes Gained Control of Northern Mexico and Beyond, 1945-1984." PhD Diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2015.

Hernández Lugo, Raúl Florencio. *El asalto al cuartel de Madera. Chihuahua, 23 de septiembre de 1965.* Mexico City: Centro de Derechos Humanos Yaxkin, 2003.

Heyman, Josiah McC ed. *States and Illegal Practices*. New York: Berg, 1999.

Hilton, Kenneth S. *Palabras y frases de las lenguas tarahumara y guarijío*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1947.

Hipólito, Simón. *Guerrero, amnistía y represión*. Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1982.

Hirales Morán, Gustavo. *Memoria de la guerra de los justos*. Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1996.

Hirales Morán, Gustavo. "La guerra secreta." Nexos, June 1st, 1982, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=4068, accessed January 10, 2018.

Hirales Morán, Gustavo. *La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre. Orígenes y naufragio.* Mexico City: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1977.

Hodges, Donald & Ross Gandy. *Mexico, the End of the Revolution*. Westport: Praeger, 2002.

Huacuja, Mario & José Woldenberg. *Estado y lucha política en el México actual*. Mexico City: El Caballito, 1976.

Ibarra Chávez, Héctor. *Pensar la guerrilla en México.* Mexico City: Ediciones expediente abierto, 2006.

Ibarra Chávez Héctor. *La guerrilla de los '70 y la transición a la democracia*. Mexico City: Ce-Acatl, A.C., 2006.

Ibarrola, Javier. *El ejército y el poder: impacto e influencia política en el México modern*. Mexico City: Océano, 2003.

Iber, Patrick. *Neither Peace nor Freedom. The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Illades, Carlos. *El futuro es nuestro. Historia de la izquierda en México*. Mexico City: Océano, 2018.

Illades, Carlos. *Las otras ideas. El primer socialismo en México, 1850-1935*. Mexico City: Era, 2008.

"Informes de Gobierno del Estado de Sinaloa, 1916-2009." Culiacán: Archivo Histórico General del Estado de Sinaloa, 2010. CD.

Insunza, Melchor & Andrés Montoya, "Dos testimonios y otro al margen. Entrevista con Cástulo Anselmo Alejo Armenta y Gonzelo Inzunza Cervantes," Culiacán Sinaloa, 1979 or 1980, https://sinaloatv.mx/?p=2679, accessed September 10, 2018.

Irigoyen Rascón, Fructuoso. *Cerocahui. Una comunidad en la Tarahumara*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1974.

Jiménez, Rubén. "Movimiento campesino en Sonora", *Cuadernos Políticos*, no. 7 (January-March 1976): 67-78.

Joseph, Gilbert and Daniela Spenser, eds. *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Joseph, Gilbert & Jürgen Buchenau. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Joseph, Gilbert, Anne Rubenstein, & Eric Zolov, eds. *Fragments of a Golden Age. The Politics of Culture in Mexico since 1940.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Joseph, Gilbert & Daniel Nugent, eds. *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Katz, Friedrich. *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Katz, Friedrich, ed. *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Keller, Renata. *Mexico's Cold War. Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Kemnitzer, William. "México en la Alianza para el Progreso," *Foro Internacional* 4, no. 13 (July-September 1963): 41-59.

Knight, Alan. "Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?" *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 1, (February 1994): 73-107.

Knight, Alan, "Political Violence in Post-revolutionary Mexico," in *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence, and Terror in Latin America*, Kees Koonings & Dirk Krujit eds. New York: Zed Books, 1999.

Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution,* 2 vol. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Kornbluh, Peter. *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention, Reagan's War Against the Sandinistas* Washington. D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987.

Lagarda Lagarda, Ignacio. *El color de las amapas. Crónica de la guerrilla en la sierra de Sonora.* Hermosillo: UTS/ITESCA/Liceo Tecnológico de Sonora, 2007.

Lagarda Lagarda, Ignacio "Cómo murieron en Tesopaco." *InfoCajeme*, September 12, 2007, https://www.infocajeme.com/general/2007/09/como-murieron-en-tesopaco/, accessed October 10, 2017.

Lagarda Lagarda, Ignacio. "Crónica de un viaje a la nación guarijía." Unpublished manuscript in author's possesion.

Langland, Victoria. *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Lazcano Ochoa, Jesús. *La Universidad Socialista del Noroeste. Documentos, relatos y opiniones.* Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2001.

Lazcano y Ochoa, Manuel. *Una vida en la vida sinaloense*. Culiacán: n.p., 1992.

Lieuwen, Edwin. *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968.

Loaeza, Soledad. "La política de acomodo de México a la superpotencia. Dos episodios de cambio de régimen: 1944-1948 y 1989-1994." Foro Internacional 50, no.3-4, 2010: 627-660.

Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio. *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2014.

López Austin, Alfredo & Leonardo López Luján. Mexico's Indigenous Past. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005.

López de la Torre, Saúl. *Guerra secretas: memorias de un exguerrillero de los setentas que ahora no puede caminar.* Mexico City: Artefacto, 2005.

López Limón, Alberto. *La Liga: una cronología.* Guadalajara: La casa del mago, 2013.

López Limón, Alberto. "Proceso de construcción de la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre (1973-1975)." *Cuadernos de Marte. Revista latinoamericana de sociología de la guerra*, no.1 (April 2011):177-207.

López Nájera, Itzel, "El Movimiento de 1968 y las tácticas de los estudiantes del Instituto Politécnico Nacional: condiciones de producción del discurso revolucionario de la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre", *Pacarina del Sur,* no. 28 (July-September, 2016), http://pacarinadelsur.com/dossiers/dossier-18/58-dossiers/dossier-18/1330-el-

movimiento-de-1968-y-las-tacticas-de-los-estudiantes-del-instituto-politecnico-nacional-condiciones-de-produccion-del-discurso-revolucionario-de-la-liga-comunista-23-de-septiembre-, accessed November 22, 2017.

López Noriega, Saúl. "El derecho a la amapola." *Nexos*, April 1st, 2016, https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=28038#ftnref4, accessed June 4, 2017.

López Portillo. José. *Mis tiempos. Biografía y testimonio político, 2 vol.* Mexico City: Fernández Editores, 1988.

Loza Ochoa, Óscar. *Tiempo de espera*. Culiacán: UAS, 2004.

Lozano Rubello, Gabriela. "Guerrilleras de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre: sujetos de transgresión en México (1973-1977)." MA Thesis, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, 2014.

Lozoya, Jorge Alberto. *El ejército mexicano*. Mexico City: COLMEX, 1965.

Ludlow, Leonor. *Grandes financieros Mexicanos*. Mexico City: LID, 2015.

Madera 1, 2, 3, and 3 bis, 1972-1973. Unpublished manuscripts in author's possession.

Manual de guerra irregular. Mexico City: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1969.

Matson, Pamela ed. *Seeds of Sustainability: Lessons from the Birthplace of the Green Revolution in Agriculture*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2012.

Magdaleno Cárdenas, Ángeles. "Los otros muertos," *Históricas, Boletín del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas*, UNAM, no. 99 (January-April 2014): 2-14.

Maldonado, Salvador. *Los márgenes del Estado mexicano. Territorios ilegales, desarrollo y violencia en Michoacán*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2010.

Manzano, Guillermo. "Toño León: de guerrillero a diputado", *Blog Ojo de gato*, October, 2000, http://likatsin.blogspot.com/2012/09/tono-leon-de-guerrillero-diputado.html, accessed January 20, 2018.

Marchesi, Aldo. *Hacer la revolución: Guerillas latinoamericanas, de los años sesenta a la caída del Muro*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2019.

Marchesi, Aldo. "Political Violence and the Left in Latin America, 1967-1979," *Latin American History Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, April 2015, http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-89, accessed March 12, 2019.

Marighella, Carlos. *Mini-manual del guerrillero urbano.* Santa Fe: El Cid Editor, 2009.

Marshall, Jonathan & Peter Dale Scott. *Cocaine Politics. Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Marx, Karl. *Capital*, vol. 1. London: Penguin Books, 1976.

Maza, Enrique, ed. *Obligado a matar. Fusilamiento de civiles en México*. Mexico City, Proceso, 1993.

Meeks, Eric. *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007.

Meyer, Eugenia. *John Kenneth Turner. Periodista de México*. Mexico City: Era-UNAM, 2005.

Meyer, Jean. *La Cristiada,* 3 vol. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1976.

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, & Mayer N. Zald, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

McCaa, Robert. "The Demographic Cost of the Mexican Revolution." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 367-400.

McCormick, Gladys. *The Logic of Compromise in Mexico. How the Countryside was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

McCoy, Alfred W. *Torture and Impunity: the U.S. Doctrine of Coercive Investigation.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

McCoy, Alfred W. *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade: Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Colombia.* Chicago: Lawerence Hill Books, 2003.

McWilliams, John C. *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990.

Menéndez, Mario. "Las guerrillas de Chihuahua." *Por qué?*, no. 25, December 20, 1968, 9-13.

Mendoza, Elmer. *El amante de Janis Joplin.* Mexico City: Tusquets, 2003.

Mendoza García, Jorge, "Los medios de información y el trato a la guerrilla. Una mirada psicopolítica", in Verónica Okión y Marta Eugenia García, eds. *Movimientos armados en México en el siglo XX, vol. 1.* Morelia: CIESAS/El Colegio de Michoacán, 2006, 145-180.

Mills, James. *The Underground Empire: Where Crime and Governments Embrace*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986.

Monsiváis Carlos & Julio Scherer García. *Los patriotas: de Tlatelolco a la Guerra sucia.* Mexico City: Aguilar 2004.

Monsiváis, Carlos & Julio Scherer García. *Parte de Guerra. Tlatelolco 1968*. Mexico City: Nuevo Siglo-Aguilar, 1999.

Monsiváis, Carlos. *Los mil y un velorios: Crónica de la nota roja en México*. Mexico City: Debate, 2010.

Montemayor, Carlos. *La violencia de Estado en México: antes y después de 1968*. Mexico City: Debate, 2010.

Montemayor, Carlos. *Las mujeres del alba.* Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2010.

Montemayor, Carlos. *Las armas del alba*. Mexico City: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 2003.

Montemayor, Carlos. *La fuga.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007.

Montemayor, Carlos. *La guerrilla recurrente*. Mexico City: Debate, 2007.

Montemayor, Carlos. *Guerra en el paraíso*. Mexico City: Seix Barral, 1997.

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

"Movimientos sociales en el municipio de Chínipas." Anonymous unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

Muehlmann, Shaylih. *When I Wear My Alligator Boots: Narcoculture in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Muñoz, María & Amelia Kiddle, eds. *Populism in 20th Century Mexico.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010.

Nacayama Arce, Antonio. *Sinaloa, un bosquejo de su historia*. Culiacán: UAS, 1982.

Navarro, Aaron. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Neufeld, Stephen B. *The Military and the Making of Modern Mexico, 1876-1911*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017.

Niblo, Stephen R. *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*. Washington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2001.

Oikión Solano Verónica & Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, eds. *Movimientos armados en México en el siglo XX.* 3 v. Morelia: CIESAS/El Colegio de Michoacán, 2006.

Oikión Solano, Verónica & Miguel Ángel Urrego eds. *Violencia y sociedad. Un hito en la historia de las izquierdas en América Latina*. Morelia: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo/Colegio de Michoacán, 2010.

Ornelas, Francisco. *Sueños de Libertad*. Chihuahua: n. p., 2005.

Ortega Noriega, Sergio. *Historia breve de Sinaloa*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999.

Ortiz Pinchetti, Francisco, ed. *La Operación Cóndor*. Mexico City: Proceso, 1991.

Ortiz Rosas, Rubén. "La Brigada Especial, un instrumento de la contrainsurgencia urbana en el Valle de México (1976-1981)." BA thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014.

Ortiz Wadgymar, Arturo. *El fracaso neoliberal en México: 6 años de fondomonetarismo, 1982-88*. Mexico City: Nuestro Tiempo, 1988.

Osorno, Diego Enrique. *El cártel de Sinaloa: una historia del uso politico del narco.* Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2009.

Padilla, Tanalís. *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of Pax Priísta, 1940-1962.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Padilla, Tanalís & Louise Walker, eds., "Spy Reports: Content, Methodology, and Historiography in Mexico's Secret Police Archive" Dossier, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research 19, no. 1 (July 2013): 1-103.

Palacios Hernández, Benjamín. *Héroes y fantasmas. La guerrilla mexicana de los años 70.* Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2009.

Pansters, Wil, ed. *Violence, coercion, and state-making in 20th century Mexico.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

"Paraquat Contamination of Marijuana", *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 28, no. 8 (March 2, 1979), 93-94.

Parra Orozco, Miguel Angel. *Oro Verde: Madera, Vida de una Región Chihuahuense.* Chihuahua: n.p., 1995.

Pennington, Campbell, W. *The Tarahumar of Mexico. Their Environment and Material Culture*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1963.

Peña Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican. Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Pensado, Jaime M. and Enrique C. Ochoa. *México Beyond 1968. Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018.

Pensado, Jaime M. "El Movimiento Estudiantil Profesional (MEP): una mirada a la radicalización de la juventud católica mexicana durante la Guerra Fría." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 156-192.

Pensado, Jaime M. *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long 1960s.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Pérez Alfaro, María Magdalena. “Violencia política, guerrilla e historia oral. Entrevista con la historiadora Alicia de los Ríos Merino.” *Testimonios. Revista científica de publicación periódica de historia oral de AHORA*, no. 4, 2014, http://testimonios.historiaoralargentina.org/download/n4/testimonios04.pdf, accessed September 10, 2017.

Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. *Yerba, goma y polvo: drogas, ambientes y policías en México, 1900-1940.* Mexico City: Era-CONACULTA-INAH, 1999.

Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. *Tolerancia y prohibición. Aproximaciones a la historia social y cultural de las drogas en México. 1840-1940*. Mexico City: Debate, 2016.

Pérez Ricart, Carlos A. *Las agencias antinarcóticos de los Estados Unidos y la construcción trasnacional de la guerra contra las drogas en México* (PhD Diss., Freien Universität Berlin, 2016).

Perkins, John H. *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution. Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Pettinà, Vanni, “Global Horizons: Mexico, the Third World, and the Non-Aligned Movement at the Time of the 1961 Belgrade Conference,” *The International History Review* 38, no. 4, (December 2015): 741-764.

Pineda Ochoa, Fernando. *En las profundidades del MAR: el oro no llegó de Moscú*. Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés Editores, 2003.

Plascencia de la Parra, Enrique. *Historia y organización de las fuerzas armadas en México, 1917-1937*. Mexico City: UNAM, 2010.

Plascencia de la Parra, Enrique. *Personajes y escenarios de la rebelion delahuertista 1923-1924*. Mexico City: UNAM-Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1998.

Pliego Moreno, Iván. “Sobre el 68. Entrevista con Gilberto Guevara Niebla,” *Sociológica* 23, no. 68 (September-December 2008): 197-208.

Polit Dueñas, Gabriela. *Narrating Narcos: Culiacán and Medellín.* Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2013.

Porras Carrillo, Eugeni. *Los warijó de Chihuahua: una etnografía mínima*. Chihuahua: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez-ENAH Chihuahua, 2002.

Posadas Segura, Florencio. *Movimientos sociales de los trabajadores agrícolas asalariados en el noroeste de México (1970-1995)*. Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2005.

Puma Crespo, Jorge Iván. "Small Groups Don't Win Revolutions. Armed Struggle in the Memory of Maoist Militants of Política Popular." *Latin American Perspectives* 44, no. 6, (November 1, 2017): 140-155.

Pyes, Craig. "Legal Murders. Mexico's War on Drugs, Operation Condor, is Responsible for Torture, Murder, and Extortion." *Village Voice*, June 4, 1979, 11-15.

Rabe, Stephen G. *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Radilla Martínez, Andrea y Claudia E.G. Rangel Lozano, eds. *Desaparición forzada y terrorismo de Estado en México. Memorias de la represión de Atoyac, Guerrero durante la década de los setenta.* Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero-Plaza & Valdés Editores, 2012.

Ramos Zavala, Raúl. *El tiempo que nos tocó vivir… y otros documentos de la guerrilla en México*. Mexico City: Editorial Huasipungo, 2003.

Rangel Hernández, Lucio. *El virus rojo de la revolución. La guerrilla en México. El caso de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre, 1973-1981*. Morelia: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2013.

Rath, Thomas G. *Myths of Demilitarization in Post-revolutionary Mexico 1920-1960.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Resa Nestares, Carlos. "El Estado como maximizador de rentas del crimen organizado. El caso del tráfico de drogas en México." Biblioteca del Instituto Internacional de Gobernabilidad, Document no. 88, October 2011.

Resa Nestares, Carlos. "Nueve mitos del narcotráfico en México (de una lista no exhaustiva)." https://www.casede.org/index.php/bibliotecacasede/crimen-organizado/narcotrafico/245-nueve-mitos-del-narcotrafico-en-mexico-de-una-lista-no-exhaustiva, accessed February 11, 2019.

Reyes Peláez, Juan Fernando. *Introducción a la historia de la guerrilla en México 1943-1983*. Torreón: n.p. 2004.

Reyna Juan Carlos and Farrah Fresnedo, *El Extraditado*. Barcelona: Grijalbo, 2014.

Robin, Marie-Monique. *Escuadrones de la muerte. La escuela francesa.* Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 2004.

Rodríguez Castañeda, Rafael, *El policía: la Guerra sucia no se olvida*. Barcelona: Grijalbo, 2013.

Rodríguez, Félix Ismael & John Weisman. *Shadow Warrior: The CIA Hero of a Hundred Unknown Battles.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

Rodríguez Munguía, Jacinto. *La conspiración del 68: así se fraguó la matanza*. Mexico City: Debate, 2018.

Rodríguez Munguía, Jacinto. "Esas horas con Philip Agee." *Emeequis,* January 22, 2008, 49-53.

Rodríguez Munguía, Jacinto. *La otra guerra secreta. Los archivos prohibidos de la prensa y el poder.* Mexico City: Océano, 2007.

Rosenblatt, Adam. *Digging for the Disappeared. Forensic Science after Atrocity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Rubio, Blanca. *Resistencia campesina y explotación rural en México*. Mexico City: Era, 1987.

Rubin, Jeffrey W. *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Ruiz Sosa, Eduardo. *Anatomía de la memoria*. Barcelona: Candaya, 2014.

Salas Obregón, Ignacio Arturo. *Cuestiones fundamentales del movimiento revolucionario*. Mexico City: Editorial Tierra Roja, 2003.

Salcedo García, Carlos. "Grupo Guerrillero Lacandones. La luz que no se acaba," 2005. Unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

Salcido, Francisco Moisés. *Zafarrancho de combate en Tlatelolco*. Caborca: n. p., 2005.

Sánchez Parra, Sergio Arturo. "Caminemos: un periódico enfermo?" *Revista 2.0, Conocimiento histórico en clave digital*, no. 4 (July-December 2012): 100-114.

Sánchez Parra, Sergio Arturo. *Estudiantes en armas. Una historia política y cultural del movimiento estudiantil de los Enfermos (1972-1978).* Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa/Academia de Historia de Sinaloa A.C., 2012.

Sánchez Parra, Sergio Arturo. *El '68 en Sinaloa. Una juventud en lucha por la democracia*. Zapopan: Astra Ediciones, 2018.

Sánchez Parra, Sergio Arturo. "*El Sol de Sinaloa* y la violencia política en México durante 1972: el caso de los Enfermos de la UAS," *Letras Históricas*, no. 18 (Spring-Fall 2018): 167-199.

Sanderson, Steven E. *Agrarian Populism and the Mexican State. The Struggle for Land in Sonora*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Santiago Quijada, Guadalupe & Jorge Balderas Domínguez. "Fundamento ideológico de la acción revolucionaria del grupo armado Lacandones." *Nóesis. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 14, no. 34 (August-December 2008): 66-91.

Santos Cenobio, Rafael, Juan García Valenzuela, & José Alberto Ortega Campos. "Los Enfermos: la configuración de un discurso gráfico radical en Sinaloa, México, 1970-1973." *Ra Ximhai* 13, no. 3 (July-December 2017): 439-460.

Santos Cenobio, Rafael. *El movimiento estudiantil en la UAS (1966-1972)*. Culiacán: UAS, 2005.

Santos Cenobio, Rafael. "Los Enfermos': Un movimiento político-armado en Sinaloa (1972-1976). MA thesis, Universidad de Guadalajara, 2007.

Sariego Rodríguez, Juan Luis. *El indigenismo en la Tarahumara*. Mexico City: CONACULTA, 2002.

Schmidt, Samuel. *El deterioro del presidencialismo mexicano. Los años de Luis Echeverría.* Mexico City: Editores Asociados Mexicanos, 1986.

Scott, Peter Dale. *Deep Politics and the Death of J.F.K.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Serrano Álvarez, Pablo. *La batalla del espíritu. El movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1932-1951).* 2 vol. México, CONACULTA, 1992.

Servín, Elisa. "Reclaiming Revolution in Light of the 'Mexican Miracle': Celestino Gasca and the Federacionistas Leales Insurrection of 1961." *The Americas* 66, no. 4 (April 2010): 527-557.

Servín, Elisa. *Ruptura y oposición: el movimiento henriquista 1945-1954*. Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2001.

Shannon, Elaine. *Desperados. Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and The War America Can't Win.* New York: Penguin Books, 1989.

Shapira, Yoram. *Mexican Foreign Policy under Echeverría*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978.

Shievenini Stefanoni, José Domingo. "La prohibición de la marihuana en México, 1920-1940." MA thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, 2012.

Sierra Guzmán, Jorge Luis. *El enemigo interno: contrainsurgencia y fuerzas armadas en México.* Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés, 2003.

Sinagawa, Jaime. *Amapola*. Culiacán: n.p., 2008.

Sinagawa, Jaime. *El Triángulo Dorado*. Culiacán: Creativos 7, 1999.

Smith, Benjamin T. *The Mexican Press and Civil Society, 1940-1976. Stories from the Newsroom, Stories from the Street*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.

Smith, Benjamin T. "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa 1930-1980," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7, no. 2, (Fall 2013): 125-165.

Smith, Benjamin T. *The Roots of Conservatism in Mexico. Catholicism, Society, and Politics in the Mixteca Baja, 1750-1962*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012.

Smith, Jeffrey. "Spraying Herbicides on Mexican Marijuana Backfires on U.S." *New Series* 199, no. 4331 (February 24, 1978), 861-864.

Smith, Jeffrey. "Poisoned Pot Becomes Burning Issue in High Places", *Science* 200, no. 4340 (April 28, 1978), 417-418.

Solís Mimendi, Antonio. *Jueves de corpus sangriento. Sensacionales revelaciones de un halcón*. Mexico City: n. p., 1972.

Sotelo Marbán, José. ed., *La verdad negada. Informe histórico sobre la Guerra Sucia del Estado mexicano entre los años '60 a los '80*. Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de los Movimientos Sociales A.C., 2012.

Sotelo, José, ed. *Informe Histórico a la Sociedad Mexicana ¡Qué no vuelva a suceder!* México: Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado, 2006.

Soto Carballo, Paulina Araceli. "Movimientos campesinos por la tierra en el norte de Sinaloa, 1968-1976. (Estudio de caso ejido campo El Tajito)." M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2011.

Soto Quintero, Miriam Faviola. *Badiraguato*. Culiacán: La Crónica de Culiacán, 2011.

Spencer, Daniela, ed. *Espejos de la guerra fría: México, América Central y el Caribe.* Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa-CIESAS-Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2004.

Stern, Steve J. *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Stern, Steve J. *Remembering Pinochet's Chile. On the Eve of London 1998.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Stevens, Evelyn P. "Legality and Extra-Legality in Mexico." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12, no. 1, (January 1970): 62-75.

Sweig, Julia. *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004

Teague, Aileen. "The Drug Trade in Mexico." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, (August 2016), http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-230, accessed June 4, 2017.

Tecla Jiménez, Alfredo. *Universidad, burguesía y proletariado*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Popular, 1978.

Terán, Lorenzo Q. *Tribuna impresa. Crónica periodística, 1966-1970*. Culiacán: UAS, 2005.

Topete, Miguel, ed. *Ayer, en la mañana clara. Salvador Gaytán y el 23 de septiembre de 1965*. Guadalajara: La Casa del Mago, 2012.

Topete, Miguel. *Los ojos de la noche. El comando guerrillero Óscar González Eguiarte.* Guadalajara: La casa del mago, 2009.

Toro, María Celia. *Mexico's "War" on Drugs. Causes and Consequences*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995.

Toro, María Celia. "The Internationalization of Police. The DEA in Mexico," *The Journal of Latin American History*, 86, 2 (September 1999): 623-640.

Treviño Rangel, Javier. "Policing the Past: Transitional Justice and the Special Prosecutor's Office in Mexico, 2000-2006." PhD diss., The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012.

Trevizo, Dolores. *Rural Protest and the Making of Democracy in Mexico 1968-2000.* University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2011.

Turner, John Kenneth. *Barbarous Mexico. An Indictment of a Cruel and Corrupt System.* London: Cassell & Company, 1911, http://online.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.991940/14?r=0&s=1, accessed February 12, 2017.

Valdés Castellanos, Guillermo. *Historia del narcotráfico en México.* Mexico City: Aguilar, 2013.

Valencia Triana, Margarita. *Capitalismo gore*. Mexico City: Paidós, 2016.

Valentine, Douglas. *The Strength of the Wolf. The Secret History of America's War on Drugs.* New York: Verso, 2004.

Valenzuela Arce, José Manuel. *Jefe de jefes. Corridos y narcocultura en México*. Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2010.

Valdés Castellanos, Guillermo. *Historia del narcotráfico en México*. Mexico City: Aguilar, 2013.

Valdivia Dounce, María Teresa. "Between Yoris and Guarijíos. Chronicles of Anthropology." In *Journal of the Southwest* 56, no. 3, 2014: 371-377.

Valdivia Dounce, María Teresa. *Entre yoris y guarijíos: crónicas sobre el quehacer antropológico*. Mexico City: UNAM, 2007.

Valdivia Dounce, María Teresa. *Los guarijíos de Sonora: un proyecto de antropología aplicada*. BA thesis, Universidad Veracruzana, 1984.

Van Wert, James Michael. "Government of Mexico Herbicidal Opium Poppy Eradication Program: A Summative Evaluation." PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1982.

Vanderwood, Paul. *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the turn of the Nineteenth Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Vargas Valdés, Jesús. *Madera rebelde. Movimiento agrario y guerrilla (1959-1965)*. Chihuahua: Ediciones Nueva Vizcaya, 2015.

Vázquez Camacho, Yair. "*La relación de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre y el Partido de los Pobres en el estado de Guerrero. La imposibilidad de la unidad (1970-1974).*" BA thesis, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010.

Vázquez Ruiz, Miguel Ángel. "Grupos económicos en el norte de México." *Problemas del Desarrollo. Revista Latinoamericana de Economía* 35, no. 137 (April-June 2004): 95-115.

Veledíaz, Juan. *Jinetes de Tlatelolco. Marcelino García Barragán y otros retratos del ejército mexicano*. Mexico City: Ediciones Proceso, 2017.

Veledíaz, Juan. *El General sin memoria: una crónica de los silencios del ejército mexicano.* Mexico City: Debate, 2010.

Vicente Ovalle, Camilo. "Estado y represión en México. Una historia de la desaparición forzada, 1950-1980." PhD diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2018.

Villanueva Gutiérrez, Victor Hugo. "Reseña: 'Resolutivos del Segundo Encuentro en la Sierra Heraclio Bernal'," *Descierto*, September 2015, http://colepi.org/revista/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/N006.pdf, accessed August 12, 2018.

Wagner, Dennis "Arturo Durazo Moreno: The story of 'El Negro's' secret, corrupt life dug up by Prescott man," *The Republic*, February 11, 2018, https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-investigations/2018/02/11/arturo-durazo-moreno-story-el-negros-secret-corrupt-life-dug-up-prescott-man/700687001/, accessed November 29, 2018.

Wald, Elijah. *Narcocorrido. A Journey into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas.* (New York: Rayo, 2002).

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

Walker III, William O. *Drug Control in the Americas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981.

Wasserman, Mark. *Pesos and Politics: Business, Elites, Foreigners, and Government in Mexico, 1854-1940*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Watt, Peter & Roberto Zepeda. *Drug War Mexico. Politics, Neoliberalism, and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy.* London: Zed Books, 2012.

Webb, Gary. Dark Alliance. *The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2014.

Weimer, Daniel. *Seeing Drugs. Modernization, Counterinsurgency, and U.S. Narcotics Control in the Third World, 1969-1976*. Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2011.

Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. *Guerrilllas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Williams, Gareth. *The Mexican Exception. Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy*. New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2011.

Wilson, Eric M. *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt and the National Security Complex.* New York: Routledge, 2016.

Wright, Angus. "Rethinking the Circle of Poison: The Politics of Pesticide Poisoning among Mexican Farm Workers." *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 4, (Autumn, 1986): 26-59.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Yankelevich, Pablo. *México, país refugio: la experiencia de los exilios en el siglo XX*. Mexico City: Plaza & Valdés-INAH-CONACULTURA, 2002.

Yetman, David. *Sonora. An Intimate Geography.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000.

Zingg, Robert. *Behind the Mexican Mountains*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Zolov, Eric. *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.