Cold War in the Countryside: <i>Conflict in Guerrero, Mexico</i>

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COLD WAR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: Conflict in Guerrero, Mexico

“Our struggle has its inspirational roots in [our] national history and reality: our flag . . . is the same raised by Hidalgo, Morelos and Guerrero, Juárez, Zapata and Villa.”

Genaro Vázquez Rojas, La Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria, 1968

INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on the Cold War in Latin America has concentrated on the influence of the Cuban revolution on governments and radical movements throughout the hemisphere. It has often presumed its appeal lay in the strategic success of its guerrilla warfare and the language of international socialism, and that its influence extended beyond urban centers to rural enclaves. What influence, if any, did Cuba’s revolutionary experience have on popular protest in the Mexican countryside? Alternatively, was popular resistance in Mexico’s peripheral states more readily organized around the language of nationalism and citizenship than that of international socialism? This article will argue that, in the southwest state of Guerrero, people were mobilized by articulation of the democratic hopes of both economic and political inclusion—expectations intimately associated with the Mexican revolution of 1910. Cuban revolutionaries’ nationalist, anti-imperialist senti-
ments resonated with the popular classes in Mexico, but their more radical language did not. Despite evidence that suggests this allegiance to the principles of their own revolution, the Mexican government manipulated Cold War concerns to argue that the proximity of Cuba, its recent revolution and discourse of international socialism, and the concurrent political instability rocking much of the hemisphere posed serious threats to the nation. By exaggerating the internationalist predilections of activists, government officials invoked the state’s prerogative to assure national security and stability, with particular attention to internal threats.

Numerous scholars have begun to move beyond a narrow analysis that links popular protest exclusively or primarily to economic demands, recognizing the broader political expectations of such efforts. A decade ago, Thomas Klubock’s analysis of the Chilean workers’ movement asserted its creation of “radical nationalism and [an] ideology of citizenship.” Greg Grandin, in his assessment of Cold War politics, argues that programs implemented (or at least, proposed) during the Guatemalan revolution (1944-54)—expansion of the franchise, land redistribution and increased access to credit, and labor’s right to organize—speak to demands for economic and political inclusion. He further suggests that the process of political activism in Guatemala encouraged a redefinition of democracy as “the felt experience of individual sovereignty and social solidarity.” Likewise, Elisabeth Jean Wood argues that El Salvador’s civil war insurgents were motivated by more than material demands: “emotional and moral motives were essential” and contributed to a reformation of the nation’s political culture in the process. Democratic aspirations were not unique to Latin America or to third world struggles: in the United States, Marxism’s Cold War attraction lay both in its working-class component and its explanation of national liberation struggles in Asia and Africa.

3. On the early development of Mexican nationalism, see, among many, David A. Brading, _The Origins of Mexican Nationalism_ (Cambridge: Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, 1985). Of the Cuban revolution, the Movimiento Liberación Nacional (MLN) (founded in August 1961 by former President Lázaro Cárdenas, among others) stated: “Because the Cuban Revolution’s realizations accord with the aspirations and struggles of the Mexican people in favor of agrarian reform, of the diversification of foreign commerce, of literacy and of education, in defense of the national culture, against imperialism, the anti-national forces and of the reactionary forces, it interests all Mexicans to identify with and defend the Cuban Revolution.” National Liberation Movement, _Programa y llamamiento_ (Mexico City: República del Salvador, 1961), p. 20 in Christopher M. White, _Creating a Third World: Mexico, Cuba and the United States during the Castro Era_ (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), p. 65 (italics added).


5. Greg Grandin, “Off the Beach,” p. 435. He also argues that “an optical history of rural insurgency resulted in elite cooperation on land reform in Mexico, thereby avoiding the kinds of insurgencies that arose elsewhere in Latin America during the Cold War. While the level of protest did not rise to that of insurgencies elsewhere, I argue it is these same aforementioned issues that generated discontent and violence in Guerrero.


Mexico, however, was a different case, “less easily categorized.” Following what was widely portrayed as a successful revolution (1910-1920), the government established a corporate structure that, while inefficient and largely protected from external pressures, provided a framework to channel both rural and urban workers’ grievances. State-sponsored social welfare programs were implemented; it was the government’s failure to fulfill their potential, rather than demands for their creation, that led to popular discontent. Dissatisfaction led to a struggle over competing claims to the nationalist mantle, one the state had asserted since it consolidated power in the decades following the revolution. The government’s ambiguous character led to a progressive public stance on the international front, including support of Castro’s revolution, breaking relations with Chile and welcoming Chilean exiles after the military coup of September 11, 1973, and expressions of “solidarity and support for the just causes and liberties of the peoples of the world.” Government commitment to human rights abroad was a façade that masked internal policies: Mexico’s dirty war raged on in Guerrero. While both Mexico’s rural and urban populations suffered from regime-sponsored repression, the national government conducted its dirty war more intensely in Guerrero than any other location. It was a contortion described by Eric Zolov as an “intricate diplomatic balancing act.”

Gilbert M. Joseph expressed surprise at the paucity of scholarship on Mexico during the Cold War; it is, perhaps, these contradictions at both the governmental level and that of the popular classes that defy easy analysis.


11. Eric Zolov, “¡Cuba sí, Yanquis no! The Sacking of the Instituto Cultural México-Norteamericano in Morelia, Michoacán,” pp. 214-252, in Joseph and Spenser, eds., In from the Cold, p. 215. Certainly, a wide range of issues led to Mexico’s stance on the Cuban revolution. Its proximity to Mexico, its anti-imperialist agenda, behind-the-scenes alliances with the United States, and the state’s need to contain leftist elements, including former President Lázaro Cárdenas, contributed to these contradictions. See, in addition to Zolov, Jefferson Morley, Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2008); White, Creating a Third World; and Thomas C. Wright, Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution (New York: Praeger, 1999). Despite acknowledging “crack downs” on protesters, the creation by Cárdenas of a pro-Castro organization, and a peasant organization outside the state’s corporate structure, Wright somehow concludes that Mexico “was only mildly affected by the Cuban Revolution.” Wright, p. 45.

COMMERCIAL EXPANSION, POLITICAL CONTRACTION

Mexican society underwent rapid economic and political changes in the aftermath of World War II. Government practices of co-optation and repression faced challenges, particularly as independent coalitions emerged. During the 1950s, well-documented, often nationwide, labor struggles became increasingly disruptive. These included a series of worker actions by electrical, petroleum, telegraph and telephone workers, and most dramatically, strikes by railroad workers and teachers in 1958-59. The government was explicitly challenged in the political arena as well. While the relationship between these urban movements and those in peripheral states has yet to be fully examined, Guerrero represents an important link. Many of the future activists in Guerrero received their political baptism during these strikes; additionally, an influential leader of the teachers’ movement in Mexico City was Othón Salazar of Guerrero. While these connections played a role in shaping the popular movement in Guerrero, that effort also reflected distinct local qualities.

Guerrero offers other particulars that make it an excellent case study of popular discontent and government response, and permit us to address the neglect of “local or regional patterns . . . the differences between national and local politics, and [general exclusion of] . . . the popular classes, from any significant influence on political decisions,” decried by Arthur Schmidt. Citizens questioned the impact of government policies on land usage, employment, and environmental preservation, making Guerrero a classic example of citizens’ weakened confidence in the state’s ability—or willingness—to serve their needs. Future teacher-activist Serafín Núñez, then a child in the region of Ixtla and son of teachers at the Ayotzinapa normal school, attributes much of his disillusionment to bitter memories of government failure to mediate disruption caused by the arrival of U.S. lumber interests in 1947. Political activism by the state’s rural and urban laborers and

14. The most conspicuous example of this is that of the henriquistas. See Elisa Servín, Ruptura y opinión: el movimiento henriquista, 1945-1954 (México: Cal y Arena, 2001).
community groups in mid-century arose in the context of endemic poverty, expanding commercial agriculture and foreign capital investment, and a history of extreme institutional instability and political corruption that characterized the state. These same conditions and the perception of government collusion had plagued the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) and contributed to the revolution that unseated him; the nationalist, anti-imperialist critique that arose a half-century later recalls that popular response.

The cooperative relationship between powerful federal and state forces navigated in the aftermath of the revolution of 1910 permitted the domination of Guerrero’s populace by regional political and economic elites—increasingly one and the same—unless their policies threatened the pax priista. These caciques closed off avenues of democratic political participation, thereby channeling the nature of activism and government response in the latter half of the century. Although a largely rural state, its organized protests were not agrarian actions per se; most were conducted not in the outlying rural zones, but in the small provincial towns that dotted the landscape. They brought together diverse popular interests, including those for land, but also for education, labor rights, small business opportunities, and greater political access.

Two major economic projects demonstrate the consequences of government-sponsored modernization: the Río Balsas Dam and the development of Acapulco as an international tourist destination. The massive construction project of the Comisión del Balsas, established by presidential decree in 1960, encouraged expansion of large-scale export agriculture. Commercial production of coffee and copra (the highly valued oil of coconuts), for example, rapidly expanded. Government pub-
licity reveals both a pattern of efforts to pacify local discontent with the largesse of federal funds, and that the Balsas project was explicitly designed to bring the region into the national economic fold.\textsuperscript{22} Secondly, government efforts to expand tourism starkly demonstrate its collaboration with national and international corporate interests, taking the form of legislative and financial support for the industry, and the involvement of influential government officials as individual investors.\textsuperscript{23} Construction associated with both projects changed the landscape of the region, dislocated small landholders, increased land-ownership concentration, and dispersed entire communities, which in turn generated a labor pool for urban development and created labor friction that grew increasingly contentious in succeeding decades.\textsuperscript{24} Not surprisingly, the communities most affected by these transformations became the sites of labor conflicts and popular protests in the 1960s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{25} Local historian Andrea Radilla Martínez points to cafeticultores\textsuperscript{26} experiences of labor organizing in the 1950s as having taught strategies employed in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{26} The coffee region was the birthplace of Lucio Cabañas, the native son who gained prominence as an opposition leader and guerrilla militant. Even today, the conflicts continue: Zihuatanejo environmentalist and political analyst Silvestre Pacheco argues that “[a]griculture has almost disappeared in this zone. The communities that were previously self-sufficient became dependent on the cities, and this problem is still not resolved.”\textsuperscript{27}
The failure of the government to adequately respond to worsening socioeconomic disparities and community concerns about land use and public services, including schools, hospitals, and women’s clinics, provided the impetus for concerted challenges to the state government. Two distinct but overlapping phases of the popular movements emerged in Guerrero, each led by teachers. The first wave was a statewide campaign in 1960 to oust Governor Raúl Caballero Aburto. It achieved ambiguous political success with his removal, but ultimately retreated to clandestine guerrilla warfare in the face of overwhelming government aggression. The political education of its leaders, native-born sons Genaro Vázquez Rojas (1933-1972) and Lucio Cabañas (1938-1974), was initially rooted in the study of national history and heroes such as Hidalgo and Zapata. It was only later, under the influence of urban militants, that each man became immersed in the study of Marx, Lenin, and Guevara.

The second upsurge in activism sought to rekindle public protest in the wake of the government’s repression of the 1960s. Many, although not all, of its leaders came from outside the state, having experienced their political awakening in the infamous government assaults on protesters in 1968 and 1971 in Mexico City and, in a few cases, by study in Moscow. These latter activists were more explicitly billed itself as an alternative to the long-dominant PRI, development plans still center on expanding tourism, just as in the PRI years.  

28. Despite government efforts to placate Guerrero’s discontent, socioeconomic indicators place Guerrero at the bottom or near-bottom of virtually every national index, confirming a high level of poverty throughout the state (only Chiapas consistently ranked lower). In 1950, Guerrero’s poverty rate stood at 56.4%. James Wilkie, The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910. 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), pp. 205, 236, Table 9-10. For a re-evaluation of Wilkie’s analysis, which concludes “Wilkie and Wilkins’s [projected estimates] were flawed because the latter used debatable criteria (e.g., language usage),” see Stephanie Granato and Aída Mostkoff, “The Class Structure of Mexico, 1895-1980,” in James W. Wilkie, ed., Statistical Abstract of Latin America Supplement Series, Supplement 10, James W. Wilkie, Series Editor (Los Angeles: University of California, 1990), pp. 103-115. High rates of illiteracy, poor health and widespread poverty went unabated. In 1970, over 65% of the population in Guerrero continued to earn income below that considered subsistence. Other social indicators included a hospital bed rate of 0.16% that of United Nations recommended rates, and the highest illiteracy in the country (44.6% of the population over 15, compared to a national average of 23.8%). Miranda Ramírez, El otro rostro, pp. 19-21. See also James Wilkie, “Comparative Government Budgets,” Table 4, in Statistics and National Policy, p. 108.

29. Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo initiated the War of Independence; Emiliano Zapata, of the neighboring state of Morelos, was the agrarian leader of the Army of the South during the Revolution of 1910.

inspired by the success of the Cuban revolution but, as I argue herein, failed to rally the populace under its revolutionary banner. Rather, by the mid-1970s, this latter effort concentrated on demands for democratic accountability for political prisoners and desaparecidos. Both movements elicited a common government response: violent repression at home complemented by international policies that publicly pursued accommodation with Fidel Castro’s revolutionary government.

Like those engaged in labor disruptions elsewhere, activists in Guerrero organized to reform the political regime. Disparate interests united to confront economic and political exclusion, and like Porfirio Díaz, Guerrero’s governor would fall. Unlike in 1910, however, the national government successfully intervened to contain popular discontent.

**THE FIRST WAVE: TO FULFILL THE PROMISES OF THE REVOLUTION**

Frustration at the government’s failure to adequately mediate their perceived interests transformed popular demands from a focus on economic justice to democratic accountability. Like their compatriots during previous decades of popular activism, these forces found allies in their struggles: teacher-activists. Labor actions in Mexico City in the 1950s attracted and politicized Guerrero’s sons and daughters who were students in the capital’s normal school, and while those strikes initially focused on union issues, government repression had pushed the discourse to political rights. The contingent of teachers returning home from Mexico City at the close of the 1950s joined the labor conflicts already underway in Guerrero. Teachers, including future guerrilla leader Genaro Vázquez, immersed themselves in labor organizing. Their education, experiences in the capital, and the community’s respect for them facilitated teachers’ assumptions of leadership positions in workers’ organizations.


32. For further discussion on the normal school education and politicization of these activists, particularly their involvement in labor organizations, see Blacker-Hanson, *La Lucha Sigue!*

Among these teacher-activists were those who led the Unión Libre de Asociaciones Copreras (ULAC). Over the course of the next several years, ULAC organizers, brothers Ishmael and José Bracho Campos, were joined by many others with links to the normal schools, including activists in the Asociación de Cafecultores Independientes. Teachers were also among the signatories of a widely distributed statement of support for workers’ right to organize against the undemocratic practices of a local cacique; another statement represented the Liga Agraria Revolucionaria del Sur “Emiliano Zapata,” formed among textile workers in El Ticuí.

Its stated purpose was to “struggle for land, against exploitation, misery, injustice, poor health and cultural conditions, and the practical absence of political rights.” These declarations are among numerous indicators that these teacher-activists were encouraging the labor movement to a broader challenge for government accountability. This would bear consequences as a generation shrugged off wistful recollections, as articulated by one teacher, of the days of “prosperity,” “abundance,” and “self-sufficiency,” to challenge the encroachment of international capital and the closing of doors to full economic and political citizenship.

Repression of labor and civic rights had become increasingly linked under the governorship of Raúl Caballero Aburto (1957-1961). His family and colleagues controlled much of the state’s commerce and as governor he adopted strong anti-labor policies. In mid-October 1960, the governor refused to recognize a strike

34. AGN DGIPS, Caja 2946a, 2946B, 1966-1968; AGN, DGIPS Caja 1488, 1968-1982; Student records, Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City. On José Bracho Campos, Student records, Escuela Normal, Mexico City; Consuelo Solís Morales, wife of Genaro Vázquez Rojas, confirms that she and her husband knew Ishmael and José Bracho at the Escuela Normal in Mexico City. Solís Morales, Excélsior, p. 31.

35. Student records, Escuela Nacional de Maestros, Mexico City; “Manifesto en la heroica Iguala la tierra se mueve bajo las botas del cacicazgo Abarca-Mirandista,” Iguala, 21 de diciembre de 1965, in Aranda Flores, Los cívicos guerrerenses, pp. 78-80.

36. Informe de Iguala, Consejo de Autodefensa del Pueblo de Guerrero, signed by Fausto Ávila (ACG), Antonio Sotelo (Liga Agraria Revolucionario ‘Emiliano Zapata’), Ishmael Bracho (ULAC), Pedro Contreras (Asociación de Cafecultores Independientes), Elpidio Ocampo (Consejo de Autodefensa, Iguala), José Martínez, Asociación de Productores Independientes de Ajonjoli, in AGN, Caja/1488, File 1967-1969, 8 de enero de 1967.


39. Serafin Núñez, interview.

40. Caballero Aburto had extensive political connections. He had risen to the rank of Brigadier General in the army and was serving as commander of the military zone in Xalapa, Veracruz when he initiated his gubernatorial candidacy. Perhaps his most notorious role was his service in leading the assault on supporters of presidential opposition candidate Miguel Henrique Guzmán in Mexico City in July 1952. Some scholars suggest his governorship was the reward from President Ruiz Cortines (1952-58) for such service. Leopoldo Ayala Guevara, La guerra sucia en Guerrero: Impunidad, terrorismo y abuso de poder (México: Editorial Ayalacenter, 2005), p. 3. On family holdings, see Pablo
by truck drivers against a family-owned company, using his authority to appoint a mediation board that declared the strike “nonexistent,” and allegedly making death threats against the workers’ leader. In response, 15 other unions, including electricians, telephone workers, stevedores, merchant marines, and service workers in hotels and restaurants, threatened a walk-out. To coordinate a state-wide response, a coalition of workers in the state’s agro-industries—many now led by teacher-activists and normal school colleagues of Genaro Vázquez—merged under a single umbrella, the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense (ACG). They demanded democratic transparency, community decision-making, and an end to government-sponsored violence. The ACG ultimately brought together rural workers, small landholders, owners of small commercial ventures (most prominently, market vendors), and teachers. Students at the State College (shortly thereafter renamed the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, UAG) were active participants, as were those at the normal schools, including Lucio Cabañas. By November, alliances largely instigated by Vázquez linked over 35 community organizations. Like other contributions made by teachers based on their experiences in the capital, the strategy of cross-class alliances was not unknown in their state’s politics. Receptivity was based on familiarity. Peter Guardino demonstrates that at least as early as the period of post-colonial nation-building, peasants forged alliances among other groups of the population. Among the more remarkable inclusionary accomplishments of this movement was securing support from the Padres de Familia, the parent support group affiliated with each school. Historically, teacher strikes had been the source of intense conflict between parents’ expectations of educational access for their children, and teacher demands for improved salaries and working conditions. This realignment was a progressive

Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social de 1960 en Guerrero. With photographs by Jesús Salmerón. 2nd ed. (Chilpancingo, self-published, 1999), p. 24. For a sample listing of family properties acquired during his governorship, see Sotelo Pérez, Breve historia, pp. 36-37.

41. Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social de 1960, p. 24.

42. Baloy Mayo, La guerrilla de Genaro y Lucio, p. 33; Gama Santillán, “Guerrero durante los últimos 30 años,” p. 93; Bartra, Guerrero bronce, p. 90. This organization, under different names and configurations (Asociación Cívica Nacional Guerrerense, ACNG, and Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria, ACNR), continued to play a conspicuous role in the political life of Guerrero throughout the next three decades.


44. Sandoval Ramírez, “Testimonio,” in Pablo Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social de 1960, p. 95; Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social en 1960, pp. 60, 74-75; Mayo, La guerrilla de Genaro y Lucio, p. 35.

45. Peter Guardino, Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico’s National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 147, 159. Guardino presents no distinction within ethnic communities and presents the popular class only in their role as peasants. His only overt recognition of the heterogeneity of this population is his discussion of language barriers.

46. Other tensions existed as well, including community resistance to secular education. See Vaughan, The State, Education, and Social Class; Marjorie Becker, Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution (Berkeley: University of California, 1995); and Maria Lorena Cook, Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teachers’ Movement in Mexico (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).
step from experiences during the teachers’ union strike in Mexico City in 1958, when the school administration organized newly formed Padres de Familia explicitly to foment discord. The broad community-based nature of this strike, presented in the language of nationalism and democratic participation, overcame the more narrowly focused parental identities that had previously clashed with bread-and-butter union interests. UAG instructor Saúl López López recalls that differences among these diverse interests were subsumed to create a broad, “almost monolithic” unity among distinct social forces that came together “like one big family,” representing a broad spectrum of democratic tendencies among the state’s polity. It would be an alliance maintained throughout the political struggles of the next decade as well.

The formal set of complaints drawn up against the governor addressed political processes, the dearth of Constitutional guarantees, and paralegal repression exercised by the governor and his relatives. Demands for an end to forest exploitation, recognition of the right to unionize, attention to the educational needs of the community, and a renewal of the university and state education systems’ dedication to the socioeconomic needs of the popular classes further reflect the grassroots expectations nurtured in the revolution of 1910 and the socialist education programs of Presidents Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-28) and Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40). Both demands and rhetoric implicitly challenged government credentials to the mantle of democratic revolutionary regime. Despite the recent success of the Cuban revolution, the promises of their own revolution resonated with the community to a degree later proclamations and attempts to portray the struggle as one in solidarity with the Cubans did not. Both the claiming of nationalist language and appeals to the federal government to intervene on behalf of the community confirm an acceptance of the dominant discourse that depicted the national government as the embodiment of the revolution of 1910 and protector of the democratic rights of the people, while simultaneously challenging it to uphold that claim.

47. Aurora Loyo Brambila, El movimiento magisterial de 1958 de México (México: Ediciones Era, 1979), p. 50. Indeed, he suggests that they were among those charging “communists” with trying to stir up agitation in the country.
49. The formal charges brought by the ACG were (1) general discontent and absence of political guarantees; (2) dislocation of campesinos; (3) constant repression on the part of the police and pistoleros on the governor’s payroll; (4) irregularities in municipal elections; and (5) illicit enrichment of the governor and his relatives. Andres Rubio Zaldivar, El movimiento social Guerrerense y la lucha armada de Genaro Vázquez Rojas. (Serie: Movimientos y Protagonistas Sociales, Equipo Profesional Multidisciplinario de Apoyo Técnico, A.C. [Epmat], Convergencia Democrática Universitaria [UAG], Periódico Pueblo de Chilpancingo. Chilpancingo: EPMAT, Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1994), p. 17; Rodríguez Saldaña, La desaparición de poderes en el Estado de Guerrero (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1992), pp. 146-161; Pablo Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social de 1960, pp. 74-75. A complete discussion of the initial charges, dated October 17, 1960, in José C. Gutiérrez Galindo, Y el pueblo se puso de pie: La verdad sobre el caso Guerrero (México: self-published, 1961), pp. 197-207. Also included are numerous other legal documents and an excellent collection of political cartoons of the period. The author attended both the National Teachers School and the normal school at Ayotzinapa.
50. Codified in Article 123 and Article 3, respectively, of the Constitution of 1917.
The protesters were demanding implementation of revolutionary promises, not a Cuban-style revolution.

The two most prominent leaders to emerge from this period, Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas, the latter then a student at the rural normal school of Ayotzinapa, along with many of their colleagues, reflected the effervescence of political participation that would soon pour forth on the streets of the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Their ideological views represented a synthesis of their experiences as sons of campesinos and their politicization at the normal schools. This combination facilitated and legitimated their leadership. Despite later socialist tendencies, their projects for social justice began as a rejection of the worst abuses of capitalist economic exploitation and a response to the closure of democratic political channels, particularly on the state level. In a conversation with teacher Félix Hoyo, Cabañas later recalled his earliest political indoctrination, witnessing the “repression, the caciques, the poverty and misery of the people . . . the robberies, torture, disappearances, and incarcerations the army had done to the people.”

Thus, popular resistance was mobilized by a convergence of repressive conditions, a commitment to the nation’s progressive legacy, the inspiration of a successful revolution close at hand, and seasoned leadership carrying the trust accrued by earlier generations of their profession. Its limited success was both advanced and constrained by the people’s retention of faith in the regime.

The popular classes’ nationalist proclivities were demonstrated in numerous ways. Demands such as “absolute respect for the Constitution,” land redistribution, and recognition of the autonomy of municipios libres, explicitly reproduced the language of the Revolution. When state officials announced a prohibition on gatherings of more than five people, participants set up a permanent sit-in symbolically located at the Monumento a la Bandera.

On November 20, 1960, the anniversary of the revolution, students presented themselves before President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-64) dressed in mourning, wearing black armbands, and decked their doors and windows in black ribbons to indicate their sorrow that “the spirit of the Revolution has died.” At another rally that same historic day, over 20,000 people gathered in the Alameda “Granados Maldonado,” one of the main
plazas of Chilpancingo, demanding Caballero Aburto’s resignation.\footnote{Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social de 1960}, pp. 27-49. At the time, the population of the state capital was about 15,000.} Echoing the state’s motto, participant Pablo Sandoval Ramírez portrayed their aspirations for “a democratic nation, free, sovereign and just.”\footnote{Pablo Sandoval Ramírez, “Testimonio,” in Jesús Salmerón, Pablo Sandoval Ramírez, et al., eds., \textit{1960: historia gráfica de un movimiento social} (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1991), p. 25. The state’s motto is the ‘Free and Sovereign State of Guerrero.’} Pablo Sandoval Cruz later nostalgically recalled demonstrations where placards, music, and “unforgettable moments of joy” were based on the panoply of national heroes, while also suggesting a wide diversity of participants:

This spirit of solidarity transcended social spheres, religions, political parties and economic fortunes of the men and women . . . it was the same spirit that we had inherited from Vicente Guerrero, with his bravery and faith in the independence of our country; that we had inherited from José María Morelos, with his heroism and his great patriotism; that of the Galeneas, los Bravos.\footnote{Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social de 1960}, pp. 38-39.}

In the tradition of popular songwriting in times of struggle, new corridos were heard in the streets of Chilpancingo, Atoyac, and elsewhere. Many incorporated the language of the Revolution to rally bystanders and buoy the spirits of marchers: “Viva la Revolución!” and “Viva la Constitución!” were common refrains.\footnote{Teacher Domingo Adame Vega, “Testimonio,” in Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social}, p. 103; Radilla Martínez, \textit{Poderes, sabores y saberes}, pp. 195-196, 208-209.} Speaking at a rally, Vázquez urged continuing respect for the Constitution as a source of legal guarantees.\footnote{Vázquez Rojas, “Anecdotario,” in Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social}, p. 130.} At yet another rally, the crowd of over 500 people heard a professor from the Ayotzinapa normal school link their current struggle to the Revolution’s assassinated martyrs: “We will fight for sovereignty and for liberty, for that which Francisco I. Madero and Emiliano Zapata fought.”\footnote{Sandoval Cruz, “Anecdotarios,” in Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social}, p. 140.} In Atoyac, Lucio Cabañas charged the government with violating “the highest and most sacred principles of the Constitution.”\footnote{Lucio Cabañas, “Anecdotarios,” in Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social}, p. 140.} Sandoval Cruz asserted that the “struggle was framed within the context of the state and federal laws” and that “[the movement is] for democratization . . . [and] in defense of the people’s rights.”\footnote{Sandoval Cruz, \textit{El movimiento social}, pp. 59, 33, 27.}

The popular classes were not alone in drawing on nationalist rhetoric. In the context of the Cold War and the government’s interest in combating challenges from the left while seeking to secure status as a leader of the “third world independent bloc,” charges of communist infiltration provided a potent weapon to isolate oppo-
nents. In depictions of the opposition in Guerrero, Caballero Aburto replicated the language used against the union movements in Mexico City in 1958-1959. In an effort to position his beleaguered administration as a bulwark against foreign threats, the governor labeled those demanding his resignation “[c]ommunists.” Heavily drawing on the federal government’s assertion that national sovereignty was threatened more by international communism than the “colossus of the north,” he later claimed that the opposition formed “part of the Communist conspiracy” to use the nation as a base to encircle the United States. He depicted the governments of Mexico and the United States as targets of an international plot that justified a vigorous defense of national sovereignty. The most damning condemnation of the teachers’ strike in Mexico City had been the suggestion that participants were “professional agitators” or “quasi-professionals,” “manipulating participants and their families” for the purpose of forming “assault brigades to accomplish their ‘wicked’ goals.” The allegation of external influences is potentially devastating in light of the acute nationalism harnessed to expel foreign influences (both cultural and financial) during and after the revolution of 1910. While limited oppositional organizing was tolerated, charges of foreign influence hinted at manipulation beyond the pale of acceptable citizen participation. The government used such allegations to expel a large contingent of student activists at the UAG, as they later did from campuses in Mexico City.

Charges of communist infiltration were increasingly wielded by national and state officials, as both internal opposition and the international tensions of the Cold War increased. The opposition vigorously rejected the label. Normal school teacher Inocencio Castro, for example, countered accusations in Diario de Acapulco (owned and operated by a relative of the governor) by arguing that officials were “always saying whatever is convenient,” and that despite allegations of communism, “we only represent the Frente Cívico.” Similar allegations would later be raised against Cabañas and fellow teachers in Atoyac and were honed still further during events in Mexico City in 1968; they would increase in frequency and escalate in intensity as the support for the guerrilla movements in Guerrero persisted in the 1970s.

62. See, for example, Aurora Loyo Brambila, El movimiento magisterial on such efforts during the teachers strike. Like its language, government military tactics reflected its own lessons from the labor conflicts in Mexico City. The government employed these tools in Guerrero, and again in the capital in 1968 when protesters challenged government legitimacy there. See Sergio Aguayo, La Charola: Una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México (México: Grijalbo, 2001).


64. Sandoval Cruz, El movimiento social, p. 82.

65. Loyo Brambila, El movimiento magisterial, p. 48.

66. Numerous historians have analyzed the role of nationalism and anti-imperialism in the revolution of 1910. Its most overt expression is Article 33 of the Constitution of 1917. “Foreigners may not in any way participate in the political affairs of the country.” Also emblematic was the nationalization of oil by then-President Cárdenas in 1938.

67. Inocencio Castro, as reported by Sandoval Cruz, “Anecdotario,” in El movimiento social, p. 131.
The broad-based, state-wide coalition threatened government authority. On December 30, government troops were called in to the state capital, and protesters maintaining a peaceful sit-in in the government plaza were attacked; seven people died. The federal government finally intervened, and Caballero Aburto was deposed by the Senate the following week. The assault in Chilpancingo was replicated in Iguala on December 30, 1962, when popular forces gathered to protest fraudulent elections.

The violence in the plazas of Chilpancingo and Iguala, the administration’s increasingly violent crackdowns on protests, and the widespread devastation of the state’s communities all fed Vázquez’s growing disillusionment with the possibility of reform. He concluded that the implementation of democratic aspirations could not be made without the violent destruction of the regime. The ACG recast itself as the Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria (ACNR), adopting more militant tactics and issuing a nationwide call for revolution. The move from public protest to armed resistance mirrored that of other opposition leaders, notably Rubén Jaramillo (1914-1962) of Morelos. Jaramillo’s movement was rooted in Emiliano Zapata’s earlier agrarian vision and its populist implementation by President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). The radicalization of Jaramillo’s movement, rather than the more distant Cuban experience, served as an important model close to home for militants in neighboring Guerrero; Jaramillo’s 1962 assassination further undermined the credibility of López Mateos’ government.

Vázquez and his armed colleagues continued to use potent nationalist language despite this radical shift, revering \textit{la patria} and declaring commitment to the “rev-
olutionary ideal of 1910 of ‘Effective Suffrage.’” This manifesto, issued on January 19, 1963, closed with the banner, “Mi Patria es Primero,” a line his audience no doubt recognized as echoing Independence hero Vicente Guerrero. In a manifesto issued in April 1964, the ACG challenged the “bad administration of justice and the annulment of the democratic liberties granted by statute in the national Constitution.” In response to a state decree of May 1965, which authorized imprisonment and fines for behaviors that challenged the regime, the ACG called for the replacement of the “government of the caciques [to reassert] democratic liberties.” The ACG appealed for implementation of the laws of Agrarian Reform, preservation of forest resources, education, and the “cultural development of the people.” A communiqué issued by the Liga Agraria Revolucionaria del Sur (allied with the ACG) on July 4, 1965 demanded “democratic liberties” as guaranteed in the Constitution, land redistribution, and national sovereignty. Each of these demands reflects the expectations aroused by the revolution of 1910 and embodied in the constitution it produced.

Following his 1966 arrest and dramatic prison escape in 1968, Vázquez and colleagues from his years in the normal school and from the ACG skirmished with military forces throughout the Costa Chica. Despite the transition to armed resistance, the language of broad-based nationalism and constitutional guarantees continued to color critiques of the government’s betrayal. After nearly seven years of resistance, in a January 29, 1967 speech in Iguala, Vázquez’s colleague, teacher Roque Salgado, still charged the government with “anti-constitutional” failure to provide land redistribution as mandated in the Reforma Agraria and with maintaining a cacigazgo of violent reprisals against cívicos (members of the ACG), members of the Liga Agraria, campesinos, and workers in the copra, coffee, and sesame industries. In another, undated manifesto (likely August 1967), the Consejo de Auto-Defensa del Pueblo called on the people to send telegrams and letters to the president and secretaría de gobernación. Such tactics revealed a lingering pre-
sumption of receptivity at the national level, indicating a degree of government legitimacy, even after Vázquez and colleagues had taken up armed resistance.\textsuperscript{76}

In yet another communiqué, Vázquez rhetorically linked their struggles to those of national heroes: “Our struggle has its inspirational roots in national history and reality: our flag . . . is the same raised by Hidalgo, Morelos and Guerrero, Juárez, Zapata and Villa.”\textsuperscript{77} From the Sierras, he issued communiqués from their “Campamento Revolucionario ‘José María Morelos,’” and signed them the “Comité Armado de Liberación ‘Gral Vicente Guerrero,’” ‘Emiliano Zapata’ or ‘Juan Álvarez.’\textsuperscript{78} In autumn 1970, he explained that he had selected the region of his origin for his armed struggle for its historic symbolism: “Here in these lands and among these people the history of our country produced the giant strategist of revolutionary independence of Mexico in the figure of José Ma. Morelos.”\textsuperscript{79} Vázquez retained a strong affinity for national icons and history despite an increasing dedication to international socialism. Ultimately, however, his more radical language and tactics further isolated the guerrillas from the broad-based popular movement from which they emerged, the anti-

\textsuperscript{76} Consejo de Auto-Defensa de Iguala, undated, in Aranda Flores, \textit{Los cívicos guerrerenses}, pp. 49-50. Grandin notes the contradiction that “an ever greater number [of rural and urban workers] turned to the government, including its rhetoric of democratic equality and justice, for help in mitigating the often brutal effects of capitalism, even though paradoxically the coercive labor and loss of access to subsistence production were in fact made possible only by government intervention.” Grandin, \textit{The Last Colonial Massacre}, p. 179. While writing about Latin America more generally, his observation applies to the increasing political and economic marginalization of workers in Guerrero.


\textsuperscript{78} See numerous ACNR communiqués, Aranda Flores, \textit{Los cívicos guerrerenses}.


\textsuperscript{80} Fausto Ávila insists that while some individuals transferred from one organization to another, and from urban to rural, there were no significant organizational links between either the Partido de los Pobres (PDLP) or Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria (ACNR) with urban guerrilla movements. Fausto Ávila, interview with the author, February 21, 2003, Chilpancingo, Guerrero.
Cabañas actively proselytized among campesinos, whose participation he sought and whose protection he needed. These activities partially explain the support he retained during his last years. Like that of Vázquez, the ideology of Lucio Cabañas was transformed by government repression. Although he, too, gradually adopted Marxism-Leninism, he continued to articulate his goals—economic and political justice—through the lens of national experiences. Cabañas was well steeped in a revolutionary heritage that included a grandfather and uncle who had fought as Zapatistas in the revolution of 1910, as well as a father assassinated as an active agrarista alongside President Cárdenas in the 1930s.

Cabañas took up a teaching post in his hometown of Atoyac, where he became immersed in local challenges to economic development policies and increasing demands for democratic processes. Community concerns focused on the denuding of the forests under a contract issued to a timber company in 1963 and on the anticipated impact of the proposed closure of a textile cooperative. Cabañas particularly urged demands involving access to and quality of education, arguing that its role was to serve the needs of the poorest of the community. Projects to change academic institutions came only when “los pobres,” the people, demanded it, Cabañas argued, noting recent cases in Monterrey, Puebla, and Guerrero. As had happened in Chilpancingo in 1960, government rhetoric sought to isolate these popular leaders. In a community meeting on June 14, 1964, during labor conflicts at El Ticuí, Cabañas rejected “deprecating” allegations made by the municipal president that he and his colleagues were “enemies of the state,” attempting to build a “swarm of communist apprentices. . . . [t]hat we are enemies of Mexico and introducers of exotic [in effect, foreign] ideas.” Cabañas’ activism, and that of colleague Serafín Núñez, led to harassment by education officials. The charges against the teachers became volatile, with community supporters raising allegations of state interference in municipal autonomy. In November 1965, authorities suspended Cabañas and Núñez from their teaching assignments and sent them to alternative posts in Durango. They returned to Atoyac shortly thereafter and joined

81. Miranda Ramírez, El otro rostro, pp. 53. See also Blacker-Hanson, La Lucha Sigue! See also Alfonso Aguario interview, below.
82. Such support is difficult to document or quantify. Kate Doyle notes, for example, the U.S. government’s presumption of extensive support. “The army was not succeeding because the campesinos in Guerrero supported Cabañas, analysts believed. . . . the United States embassy cabled, ‘It is apparent that Cabañas and his group operate freely in Guerrero. Implications are that local populace, for whatever reasons, continues to afford Cabañas cover.’” Doyle, “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War,” posted December 5, 2002, National Security Archive, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEB105/index.htm#article. Likenesses of both Cabañas and Vázquez are still displayed at Ayotzinapa and in public fora throughout the state.
83. Hoyo, interview.
parents, students, and members of the ACNR in demanding reinstatement of a
teacher suspended for charging the school director with malfeasance. Marches,
rallies, and denunciations punctuated sporadic discussions with government offi-
cials. Like their counterparts at the UAG in 1960, the demonstrators demanded
greater accountability and insisted on the removal of all teachers and administra-
tors affiliated with the corrupt administration. Although rumors hinted at a gov-
ernment plan to remove the protesters from their plantón in front of the Palacio
de Gobierno, no one anticipated what Serafin Núñez, with understatement, called
“a disproportional response.” The main plaza was filled with demonstrators when
the police opened fire, killing seven people and wounding many others.

It was May 18, 1967. Activists in Guerrero still cite the date as the turning point
in their struggle for democracy. Cabañas was present but Núñez, by chance, was
not. Three months later, on August 20, the government let loose an assault against
striking copra workers in Acapulco in response to efforts to regain grassroots con-
tral of the union. This confrontation left over 40 strikers dead and a reported 500
injured. The incident led to the disintegration of the grassroots coprero organiza-
tions, to the apprehension and persecution of the leadership, and the discouragement of new mobilizations.

Following the attacks in his hometown of Atoyac and in Acapulco, Cabañas, like
many before and after him, abandoned public protest and went to the Sierras to
wage armed opposition to the regime. Under the weight of government persecu-
tion, violent crackdowns on anti-government protests, and continued economic encroachment on the communities’ well-being, calls to militancy resulted from the paucity of legitimate paths to secure democratic processes. As with many progressives of this generation, the Cuban revolution offered Cabañas and his cohorts but one paradigm of a successful strategy to secure political inclusion. Octaviano Santiago Dionisio, long-time political prisoner and self-proclaimed Marxist, credited his early political proclivities to three decisive influences: the “brutal repression to which the people of Guerrero were subjected in the years 1960-61,” disillusionment with the electoral process, and the Cuban revolution. He joined Cabañas’ Partido de los Pobres (PDLP) in May 1971. In a round-table discussion in 2003,

86. Núñez, interview.
87. Núñez, interview. Like his colleagues who had witnessed the government violence unleashed against peaceful protesters, Núñez grew disillusioned with the prospects for reforming the Mexican state; personally unwilling to take up arms, he eventually made his way to Moscow.
89. Octaviano Santiago Dionisio, Testimonio, pp. 9, 14. Santiago Dionisio’s case was taken up by Amnesty International.
former militant José Luis Moreno Borbolla attributed his radicalization to the leadership of Guerrero’s Othón Salazar, the railroad workers’ strike of 1958, and the Cuban revolution. At the same conference, former urban militant Rosario Dávila recalled how Cuba’s revolution had affirmed her hopes that a small guerrilla band could ultimately triumph against an oppressive regime. According to participant Félix Hoyo and scholar Luis Suárez, Cabañas explicitly sought to adapt international lessons to local conditions; both his programs and his organizing style reflected his belief that the life experiences of the people had much to contribute.

Those who had struggled alongside Lucio Cabañas and Serafín Núñez in Atoyac, like their compatriots elsewhere in Guerrero, led a community-based movement rooted in grassroots perceptions of their rights granted in the Constitution of 1917: protection of community resources, democratic accountability, and local autonomy, notably in community involvement in the schools. This latter expectation was rooted in the promise of public education embodied in Article 3 of the Constitution. Cabañas called for the formation of preparatorias populares and a normal popular, calls that were later answered by the next generation of teacher-activists who arrived in Guerrero after events in the nation’s capital discouraged radical organizing there.

With two guerrilla fronts now operating across the Sierras, the federal government stepped up efforts to eliminate the opposition, using a two-pronged strategy wherein it provided visible services while aggressively isolating and eliminating the guerrillas and their presumed supporters. It conflated its military presence with its economic largesse: the army itself was the visible hand distributing benefits (a policy known as *palo y pan*—the stick and the bread). In an *Excélsior* interview, Secretary of Defense General Hermenegildo Cuenca Díaz explained army participation in civil projects (pan), “to dispel the negative attitude of the civil population which has inevitably originated as a consequence of the investigations and detentions. . . . [It will] reaffirm the noble image of the soldier and increase public opinion towards sentiments of admiration, respect and sympathy. . . . This [will be accomplished] in actions immediately beneficial [to the social welfare] such as construction of schools, electrification, [and] establishment of community

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90. “En busca de la memoria: Testimonios sobre los movimientos armadas de la década de los setenta,” presentation at UNAM, October 25 and November 6, 2003, recorded and prepared by José Luis Moreno Borbolla (in possession of author), p. 5.
shops.” Concurrently, a government report recommended clandestine actions “to break morale” (palo). U.S. Ambassador Robert McBride observed that such combined efforts had the explicit goal of “reducing support for Genaro Vázquez Rojas . . . and Lucio Cabañas.”

Despite an overall strategy of *palo y pan* until the deaths of both guerrilla leaders, the government most aggressively implemented repressive tactics aimed at isolating and defeating the guerrilla resistance. If an individual were suspected of radical activities, he or she was seized, tortured, disappeared, or murdered. No independent campesino, worker, or student organizations remained overtly active. The populace was subjected to military incursions and to the tactic known as “tierra arrasada,” a “razed earth” practice that left entire communities bereft of shelter and crops. In the Costa Grande region, over 400 homes were destroyed and over 2,000 families left homeless. The market booths of those who had supported the cívicos were destroyed. Campesinos fled to the mountains. Cabañas’ surviving half-brother “David” (his *nom de guerre*) later reported that over 126 members of the Cabañas Barrientos family disappeared in the years after 1967. He himself escaped the watchful eye of state police when he was smuggled out of Guerrero dressed as a woman. Arrests continued and jails filled. In a scathing report issued by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, most of the reported cases of disappearances in the country were “in the context of the rural guerrilla warfare that was waged in . . . the state of Guerrero.”

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96. AGN/DFS, Expediente 100-10-16/4 L1 & L3, and July 7, 1972, in Marco Bellingeri, *Del agrarismo armado a la Guerra de los pobres: Ensayos de guerrilla rural en el México contemporáneo* (México: Ediciones Casa Juan Pablos, Secretaría de cultura de la Ciudad de México, 2003), p. 13. On such tactics, see also Durand Alcantara, *La lucha campesina*, p. 76; Wilfred Fierro Armenta, *Monografía de Atoyac*, p. 360. Fierro records one such visit on May 16, 1969. This text is an excellent resource in support of the contention that Echeverría balanced guns and butter, as it is largely a daily journal of civic events in Atoyac, including numerous listings of military actions and seemingly minor civic improvements; *¿Por Qué?* August 12, 1971, pp. 8-9; and Juan Fernando Reyes Peláez, “El largo brazo del Estado: La estrategia contrainsurgente del gobierno mexicano,” presentation at *La Guerrilla en las regiones de México Siglo XX Conference*, Zamora, Michoacán, July 2002, pp. 5-6.

97. Robert H. McBride, Department of State Telegram to Secretary of State, Confidential 949, Mexico 2882, May 27, 1971. Obtained through the NSA, identified as POL 23-9 Mexico 2882.

98. Félix Hoyo, interview; Alejandra Cárdenas, interview with the author, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, August 19, 2002 and other dates; Ávila, interview. See also United Nations and Amnesty International reports on the government’s dirty war in Guerrero.

99. Teacher-activists Félix Hoyo and Alejandra Cárdenas were instrumental in smuggling “David” and other Cabañas relatives out of the state. Interviews, Hoyo, Cárdenas and “David” Cabañas, interview with the author, Mexico City, Mexico City, February 17, 2003.

Prieto of the office of Mexico’s Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements of the Past (Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado [FEMOSPP]) confirmed a history of torture, assassinations, bombings of rural communities, and the disappearance of hundreds of campesinos. The popular movement, while suppressed, was not entirely crushed: two campus strikes occurred, one in opposition to the newly appointed rector at the UAG, and another at the normal school in Ayotzinapa in support of those at the UAG. Despite government efforts to “win the hearts and minds” of Guerrero’s popular classes, a major military response of over 24,000 soldiers was deployed in the Sierras; Cabañas died in a confrontation in 1974. The first branch of popular protest withered under the weight of government repression.

**THE SECOND WAVE: CARRYING A DIFFERENT REVOLUTION’S MESSAGE**

Guerrero became the destination of urban radicals seeking to spark a socialist revolution in the aftermath of government assaults on protesters in Mexico City in 1968 (Tlatelolco Plaza) and 1971 (San Cosme). Their ideology reflected their experiences in the capital, practical links to the Soviet Union (several had attended the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow), and economic and educational differences from the popular classes in Guerrero. Beyond the obvious distinction between urban and provincial cultures, their strong identification with internationalist movements limited their effectiveness. Strongly influenced by the Cuban revolution, they believed that in Mexico, like much of Latin America, the Revolution would be advanced by the rural populace. Guerrero’s native-born activists, Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez among them, did not initiate their struggle in these terms, nor were they unequivocally dedicated to a Soviet-, Chinese-, or Cuban-style revolution. As elsewhere in Latin America, urban radicals learned that the rural populace was more readily mobilized around its own “concrete and even local demands.” By the late 1970s, they led popular efforts largely redirected from revolutionary advocacy to reactive demands for the release of political prisoners and accountability for desaparecidos. It was ultimately through demands for

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Amnesty International Report, AI-index: AMR 41/005/1998, 07/05/1998; *Amnesty International’s concerns in Mexico*, AI Index: AMR 41/13/86, July 1986; the postings of the National Security Archives, particularly [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB180/index.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB180/index.htm); *La Jornada*; and Blacker-Hanson, Epilogue, “La Lucha Sigue!”


102. Ávila interview; Hoyo interview; Alejandra Cárdenas, interviews.

103. Hoyo, interview; Cárdenas, interview.

government responsiveness and democratic rights that they spurred a reawakening of public engagement in Guerrero.

This second wave of activists faced the immediate task of reinvigorating a movement that had been crushed by the weight of government violence. Typical among them, Félix Hoyo Arana left Mexico City for Guerrero in 1972 with the explicit intention of revitalizing the popular movement at the UAG.105 Hoyo had initially studied with the Jesuits, but following the government assaults in 1968 and 1971, he turned to the study of Marxism and considered himself a “Christian for Socialism.” His was not an uncommon trajectory among radicals; a significant number began their student careers under the influence of Catholic organizations.106

At the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Hoyo offered seminars, lectures, and readings in Marxism in an effort to rebuild a core of student leadership after its suppression the previous decade. When asked what courses he taught, Hoyo responded that he would teach “anything and everything” that provided him access to students. His overtly political work concentrated on building alliances among the diverse populations on campus, that is, supporting academic concerns of students and faculty, and union struggles of staff and faculty.107 He formed a core of leadership faculty that included Alejandra Cárdenas, Antonio Hernández, Pablo Sandoval, and Fernando Piñeda.

Alejandra Cárdenas Santana’s politicization differed from that of colleague Hoyo. From 1965-1972, she attended the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow.108 During the Cold War, that institution provided education and training to a cadre of militants from throughout the third world, including those seeking to replicate the “Cuban experience” elsewhere in Latin America. In Moscow, Cárdenas befriended students from among the 80 countries represented, including 120 other Mexicans. She cites her strongest influences at the time as the Cuban revo-

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105. All personal details, Félix Hoyo, interview. Hoyo left the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero for a faculty position at Chapingo in August 1973, after a series of escalating threats against his life. He continued to work with the Guerrero movement.

106. Like Hoyo, former guerrilla Rosario Dávila describes herself as having been involved with a student group affiliated with the Jesuits, and those from religious colleges (Maristas and Guadalupanas) who were moved to political action “that was intimately related with our religious sentiments,” including the concept of martyrdom. She also credits the influence of both October 2 and June 10 on her radicalization. Rosario Dávila, “En busca de la memoria,” p. 6; and José Luis Alonso, “En busca de la memoria,” pp. 35-40. My thanks to Susan Smith for noting a similar radicalization that had occurred in Russian seminaries.

107. These same strategies were evident elsewhere, as radical intellectuals sought alliances, particularly with campus workers; for example, the Worker-Student Alliance Caucus within the Students for a Democratic Society in the U.S.

108. All personal details, Alejandra Cárdenas, interview. On the university, see Alexander Fradkin, The Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1973). Timothy Wickham-Crowley asserts that a number of “left-wing students who together attended Moscow’s Patrice Lumumba University” joined the leadership of Nicaragua’s FSLN. Timothy Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 222. It would be interesting to track any links between the Nicaraguans and Mexicans, who undoubtedly met in Moscow.
olution and the resulting “época de Guevarismo,” as well as such readings as Herbert Marcuse and Robert Taber.\(^\text{109}\) She returned to Mexico City in 1972 and sought out friends from the Soviet Union. Among them was Luis Sandoval Ramírez, brother of Pablo Sandoval of Guerrero. In September of that year she joined the faculty at the UAG, where her self-defined role was “to propagandize and proselytize.”\(^\text{110}\) She worked to strengthen university-community political networks and, before his death, acted as a link between the university and Lucio Cabañas. Perhaps the most influential and enduring strategy employed by this wave of activist teachers was their role in founding and staffing *prepas populares* as Cabañas had urged. With faculty colleagues Hoyo, Hernández, and Alfonso Aguario, Cárdenas was co-founder of “Prepa Comité Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara” in Chilpancingo. The school encouraged student activism throughout the 1970s and beyond.\(^\text{111}\)

The most explicit link between these educators and the first generation of militants occurred when Lucio Cabañas requested that UAG faculty provide study sessions on Marxist thought to his guerrilla fighters. In February 1974, UAG faculty joined a group of perhaps 20 to 30 young combatants in the mountains. Hoyo spoke on alienation and exploitation; Cárdenas on socialism; and Antonio Hernández on ‘the state,’ academic language that itself is indicative of the chasm between these young campesinos and university-educated faculty.\(^\text{112}\) The presumption that these intellectuals could provide a more genuinely radical indoctrination is expressed by former militant Ricardo Rodríguez G., who believed that “the presence of students and sympathizers of Marxism-Leninism conferred on the PDLP a more revolutionary character.”\(^\text{113}\)

Another strain of activists, those native to the state of Guerrero, became politically and professionally engaged during this second wave of popular mobilization. They

\(^{109}\) Herbert Marcuse was a German-born scholar of Marxism. His most influential works include *Reason and Revolution* (1941), *Eros and Civilization* (1955), *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (1958), and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972). Marcuse taught at Columbia, Harvard and Brandeis and was a close intellectual colleague of sociologist Barrington Moore, Jr. Robert Taber wrote the widely-read *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (1965), available in Mexico as *La guerra de pulga*.


\(^{111}\) Initially a “prepa popular,” it was fully incorporated into the UAG system, when—still retaining its original name—it was designated Preparatory #9 in 1973.

\(^{112}\) Cárdenas and Hoyo, interviews. According to government files, the visit came about as the result of a request “to implement study circles and conferences among the participants of the armed movement.” The session covered “socialism, customs of socialist countries, economics, and ‘systems of life.’” AGN DGIPS File on Cárdenas, Expediente 100-10-1-78 H51-L-77. The source for this government assessment of the sessions is unidentified, but its specificity and rhetorical ring suggest it is the result of statements made by participants under police questioning, most likely Cárdenas and Hernández. See also Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, “Movimiento subversivo en México.” (No publication information: January 1990) (in possession of author), pp. 11-12.

\(^{113}\) Ricardo Rodríguez G., “Testimonio,” 27 de octubre de 2001, unpublished, p. 3, in possession of the author. Rodríguez G was a member of the Partido de los Pobres (PDLP), founded by Cabañas.
represent a synthesis of the earlier militants, with a strong grounding in national history, and the internationalism of their colleagues from outside the state. The route Alfonso Aguario took to the forefront of Guerrero’s political movement was typical of many of his colleagues.\textsuperscript{114} Aguario was raised in Coyuca de Catalán in the Amuzco territory of the Tierra Caliente and, like Cabañas’ colleague Serafín Núñez, recalls the impact on his community of the abrupt transition to large-scale commercial agriculture. And like Félix Hoyo and others, he might well have pursued a career with the Church had he not attended a conference of directors of rural normal schools in 1962. He was impressed by the progressive teachers-in-training, and one in particular: Lucio Cabañas. Aguario became a leader of the Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Socialistas de México.\textsuperscript{115} When a schism arose among the rural normal school administrators, Aguario threw in his lot with Cabañas. In 1972, he joined the faculty at the UAG, where he immediately became involved in campus issues, including the formation of the Unión Sindicato de Catedráticos de UAG. He joined colleagues Cárdenas and Hernández in the creation of preparatorias and the consolidation of links between the university and the guerrillas.

Aguario defines his ideology as utopian, and notes his support of the popular struggles of the landless in Guatemala, affirming historian Grandin’s assertion of the widespread influence of those efforts. Closer to home, Aguario also points to the lessons of the railroad workers’ strike in Mexico. Like so many teachers of the period, Aguario attributes much of his radicalization to Othón Salazar and the Movimiento Revolucionario Magisterial; while the MRM was not large in Guerrero, he believes its presence significantly shaped the opposition movement and a generation of activists. Well-steeped in both national and Marxist literature—the latter through a reading group that also facilitated cultural exchanges between Mexicans and Russians—he found Mao “very sensible” and also read Trotsky, Russian novels, and literature on the Mexican revolution, including work by Adolfo Gilly, John Womack, and the novels of Mariano Azuela and Martín Luís Guzmán. After 1968, his reading included work by Elena Poniatowska, Luis González de Alba, and José Revueltas.\textsuperscript{116}

The range of influences on these participants is well represented by Eloy Cisneros, a primary school teacher and Guerrero native. Like his colleagues on the left, Cis-

\textsuperscript{114} All personal data herein, Alfonso Aguario interview with the author, Chilpancingo, February 21, 2003 and subsequent discussions; AGN DGIPS File on Alfonso Aguario, 012-037-121, 1-1, 64, undated. Aguario continues on the faculty of the Prepa “Che Guevara.”

\textsuperscript{115} Murals touting this student organization still enliven the campus of the normal school in Ayotzinapa.

\textsuperscript{116} Adolfo Gilly’s \textit{La revolución interrumpida}, published in 1971, was a major contribution to the post-’68 revisionist scholarship on the Mexican Revolution. John Womack’s \textit{Zapata and the Mexican Revolution} appeared in 1969 and remains a standard work on the subject. Both Azuela and Guzmán wrote novels depicting the conditions of the period preceding the revolution. González de Alba emerged as a prolific leftist leader of the Movement of ’68; Revueltas (1914-1976) was a prominent poet and novelist of the left. His \textit{México 68: Juventud y revolución} (México: Ediciones Era, 1978) was an influential analysis of events surrounding the Tlatelolco assault.
CEROS recalled reading Marx, and Castro’s “History Will Absolve Me,” but also classics on the Mexican revolution. He particularly recalled Womack’s *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, a text Cárdenas says was also read by Cabañas. He strove to integrate the school and community, worked closely with the Padres de Familia, and placed an emphasis on local social and cultural studies. Like Aguarío, he worked with Othón Salazar and his MRM. Later arrested and tortured for his alleged role in the kidnapping and death of a local politician, Cisneros was amnestied November 27, 1978.

Another ACG militant and Guerrero native, Fausto Ávila, believes he fought for a democratic Mexico. A close colleague of Vázquez, he returned to Chilpancingo after the latter’s death and, with the support of Cárdenas and others, joined the UAG faculty. While relatively well versed in Marxist literature, when asked about his primary ideological influences, he unhesitatingly responded, “the Mexican revolution.” Unlike many of the urban activists who comprised Guerrero’s second wave, that project was more integral to his political vision than was the Cuban revolution. He acknowledged that some, although not all, of his colleagues had been socialists, but believed they were so essentially “by default,” that is, because the regime had proven its unwillingness to fulfill the promises of the revolution of 1910. Influential readings he cited included Marxist theory and, parenthetically, Regis Debray (but not Lenin, Mao, Guevara or Castro), as well as novels of the Mexican revolution, notably Mariano Azuela’s *Los de abajo*.

Among this second generation of militants, those with roots in the earlier struggles continued to cite the Mexican revolution as their primary inspiration; those
who went to Guerrero from the capital were more likely to identify the Cuban revolution and Marxist thought. The intellectual tensions between the two, however, receded in the presence of a shared short-term goal: demands for democratic accountability in response to the government’s dirty war. It was these “concrete and local demands” that rallied the popular classes to again fill the streets of Guerrero’s capital and outlying communities despite continued government repression.122

CONCLUSION

This article began by asking if Cuba’s revolutionary rhetoric and utopian vision influenced popular resistance in the Mexican countryside. The Cuban example of a successful guerrilla war in Latin America was not lost on the discontented in Mexico, yet despite strong evidence suggesting a later socialist agenda on the part of prominent leaders, I have argued that their projects were rather demands for implementation of the democratic inclusion at the heart of the Mexican revolution. Pervasive belief in the government’s failure to do so encouraged the pursuit of alternative processes to secure land redistribution, urban employment, access to democratic processes, and educational opportunities. Influenced by readings of Marx and Lenin, the recent examples of the Guatemalan agrarian reforms under Jacobo Arbenz, and later, the Cuban revolution, activists in Guerrero picked up the language of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist struggle. However, their ability to juggle nationalist rhetoric, imagery, and icons—including the names of Revolutionary heroes—alongside the more internationalist language of class struggle suggests that in Guerrero, a surviving faith in the renovation of their own Revolution took precedence and impeded the embrace of international socialism.

In providing covert support to the guerrillas, the campesinos of Guerrero’s Sierras were modeling themselves less on their counterparts of Cuba’s Sierra Maestra, and more on the legacy of the guerrilla struggles of Emiliano Zapata and Rubén Jaramillo of neighboring Morelos; indeed, on the struggles of Guerrero’s own Revolutionary heroes, including Zapatistas Pablo and Pedro Cabañas.123 The deep community roots of this generation were evident in the longevity of the guerrilla move-

122. For more on the resurgence of popular protest, see Blacker-Hanson, La Lucha Sigue!
123. Indeed, Christopher White makes a compelling argument for the extent to which the Mexican Revolution was a model for the Cubans. See especially, pp. 42-44. He quotes Castro, “I credit [former President Lázaro] Cárdenas with [our] freedom,” and “I credit Mexico with [our] inspiration.” Fidel Castro, “A Cárdenas debo la libertad; a Mexico la inspiración, dice Fidel a la Revista Siempre!” Siempre! August 12, 1959, p. 32, in White, Creating a Third World, p. 59. Nor do I mean to suggest that Cuba’s influence in Mexico be dismissed. In their testimonial written in 1987, former members of the Partido de los Pobres, as well as activists at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, in their recollections, and others cited herein, affirmed the importance of the Cuban success as an inspiration. José Orbe Diego, et al., Lucio Cabañas y el Partido de los Pobres (México: Editorial Nuestra America, 1987).
ments in the Sierras, despite their small numbers and inadequate arms. When the movement returned to the public arena, the second generation of militants could rally this commitment to family and community to motivate demands for accountability for those who had been disappeared. Alternatively, urban militants such as Félix Hoyo and Alejandra Cárdenas carried the government assaults in Mexico City as their defining experiences with the national government. They became politically engaged by events of the Cuban revolution, the rural paradigm of Maoist China and the tensions of the Cold War, as well as—for some—study in the Soviet Union. Theirs was both an urban experience and an urban culture, which, in addition to their university educations, distinguished them from the largely rural and less-educated popular classes in Guerrero. This class distinction was not unique to Mexico; Héctor Béjar attributes the failures of his guerrilla movement in Peru to the geographic, historic, and cultural isolation of the countryside from the city. Indeed, in a series of interviews in 2000, several ex-militants attributed the ultimate failure of Mexico’s armed movement to an inability of diverse organizations to find accommodation among distinct social groups. Former urban militant José Luis Moreno claims that theoretical discussion with Lucio Cabañas failed to bring unification because of Cabañas’ insistence on the primary role of the campesino rather than their submission to the leadership of the proletariat.

Scholars have until recently lagged behind the popular classes in recognizing the importance of “claims to citizenship and national inclusion.” Alfonso Aguario describes the popular struggles of the 1960s and 1970s as a “grand democratic movement” necessary to achieve greater citizen participation. He concludes that while the movement may have been “romantic . . . utopian,” it was “the only road to follow” for those who believed they had “an obligation to participate in the process of change.” Aguario was not alone in positioning their efforts within a vision of utopia. Decades after her involvement with guerrillas and her arrest and torture, Alejandra Cárdenas also speaks about her belief in the possibility of life “without misery and with democracy.” Both Cárdenas and Aguario argue that

124. An uncle of Lucio Cabañas attributed the movement’s durability to its grounding in family networks, asserting a core base of over 300 armed campesinos whose loyalty was based on family ties more strongly than political ideology. Félix Hoyo, interview. Timothy Wickham-Crowley demonstrates the importance of family and friendship networks to recruit others as well as to sustain a clandestine movement. Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 138. The study is on South America, not Mexico.
126. José Gil Olmos, “Entrevistas a ex-militantes del movimiento armado de los 70s: Dudan ex combatientes del fin de la guerrilla con Vicente Fox” (unpublished, October 23, 2000), recorded and transcribed by José Luis Moreno Borbolla, transcript in possession of the author, pp. 4-5.
129. Aguario, interview and discussions with the author.
130. Alejandra Cárdenas, presentation, University of Washington, and in numerous discussions with the author. See also Max Elbaum’s discussion of the utopian attraction of Marxism to U.S. students and workers by “targeting the
their generation was attracted to Marxism because it provided an explanation for the conditions they witnessed and a vision of a more egalitarian society. Like them, coffee worker Gregoria Nario of Atoyac had asserted at a meeting to organize support for the anti-caballerista movement: “Socialism assures our children food, education, health and recreation; the road is clearly marked for us.”

The debate continues among scholars and activists on whether activism contributes to a “process of change,” ultimately overcoming the increased repression it engenders. Charles Tilly acknowledges the risk, however unintended, of inciting increased repression and “de-democratization”—as popular resistance did in Guerrero. In a remarkably prescient analysis, journalist Robert Taber predicted that, in the face of escalating opposition “in the form of petitions, demonstrations, strikes . . . it will be a remarkable government that will not be driven to stern repressive measures—curfews, the suspension of civil liberties, a ban on popular assembly, illegal acts that can only deepen the popular opposition, creating a vicious circle of rebellion and repression.” Indeed, “given the choice between repression and negotiation, political stasis or change, the [Mexican] regime predictably, inexorably chose violence to preserve the status quo.” Thus, it is not surprising that government violence progressed from initially targeting meetings, rallies, and parades to the less discriminate and far more public assault on citizens gathered in the plazas. This escalation is evident in Chilpancingo, Iguala, Atoyac, and Acapulco. As the conflicts continued, the numbers of political prisoners and charges of torture and governmental abuse, like the initial government response, escalated. Ultimately, government repression took the form of seizing an uncounted number of political prisoners, many of whom remain disappeared. Despite democratic aspirations and visions of utopia, movements for radical change are a product of “accelerating rhythms of frustration, fear, and extremism.” Surely, the popular classes of Guerrero were subject to such acceleration.

The reassertion of civic activism in Guerrero pushed demands for social justice and government accountability onto the national stage, where they continue to be played out in the electoral arena and popular mobilizations. The legitimization of these demands emerged from the efforts of committed citizens in the face of the interconnection between class exploitation and racial oppression.” Elbaum also links this appeal to self-identification as revolutionary nationalists. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, pp. 42-46.

134. Doyle, “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War.”
government’s dirty war. The leaders of these popular movements in Guerrero adapted their strategies, rhetoric, and leadership to international events as well as to local conditions. This flexibility facilitated the blurring of ideological dogma, resulting in cyclical calls for democracy and nationalism, socialism, and a return to the language of democratic nationalism and justice. In its portrayal of these popular movements, the historiography has, perhaps inadvertently, replicated the government’s emphasis on socialist proclamations and guerrilla activities. In so doing, it has segregated them from mainstream efforts to democratize the political processes in the state and nation. It is time to reposition these efforts within the struggle for social justice and democracy, goals that inspired participants in these movements just as they did their heroes of the Mexican revolution.

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