

# THE ARCHIVE THAT NEVER WAS: STATE TERROR AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN GUATEMALA\*

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**ABSTRACT.** Between 1961 and 1996, more than 200,000 people in Guatemala lost their lives as a result of state-orchestrated acts of terror denied still by the national security forces who committed them. A U.N. Truth Commission was repeatedly obstructed by army and police personnel from gaining access to official records, being told that no documentation of the type sought existed. Bureaucracies do not work that way, even ones with good reason to destroy or conceal evidence of an incriminating nature. It was nonetheless of startling import when an attorney working for Guatemala's Human Rights Office stumbled upon an archive recording the deeds of the National Police. Known now to contain an estimated 80 million documents, the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional is a cabinet of atrocities that reveals conspiracy and complicity on the part of police officers engaged in a ghoulish network of surveillance, intimidation, abduction, torture, and murder. *Keywords:* archives, Guatemala, human rights, police, terrorism.

*There is no political power without control of the archive.*

—Rogelio López Cuenca, 2011

The inscription above the entrance to the cemetery, there for as long as anyone can remember, has a valedictory ring. Its message is not lost on the citizens of Quetzaltenango, or any other Guatemalans passing through to pay their respects. “The memory of the living,” the inscription reads, “gives life to the dead.”<sup>1</sup> His arms full of gladioli, my colleague Eduardo Velásquez, professor of history at the Universidad de San Carlos, takes me to where his beloved nanny is buried. “She made me who I am,” he tells me, tidying up the grave site before placing the freshly cut flowers next to her tomb. I wander off to give Eduardo a moment to reflect. In the burial quarters of more prominent families—Quetzaltenango was home to coffee barons of local and German origin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—vandals have struck, severing the heads of stately marble angels and

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\* My first visit to the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN), in August 2010, came about through the good offices of Catherine Nolin and Marc Drouin. The latter's doctoral investigations, like those of Kirsten Weld, will deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of state terror in Guatemala. For receiving us on that first visit, and showing us around, I thank Alberto Flores and Gustavo Meoño. A conversation I had with Edilberto Cifuentes about his discovery of the AHPN will stay with me always. I profit likewise from what my colleague, good friend, and traveling companion, Eduardo Velásquez, has to say. Thelma Porres, head of the Archivo Histórico of the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica in Antigua, Guatemala, furnished me with a hard copy of Operación Sofía before the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., made it available online. After delivering oral presentations of the piece, which Victoria L. Henderson resourcefully illustrated, I benefited from the moral support of Laura Cameron, Felix Driver, David Lyon, Joan Schwartz, and Matthew Taylor. I thank Sarah de Leeuw and Sallie Marston for inviting me to contribute to this special issue of the *Geographical Review*, and its editorial staff and reviewers for their thorough critique of my submission. The insights and copyediting skills of Maureen McCallum Garvie are again appreciated, as is the research funding of the Killam Program of the Canada Council.

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hacking off their wings. The mausoleums of the rich, several sprayed with uncomplimentary graffiti, dwarf row after row of engraved cement niches, three feet by three feet by seven feet, piled on top of each other five or six high. There families of more modest means seal the remains of their loved ones. Beyond are the earthen mounds of the poor, where makeshift wooden crosses have names painted on by hand, more than a few indicating that the deceased was indigenous. At the far end of the cemetery, communal burial sites either have no identification or are marked "XX." What would be the more ignominious, I ask myself—an unmarked resting place or one indicated by two anonymous Xs?

I mention my observations to Eduardo. He shakes his head at the desecration, then elaborates on a discovery that offers a glimmer of hope for anyone trying to establish what happened to the more than 45,000 Guatemalans who were "disappeared" in the years of civil strife between 1961 and 1996, missing and presumed dead, many of whom are believed to be interred not only in known mass graves in cemeteries like Quetzaltenango's but also strewn around the country in clandestine ones now being exhumed.

Edilberto Cifuentes Medina is an associate of Eduardo's. Both men are now middle-aged, but as students they took classes at the university from a rebel offspring of the Quetzaltenango elite, Severo Martínez Peláez (1925–1998). Considered by some to be the country's most influential, if controversial, modern historian, Martínez Peláez was a Marxist whose views of how Guatemala came to be continue to spark debate. Eduardo and Cifuentes hold him in high regard and have written about him passionately (Cifuentes Medina 2000; Velásquez Carrera 2000, 2008). I too have long admired the scholarship of Martínez Peláez, especially his magnum opus, *La patria del criollo* ([1970] 2009), a searing critique of Guatemala's enduring colonial legacy that I helped translate and edit, much of its subject matter as pertinent today as when the book first appeared more than four decades ago.<sup>2</sup> Later given access to photographs from family members that neither Eduardo nor Cifuentes were able to draw upon, I also coauthored a cameo of Martínez Peláez's turbulent life and times, from an idyllic childhood ended by the suicide of his mother to the struggle he lost, in exile in Mexico, to the scourge of Alzheimer's (Lovell and Lutz 2009). With a sense of homage foremost in mind, Eduardo arranged for a presentation of both books to be held at Casa Noj cultural center in Quetzaltenango, the reason for our traveling there together. He takes great delight in showing me around the city he was born and raised in, which has a hold on his heart like no other.

"I don't see much of Cifuentes these days," Eduardo complains, "what with me so wrapped up in my job"—he may yet serve as president of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala—"and he in his." In 2005 Cifuentes worked under the attorney Sergio Morales Alvarado in Guatemala's Human Rights Office. In that capacity he was sent to oversee a routine undertaking and stumbled upon a complex filled with old police records, which authorities hitherto claimed did not exist. "Historians dream of finding a lost document or two," he told me when we met. "It

still gives me goose bumps to think that I discovered an archive.” The Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN) is the outcome of Cifuentes’s chance find, its documents indicating the reverse of what one might expect: that an entity responsible for investigating crimes was instead geared to committing them. As sickening as they are incriminating, the teeming contents of the AHPN are unlikely, given the impunity that prevails in Guatemala, to bring little more than token justice to the perpetrators of among the most heinous abuses of human rights in all of Latin America. Its evidence, however, offers a semblance of closure for relatives who hope to find information about the fate of next of kin registered in the AHPN’s grisly holdings. The archive that never was is a rare and unusual source, one that reveals, amid such mundane paraphernalia as tickets issued for traffic violations or applications for a driver’s license, gruesome details of the inner workings of government-sanctioned—indeed, government-orchestrated—repression (Weld 2012, forthcoming).

#### A PAPER TRAIL OF DEATH

It all started with fears that explosive devices stored at a police compound on Avenida La Pedrera, in a densely populated part of Guatemala City’s Zona 6, constituted a risk to neighborhood safety. Raids over the years had seen the police seize all sorts of weaponry, in addition to rounds of ammunition, homemade bombs, and grenades. An accidental explosion at a nearby military base raised concerns that something similar could occur in the police compound. The National Civilian Police were called in to remove the materials, which had been amassed by their predecessors, the National Police, an institution whose reputation was so sullied that it was disbanded in 1997 as a requirement of the peace accord signed the year before. As part of his watchdog duties, Cifuentes was posted to verify compliance in the transfer of materials to another, less-vulnerable location. In his reconnaissance of the property, five buildings in all, he noticed stacks of paper piled high against the window of one of them, visible from the outside. Upon entry, he encountered room after room of decaying documents, reams and reams of them, scattered on floors, thrown into corners, many bundled and tied together, others spilling out from creaky storage units, all suffering daily degradation from leaky roofs, the droppings of bats and birds, and the forays of mice, rats, and cockroaches. What Cifuentes’s curiosity brought to light is a veritable cabinet of atrocities, a log of the activities of the National Police not as agents of public security but as the instruments of state terror.

Kate Doyle of the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., visited the AHPN in 2007, five weeks after it was located. She was led into “a warren of pitch-black rabbit holes, corridors that led nowhere, dripping ceilings, broken lights hanging from frayed wires, and ominous stains underfoot” (2007, 55). The police facility not only housed records of individuals who had been abducted, confined, and tortured but also showed visible signs of these very deeds having been conducted on the premises. “We found a series of tiny windowless spaces, with heavy

wire netting wedged over the tops to create a kind of cage,” Doyle writes. “There were old, torn mattresses, some with brownish stains dried hard into the fabric” (p. 56). During her inspection she entered one former office in which “metal file cabinets lined the walls with improvised labels scrawled in black marker,” indicating “assassinations,” “homicides,” and “kidnappings” as operational categories; in another were “internal police-employee files” that contained “I.D. cards for thousands of *orejas* [ears], the civilians who worked for the police as informants,” as well as “enormous leather-bound ledgers” filled with the names of “captured communists” (pp. 56, 58). Doyle’s visit to this “long-abandoned scene of a terrible crime” prompted her to acknowledge that, even though the archive amounts to “the discovery of lifetime” (p. 58), the staff of Guatemala’s Human Rights Office was not sure what to do with the ghastly repository.

Five years on, in August 2010, a week after my sojourn with Eduardo in Quetzaltenango, I was shown around the AHPN as part of a delegation organized by Catherine Nolin, a colleague who teaches geography at the University of Northern British Columbia, and Marc Drouin, then a doctoral candidate in history at the Université de Montréal. A former student of mine, Catherine has written about the impact of the armed conflict in Guatemala from a forced-migration as well as a gender perspective (Nolin Hanlon and Shankar 2000; Nolin 2006; Reade and Nolin 2006). Marc’s 2006 master’s thesis on acts of genocide during the civil war, which spawned a book chapter and a study in its own right (Drouin 2010, 2011), propelled him to doctoral-level investigations, with the AHPN his main research site. Several of Catherine’s students and another Canadian researcher, Emilie Smith (1991), also formed part of the delegation.

#### A TOUR OF THE PREMISES

Alberto Fuentes is assistant director of the AHPN. On a hot sunny morning—the rain would lash down later in the day—he welcomes us at the entrance to the archive and issues us with visitor tags. Alberto has a kind, weathered face but solemn, deep-set eyes that have seen much and insist on bearing witness. He and his boss, Gustavo Meoño, are former guerrillas, in charge of running an archive suffused with traces of comrades of theirs who are no longer alive. Although Alberto has signed us in, his tour begins on the outside, as did that of Cifuentes, whom he invokes as we circle the compound. Abandoned cars dumped two or three high rust along the perimeter. Dogs bark from the adjacent, still-active police station, where flashy modern vehicles donated by the international community await dispatch: The designation “Explosive Deactivation Service” is emblazoned on the side of a van, perhaps the very one that off-loaded the munitions in 2005. Alberto points to the window that caught Cifuentes’ attention, the space above it marking his find with the words “Área Histórica.” Although some 13 million of the estimated 80 million documents found inside have been individually sorted and processed, others remain in the sorry state that awaited Cifuentes. Alberto leads us through a corridor where I notice the “Gabinete de Identificación,” the identity card, of one man lying atop a

putrefying heap. Beyond, however, lies a world of order, structure, and reckoning, where 150 dedicated employees toil away—cleaning, repairing, scanning, and making digital inventories of what has been, and is being, unearthed. The staff of the AHPN conducts its business in white laboratory coats, mouths covered with surgical masks and hands protected by thin gauze gloves. They bear more resemblance, in their starched uniforms and overalls, to trained hospital orderlies than run-of-the-mill office workers. The jobs they perform are not without personal risk, for anyone even remotely involved in human rights activities in Guatemala is still the target of harassment, intimidation, and even the threat of death.

Before he escorts us from one division to another, Alberto sits us down at a table at the end of an airless aisle and starts to talk. What he has to say lasts the better part of an hour, during which time I scribble away, taking notes as fast as I can while his soft-spoken delivery holds us spellbound.

“If you look at volume 12 of the United Nations’ Truth Commission report, mandated as part of the 1996 peace accord and presented to the public a little over two years later, you will see that it reproduces letters sent to the security forces requesting permission to view files concerning the armed conflict.” He makes a sweeping gesture with his hand, and casts an affirmative glance around. “The existence of all this was denied, as official correspondence attests.” His tone is measured and precise, much like the U.N. fact-finding investigation, *Guatemala: Memory of Silence*, to which he alludes, a mammoth, 3,600-page corpus of evidence, as much a moral as political indictment, available in summary form (CHC 1999) or in meticulously documented, full-fledged detail at [<http://shr.aaas.org>]. It establishes that, in the thirty-six years preceding the signing of the peace accord, war waged in the name of anticommunism consumed the lives of more than 200,000 Guatemalans, 93 percent of them killed by state personnel, most by the national army, which carried out 626 massacres in rural areas of the country. Indigenous Maya communities endured 83.33 percent of all fatalities. The expertise of German law professor Christian Tomuschat, the head of the Truth Commission, allowed him to determine that acts of genocide as legally defined by three articles in the Geneva Conventions had been carried out.<sup>3</sup>

I was in Guatemala on 26 February 1999, when *Memory of Silence* was symbolically gifted to then President Álvaro Arzú at a gala event in the Teatro Nacional. The day before, Tomuschat had been interviewed by Carlos Menocal in the newspaper *El Periódico* about the Truth Commission’s findings. Tomuschat’s responses to two questions echo in my mind as Alberto holds forth:

- (Q) *How does the armed conflict in Guatemala compare with other wars?*
- (A) In no other country in Latin America have there been recorded as many cases of human rights violations as here. In terms of statistics, Guatemala heads the list.
- (Q) *What explanation can you give to account for such brutality?*
- (A) That is a difficult question to answer, for Guatemala has a history of vio-

lence that dates back centuries. Also, transformed into a doctrine of national security, anticommunism carries a heavy weight. No party involved, most of all the army, felt itself bound to any rule of law.

The National Police, Alberto makes clear, were army accomplices, the two institutions working hand in hand to pioneer the art of political “disappearance,” a terror tactic that would later become synonymous with state repression throughout Latin America. Cooperation between the army and the police means that the AHPN may be considered a damning register of terror by association.

Although records date back to the late nineteenth century, documentation from the 1950s on constitutes the archive’s most valuable asset, facilitating (in Alberto’s words) the exercise of three fundamental rights: the right to memory, the right to truth, and the right to justice. Textual evidence from the AHPN can now complement the data of personal testimonies and forensic science for charges to be pressed in a court of law. Since the archive was opened for consultation on 25 March 2009, Alberto informs us that four out of every five visits have yielded relevant details, enough either to proceed with criminal prosecution or sufficient to satisfy demands to know more about the abduction and disappearance of a relative or friend. Unrestricted access to AHPN files is taken advantage of mostly by lawyers working for the public prosecutor, but when AHPN Director Gustavo Meoño joins us, he stresses also how crucial the archive is for scholarly research, gratefully acknowledging Marc as one of the first academics to focus inquiries to that end.

Both Gustavo and Alberto emphasize the unique nature of the AHPN in the grand Latin American—indeed, Hispanic—scheme of things: Nothing quite like it is to be found in Argentina, Brazil, or Chile, all three of which experienced cold war traumas like Guatemala’s but have yet to yield an equivalent cache of documentation and muster the resolve to process it to the full extent of the law (Grandin 2004).<sup>4</sup> Nor have the governments of Portugal or Spain, in the changed but still charged postdictatorship eras of Antonio de Salazar and Francisco Franco, welcomed investigations of the depth and breadth that Gustavo and Alberto envision (Tremlett 2006; Ribeiro de Meneses 2009; Colmeiro 2011).

#### PROSECUTION AND INDICTMENT

Two high-profile cases, one an assassination, the other a disappearance, have already been illuminated by the contents of the AHPN. On 22 March 1979, Manuel Colom Argueta, the uncle of former Guatemalan President Álvaro Colom Caballeros (2008–2012) was gunned down barely a week after he had registered a new political party that he hoped would gain office, with him at its helm. Memos and reports reveal that the police had kept a close eye on Colom Argueta for as long as twenty-two years prior to his murder, monitoring his movements, opening files on people he visited, and keeping track of his whereabouts. Similarly, Congresswoman Nineth Montenegro, whose husband, Fernando García, was a social activist and union organizer, accessed the AHPN to learn not only where he was taken and tortured after being apprehended on 18 February 1984 but also the names of

the officers on duty at the police station in question. Some 667 documents from AHPN holdings were subsequently made available for court proceedings, allowing a judge in October 2010 to sentence two former policemen, Héctor Roderico Ramírez Ríos and Abraham Lancerio Gómez, to forty years of imprisonment for their roles in García's disappearance. Likewise implicated and placed under arrest for his part in the case is Héctor Bol, former chief of police. Also in captivity, awaiting trial based on AHPN disclosures about other crimes, are Pedro García Arredondo, who headed the notorious "Comando Seis" police unit that functioned as a death squad, and retired General Héctor Mario López Fuentes, linked to the deaths of more than 300 people between 1978 and 1985 and facing charges of genocide.

Manuel Colom Argueta and Fernando García are both well-known figures in Guatemala, so interest in what happened to them, not surprisingly, has been animated and sustained. The AHPN, however, contains abundant information on thousands of less prominent but equally ill-fated critics of the regimes that ruled Guatemala with anticommunist zeal for four decades after the Central Intelligence Agency helped orchestrate, in June 1954, the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán (Immerman 1982; Schlesinger and Kinzer [1982] 2005; Gleijeses 1991; Handy 1994; Cullather [1999] 2006). Moderate, forward looking, reform minded, and democratically elected, President Arbenz was among the first of a long line of cold war casualties who, generation after generation, have paid a high price for how the United States views Latin America, especially its insistence in dominating a "backyard" historically linked to business interests and commercial investments. "What we'd give for an Arbenz now," declared a staff member of the U.S. embassy in Guatemala in 1980, lamenting the impossibility that even the government of President Ronald Reagan could convince hard-liners to deal with political opponents, real or perceived, in a less heavy-handed manner.<sup>5</sup> The country, we do well to remember, is not a poor one in terms of the resources at its disposal; Guatemala has been made a poor country because crippling geographies of inequality, in relation to landownership foremost of all, guarantee a life of plenty for an entrenched, intransigent, and privileged few. A deprived and excluded majority barely survives, having little choice but to make do with paltry access to basic needs (Lovell 2010).

In a single day in June 1980, one AHPN source reveals, more than 100 persons showed up dead in Guatemala, their mutilated bodies summarily buried in mass graves as "XX," signifying "unidentified." The National Police, Alberto elaborates, studiously avoided identifying such corpses, even though they had the means to do so in the form of Gabinetes de Identificación like the one I had noticed on top of an array of other documents earlier that morning. "Finding bodies and failing to identify them," Kate Doyle observed, "was evidently a central preoccupation for the National Police" (2007, 56). She noted that "at age eighteen, every adult in Guatemala is issued a small I.D. (known as a *cédula*) with his or her photograph and identifying particulars" (p. 60). From the rudimentary data listed on the

cédula “the National Police would in turn create a larger index card that contained the same information as well as a complete set of fingerprints” (p. 60). Alberto insists that, even when the face of a dead person has been disfigured beyond recognition, the fingerprint data of the Gabinete de Identificación would have allowed police officers to name the victim. They violated Guatemalan law by not doing so. He asks trenchantly: “And why did they not pursue this course of action”? His answer is chilling. “Because in many cases”—his voice thins out as he speaks—“police officers were themselves the ones who committed the crime.”

Further evidence of police wrongdoing includes a haul of license plates that can be connected to the vehicle into which eyewitnesses say targeted individuals were bundled before being “disappeared.” The license plates are inventoried, like all the materials located in the buildings, as much as possible in the order in which they were found. This procedure is followed in order to maximize what Kate Doyle’s colleague Trudy Peterson, a former chief archivist of the U.S. government called in to help organize the AHPN as a working repository, terms “continuous custody,” a concept that implies “legal guarantee that documents have not been tampered with or taken out of their original context” (quoted in Doyle, 60). To safeguard the results of years of assiduous activity, copies of all digital files, added to by some 2 million items annually, are sent to Switzerland to be stored for posterity by the Swiss government. An arrangement has also been reached between the AHPN and the University of Texas–Austin whereby the latter makes available for online consultation all materials scanned to date. Such collaboration minimizes personal risk and maximizes documentary survival.

#### A LETHAL ALLIANCE

The collusion between the National Police and the army is a *modus operandi* that Alberto devotes considerable time to explaining, as well as illustrating with examples. A unit called the “Centro de Operaciones Conjuntas” (COC) served as a bridge between the two security outfits. Created to share information and coordinate counterinsurgency tactics, the COC zeroed in on anything, or anyone, deemed subversive. It scrutinized the behavior of artists, clergy, journalists, lawyers, students, labor organizers, social workers, school teachers, and university professors, subjecting them, as AHPN records testify, to abuse, surveillance, and assault. If those measures did not have the desired effect, and frequently even if they did, abduction, torture, and death lay ahead. Undesirables picked up by the police were also handed over to the army to be dealt with.

Collusion is exemplified by a macabre dossier, the *Diario Militar*, referred to as a “*Death Squad Diary*” (Doyle 1999). Lifted from military files two days before the presentation of *Memory of Silence*, and purchased for \$2,000 from a former army officer, the dossier charts the predicament of 183 abducted suspects. More than 100 of them were murdered, their demise entered in code either by the number “300” or the cryptic phrase “taken away by Pancho.” Some were released on the condition that they furnish information leading to the apprehension of others also consid-



ered a nuisance or a threat. The *Diario Militar*, its typewritten text accompanied by photographs, spans the period from August 1983 to March 1985, reflecting a counterinsurgency trend in which the widespread massacres carried out in rural areas in 1981–1982 were followed in 1983 and 1984 by the targeted elimination of specific individuals in urban areas, usually in Guatemala City.

Just as the AHPN was the subject of denial, so too does the Guatemalan military claim that no archive of theirs relates to the armed conflict. It dismisses the *Diario Militar* as pure fabrication, a ruse to stain its honor, when in fact hundreds of files in the AHPN confirm its authenticity and expand on the lethal connection between the two branches of state security. Alberto turns philosophical. “It is an inherent part of any institution, even one bent on the act of murder, to keep track of what it has accomplished. That is the nature of bureaucracy, and so we know that a military archive similar to the AHPN exists, just as we know that the army has already destroyed documents we would like to have seen.” He reckons, as in any field of employment, that work performed satisfactorily would have had its rewards, like promotion through the ranks or a raise in pay for an underling assassin, a holiday or a visit to a brothel for the person who tipped him off, indicating where an intended victim lived. The police officers who abducted Fernando García were later nominated to receive medals for their actions.

Meanwhile, the military and the government stall and dither. “These archives raise a lot of fears,” President Colom is recorded as having said.<sup>6</sup> “We’ll locate and access them one day,” Alberto declares confidently.<sup>7</sup> With the reins of the presidency now in the hands of Otto Pérez Molina, a retired general who commanded troops involved in counterinsurgency sweeps that devastated Ixil country in 1982 (Stoll 1993; Schirmer 1998), uncertainty prevails.

We step outside to where the air, even for Guatemala City, smells fresh and clean. The sky is clouding over, but the rain is a few hours away. As a gesture of appreciation, I give Alberto a copy of the 2009 book I coauthored on the life and times of Severo Martínez Peláez. He glances at the title and nods his approval. *Historia sin máscara*, the unmasking of history, is a fitting metaphor for the work in which he and his AHPN colleagues are engaged. “What’s next on the agenda?” Alberto inquires. A visit to La Verbena cemetery, we tell him, and a look at the exhumations being conducted there by the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala.

The bones of the “disappeared” also have a story to tell.

## NOTES

1. Grandin dated the inscription—“La memoria de los vivos hace la vida de los muertos”—to 1894 and begins his “history of race and nation” also with “a walk in the cemetery” (2000, 1). The burial ground in his day—Grandin worked in Quetzaltenango in the 1990s—appears not to have been as vandalized as when I visited in August 2010, especially the tombs of the well-to-do, whether criollo (Guatemalans born of predominantly Spanish ancestry), Ladino (mixed bloods), K’ich’è Maya, or foreign.

2. For insightful commentary on the historiographical merits, and ideological flaws, of *La patria del criollo* (Martínez Peláez [1970] 2009), see the review essay by Florencia Mallon, who considers the appearance of the English-language edition “welcome and long overdue” (2011, 136).

3. Some in Guatemala dispute the accuracy of the Truth Commission's findings and take issue with its methodology as well as its analytical and interpretive thrust. Perhaps the most articulate and widely read of adversaries is Carlos Sabino (2007–2008).

4. The files that relate to Operación Condor (see McSherry 2005) may be the closest cold war equivalent known to exist for the countries of the Southern Cone.

5. For the provenance of the staff member's lament, and for further elaboration of its import, see Streeter 2000.

6. Colom Caballeros's words, from an article first published in the *Washington Post*, appear in *Archival Outlook*, May/June 2009, p. 21.

7. That the Guatemalan military kept close paper track of its activities during the years of armed conflict is confirmed by the existence of documents pertaining to Operación Sofía, available online at the Web site, [www.nsarchive.org], of the National Security Archive. "Among the 359 pages of original planning documents, directives, maps, and hand-written patrol reports," writes Kate Doyle of Operación Sofía, "is the initial order to launch the operation, issued on July 8, 1982 by Army Chief of Staff Héctor Mario López Fuentes." The appearance of documents in the guise of Operación Sofía "provides the first public glimpse into secret military files," offering the hope that others like them exist and one day will be brought to light—and the guilty to justice. In a historic ruling on 28 January 2013, Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez ordered that former general Efraín Ríos Montt, president from 23 March 1982 to 8 August 1983, stand trial in Guatemala for acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. Also indicted on the same charges was retired general Mauricio Rodríguez, who served Ríos Montt as head of military intelligence.

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