

Introduction

ON THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 18, 1968, Mexican president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970) ordered the Federal Army to take over the University City. His goal was to put an unqualified end to a two-month-old student strike led by *revoltosos* (“troublemakers”) that had threatened to spoil Mexico’s hosting of the 1968 Olympic Games. The following day, the president received a telegram of support from an appreciative citizen with the following message: “My eleven children, wife, and I congratulate you for this latest action taken against the communist plot.” Hundreds of comparable letters continued to arrive to the presidential office in the following days stressing that agents provocateurs sponsored by “foreign elements” had “infiltrated” Mexico. A man stated, “[As] a [true] Mexican, I celebrate the fact that the University has been rescued by the Army.” Others similarly wrote:

This is an appropriate measure, *Señor [Presidente.]*

I applaud you for the intervention.

The unrest of the bad Mexicans [will finally be] crushed.

Accept my modest support for your highly patriotic conduct.

I am at your marching orders.

The reign of prosperity, justice, and integrity is the flag of our government.

Mexico needs order.

Analogous letters continued to arrive at the office of Díaz Ordaz after October 2, 1968, the day when an undetermined number of young students (estimated

in the hundreds) were ambushed and brutally killed or arrested by government authorities in the Plaza of Tlatelolco. A citizen expressing his indebtedness to Díaz Ordaz wrote to the president a day after the student massacre: “The true Mexican people congratulate you for having exercised, at last, the authority [of our government].” Three months later, another citizen wrote “[*Señor Presidente,*] do not let anything get in the way of putting an end to the *revoltosos*.”¹

The excerpts highlighted above not only complicate the historiography on student politics in Mexico, which tends to overstate public support for the 1968 student movement, but also echo similar sentiments of disapproval regarding *revoltosos* and *porros* (“thugs” for hire/“agents provocateurs”) previously voiced in Mexico for more than a decade; such sentiments continued to be heard after the student massacre in Tlatelolco. This book traces the rise of Mexico’s “student problem,” reaching its zenith in the ’68 movement, by examining the political and social factors that led to a consolidation of *porrismo* (“student thuggery/provocation”) and *charrismo estudiantil* (“student clientelism”) in the postwar period. These authoritarian processes are understood by closely analyzing Mexican student politics and culture, as well as reactions to them on the part of school authorities, government officials, competing political powerbrokers, divergent voices of the Right, and the print media, particularly during the long sixties. Examining student unrest and response in the forms of sponsored student thuggery, provocation, clientelism, and *relajo* (“fun”) during this period offers insight into larger issues of state formation and hegemony. Further, it helps provide an explanation for the irrefutable longevity of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).²

Porros and Revoltosos

Young man, you seem to be wasting your time. I don’t know who pointed you to our archives; but apparently, you have been misinformed. Here, you will never find legitimate sources on the so-called *porros*. Frankly, I am not sure why a historian working at an American university would be interested in such a fictional topic. Obviously I am not in a position of telling you what to do, but I strongly recommend that you reconsider your theme of investigation. Student violence in Mexico is a messy topic. In fact, the phenomenon of *porrismo* that you are inquiring about is nothing but a myth. It was invented by the enemies of our nation with the sole purpose of discrediting our precious institutions.

The skeptical words quoted above were uttered by an influential director from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute, IPN) upon my visiting his office.³ I responded by stating that my interests in the archives were not constrained to *porrismo*. Rather, I insisted that I was also seeking information pertinent to student activism inside the Politécnico during the 1950s that had been minimized in the secondary literature. In a more irritated voice he then asked me, “Is that it? Did you really come to Mexico to write a book on *revoltosos* and *porros*? Plenty of books have been written on the 1968 student movement and the so-called Tlatelolco massacre. Why write another one?”⁴

The director’s attitude reflects the general wisdom within the historiography of modern Mexico, which insists on limiting the rich history of the student movement to the massacre in Tlatelolco on of October 2. Further, it speaks to a conservative voice that not only arose in support of the administration of Díaz Ordaz but also went so far as to raise doubts regarding the number of people killed on that night in 1968. Attempting to provide a broader history of student activism and divergent conservative reactions, this book examines the origins, growth, and consequences of Mexico’s “student problem” by exploring student culture, political patronage, and Cold War violence in the nation’s capital after the 1940s, with particular attention to the “long sixties” (1956–ca.1971). In so doing, it draws attention to the shifting notion of “youth” in Cold War Mexico, revises the historiography of the 1968 student movement by examining key antecedents of the movement and its immediate aftermath, and demonstrates how deviating authorities inside and outside the government structure responded differently to the various student revolts.

As a backdrop to this critical history of student unrest and response, this book takes up two historical questions that have not been addressed in the historiography of post-1940 Mexico: (1) What were the social, cultural, and political factors that caused *porrismo* to proliferate in Mexico during this period?; and (2) What does *porrismo* tell us about Mexican politics during the nation’s “economic miracle” in general, and about the impact of the Cold War in student politics in particular?⁵ The answer to these questions has much to say about the authoritarian culture of the governing elite, the conservative reactions to political dissent, the competition among local powerbrokers for control of the schools, and the defiant student activism so prominent in the nation’s capital during the long sixties. The argument here stresses that *porrismo*, simultaneously defined as a mechanism of control and mediation, was

effectively consolidated as an extralegal tool of repression and conciliation by the government and rival political elites inside the secondary schools and universities during this period. Its purpose was both to crush and to negotiate with what authorities in various positions of power saw throughout this confrontational era of the Cold War as the “rise” of “radical” student political forces.

In recent years a number of books on student culture, Cold War violence, and political patronage in Mexico have been published. In the work on student uprisings, memoirs of former student leaders, chronicles, and photographic testimonies are the most common.⁶ While insightful, they are often impressionistic. With a few exceptions, this literature tends to overstate the idiosyncrasies of the 1968 student movement, lacks a rigorous examination of the importance of earlier student uprisings, falls short in explaining the social and political factors that contributed to the escalation of student factionalism that characterized this period, and fails to consider the incongruities of the student movement, including the students’ readiness to invoke the legitimacy of violence in the name of democracy.⁷ To offer a more comprehensive history of student activism, this book employs the term “the long sixties” to denote an era in student politics characterized by a new culture of more aggressive public protest and political violence. In dialogue with the historiography of the global sixties, this book argues that the political activism of the era did not take place in a vacuum. Instead, it was characterized by an international language of dissent in which students assumed the role of central protagonists of “revolutionary” and/or “democratic” changes who embraced innovative strategies of defiance and opened new spaces of contestation.⁸ The book contends that in Mexico, the crucial—yet hitherto overlooked—1956 strike at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional was the opening salvo of this period’s student activism, and both the 1956–1959 workers’ movements against *charrismo* (“labor union bossism”) and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 greatly influenced the direction of student political and cultural activity in subsequent years.

The military occupation of the IPN in 1956, the regular use of the riot police, and the imprisonment of students, labor leaders, and intellectuals thereafter sparked the birth of a “New Left.” As conceived of by a new generation of students and intellectuals (and recently brought to our attention by a few historians), this New Left denounced the authoritarian nature of the “revolutionary” state, the “anachronistic” language in defense of “traditional values” endorsed by older parents and school authorities, and what many

began to see as the incompetence of an “old” generation of leftists.⁹ After the 1968 uprising, a small yet significant segment of the otherwise moderate New Left was further radicalized by the student massacre carried out by the military in the Plaza of Tlatelolco. Moreover, as others have demonstrated, the positive image that Mexico had come to enjoy in the international arena as a stable and relatively democratic nation was tarnished by this violent outcome.

The state took major steps throughout the long sixties to shore up its political authority inside the schools and restore its image abroad. After 1956, it made a deliberate effort to distinguish itself from other Latin American countries by reducing the role of the military in politics.¹⁰ In moving away from the use of overt force, Mexico invested tremendous resources in extra-legal mechanisms of control and mediation, which included the use of agents provocateurs and charismatic intermediaries (*porristas*, or “male cheerleaders”) inside the schools and the installation of corrupt leaders (*charros*) in the student organizations (and labor unions). To complement these mechanisms and to transfer power to a civilian government, the state also expanded its riot police force (the *granaderos*), and with the financial support of the U.S. Intelligence Services, it transformed the Office of Federal Security (Dirección Federal de Seguridad, DFS) into a powerful and efficient machine of repression and surveillance.¹¹ In the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution the state went to great lengths to carry out a series of populist reforms and institute a more aggressive form of *porrismo*. To elaborate this point, this book engages in dialogue with the few studies that have examined this uniquely Mexican phenomenon.¹² But distinctively, it argues that these combined efforts were, on the one hand, directed toward the repression and co-opting of the moderate activists, responsible for the student activism of the long sixties and served, on the other hand, as a cover for the surgical government repression launched against the more radical activists of this period. Furthermore, unlike the few studies that have examined *porrismo*, the book argues that the politics of “fun,” or *relajo*, also constituted a vital aspect of this mechanism of control and mediation, which school and national authorities manipulated to both accentuate the crisis of youth and to “manage” student politics.¹³

The long sixties also witnessed what students of the New Left themselves interpreted as the creation of and participation in new (and more democratic) spaces of contestation inside the schools. This book argues that such spaces, which included a renovated radio station, countercultural and academic jour-

nals, and movie houses (*cineclubs*) as well as innovative student assemblies and independent student organizations and newspapers, allowed for the articulation of demands that were largely identical to those put forth by the student activists in 1968. The print media and divergent voices of the Right, concerned with the students' readiness to invoke the legitimacy of violence in these new spaces of contestation, joined authorities in painting these demands as "subversive threats" to the centrist position promoted by the state. The democratic as well as violent actions by the students were met with public outrage in the nation's most influential newspapers and magazines (*Excelsior*, *El Universal*, and *Tiempo*), as the growing "student problem" represented one of several anxieties that came to the fore at this time. Taking their cues from the changing perceptions of youth in other countries, Mexican journalists, government authorities, and key intellectuals referred to students who engaged in politics, *relajo*, and violence as "rebels without a cause," "revoltosos," and eventually "porros" whose hedonistic subculture and infatuation with vandalism imperiled Mexico's traditional values.¹⁴ Drawing from key texts in Youth Studies, this book argues that school and national authorities fanned the flames of public fears by lumping together "the rising student problem" with the "threatening" images of the Cold War, such as reactionary politics and especially communism.¹⁵ The divergent voices published in the media, echoing the sentiments expressed by the state, argued that "foreign ideologies," or worse yet, *manos extrañas* ("foreign hands") endangered national unity, social stability, and economic progress. They made persistent demands that the ruling authorities in the PRI do something about them, using force if necessary.

Many of the most important scholarly works dealing with the PRI make evident that the state indeed responded to popular protests (although not always "successfully") with wide-scale repression during this period.¹⁶ On the one hand, the postwar era, traditionally celebrated in the historiography for its political stability, rapid economic growth, and the consolidation of the middle class, simultaneously witnessed a steady progression of social unrest.¹⁷ On the other hand, the PRI did not have a monopoly on the repression of such unrest, as scholars frequently assume.¹⁸ Key figures representing competing ideological positions within the PRI, but also from oppositional parties as well as from the private sector, also became involved in promoting *porrismo* in the context of the Cold War.

Historians recently have expanded debates about the impact of the Cold War in Latin America in three significant ways.¹⁹ First, they have shifted away

from a focus on the Cold War as strictly a bipolar conflict, and so have made it clear that the presence of the “superpowers” in Latin America was not as monolithic as the historiography often assumes. Second, they have demonstrated that key decision-making power during the Cold War was not always confined to Latin American states. Finally, by stressing the political nature of culture, authors have reminded us that political power does not only flow from above in the form of laws and institutional intervention, but also from below, “through language and symbolic systems and manifests itself in identities and everyday practices.”²⁰ Engaging with these three assertions, this book shows that a variety of figures inside and outside of the government (or the *prústa* structure) developed *porrismo* into an effective mechanism of control and mediation during this period in order to both subdue and negotiate with a new generation of increasingly militant, yet emphatically factionalized, “rebellious” students. In making this argument, the book draws on the work of a variety of authors who have demonstrated that political power in Mexico has historically been negotiated between diverse corporate groups through a complex social and political network of *camarillas* (“political cliques”) and clientelism.²¹ But distinctively, by taking a close look at the role *padrinos del relajo* played in student politics, it joins the relatively few scholars who have explored the interconnections between cultural expressions of fun and the realm of politics.²²

Further, in examining the role that agents provocateurs played in fomenting student factionalism, the book also addresses the demographic, social, cultural, and political components that contributed to the lack of unification in the student body. The dominant historiography suggests that the state had successfully unified its citizens by the 1950s under the umbrella of “revolutionary nationalism.”²³ By contrast, this book demonstrates how incredibly faction-ridden the population of the nation’s capital was, particularly young people who repeatedly challenged the state’s patrimonial authority, not in 1968 for the first time, as the scholarship tends to suggest, but throughout the postwar period (and especially in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution). Powerful, even violent, distinctions were made between “good” and “bad” Mexicans, “patriots” and “sell-outs,” not only by the conservative representatives of the state but also by the Left, the Right, the students themselves, and the public, in general, which grew increasingly intolerant of the “undemocratic” nature of student culture, as evident in the destruction of property, the occupation of public spaces, and the defamation of “sacred,” “religious,” “national,” and/or “revolutionary” symbols and traditional values.

Finally, tracing the development and consequences of porrismo, this book draws a parallel between porrismo and a similar mechanism, charrismo. This form of institutionalized union cronyism was characterized by a kind of *caciquismo* (“bossism”) that took advantage of the networks that developed among corrupt union leaders, business interests, and government authorities.²⁴ In the 1940s and 1950s charrismo served government elites quite well as a means of thwarting and controlling labor unions. This book argues that projects dedicated to modernization, national unity, centralization, revolutionary progress, and bureaucratization—present in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Politécnico (IPN), and their secondary schools (*preparatorias* and *vocacionales*, respectively)—not only failed to eliminate caciquismo but rather nationalized it in the forms of porrismo and charrismo estudiantil.²⁵

Sources and Methodology

The book relies on interviews and a variety of documents from Mexican and U.S. archives. The majority of the interviews developed from casual conversations with former students enrolled in the Politécnico and UNAM during the 1950s and early 1960s.²⁶ Some of these interviewees, such as Luis “Palillo” Rodríguez, Jorge “El Oso” Ocegüera, and Oscar González, served as key intermediaries between cultural activities and politics.²⁷ Others, such as Nicandro Mendoza and Carlos Ortiz Tejeda, had leading roles in the student protests of 1956 and 1958, respectively.²⁸ Not all of the interviewees were prominent figures, but their testimony was valuable nonetheless—some former provocateurs, such as “El Ángel,” “El Negro,” and “El Gato,” provided candid accounts of their activities.²⁹ With very few exceptions, none of the people interviewed played a significant role in the 1968 student movement.³⁰ And because the overwhelming majority of students who engaged in public activism, provocation, violence, and *desmadre* (a more aggressive culture of youth defiance) were young men, these and similar voices referenced here speak primarily to a male perspective. As Elaine Carey (among others) has demonstrated, these hegemonic voices were challenged throughout the long sixties, but only became louder in 1968 when thousands of young female students took over the streets to engage “in a two-front gender battle.” Carey explains, “They subverted gender roles and social and political constructs of their elders by becoming public, but they also struggled with their male com-

rades in the movement who continued to view their female peers through a traditional lens.”³¹ Earlier parallels to the 1956 student uprising emphasized here suggest that when female students engaged in public protest, they too acquired the otherwise masculine label of *revoltoso*.³²

Interviewing people who served as leading lights in student politics during the 1950s and early 1960s was a conscious decision on the part of the author. The goal was to move away from what has developed into an “official” narrative of student activism in Mexico, an account that continues to dominate the historiography. Ignoring important antecedents that took place in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, this “official history,” Herbert Braun explains, “reside[s] at the core of a broad set of ideas held mainly by a small and vocal group of seasoned student militants, university professors, teachers, and intellectuals who were initially at the forefront of the [1968 student] movement,” such as Gilberto Guevara Niebla, Raúl Álvarez Garín, Luis González de Alba, Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Monsiváis, Daniel Cazes, and Marcelino Perelló.³³ These authors, political activists, and intellectuals as well as the scholars who continue to rely on their interpretations, have failed to locate important historical events within a local context of repeated postrevolutionary mobilizations, such as the 1942, 1950, and (especially) the 1956 strikes organized in the IPN or the protest launched by *universitarios* (UNAM students) in 1958.³⁴ In doing so, they fail to recognize events that crystallized a higher level of engagement on the part of a new generation of intellectuals and student activists who began to decry the degeneration of the Mexican Revolution.

Political cartoons published in the nation’s most influential newspapers, photographs, and films were particularly important in documenting the rise of a national “student problem” during the Cold War. As historian Elisa Servín has argued, besides involving military threats and “geopolitical containments” on an international level, the Cold War also entailed an ideological “war of words.” Propaganda was orchestrated by the two conflicting powers for a common objective: to manipulate information in order to “inflict fear” and “create new monsters and heroes.”³⁵ Mexico’s mainstream media was not immune to this ideological war. Besides “words,” it also became invested in the manipulation of “images,” in which photographers, filmmakers, and cartoonists in the nation’s leading newspapers, *El Universal* and *Excelsior*, played a crucial role in swaying public opinion in favor of the “discreet” yet highly “authoritarian” anticommunist stance preferred by the “centrist” Mexican state during the most volatile years of the Cold War.³⁶ For instance, with the

financial and political support from the U.S. and Mexican governments, the cartoonists Andrés Audiffred, Arias Bernal, and Rafael Freyre (repeatedly referenced in the book) not only were involved in creating an atmosphere that made it easy for the Mexican public to accept the 1954 CIA-sponsored overthrow of the democratically elected Guatemalan government of Arbenz, but, echoing the institutionalized rhetoric of the state, they also portrayed the Mexican Revolution as “incomplete,” yet one that was very much alive and still reliant on a strong presidential leader.³⁷ Promoting this paternalistic view of Mexico, the three cartoonists argued that postwar Mexico was experiencing some sort of “youth crisis” that threatened “national unity,” *mexicanidad* (national identity promoted by the state), the “family,” “traditional” gender roles, and “revolutionary progress.” In particular, echoing the words of others, they worried that if left without institutional guidance, UNAM and IPN students could be led astray by foreign ideologies, such as “youthful rebelliousness without a cause,” or worse yet, communism. Nonetheless, the Cuban Revolution and the countercultural turn associated with the global youthful unrest of the 1960s would have a significant impact on a new generation of political cartoonists. Largely represented in the book by Eduardo del Río (Rius), this new generation of cartoonists would open new and more independent spaces of contestation to argue that little had changed since the Mexican Revolution, and they demanded that more radical measures needed to be taken. Further, unlike the critical yet more conservative cartoonists of the 1950s, they would redefine students as “active agents” of society capable of bringing real revolutionary changes to Mexico.³⁸

Equally important in the effort to depart from the “official history” of the student movement was the consultation of student manifestoes, pamphlets, propaganda, and school newspapers produced during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. The same is true of newspaper accounts representing a broad range of perspectives from the Left, the center, and the Right; reports relating to cultural, athletic, and political matters that were sent to the university rector’s office; U.S. government documents produced primarily by the U.S. embassy in Mexico; diplomatic telegrams and detailed reports received by the Ministry of Interior (Gobernación) from multiple Mexican embassies stationed in different countries of Europe, Asia and the Americas; and thousands of Mexican government reports written by agents of the Office of Federal Security (DFS) and the General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations (Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, hereafter IPS).³⁹

President Vicente Fox ordered Gobernación in November 2001 to make these documents available to the public, so as to bring to light information related to past human rights abuses.⁴⁰ In June 2002 Gobernación, following the president's directive, compiled "some eighty million documents that were deposited in the National Archive." One of the goals of the Fox administration was to find "evidence" that would detail the authoritarianism of the PRI. Nonetheless, as the present work concludes from the use of these same archives, the PRI never consolidated a monopoly on political violence, as testimonies by student activists often assume. Influential *panistas* (PAN members), as well as key members from oppositional parties and the Right, also relied on the use of agents provocateurs and intermediaries inside the schools.

Research for this book suggests that documents out of the DFS and related agencies pertaining to *problemas estudiantiles* ("student problems," as they were called) became more frequent in the early 1950s, and there was a noticeable increase following the 1956 student protest at the IPN.⁴¹ When Colonel Manuel Rangel Escamilla became director of the DFS (a post he held from 1958 to 1964), the flow of documents from the agency became a torrent, and the documents themselves became more detailed. These and other sources show that, following the outbreak of the Cuban Revolution, the DFS and IPS managed to infiltrate the leading educational institutions of Mexico, particularly those where leftist students had achieved the greatest degree of prominence (the Law, Economics, Political Science, and Philosophy and Letters schools), as well as Preparatorias #2 and #5, where porros held sway. The goal of the DFS and the IPS, as the straightforward language of these reports makes plain (especially in the case of the DFS under Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios [1964–1970]), was to prevent the spread of both communism and ultraconservative ideology inside the schools. To accomplish this goal, training programs on espionage, information gathering, and social behavior underwent significant improvements.⁴² But by the mid-1960s secret agents of the DFS and the IPS had come to rely on porros as informants (*orejas*) and provocateurs. Moreover, these documents include ample evidence confirming that school officials, national authorities, the police, and secret agents were aware of the activities, political networks, and specific crimes committed by porros. Yet the government seemed to have prosecuted only the "provocateurs," "delinquents," or "criminals" (as they called them) when they were no longer useful, or, as El Angel (a porro leader at Preparatoria #2 in the mid-1960s) angrily lamented during an interview, "when we made the mistake of messing with

the wrong padrinos.” He explained:

We frequently worked together with agents of the DFS and the police. We sold them information. Some of us even bought their bullshit (*chingaderas*), you know? We really thought that communism was taking over Mexico and, as the guardians of order that we were, we intervened in student politics to stop the radicals from importing foreign revolutionary models into our nation. Other porros were much savvier than I ever was. They collaborated with the DFS, school authorities, important politicians, and the police, but for personal ambitions. Accordingly, these porros ended up as full-time agents of the DFS, as members of the judicial police, as school directors, or as “respectable” politicians. I, like many other porros, by contrast, ended up in prison. Others were not so lucky. They ended up with drug problems or dead. We were all victims of an authoritarian system. The powerful prevailed. Those who wanted to make Mexico a more democratic nation are still struggling. We all learned in the process.⁴³

But porros were not the only actors who served as “guardians of order” inside the schools or as key intermediaries between school and government authorities and students. DFS and IPS documents give ample evidence that athletes, as well as bona fide student leaders and charros, also played key roles in the political management of student activists. Many of these actors, such as El Angel, became victims of an authoritarian system. Others excelled; took advantage of their direct and/or indirect role in the consolidation of *charrismo estudiantil* and *porrismo*; and became key authorities within the schools, the government, oppositional parties, and the private sector. One of the intermediaries who became a successful politician was the IPN director noted at the beginning of the introduction. His career began as an influential charro leader at the IPN during the 1950s. His networks of political patronage expanded in the aftermath of the 1956 student protest. And despite his insistence that *porrismo* was nothing but a “myth,” provocateurs as well as former student leaders later testified that this influential IPN director became a chief promoter of *porrismo* in subsequent decades.⁴⁴

Structure of the Book

Divided into three parts, the book first traces the socioeconomic, demographic, political, and cultural changes emerging during the postwar period that compelled key authorities and intellectuals to view politicized students

as potential threats to “national unity” and “revolutionary progress.” Chapter 1 gives a broad overview of the structural changes that developed during the heyday of Mexico’s “economic miracle,” as differently perceived by middle class *universitarios* and working-class *politécnicos* (IPN students). Chapter 2 specifically analyzes the cultural and political significance of *relajo* and traces its links to *desmadre*. It asserts that authorities responded to the growing political awareness and defiance of students inside and outside the school setting by framing them as a population “in a transitional moment of crisis” in need of governmental control. School and national authorities would eventually sponsor and manipulate with some success both these practices throughout the long sixties to accentuate the so-called crisis of youth, covertly undermining the growth of student activism.

Part II examines the rise of Mexico’s “student problem” and state response in the form of the consolidation of *charrismo estudiantil* during the early part of the long sixties. The 1956 student strike in the Politécnico is the focus of Chapter 3. This chapter argues that, more than any other national student protest, this very significant yet understudied strike signaled the end of an era in student activism and the beginning of a new one. On the one hand, the 1956 protest was the last in a series of student demonstrations demanding a return to cardenista “popular politics.” On the other, this important episode represents the first massive student strike of the long sixties to challenge notions of power and authority in public by bringing an incipient concept of democracy and new strategies of struggle into the streets. In so doing, young students came to be seen as a “subversive threat to the nation” manipulated by *manos extrañas*. Chapter 4 examines both putatively legal and extralegal mechanisms of control employed by government authorities and competing political powerbrokers to repress, co-opt, and/or negotiate with students of the Politécnico during the 1956 student protest. As a key point of comparison, this chapter also examines the consolidation of *charrismo estudiantil* inside UNAM during the university’s “Golden Years.” Occurring during the administrations of Nabor Carrillo Flores (1953–1961), this period tends to be described in the historiography as one of economic prosperity and social stability, as evidenced by the founding of Ciudad Universitaria (University City, or CU), an increase in federal funding, and no massive student protests (with the exception of 1958). However, for an emerging generation of students claiming to transform UNAM into a truly autonomous and democratic space, the emergence of *charrismo estudiantil* during the rectorship of Nabor Carrillo

also marked a dark period in the history of this institution. Chapter 5 reviews the significance of the 1958 student strike organized by universitarios in support of striking bus drivers. It argues that, despite the protest's short duration (August 22 to September 4), this event should be interpreted as one of the most important student actions of postrevolutionary Mexico, which would partly influence the rise of Mexico's New Left. Following the 1958 strike, students began to see themselves as a unifying front—*el estudiantado*—a “movement” that could challenge the institutionalized barriers of class differences that had traditionally kept students from different institutions apart. In particular, this chapter argues that the uprisings of 1958 emerged to a large extent as a direct response to the consolidation of charrismo as a mechanism of control across the domains of labor and education.

Part III examines student unrest and government response in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. Chapter 6 explores the impact of this defining international event on the leftist student political landscape at UNAM, as evident in at least four significant ways: the radicalization of students throughout the 1960s in response to the proliferation of charrismo estudiantil; the reevaluation of the importance of ideology by this new generation of politicized students (and intellectuals); the creation of innovative spaces of contestation; and the rise of reactionary politics and political violence. The chapter argues that the internationalist spirit of the 1960s gave rise to a new culture of political violence and protest inside UNAM. It illustrates the characteristics of Mexico's “New Left” by focusing on several intellectuals who were influential inside UNAM and who decried the degeneration of the Mexican Revolution in their prime vehicles of expression: the political cartoonist Rius, the participants of the university cineclubs, the collaborators of Radio Universidad, and the writers of *El Espectador*, *Revista de la Universidad*, and *El Corno Emplumado*. Chapter 7 lays out the different ways in which the administration of Díaz Ordaz and competing political powerbrokers responded to the “radicalization” of students during the 1960s, with particular attention to the financial support of “porra gangs” and pseudo-student organizations. The so-called international threat imposed on Mexico during the 1968 student movement is the subject of analysis in Chapter 8. Unlike previous studies of this important event, this concluding chapter examines the divergent conservative reactions that came in support of President Díaz Ordaz. It argues that '68 renovated the language of the Right and brought the different factions together, which—once unified—played an important role in minimizing the

popular support of the movement and in defending the repressive reaction of the government. The conclusion illustrates the particularly violent environment that emerged inside the schools during Luis Echeverría's so-called democratic aperture, offers a brief critique of the *Memorial del 68* (opened in the Plaza of Tlatelolco in 2007–2008 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the 1968 student movement), and raises a number of historical inquiries that remain unaddressed in the scholarship.