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CINE MEXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

NO SE OLVIDE

Contemporary with these emergent countercultures, Mexico faced the most grave internal crisis since the Revolution.

This tragedy was framed by a series of unfortunate coincidences, collisions, and murderous miscalculations, especially the selection of one of the most conservative presidents-Gustavo Díaz Ordaz-in the most radical of times. Faced with increasingly harsh repression, university students demanded the release of political prisoners, the end of state repression, and the replacement of a hated police chief. In

a series of confrontations between paramilitary *granaderos* and leftist students over the summer of 1968, the two sides sized each other up and prepared for more. In August, half a million protesters filled the Zócalo. There could not have been a worse time. With the Olympic Games approaching, the president feared that student protests would mar the nation's international image at precisely the moment of highest visibility.

Enthusiasm for the Games was not unanimous. Protesters chanted: "We don't want Olympics/We want revolution!" ["No queremos olimpiada/queremos revolución!"] In response, Díaz Ordaz ordered the army occupation of the UNAM campus. The rector, Javier Barros Sierra, resigned in protest. The university went on strike. On October 2, just days before the beginning of the Olympic Games, the army and police opened fire with automatic weapons on a rally at Tlatelolco. Uncounted hundreds died.

As the atmosphere of dissension heightened around them, the film students at the CUEC proved that cinema could be a viable weapon in the struggle. The students filmed nearly every march, protest, and demonstration, creating a vast visual archive of the events. This material was first released in a series of counter-newsreels, called *Comunicados* (collective productions of the *Consejo nacional de*

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huelga, 1968), that chronicled both the protests and government's response. Using still images, sound effects and little dialogue, they prove the lessons of Santiago Alvarez were not lost on this group of cine-militants. Much of this material was later reused in the making of *El grito* (1968-70), the definitive film record of the unrest of '68. Though Leobardo López Aretche is credited as the film's director (assisted by Alfredo Joskowicz), *El Grito* is essentially a collective project of the first generation of CUEC students, and the credits read like a class roster. Month by month, the movie details the events and actions preceding the October massacre: rallies at the Zócalo, meetings on campus, the theatrical techniques of the protesters, the use of posters, expressions of solidarity and public support.

Ironically, some of the filmmakers active in these productions also found employment with the government. Parallel to the sports events was a large and expensive "Cultural Olympics," funded by the government. Along with the art exhibitions, literary events, outdoor sculptures, and concerts, the state also bankrolled a documentary, in the tradition of the immensely successful *Tokyo Olympiad* (Kon Ichikawa, 1965). Key figures from the independent film community, including Paul Leduc, Rafael Corkidi, Felipe Cazals and Rafael Castanedo, not only worked on the official production *Olimpiada en México* (Alberto Isaac, 1968) but also contributed to agitprop shorts such as *Comunicados* series.

Third Cinema in Mexico continued long after the violence of 1968. Oscar Menéndez made several documentaries in the aftermath, including *2 de octubre: aquí México* (1970), *Historia de un documento* (1971), a reworking of super-8 footage he shot surreptitiously in prison, and *1968: homenaje a José Revueltas*. A group of CUEC students calling themselves the *Taller de Cine Octubre* directed several productions as a collective, including *Explotados y explotadores* (1974), *Los albañiles* (1974), *Chihuahua, un pueblo en lucha* (1974), and the feminist tract *Mujer, así es la vida* (1975-80). In a similar vein, the *Grupo Cine Testimonial* made polemic documentaries including *Atencingo* (1973) and *Una y otra vez* (1972-75). Salvador Allende's aborted experiment with socialism in Chile inspired a collaboration between the CUEC and the group *Cine Experimental de la Universidad de Chile*, entitled *No nos moverán* (1972), as well as Carlos Ortiz Tejada's account of Pinochet's military coup *Contra la razón y por la fuerza* (1973). By the early seventies, the use of film in countercultural circles was not uncommon. To a great extent this was

possible because of super-8.

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