Remembering the Rescuers of Victims of Human Rights Crimes in Latin America

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To those who helped victims with resistance, compassion and solidarity, transcending death.

Contents

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Introduction

Why Remember the Rescuers in Latin America?

Marcia Esparza and Zachary McKiernan

Persons and organized groups who helped and rescued targeted victims during the Cold War in Latin America are rarely remembered publicly. From a genocide and human rights scholarship perspective, this silence is surprising, especially given the large-scale killings, disappearances, acts of torture and sexual assaults perpetrated by rightwing armed forces in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala and México—the case studies included in this volume. A valuable exception is Jessica Casiro's essay, included in this book, arguing that the Argentine case suggests that social networks can be more important in explaining rescue than personal attributes and values.

Drawing from genocide and human rights literature, this introduction seeks to lay out the theoretical challenges and the historical background we need to consider when reckoning with this issue. While some authors in this volume have sought to deconstruct and reconstruct the term "rescuer," we believe that it is important to consider the Holocaust literature that analyzes this concept because we aim at emphasizing common acts of humanity. Thus, without losing sight of the specificities of the Latin American experience, our goal is to redefine and adjust the concept of rescuers by situating it in the broader historical, socioeconomic and political postcolonial context of the region and to integrate this experience into the larger scholarship of collective memory, human rights and genocide. To this end, this book extends in scope and expands in breadth the relationship between memory and human rights in a region of the world that has contributed so much to our understanding and practice of both.

Remembering the Rescuers seeks to broaden the dominant discussion of the rescuers by answering these questions: What, if any, are the similarities between the political, social or cultural groups to which the rescuers belong?

What rescue practices successfully helped Indigenous peoples, and who risked their lives to help them? How can rescuers be defined in the Cold War context of "internal enemy" doctrines? Who, in fact, are these people and groups who did the rescuing? Ultimately, our book contends that unless an account of the courageous rescue actions in the region is integrated into the global study of state violence, human rights, genocide, collective memory and shared silence, the study of rescuers will remain incomplete. By integrating the role of the Latin American rescuer within the global study of rescuers, this volume not only fills a gap, but contributes to scholarly approaches that examine historical memory and human rights more broadly.

RESCUE WITHIN GENOCIDE STUDIES

As the authors suggest here, current genocide studies have notable blind spots that have kept Latin American rescuers in the dark.[1] Most studies concentrate on the Holocaust, overlooking the experience in Latin America. Emphasizing the lack of studies on rescuers and acts of rescues, Ron Dudai (2012) underscores the largely ignored significance of commemorating rescuers of mass atrocities in the aftermath of genocides and its potential contribution to post-conflict reconstruction and the field of transitional justice. Dudai's research illustrates the "symbolic value" of rescue, examines reasons why it has largely been ignored, and discusses initiatives that commemorate rescuers of the Holocaust, and the Rwandan and Yugoslavian genocides. In *Resisting Genocide* (2011), Jacques Sémelin et al. investigate acts of organizations rather than individuals, emphasizing that organized networks' actions, letter-writing and lobbying lessened the persecution of the Jewish population in France, Christians in Armenia and Tutsi in Rwanda, conspicuously excluding the Latin American experience. Semelin notes that a heroic representation of the rescuer, which implies an actor struggling against a totally hostile environment, does not really "stand up to socio-historical analysis," and advocates that for an in-depth understanding of "the act of rescue, the context of the act must be taken into account as well as the history of the context."[2] Keeping the need to historicize the rescue and the remembrance in mind, the approach used here emphasizes the rescue itself, performed in an extreme crisis situation."[3] Similarly examining the social history of those involved, the pioneering work of Nechama Tec explores the social class, political beliefs, and the prospects of monetary rewards, among other factors, that accounted for the actions of "righteous peoples" rescuing Jews in Europe. Though first she focused on psychological profile of rescuers of Jews, she later included the organized rescue operations performed by Jews themselves, broadening her initial theoretical scope.

In the *Fragility of Goodness* (2001), Tzvetan Todorov explores the individual and collective actions taken by representatives of parliament, intellectuals and Orthodox Church officials in Bulgaria to pressure the Sofia administration against deporting Jews during the Holocaust. Early studies by Tec and Pearl Oliner have argued that the act of rescue can be explained by the rescuers' personalities. As Lee Ann Fuji's chapter, "Rescuers and Killer-Rescuers during the Rwanda Genocide," suggests, rigid genocide categories cause "us to overlook acts of killing and acts of rescue that do not originate with those we would normally classify as 'perpetrators' and 'rescuers.'"[4] The groundbreaking work of Raul Hilberg also shows that during the Holocaust, bystanders could also become rescuers, though "helpers seldom took the initiative," and that even those in uniform "tried to limit the scope of the slaughter."[5] By bringing to the collective memory the selfless acts that sought to protect victims of human rights crimes, we can move beyond the "perpetrator-victim" binary that so ill-informs current human rights discussions. "First of all, the perpetrator/rescuer dichotomy is not absolute . . . Rescuers, therefore, do not have a stable 'personality.'"[6] As in the case of the Holocaust, rescuers come from all social and occupational categories, yet they share common altruistic values. As told by journalist and scholar Pascale Bonnefoy in Chapter 2, the case of Harald Edelstam, Swedish Embassador to Chile at the moment of the coup d'etat in 1973, illustrates how powerful actions of diplomats were, through unique primary records, historical letters and photograps. Unlike during the Holocaust, when "many rescuers helped complete strangers, this was the exception," in Argentina.[7] Here organized humanitarian aid was mostly carried out by the very same people the state's violence was targeting, a trait this book reveals is also found in other countries. Historian Bob Moore explores the historical context of those who sheltered Jews in the Netherlands, and argues that the motivation of rescuers can only be "fully understood" when grappling with the scope of the society in which they lived.[8] Following this line of thought, an analysis of the specificities of the region remains largely unexplored, requiring us to address each situation's unique historical background to understand the actions of those who risked their lives to protect the human dignity and physical integrity of others.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN LATIN AMERICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR YEARS

In the decades preceding state terrorism in Latin America during the Cold War (1950s–1990s), this region of the world brimmed with progressive and sometimes revolutionary ideals of self-determination. Working class mobilization, demands for improved working conditions, higher wages, and access to basic

socioeconomic rights all mobilized trade union workers, students, intellectuals, shanty town dwellers and Indigenous peasants in non violent, widespread protests and union organizing against the visible and lived inequalities in their respective countries. Following the United States' National Security Doctrine that criminalized left-wing opposition to a globalizing economy following World War II, state responses to grassroots mobilization aimed at squelching and sometimes exterminating political dissent.

As a result, many Latin American nations—with covert and overt support from the United States—launched a series of coup d'états beginning in Guatemala in 1954, anticommunist counterinsurgency campaigns and, ultimately, genocide against a real or unreal "internal enemies." These "dirty wars" worked to root out those who opposed authoritarian regimes or citizens who sympathized with left-leaning political ideologies. The Cold War violence left some 200,000 dead in Guatemala, 75,000 dead in El Salvador, 30,000 disappeared in Argentina, and some 30,000 tortured in Chile. Added to this were uncounted thousands who suffered exile, internal displacement, and loss of social and political freedoms, as well as economic opportunities and cultural expression. Studies have shown that state violence left behind a trail of long-term footprints that shape, to varying degrees, the early aftermath in the region: entrenched impunity for past human rights crimes, mistrust of the criminal justice system, disintegration of solidarity ties, the breakdown of family units, and an ongoing legacy of need to recover the historical memory of past human rights crimes, which continues today.[9]

With the demise of military dictatorships and the signing of various peace accords ending armed conflicts, human rights literature and transitional justice research have emerged to frame these past violations and present struggles in terms of redemocratization of the state's institutions and civil society, as well as legal redress for victims seeking accountability for perpetrators. These official mandates to deal with the past, however, leave much to be desired, as ordinary citizens continue to feel left out of these processes. Unlike much past literature, this edited volume focuses instead on the political and moral significance of remembering rescuers who carried out acts of kindness to protect and save others, or those who provided protection to victims of human rights violations. Often, as this book will show was the case in México, Argentina, and Colombia, rescuers themselves became victims of human rights abuses, which calls attention to the tension and overlapping roles rescuers confronted. Furthermore, focusing on organized rescue operations forces us to recognize that, more often than not, rescuers were known by the victims. They themselves were university students, teachers, workers, and trade unionists who sought to protect the affected, and would, later, in the aftermath of state violence keep alive the memory of the victims and their political resistance.

What is our responsibility as engaged scholars and citizens to remembering rescuers and their efforts? This question drives at the center of the human rights violations committed during the period in question and our ongoing responsibility to those violations. Steve J. Stern's pioneering trilogy—The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile—puts forth the memory question, "how to remember the origins, violence, and human rights violations" in Latin America during the Cold War and its aftermath. This interrogation of memory, posited first by historian Steve J. Stern in the Chilean case, was critical to the socio-political debates and culture that led to the formation of post-dictatorship democracies.[10] It was leveraged by politicians and cultural leaders to find a middle ground for reconciliation and consensus concerning the violations of the past. A quick reconciliation process and a collective consensus signaled the unification of a once-divided society that was supposed to allow the nation to move forward without dwelling on its past. This official mandate met some successes, including truth-seeking commissions, calls for symbolic and economic reparations for victims, and prosecutions of a small number of perpetrators. But these nods to truth and justice seemed nominal to many ordinary citizens and human rights organizations either quieted by voices of pluralism or altogether left out of the process of debate. Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard reminds us that:

> Pluralism and consensus were the issues called on to interpret a new social multiplicity whose ebbs and flows of opinion should, supposedly, express the diverse, but whose diversity had to be regulated by certain pacts, understandings, and negotiations that would contain excesses so as not to revive the collision of ideological forces that divided us in the past.[11]

Thus, containing and controlling excesses became an important tool for explicitly ushering in a new, unified social order and implicitly closing the door on the past. In effect, the notion of consensus served as a signal that the transitions from dictatorship to democracy were complete, that the past was solidly behind new, democratic regimes, and that the contestation in the past and present had been smoothed over and ironed out. In Chile, for example, the first post-dictatorship president, Patricio Aylwin, declared after only a year and half, "The transition is now complete. In Chile we live in democracy."[12] Memory then became "an issue that, at least in official circles, would best be left shrouded by a tacit pact of silence."[13]

The question of memory for those directly affected by human rights crimes, however, could not be contained by official commissions or tacit silences. The Argentine sociologist Elizabeth Jelin has smartly signaled the role of these individuals and their allies—members of the robust human rights movements that moved against authoritarian regimes throughout Latin America,

especially in the Southern Cone and Central America—in challenging the status quo and master narratives of the victors. For Jelin, the political transitions were moments that catalyzed, however unevenly and slowly, the possibility of redefining the past, especially for those directly affected by the violations, and "asserting the 'true' version of history based on their memories, and that of demanding justice."[14] The blending of memory, truth, and justice by human rights actors put these groups at the center of the memory question, linking, as Michael Lazzara has shown, "the demands to settle accounts with the past . . . with the founding principles of democratic institutions."[15] As such, the human rights movements that formed to confront the authoritarian regimes *during* the Cold War were the same movements that pressed for the deepening of democratic institutions and social justice structures in its aftermath. And this deepening could only be achieved, the aggrieved argued, through a full accounting of the past. It is also important to note that, as the question of memory slipped from the center of the socio-political debates, as politicians and cultural leaders basked in self-congratulatory praise, and as consensus and reconciliation represented a turning-of-the-page of history, human rights movement members ramped up their public action. They turned toward popular and cultural expressions of memory and alternative modes of narrative making, to include public memorials and memorialization, song and art and theatre and dance. In a very real way, and to varying degrees, the aggrieved translated the memory of human rights violations into collective social action.

For long-time followers of Latin America, the distinct tradition of human rights discourse and practice is easily recognizable. The Christian humanism of de Las Casas, the regional variations of Enlightenment ideals, México's 1917 constitution that championed social and economic guarantees and protections, and the strong Latin American influence on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have merged into a special sensitivity for human dignity, integrity, and responsibility.[16] But it wasn't until the Cold War that human rights translated into powerful social and political movements responding to state terror.

Edward Cleary has noted that very few human rights organizations existed before the authoritarian regimes of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and that the grassroots and mid-level society membership in these organizations was something new. "Latin America . . . became a movement society," and human rights was a special issue, giving form to "the foundation of a strong civil society,"[17] Cleary observed. Thus, as visible patterns of violations emerged throughout the region, as citizens were arrested, tortured, massacred, and disappeared, and when Latin Americans were threatened most, grassroots and mid-level society members mobilized, organized, and acted, forming powerful movements that still resonate today, as Chris Ney shows in his moving account of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture in Chile, in Chapter 1.

Human rights activism and rescue mobilization during the Cold War in Latin America meant two things. First, the immediate protection of people being persecuted by state security forces. Second, the removal of the military or authoritarian regime that persecuted their citizens. As such, other rights issues took a back seat to the immediacy of state-sponsored terror. Though stories and narratives—Jelin's "private memories"—of this terror circulated in discreet spaces such as homes and churches, collective memory had not yet emerged as a human rights issue. Meanwhile, as activists from the region busied themselves protecting potential victims and rescuing others, so too did they begin piecing together evidence that would later amount to immense archival power in the making of memory narratives reckoning with the past. In another way, although state control of public space and discourse prevented the memory question from flourishing, human rights organization members consciously amassed material evidence and constructed counter-narratives that would emerge during and after the political transitions to democracy.

Louis Bickford, a transitional justice pioneer, labeled this material and these counter-narratives "memory repositories" working in the service of "activist truth-telling." With the removal of the authoritarian regimes and the relative physical safety of citizens secured in democracy, what the human rights movements had initially mobilized around was no longer a threat. In fact, the robust movement of human rights organizing experienced a notable downturn as regimes transitioned to democracy, international attention and funding reversed, and a sense of elation and relief outweighed the urgency to activate and agitate. It was in this environment that the political and cultural elite began to build the aforementioned consensus around healing, pluralism and reconciliation to hasten the establishment of democratic institutions while negotiating pacts and silences, amnesty and impunity, official history and memory. But it was exactly this that re-energized human rights movements to challenge the new national narrative of consensus, reconciliation, and democracy. In another way, the human rights movement turned its attention to the urgency of the past in order to inform the future and, in so doing, offer an intimate portrait of the political present as they now rescued the memory of those who died fighting for social justice.

The responsibility to remember the victims and violations of the Cold War past in Latin America resonated deeply throughout the region. Human rights organization members grounded this urgency in both moral and political terms—and crystallized the relationship between human rights and memory. In a more subtle way, vocalized through concrete actions and memorialization and commemoration, grassroots actors argued for a "right to memory," applying human rights discourse and experience to the historical practice of memory-making. Jelin, Lazzara and others have noted the privileged role that

victims and their family members play in this relationship, ultimately inserting their truths in order to counter official or dominant narratives that deny their legitimacy. The ways in which these actors have dealt with, focused on, and taken ownership have manifested in a wide array of "memory technologies," as Marita Sturken might say. Through public memorials, museums, commemorations, vigils, literature, memoirs, art, theatre and music, human rights sympathizers have gained much public ground, though they also assert that much memory work remains. In fact, if collective memories are dynamic and open to challenges based on present socio-political circumstances, then memory work is necessarily never-ending.

Remembering the Rescuers speaks to the never-ending work that memory and human rights demand, especially because it moves beyond the victim-perpetrator dichotomy to a more nuanced—and therefore broader—recognition of thinking about the past. Where victims and their allies have played a privileged role in shaping the public memory debates against official or apologetic versions of the past, the responsibility and challenge to remember rescuers is only now being met in Latin America. Though it has been nearly a decade since Alex Wilde advocated that Chile's "political culture could benefit from more projects to remember those who stood up to repression," little attention has been paid to this directive. That is, we "should remember not just the victims, preserve not just places of suffering, celebrate not just dead fighters or resistance martyrs, but also the dogged work of human rights survivors, including lawyers, teachers, journalists, archivists, and parish priests."[18] Of course, Wilde's argument is appropriately extended to other Latin American nations facing similar processes.

The advancement of Holocaust rescue studies is partly attributed to finding, uncovering, and exploring little-known archives. The Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, whose mission includes awarding the title of "Righteous among the Nations," shows that survivors' testimonies found in archives are pivotal to unearthing the role of the rescuers.[19] This is certainly the case in Latin America, where unique archival evidence documenting war and genocide has been kept by survivors, and the continued mobilization around memory, suggested earlier, illustrates that the time is ripe to identify, preserve and examine local archives. As Esparza, Alfaro, and Sanandres show in Chapter 3, courageous firefighters from the township of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, Guatemala, were called on to perform rescue efforts in the aftermath of massacres, revealing acts of courage in providing help to the poverty-stricken, rural Maya population.

As previously asserted, human rights organizations born during the height of the Cold War repression—and not in their aftermath—played a pivotal role in saving lives by calling national and international attention to "torture,

murder, and disappearance . . . [which] caused a strong negative reaction in world opinion."[20] Focusing on Guatemala, Roddy Brett (Chapter 4) argues that organized rescue efforts in México saved the lives of thousands of Maya peasants fleeing from the carnage. Brett identifies two predominant rescue patterns that emerged: rescue *within* Guatemala, characterized by the mobilization of displaced Indigenous communities through the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPRs) themselves (what we might term endogenous rescue); and rescue driven by non-Indigenous, non-Guatemalan actors, *outside of the country* (in México) and thus, to a degree, sheltered from systematic repercussions for rescue activities (exogenous rescue). In Chapter 5, Isabel de León Olivares and Maribel Rivas-Vasconcelos argue that human rights groups in México developed a strong sense of solidarity while attempting to save lives during the country's dirty war wave of state-sponsored political repression. A similar emphasis is found in Jenny Escobar and Angie Tamayo's provocative Chapter 6 essay, focusing on Colombia—a country still at war as the Peace Process unfolds at the moment of this writing.

A final caveat. Contributors in this book present their research according to their own discipline, as social scientists, journalists, and theologians, adding to the interdisciplinary richness of this volume. From these disparate approaches, our aim is to contribute, in the words of Jelin, to the "labors of memory," the type of activities that can lead people to act as "agent[s] of transformation, and in the process transforms [themselves] and the world."[21] By remembering those acts that helped denounce violence and save lives, and by analyzing the larger power dynamics involved, we hope to lay the groundwork for a new generation of scholars focusing on Latin America to investigate not just acts of atrocity but also acts of goodness.

NOTES

1. In Israel the distinction of the "Righteous among the Nations" is given, in the form of a medal, to non-Jews who "selflessly saved Jews." Jacques Sémelin, "From Help to Rescue," in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, eds. Jacques Sémelin et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) 1–14. Fn. 2, 2. Contesting this term, Sémelin argues that "Righteous" is a moral category that cannot be used in the social sciences. On Rwanda, see Paul Conway, "Righteous Hutus: Can Stories of Courageous Rescuers Help in Rwanda's Reconciliation Process," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3, no. 7 (2011): 217–23; For the former Yugoslavia, see Svetlana Broz, Good People in an Evil Time: Portraits of Complicity and Resistance in the Bosnian War (New York, Other Press, 2005).

2. Sémelin et al., *Resisting Genocide*, 8.

3. In this sense, the study of rescuers is closer to the study of resistance itself. There has to be an environment of complicity involving the "immediate family, or social or professional entourage," Sémelin et al., *Resisting Genocide*, 8.

4. Lee Ann Fuji, "Rescuers and Killer-Rescuers during the Rwanda Genocide," in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, eds. Jacques Sémelin, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 145. She also notes, "By 'acts of rescue,' I mean deliberate actions that people took to keep another person from being killed,"146.

5. Raul Hilberg, Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders. *The Jewish Catastrophe* (1933–1945) (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1993), 499.

6. Claire Andrieu, "Conclusion: Rescue, A Notion Revisited," in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, eds. Jacques Sémelin et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 499.

7. Casiro, this volume.

8. Bob Moore, "The Rescue of Jews from Nazi Persecution: A Western European Perspective," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 2 (2003), 293–308.

9. In Argentina, see Daniel Feierstein, Genocide as Social Practice: Reorganizing Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas, trans by Douglas Andrew Town (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press); for various case studies, see Marcia Esparza, Henry R. Huttenbach and Daniel Feierstein eds., State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold War Years (London: Routledge, Critical Terrorism Studies, 2011).

10. Steve J. Stern, Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998, Book One of the Trilogy: *The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), ix–xxxi.

11. Nelly Richard, Cultural Residuals: Chile in Transition, trans. Alan West-Durán and Theodore Quester (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 6.

12. Patricio Aylwin quoted in Michael Lazzara, Chile in Transition: The Poetics and Politics of Memory. (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2006), 19.

13. Patricio Aylwin quoted in Michael Lazzara, Chile in Transition, 19.

14. Elizabeth Jelin, State Repression and the Labors of Memory. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 29. Originally published in Spanish as Los trabajos de la memoria, Siglo XXI, 2002.

15. Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression*, x.

16. See Paolo G. Carozza, "From Conquest to Constitutions: Retrieving a Latin American Tradition of the Idea of Human Rights," in *Human Rights Quarterly*, 25 (2003), 281–313.

17. Edward Cleary, Mobilizing for Human Rights in Latin America. (Bloomfield, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, Inc, 2007), ix.

18. Alex Wilde in the final report for the international conference Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action, edited by Sebastian Brett et al., (Chile: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007), 10.

19. Jacques Sémelin, "From Help to Rescue," in *Resisting Genocide*, edited by Jacques Sémelin et al., 2.

20. Thomas C. Wright, State Terrorism in Latin America. Chile, Argentina and International Human Rights. (Maryland: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2007,) XV.

21. Elizabeth Jelin, State Repression and the Labors of Memory. (New York City: The Social Science Research Council, 2003), 5.

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Chapter 1

Rescued from Fear

The Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture in Chile[1]

Christopher Ney

Amidst the brutal violence of General Augusto Pinochet's state terror regime in Chile, the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture carried out a campaign of nonviolent direct action to protest the practice of torture. Its members included priests, nuns, and lay members of the church; human rights activists and family members of the disappeared; and militants from the leftist parties who were targeted by the military. From 1983 until 1991, they staged approximately 180 nonviolent actions. They protested every month and sometimes every week. They were compelled to touch the conscience of their nation. They felt an ethical imperative to communicate a simple message: in Chile under Pinochet, the practice of torture was systematic and institutionalized, and that practice was intolerable. Although they did not rescue torture victims from the jails of the secret police, they put their own lives at risk in solidarity with victims of torture to protest the abuses of the Pinochet regime. They were rescuers. As Ron Dudai notes, the emphasis in Latin America on truth and reconciliation has largely overlooked the role of rescuers.[2] This essay on the history and tactics of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement is part of a larger effort to lift up the stories of those people in Latin America who sought to rescue others from state-sponsored terror and human rights abuse.

The members of the Sebastián Acevedo movement included a wide range of people and ideological perspectives, yet they were able to find common ground in courageous action to denounce one of the gravest violations of human rights: torture. The movement never grew larger than 300 people at any time, but approximately 500 people participated over the years of its actions.[3] They risked their own safety and security to denounce the widespread practice of torture. They embodied the spirit and commitment of rescuers in their public actions. Yet their approach aimed not only at the institutions of the state that were engaged in human rights abuse, but also at the

transformation of a society that accepted the practice of torture through willful ignorance or apathy. Their actions contributed, in part, to the pressure that the Pinochet regime felt to sign the Convention Against Torture in 1984, an act that led directly to Pinochet's detention in England in 1998 while awaiting the result of the extradition request of a Spanish judge.[4]

This work is based on research and field work that I did in a pivotal moment in Chile's history: 1991, the year immediately after the restoration of democracy. The ongoing truth telling process had begun, but it was (and remains) a process which proceeds at its own pace. It cannot be rushed or closed prematurely. It is worth noting that Chile had more than one truth commission. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created during the first month of the post-Pinochet presidency of Patricio Alywin.[5] The commission was charged with the task of investigating actions by agents of the Chilean state that resulted in death during the years of the dictatorship. When the Commission issued its findings, known as the Rettig Report, it documented that nearly 3,400 people had been killed by the state during the Pinochet years.[6]

A second Truth Commission was established in 2003 by President Ricardo Lagos to investigate situations of unlawful detention and torture during the years of the dictatorship. This report, the Valech Report, was submitted to the president in November 2004. After the initial report, the commission continued its work as more people were willing to tell their stories. Altogether, the Valech Commission received testimony from nearly 36,000 people and determined that more than 27,000 witness statements were legitimate. The second report documented an additional 1,200 cases.[7] Most human rights observers agree that the actual numbers of death, disappearances, detention and torture are higher than the official record as victims and survivors are still too fearful to report.

As stories of survivors continue to emerge, so too do the stories of the heroism of those who resisted oppression and political repression. The literature about rescuers that emerged from the Holocaust looks, almost exclusively, at the work of those who provided safe havens for Jews who were under threat of deportation, internment, and execution. The work of the "Righteous Among the Nations" has been celebrated, documented and analyzed.[8] But the context of the state terror regimes of the Southern Cone requires a broader understanding of rescuers to include those who risked their own lives to protest the regimes' repressive actions. The members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture were rescuers because they resisted the Chilean military regime and its unimaginable violence of genocide, human rights abuse, and torture. Moreover, viewing this movement through the lens of rescuers offers new insights into their dramatic story of resistance.

ENCOUNTERING FEAR IN CHILE

I was introduced to Chile during the summer of 1988 when I was invited to participate in a small faculty-student research team of two professors and four students from Earlham College. That experience launched a life-long fascination with the long, narrow country that hugs the Pacific coast of South America. During my first experience in Chile, I met people who lived in shantytowns and marginalized communities. Our group met people who had been exiled, tortured, or were relatives of the disappeared. For the first time in my life, I encountered people who were afraid to speak.

But we also met courageous people who were struggling creatively to overcome these conditions, and we were privileged to serve as International Observers for the historic Plebiscite of 1988 as the Chilean people voted to end the dictatorship and restore democracy. At the time, it was the first nation in the world to end military rule through the ballot box. Yet one of the strongest and most enduring memories of that experience was fear, an experience that was common among Latin American societies in the aftermath of civil conflict. Fear was palpable almost from the moment I stepped off the plane at Santiago's international airport. The machine guns carried by ordinary police officers and the anti-riot vehicles that patrolled the city streets were visible reminders of the regime's fearful authority. The atmosphere of fear was pervasive and with long-lasting consequences.

A repressive regime survives by fear. Using deadly force and torture, a dictatorship terrorizes its own people through the gross violation of human rights. It manipulates the media and projects an image of omnipotence. It claims to be the only force that can provide stability and security. The truth is the opposite: repressive regimes are the source of insecurity and violence. Fear is more than the by-product of state repression. During the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone, fear was intentionally created and manipulated. This issue has been examined thoughtfully by a number of scholars, particularly Juan Corradi and Marjorie Agosin. Writing in the anthology *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*, edited by Corradi, Patricia Weiss Fagen writes,

> The pervasive state violence and the psychology of fear caused citizens to turn inward, avoiding public contact. Not only were people likely to abandon overt political activity, but they also grew wary of social interactions that might have a political content and fearful of joining with others to make economic demands. Deprived of information, unable to predict who might be suspect, and aware that to be suspect oneself could carry dreadful consequences, most citizens feared to complain or protest. This phenomenon was no accidental outcome of the widespread violence. It was the intended outcome of regime terror designed to inhibit collective action, diminish support networks and depoliticize social interactions.[9]

This environment makes the actions of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture even more significant. They hoped to stop the practice of torture by denouncing it, a goal that they did not achieve. But their mode of action—public protest and a deep sense of group solidarity—defied and undermined the project of state terrorism. Intuitively, the leaders of the movement understood that the importance of their actions extended beyond the immediate rescue of individual torture victims.

Jesuit José Aldunate, a founder of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement and its principal spokesperson, wrote a significant article for the Chilean Jesuit magazine, *Mensaje*. Titled, "Feet of Clay,"[10] (from the Biblical Book of Daniel) the article integrates theological reflection and social scientific analysis. Citing sociologist Alain Touraine, Aldunate argues that repressive "regimes sustain themselves by torture. They lift themselves on these feet. Torture is an effective way for them to maintain themselves in power."[11] He goes on to describe the arrest and torture of a young man, a carpenter, along with Juan Antonio Aguirre Ballesteros in 1984. They were stripped, blindfolded, and interrogated while electrical shocks were applied to their mouth, genitals, anus, ears and nasal passages.[12] Aguirre became the subject of a movement campaign in September 1984 but in the midst of that campaign his decapitated body was recovered. He joined the ranks of the *degollados* or decapitated ones. The carpenter was released but suffered from the after-effects of trauma.[13]

The cruelty of these acts reflects the systematic terror methods that the Pinochet regime used to create fear from the moment it seized power. The coup d'état of September 11, 1973 ended one of South America's most stable and enduring democracies. With support from the administration of Richard Nixon (1968–1974), the coup destroyed the experiment of democratically-elected President Salvador Allende (1970–1973) to create a nonviolent, democratic road to socialism. The bombing of the national palace, La Moneda, by jets from Chile's Air Force represented the Chilean military's use of shock and awe—long before the term gained notoriety during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

In the seventeen years that followed, the regime deployed state-sponsored, political violence with impunity. Pinochet's use of state terrorism effectively silenced opposition. During the first ten years after the coup, few Chileans were willing to protest against the regime for its harsh economic policies or its gross violations of human rights. The exceptions were notable for their courage. Even after large-scale protests began in 1983, few were willing to challenge the repressive apparatus of the state: the CNI (secret police), the use of torture by the *carabineros* (Chile's national police), or Chile's willful indifference to these human rights violations.

This was the focus of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture. They sought to rescue the victims of the military regime from abuse while

rescuing the conscience of their nation from indifference to state-sponsored terrorism. They rescued people from fear by denouncing the use of torture, and their heroic courage is remembered in this essay.

I witnessed only one action of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture. It was late October 1988, a few weeks after the Plebiscite vote against continuing military rule by Pinochet. I had been told that the demonstration would take place in the Plaza de Armas in downtown Santiago and that it would begin at 1:00 pm. Five minutes before the hour, the park appeared normal. An elegant park surrounded by colonial buildings, the Plaza de Armas is dominated by the Roman Catholic Cathedral. The sidewalks are typically busy with vendors, artists and street preachers. On this day, there were a few foreign film crews, the only indication that something unusual was about to happen.

Immediately at one o'clock, members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement gathered on the steps of the Cathedral. They seemed to form out of thin air. They held signs that featured the names of the *detenidos-desaparecidos*, the Chileans who had been disappeared by the Pinochet regime. Above the name and outline of a person, the placards carried these words, "Have you forgotten me? Yes or No." These two words were especially significant at that moment. Chile had just voted "No" in the 1988 plebiscite, marking the end of military rule.

The protesters sang "Te Nombro Libertad" and they read a litany. Then they marched to the fountain in the center of the park and threw red dye into its waters, turning them the color of blood. They placed their signs in the ground and called out their name, "Movimento Contra la Tortura—Sebastián Acevedo." As quickly as they had gathered, they dispersed. It was a flash mob protest, long before that term was known.

The police arrived a few minutes later, gathering the signs and driving their vehicles on the sidewalk of the plaza in an apparent attempt to intimidate. But the effort by the police to reassert their authority was in vain. The demonstrators had been greeted by spontaneous and sustained applause; the police were greeted by catcalls and whistles. The action of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement gave the spectators in the park the courage to express their support and to denounce the police actions.

REMEMBERING THE BIRTH OF THE SEBASTIÁN ACEVEDO MOVEMENT AGAINST TORTURE (SAMAT)

The first action of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement was held on September 14, 1983. It set the tone and style for all of the following actions. It is well-remembered by the activists who participated in it. One of those people was Juan Cortez, a torture survivor who became involved in the

Movement. He remembered that at that first action, a group of approximately seventy-five people gathered at 1470 Borgoño Street in Santiago, the site of a clandestine jail and torture center run by the secret police. The group had planned to occupy the street and sidewalk at that location to denounce the practice of torture. They unfurled a large banner that read, "The CNI Are Torturing a Man Here." Beyond that basic goal, the event was largely improvised.[14]

Elena Bergen, a member of the Base Christian Community which gave rise to the Sebastián Acevedo Movement, recalled that one member of the group raised his arm to point at the building that housed the clandestine jail and torture center. Then someone began to sing, *Por el pajaro enjaulado.*[15]

For the caged bird
For the fish caught in the net
For my friend who is a prisoner
Because she has said what she thinks,
For the uprooted flowers,
For the trampled grass,
For the cut trees,
For the tortured bodies
I name you freedom.[16]

Pointing their fingers in accusation and singing the song became hallmarks of the movement. Nearly every action featured these elements. But these practices were adopted almost by accident.

Bergen remembered the improvisational nature of the first action. "We had the banner and the song. Nothing more. It was crazy," she remembers with laughter.

> We didn't even know how to make a banner. We knew that we would take a banner and that the banner would say, "Here They Torture," a very simple banner. Later we began to become more elaborate. We knew that we wanted to do something like what we saw in the movie. We knew that there was a street there, so we would sit down in the street to stop traffic. But it turned out that it was raining, so we didn't want to sit on wet pavement. So in an unorganized way, we stood in the street and one of the *compañeros* pointed his finger at the building. As he pointed, so the rest of us pointed also, in total silence. Then a priest who was participating said, "Let's sing something," and suddenly someone began to sing, "*Por el pajaro enjaulado.*"[17]

The film mentioned above was *Gandhi*. Many founders of the movement saw the film together as it was showing in Chile at that time and it inspired them to act.

Juan Cortez added that the first action took too long. So a busload of *carabineros* arrived to break up the disturbance. "Our immediate reaction was to run away, but this reaction lasted only a fraction of a second. Then we sat down because the first criteria of the movement was 'one for all.' If one of us is taken prisoner, I am also going to be taken prisoner."[18]

This is a remarkable statement of courage for someone who had recently been held incommunicado and subjected to torture. But the weeks of planning and discussion that preceded their first action developed a deep sense of solidarity among the members of the movement. They knew that they could depend on each other and that mutual commitment created a strong and resilient movement. Forty-eight of the seventy-five protesters were arrested and released later that day. In the process, the members of the Movement learned that the *carabineros* preferred not to have to arrest them, presumably because the police did not want to acknowledge formally that individuals were arrested for protesting torture.

In that first action, members learned many valuable lessons, but the most important may have been this: the regime was not omnipotent. Disciplined, nonviolent action could shift the dynamics of power.

A TIME OF PROTEST AND REPRESSION

The Movement was born in an environment of protest and repression. In 1983, the first large-scale public opposition to the military dictatorship emerged after nearly ten years of complete silence. The "economic miracle" that had been proclaimed by the military dictatorship and its supporters, came to an end. The bubble burst, the economy collapsed, and the period known as "Las Protestas" began. The first demonstration was called for May 11, 1983. Organized by Chile's labor unions, but supported by the middle and upper classes,[19] the protest was multi faceted, featuring strikes, marches, and student demonstrations; banging pots and pans; and hunger strikes. The regime's response was also multifaceted. With tear gas and bullets, the *carabineros* and unidentified civilians killed two, wounded fifty, and detained 800. One month later, on June 14, the scene repeated itself during the second protest. This time, four were killed, 70 wounded, and 1,351 detained. With the third protest on July 12, demonstrations spread beyond Santiago to Valparaiso, Concepcion, Talcahuano, Temuco, Valdivia, Osorno, and Ancud. In response, the regime used the CNI (secret police) and regular army soldiers with tanks to repress and intimidate the opposition. Two more were killed and over a thousand detained.[20]

The fourth protest represented the greatest threat yet to the Pinochet regime. On August 11–12, demonstrators were out in force throughout the

county and Pinochet ordered 18,000 soldiers into the streets of Santiago "with instructions to be tough."[21] It was the largest show of military force since the coup d'état in 1973. Official statistics report that 29 were killed, 100 wounded, and 1,000 detained, but the opposition reported much higher numbers. The military raided slums, destroying and burning buildings. They used tear gas, bullets, and torture to intimidate their opponents.[22] A fifth and final protest lasted four days and coincided with the tenth anniversary of the coup, September 8–11. Protests covered the entire country and the repression was fierce: 15 were killed, 400 wounded, and 600 detained.[23]

The goal of the protests was to topple the military regime. But Pinochet remained in power through a combination of repression and reform. Some controls were eased. Opposition magazines began to publish again and book banning ended. But as these civil liberties were restored, human rights violations multiplied.

During the protests, repression became more widespread and more diverse in its forms. The practice of internal exile—forcible resettlement from one's home to another part of the country—became common. Neighborhood sweeps created an atmosphere of fear and intimidations in the *poblaciones* (working class neighborhoods and slums). During the terror raids, Chile's armed forces acted like an occupation army as citizens were forced from their homes in the middle of the night. Typically, the men were forced to stand nude, lined up on a soccer field, under the spotlights of the military, while their wives and children witnessed their humiliation from a distance.[24] Mass arrests often accompanied the raids. Indeed, arrests increased dramatically from 1,213 in 1982 to 4,537 in 1983. By 1986, the number of arrested reached 7,091.[25] Although most of these detainees were released within a few hours after their arrest, many were tortured. According to the Christian Democratic magazine *Hoy*, torture increased 300% from 1983 to 1984. The neighborhood raids, mass arrests, and torture had only one purpose: state-sponsored terror.

Jesuit priest and Sebastián Acevedo Movement spokesperson, José Aldunate, reflected on these significant changes in the repressive tactics of the military regime, "For the first time, the *carabineros* were practicing torture. They had always beaten or threatened detainees, but now they were using more sophisticated techniques of torture: electric shocks, etc."[26] The founders of the Movement were deeply troubled by these developments. Many of them worked as social workers, teachers or pastoral agents in the *poblaciones*, of Santiago, so they saw personally the impact of the growing use of torture. They believed that the situation demanded a powerful ethical response. The terror of state violence sparked the rescuer impulse and inspired the hope embodied in the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture. Aldunate said, "Many times, we priests are very good at talking, but we are not very effective in action. So we took to the streets."[27] A few weeks after their first

action, an act of rescue and sacrifice would give the newly-formed movement a name and an identity that would be remembered to this day.

A FATHER'S SACRIFICE TO RESCUE HIS CHILDREN

At dawn on November 9, 1983, the police and the CNI staged a terror raid in a *poblacion* in the southern coal mining town of Coronel. Fifteen men descended on a small house. After they searched and ransacked the home, they planted a bomb made from plastic explosives in the backyard. They accused a 25-year-old woman, Maria Candelaria, of being a terrorist and they arrested her. Her father had been waiting for the bus to take him to work when he saw the police surround his house. He tried to intervene on behalf of his daughter, but he failed to prevent her detention. Later on that same day, the police arrested the man's son, Galo Fernando, from his place of work. Immediately, the parents of these two young adults began their frantic search to secure the release of their children.[28]

For the next three days and nights, the parents did not eat or sleep. They searched for their children and tried to enlist others to aid their cause. They visited jails and police stations, hospitals and morgues, legal offices and newspapers, social service agencies and the church. At each step they were frustrated.[29] Fearing that their children were being tortured and that they might be "disappeared," they demanded the right to visit Maria and Galo. They demanded that the government formally charge them with a crime and take responsibility for their arrest and well-being. But the government was silent. In my interview with her, Maria told me that the government could not respond because she and her brother were being held in a secret jail by the CNI and they were being interrogated under torture.[30]

Finally, the children's father could wait no longer.

He said goodbye to his wife and went to the nearby city of Concepcion. After a final—and failed—attempt to gain support from the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, he stood on the steps of the Cathedral and drew a chalk line around himself. He announced that no one was permitted to cross the line unless they had information about his missing children. Then he poured a mixture of gasoline and kerosene over his body and he held a lighter over his head. Again, he demanded, "*Que la CNI devuelva mis hijos*." (Let the CNI return my children). When a young police officer tried to intervene to end the public disturbance, the man ignited the lighter and his body burst into flames.[31]

He was taken to the hospital with severe burns over ninety percent of his body. His son and daughter were released that afternoon. His daughter spoke to him through an intercom at the hospital. He asked her to forgive him. At

midnight, Sebastián Acevedo died. He died in the act of rescuing his children from torture and possible disappearance or death. The newly-formed Movement Against Torture took his name as a tribute to his sacrifice. In their actions, they embodied the spirit of resistance to which he gave the full measure of his being.

Sebastián Acevedo's entire life had been marked by the repressive acts of state-sponsored political violence. His father was tortured in 1947 for being a member of the Communist Party during a time of Cold War hysteria in Chile. The police tortured his father in his presence, even though he was only a young boy.[32] Then in 1973, in the days immediately after the coup d'état, Sebastián's father and Sebastian himself were detained and tortured by the military.[33]

Throughout his life, Sebastián Acevedo suffered because of his political convictions. His father was one of the first members of the Communist Party in Chile. He was also a dedicated member of the party, as were his children. They were targeted by the military regime because of their ideology. But Sebastián Acevedo was also a devout Christian. His widow and children told me that he saw no contradiction between his faith and his political affiliation. In fact, both commitments may have contributed to his ability to engage in a dramatic act of self-sacrificing rescue for his children.

In the moments before he immolated himself, he shouted, "*Que el mundo se impacte. Crean en Dios y en la palabra de los hombres.*" (May the world take notice. Believe in God and in the word of men.)[34] The world did take notice. Chilean historian Gabriel Salazar wrote, "in one hundred fifty years of political and judicial history. . . . No one had burned himself to demand something as basic" as habeas corpus.[35] The conscience of the nation was shocked and the people of Chile felt a need to respond.

Sebastián Acevedo's funeral became a public event—more than 2,000 people accompanied the hearse that carried his body from Concepcion to the parish church in Coronel where it lay in state. The crowd chanted a popular anti-Pinochet slogan, "*Se va a acabar, se va a acabar, esa costumbre de matar*."[36] (It's going to end, it's going to end, this custom of killing.) But the regime continued to harass the Acevedo family and their community. During the wake on the night before his funeral, the police fired at least eight tear gas canisters into the small parish church that held Acevedo's body. Several people were overcome by the poisonous gas and some passed out.[37]

The following day, the Bishop of Concepcion offered a eulogy in the parish church of Villa Moro, the neighborhood where the Acevedo family lived. Twenty thousand people filled the narrow streets as Bishop Goic invoked the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. and praised Acevedo's "heroic act of love."[38] In response to Acevedo's death, many Roman Catholic leaders, including Bishop Goic, called for the dissolution of the CNI, the secret police.[39] The

response of the military regime was not surprising. Minister of the Interior, Sergio Jarpa, told the people of Chile, "You will have the CNI or you will have terrorism."[40] Pinochet himself also commented, "People who call for the dissolution of the CNI are Marxists. People who act like the person in Concepcion usually have mental problems."[41]

Sebastián Acevedo became a symbol of courageous sacrifice and resistance to a regime that violates the human rights of its people. The site of his immolation became a shrine with flowers and messages surrounding the wooden cross that marked the spot where he drew the chalk circle. One of the notes placed on the cross read, "This man is not a man, he is a people, he is a bundle of dreams."[42] Pinochet's comment suggesting that Acevedo had mental health problems is a sign of the perverse logic of a regime that uses arbitrary arrest and torture as routine policy. In fact, a regime that abuses its own people violates the norms of international law and decency. It is aberrational and, in some ways, the only rational response is to protest. In an example of the moral ju-jitsu[43] that nonviolence creates, Acevedo's act inspired courage and the capacity to resist among oppressed people, while the regime—which had seemed omnipotent—reacted with fear.

In terms of Christian theology, Acevedo might be viewed as a martyr (one who sacrificed himself for another) or a witness (to a cause or concern greater than himself). During the time of Latin America's terror regimes, people played many different roles—perpetrator, victim and bystander. Within that context, Acevedo engaged in an individual act of rescue, following a pattern that has been documented and analyzed by Jessica Casiro in her study on rescuers in Argentina.[44] But he inspired a movement that adopted his name, a movement that sought to rescue individuals and to transform institutions.

THE RESCUERS EXPAND THEIR FOCUS

Following the initial action, the next several demonstrations revealed the strategic concerns and preoccupations of the movement. A month after their first demonstration, the Sebastián Acevedo movement returned to 1470 Borgoño. Then on November 3, 1983, they wrote a letter to the President of the Chilean Supreme Court, Rafael Retamal Lopéz:

> We believe that history will judge Chilean Justice very seriously for its failure to do its duty: to do justice. During ten years it has abdicated its responsibilities to the Executive Branch. That abdication has resulted in illegal arrests, detentions, torture, disappearances . . . and even murder.[45]

The letter was signed by José Aldunate, Lucia Busta, Elena Bergen, Manuel de Ferrari, founding members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement.

After delivering the letter, they stood on the steps of the Supreme Court building with a banner that read, "In Chile, they torture and the courts are silent." Throughout the movement's history, they regularly wrote to judges and government officials, including the Secretary of the Interior. They rarely received a response.

Later that same month, the movement brought a similar message of institutional responsibility to Chile's leading media outlet. On November 21, they stood in front of the offices of *El Mercurio*, Chile's conservative newspaper. Their banner read, "In Chile They Torture and *El Mercurio* is Silent." In the litany that accompanied this action, they were explicit in their denounciation:

For the death of Victor Jara
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the torture and murder of Marta Ugarte
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the disappearance of Carlos Lorca and many others
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the massacre of peasants at Lonquen
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the new torture techniques used against labor leaders
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the clandestine jail on Habana Street in Valparaiso
El Mercurio is an accomplice
For the moral torture of the exile
El Mercurio is an accomplice

The litany is powerful not only for its moral outrage but also for its specificity. They named individual people and specific locations of suffering and human rights abuse. The protest went on to question whether *El Mercurio* had the moral legitimacy to editorialize about democracy, freedom or Western civilization if it remained silent in the face of torture.[46]

On December 1, the Movement turned its attention to the Catholic Church. In a letter to Monsignor José Manuel Santos, President of the Chilean Episcopal Conference, they cited documents from Vatican II and the Latin American Bishops meeting at Puebla, and the statements of John Paul II and asked that the Chilean Bishops condemn torture explicitly. While citing their own loyalty to the church, they criticized the church because its "indecision and weakness have made it an accomplice to torture, when it should have denounced and condemned it."[47]

They asked the Bishops to take the bold step of excommunicating anyone who practices torture. The Bishops responded with a statement on December 10, the International Day of Human Rights which marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United

Nations. Titled "A Christian Way," the statement assigned "the punishment of excommunication to all torturers, their accomplices, and those who should prevent torture but do not."[48] The statement has been heralded around the world as a significant moment in the church's defense of human rights. The movement would return its focus to the church, distributing Christmas cards to parishioners which hoped for "A Christmas without Herods and a New Year without Torturers."[49] During one of these actions, several priests and nuns were arrested. U.S. Missionary Dennis O'Mara was expelled from the country, an event that received international press coverage.[50]

Elena Bergen remembers the initial impulse of the movement founders was to rescue torture victims. "We wanted to know from human rights organizations and family members where they were torturing. We would go there and denounce. That's all we knew. From that impulse, we had the first action and then the second and we kept refining it." Bergen was part of the Base Christian Community, where the idea for these actions was first discussed. She reported that it started with only six people. They invited other members of the community and representatives of organizations and they began to hold organizing meetings. A larger group of people gathered,

> And we presented the problem that we wanted to form a group that we said would be like the fire department, which would respond in times of emergency. We imagined a group—not very large—but like the fire department. As soon as we got information that a person was being tortured in such a place, we would go there. Well, things evolved another way.[51]

While the movement focused primarily on institutional responsibility and change, its members remained aware of the individuals who were detained and tortured. They were aware that on some occasions, prisoners heard their voices or even saw their faces during the protest. In May 1984, they published a flyer titled, "Messages from Jail," that included brief comments from prisoners, among them, Dennis O'Mara who was jailed before his expulsion from Chile: "Much thanks for the support: the song and your faces showed your solidarity outside the gym of the First *Comisaria* (local jail). All of us are in good spirits and we send our greeting with this letter. A warm embrace to all of you."

Another message from Carlos Muñoz highlighted the sense of solidarity between prisoners and protesters:

> Thanks to everyone from the Vicaria of Solidarity for their support of us. I also want to encourage all of the members of the Movement to continue struggling against the systematic practice of torture. Receive a warm embrace from a committed Christian, even though what I am enduring is not significant.

Although the members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement did not literally rescue the prisoners in Pinochet's torture chambers, their actions did have a beneficial impact on the regime's victims.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES

As the Sebastián Acevedo Movement developed, its members reflected on their experience and participation. They recognized the need to establish principles and practices for the movement. The members needed to protect themselves and each other from infiltration or espionage by the regime. New members could join the movement by invitation only. Prospective members were proposed and discussed by the entire group to ensure they had broad support. Further, the group was organized in cells. One member would communicate with a small group, but no one possessed a membership roster. Further, they communicated with each other through a series of code words as they prepared for an action because telephone lines were usually bugged. As a result of these precautions, the Movement was never infiltrated. It may be the only Chilean opposition group that can make that claim.[52]

The written principles were simple but clear. They described goals and strategy. They established a "big tent" approach, making the space for people with diverse perspectives and beliefs to join together. They established clear expectations for participation, contributing to the sense of group solidarity that was essential to the movement's success:

Principles of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture[53]

1. Torture is death: we commit to our action in defense of life.
2. The Sebastián Acevedo Movement is pluralist. We are Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers, from a church and from no church, practicing and non-practicing, socialist realists and utopian socialists, more radical and less radical; we are positivists, functionalists, or Marxists; some are involved in political parties and others not; each one of us has his or her own religious, political, ideological, and philosophical commitments.
3. We do not represent any organization or person but participate independently, each according to our own personal decision. In sum and total, the Sebastián Acevedo movement is autonomous.
4. We demonstrate at the jails of the CNI (secret police) or a local jail where torture takes place, denouncing those who are responsible—the torturers and their laws. There are no lectures, there is action. The struggle of the Movement is testimonial.

5. Torture is institutionalized by a regime of death. It is a support of the dictatorship and its crimes. It involves organisms of the state and the government. The struggle against torture is a struggle against institutions. The struggle of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement has a political content; it is not naïve.
6. We make decisions about the actions together and we participate freely. There is a commitment but not obligation. There is a mystique but not a sanction. Within the movement, we respect the personal decisions of every member and the final decision to participate and to accept certain attitudes and actions is personal.
7. What is the key? The place and hour are clear: The Movement is organized for action. The organizational structure is minimal. We are a movement, not an institution.[54]

These principles created a platform that allowed the members of the Movement to engage in collective action, to take risks, and to confront their fears by learning to trust each other. As elsewhere in Latin America where groups practiced rescue efforts, the solidarity that they developed was essential to their campaign—both as the foundation and the result of their actions.

Elena Bergen reflected on the demonstration at the offices of the newspaper, *El Mercurio*. Her comments highlight the high degree of solidarity and commitment that members of the movement felt toward each other, even though the movement was still in its infancy:

> There were many people watching, so we continued and the *carabineros* arrived. That produced a phenomenon that I don't understand. They arrested one of the *compañeras* and put her in the police van. It occurred to someone to surround the van, so all 100 people surrounded it and the *pacos*[55] couldn't move. They knocked some people down to the ground and it occurred to someone to link arms. So we linked arms, knelt down, and began to pray. It was crazy: 100 people, praying the "Our Father" or any other prayers that we had in our head. At this point, the *guanaco*[56] arrived and started dumping water down on us. We continued to pray and remained like a giant ball. It dumped water on us and we continued singing and praying and did not stop. And the *guanaco* ran out of water. So we continued and thought, "What is going to happen to us?"
>
> A second *guanaco* arrived and again water, water, water poured on us. Finally, we went to speak to the captain or someone who was commanding, soaked from head to toe because we had been receiving water for about five minutes. Pepe (José Aldunate) and I and others went up and said, "Let's make a truce. We will withdraw if they don't take anyone prisoner." But he said no. Someone advised the Vicaría[57] what was happening and a lawyer from the Vicaría arrived and began to negotiate with the official. He said that we were all Christians and they should allow us to leave. He would take personal responsibility that we did not

> do anything. The official said, "Here's what's going to happen. We will go to a church." There was a church nearby. "And we will do it without disorder." So we formed a column about four or five across. It was the most comical thing because there we were—about 100 people—walking through the streets, singing, praying on the way to the church.[58]

In this early action, the members of the Movement learned that the regime was not omnipotent. While the police engaged in brutal repression, the protesters did not give up or strike back. They forced the police to accept a negotiated solution.

Not surprisingly, fear is a theme that many members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement recollect in their comments about participating. José Aldunate remarked, "There is fear until the action begins, then you lose your fear totally. To sing is to affirm, 'Here we are. We are against torture.'" The collective action of the Movement helped people to overcome their fears. Everyone that I interviewed highlighted this aspect of the movement's activity. Three comments illustrate this dynamic:

Lilian Molina was a social worker who served a community center based in a Catholic parish in a working class neighborhood in Santiago. She had been the member of a religious order, but left the order during the years that she was involved in the Movement:

> It helped with my personal liberation. I had tremendous fear of the *pacos*. But I realized that they could hit me, but later it would go away and they were not monsters. They are what they are, repressive instruments of the regime. And if they detained me, there was a normal process that I went through. Whenever you confront a problem, it becomes less of a problem. It diminishes in size. Under the dictatorship you felt that your life was in a game. You knew that they killed people, they tortured people, they detained people, but you didn't know what to do. This impotence kills you. The strength of the group helps you to think less about solidarity with others; we acted in response to our own needs. It helps you protect your mental health. Solidarity with people in the movement helps you overcome the feeling of impotence. I was always afraid up until the moment when the action began. When I was with the group I felt that whatever happens, happens. Then my concern was that we would not be able to complete the program we had planned.

Bergen makes a clear connection between the personal and the social. Participating in the movement contributed to her personal development. In fact, she suggests that she lost her personal sense of fear and insecurity because of the protection of the group.

Another member whose participation contributed to her personal development was Irene Rojas. She got married as a teenager and was dedicated to

her family, rarely engaging in any public activity. Her participation in the Movement helped to transform her personal life by engaging in public issues. She is one of the few members of the movement to express an absolute commitment to nonviolence.[59]

> I began participating during the second action. I was too scared to go to the first one because it was at 1470 Borgoño and that scared me. So I went to the second one for a very pressing reason—a member of our Base Community was detained by the CNI. He was detained for several days and tortured. With the intercession of Cristian Brecht, they let him go. This is what took the fear away from me and I decided to participate in the second action. [My reasons for participating were] First, it was shame that I felt so afraid that I stayed in my home. I didn't risk myself at that time. So I was ashamed that I had not done something earlier and perhaps prevented some of these things. My life was very confused during all this time, confused because it was difficult to decide to participate in things that were absolutely dangerous in this country. Things in which women were absolutely prohibited to leave the house, much less to participate in current events. I went through a personal process where I began to grow as a person. A very difficult time for me, as a person. I was married at 16 years, the first time. So it wasn't until 16 years later that I began to think of myself—not what the church said, not what my husband said. I went through a personal transformation and realized that the history of Chile demanded that people make personal decisions and that if you take on that decision, it remains strong with you. So when I joined Sebastián Acevedo and found people who were so committed, so committed including that they were willing to risk their personal security, it seemed that I was giving very little. As a person who believed in God, believed in life, I felt that I needed to respond to the call. I was given life, health, good intelligence. I realized that I needed to respond to this deep pain.
>
> I remember the first action that I participated in because I didn't know what it meant to face the repressive forces. I knew that when they arrived, I would take off running. But I saw that everyone else remained and my friend took my hand and said, "You're not alone. Be at peace. You are not alone." This experience marked me for the rest of my participation in the Movement. I started to think that we are here to denounce something so horrible as the fact that they torture people and if someone who has been tortured could take you by the hand and say, "You're not alone." That has to give you a lot of strength.

The sense of strength that comes from the collective is part of Rojas' testimony. She also makes clear that her participation in the movement's public actions expanded her sense of herself and the world in which she lived.

Claudio Escobar comes from a family of political party activists. His father was involved with the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. But Claudio's convictions and actions grew out of his Christian faith more than his political ideology.[60]

> The movement helped me to develop as a man. I realized that I am not a superman—I'm human and I'm fearful. So these actions which place you at some personal risk, although it is small, helped me to overcome my limitations. My fear was very concrete. Sometimes I could not sleep. At other times, I got diarrhea. But the fear, and others have experienced the same thing is conquered through others. When the action began, the fear hit me. And when the *pacos* came, we took each other's arms or sang a little louder and it passed from me. Or it continued to be there but it diminished a little in the presence of others. It was odd because many people would say to me, "When I see you, Chubby, the fear leaves me." Please, I'm the most frightened of them all. Others would tell me that I gave them strength.

Just as the fear created by the regime was contagious, the intense courage that developed from denouncing and defying the regime's abuses also affected other people.

CONCLUSION

For eight years, the Sebastián Acevedo Movement maintained its campaign of nonviolent direct action and protest against the practice of torture in Chile. They demonstrated a remarkably high degree of commitment and solidarity with each other and with the individuals who were detained and tortured. Although they forced Chileans to confront the reality of torture and state violence, they recognized that they did not end the practice of torture in Chile; in fact, it likely increased every year that they protested. Reflecting on the movement's effectiveness, José Aldunate took a longer view:

> The movement had a significant impact. In the first place, there was the Plebiscite.[61] When the population said "No" to Pinochet, the movement was part of that No because we helped to shape opinion that the government could not continue, that this was a torturing government. It also helped people to overcome their fears. It strengthened the protests. When they imposed a new state of siege, after the attempted assassination of Pinochet, we were the first to protest, in the Plaza where the autos were on display with the bullet holes and all. It was really an imprudent action, but sometimes you are more imprudent in a group than you would be as an individual. Another long-term result is that there will never be another military dictatorship in Chile. The movement has had an impact on the historical memory and conscience in Chile. Sebastián Acevedo will be remembered as a new form of struggle.[62]

In addition to the impact of the movement on Chilean society, history and politics, the movement had a significant impact on its participants. It helped them to overcome fear that the regime sought to instill in the population.

It also helped them to overcome the sense of isolation that results from fear. The organizational structure and principles of the movement, although simple, created a sense of security that enabled the participants to take risks. The actions taught them to trust each other. If torture is designed to break down and destroy an individual's connection to a larger world, the nonviolent action of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement rebuilt and expanded connections between its members and the larger world. It accomplished this through action—action to rescue the one who is being tortured. I close with José Aldunate's remarks:

> One of the greatest satisfactions is to act. It is very frustrating to talk and theorize without accomplishing anything. So to do things is very liberating because you feel that you have risked something. Many nuns who dedicated themselves to the contemplative life have described the importance of participating in the movement for their interior life—to be able to act, to make love effective in action is very liberating, especially an action that costs, that demands sacrifice and overcoming oneself. It is a spirituality of action—an action of love, a commitment to the tortured one, the most needy. I cannot imagine anyone whose needs are more urgent than someone who has been tortured.
>
> We experience solidarity—an increased interest and concern for the tortured. The Little Prince says that love comes from action, but it is also true that actions come from love. When you take care of a plant with great attention, you end up loving the plant. The same is true with the tortured. You end up loving the tortured. That is the spirituality of the action. The action is a form of contemplation, interest, self-giving solidarity, and union.[63]

In their action to rescue the victims of torture—and to touch the conscience of Chilean society that had accepted the institutionalized practice of torture—the members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture risked their own safety in solidarity with the victims of torture. As an unexpected consequence, they rescued themselves from fear.

NOTES

1. Dedicated to Maria Saez, (d. January 10, 2015) the widow of Sebastián Acevedo.

2. Ron Dudai, "'Rescuers for Humanity': Rescuers, Mass Atrocities, and Transitional Justice," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2012): 1–38.

3. Roberta Bacic, "Stitching Together Nonviolence and the Movement Against Torture 'Sebastián Acevedo,'" MCTSA, 2013, http://menschenrechte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Bacic_Stitching-together-nonviolence-and-MCTSA.pdf. Accessed on March 30, 2014.

4. Ibid.

5. Comisión Nacional Sobre Prisión Politica y Tortura, "Valech Commission," (Santiago, Chile: 2003,) at http://www.usip.org/publications/commission-of-inquiry-chile-03.

6. Informe de la Comision Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliacion, Febrero 1991, Volumen 1 y 2.

7. National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (Comisión Nacional Sobre Prisón Politica y Tortura, "Valech Commission"), Chile 2003, http://www.usip.org/publications/commission-of-inquiry-chile-03.

8. The literature ranges from the stories of individual rescuers like Mordecai Paldiel, *Saving the Jews: Amazing Stories of Men and Women Who Defied the "Final Solution"* (Rockville, MD: Schreiber Publishing, 2000 to cultural analysis, Pearl Oliner, *Saving the Forsaken: Religious culture and the Rescuer of the Jews in Nazi Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) to specific national case studies or collections of essays examining different aspects of the rescuer experience.

9. Patricia Weiss Fagen, "Repression and State Security" in *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America,* ed. Juan Corradi et al. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 62.

10. José Aldunate, "Los Pies de Barro," *Mensaje*, no. 338 (Santiago, Chile, 1985), 137.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Archive of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture.

14. Juan Cortez, interview by Rainer Huhle, Lima Peru, March 21, 1988, transcript.

15. Elena Bergen, interview by author, tape recording, Santiago, Chile, July 4, 1991.

16. "Yo te nombro, libertad." The song was composed by Gian Franco Pagliaro an Italian composer. It became well known in Chile as a protest song.

17. Elena Bergen, interview by author, tape recording, Santiago, Chile, July 4, 1991.

18. Juan Cortez, interview by Rainer Huhle, transcript, Lima, Peru, March 21, 1988.

19. Genaro Arriagada, *Pinochet: The Politics of Power*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 56.

20. Gonzalo de la Maza and Mario Garces, La Explosion de las Mayorias: Protesta Nacional 1983–1984 (Santiago, Chile: ECO, 1985), 29–35.

21. Arriagada, 57.

22. Gonzalo de la Maza and Mario Garces, 38.

23. Ibid, 41–42.

24. Ariel Dorfman, *Exorcising Terror: The Incredible Unending Trial of General Augusto Pinochet*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 9.

25. Arriagada, 63.

26. José Aldunate. Interview by author. Santiago, Chile, June 24, 1991.

27. José Aldunate, interview in *Por La Vida*, documentary, Santiago, Chile, 1986.

28. Mario Aravena, La inmolación de un padre," *Hoy,* 18–25 November 1983, 10.

29. Hernan Vidal, *El Movimiento Contra La Tortura "Sebastián Acevedo" Derechos Humanos y la Produccion de Simbolos Nacionales bajo el Fascismo Chileno* (Minneapolis MN: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, 1986), 160–167.
30. Maria Candelaria. Interview by author. Coronel. July 15, 1991.
31. Aravena, "La inmolación de un padre," 11.
32. Maria Candelaria. Interview by author. Coronel Chile, July 15, 1991.
33. Marcela Otero, "El impact de la inmolación," *Hoy,* 23–29, Noviembre 1983, 14.
34. Aravena, "La inmolación," 11.
35. Gabriel Salazar, *Violencia politica popular en las grandes alamedas, Santiago de Chile, 1947–1987* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Sur, 1990), 363.
36. "Un ambiente de gran recogimiento aguardaba funeral de sacrificado," *Cronica* Concepción, Chile, 1983, 2.
37. Ibid.
38. "Solo el Silencio. . .," *Cronica* November 15, (1983): 4.
39. "Obispos y vicarious exigent la disolucion de la CNI," *Sur*, Concepción, Chile, November 15, (1983): 2.
40. "La Tortura y el Terrorismo: dos grandes inquietudes nacionales," *Sur*, November 25, (1983): 6–7.
41. Mario Aravena, "Conmoción General," Hoy, November 18–22, (1983): 12.
42. Marcela Otero, "El Impacto," 14.
43. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Three: The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), 657ff.
44. Jessica Casiro, *Argentine rescuers: A Study on the "Banality of Good," Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4*, (*2006): 437–54.
45. Archive of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture.
46. Hernan Vidal, 333–335.
47. Archive of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture.
48. Conferencia Episcopal de Chile, "Un Camino Cristiano" in Eugenio Hojman, Memoria de la Dictadura, (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Antártica, 1990), 194.
49. Archive of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture.
50. Anthony Boadle, United Press International, DIALOG OneSearch, December 28, 1984.
51. Elena Bergen. Interview by author. Santiago, July 4, 1991.
52. Discussion with Roberta Bacic, July 1991.
53. Archive of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture.
54. Ibid.
55. Slang term for the Chilean police.
56. Slang term for an anti-riot water cannon truck.
57. The Vicariate of Solidarity, the human rights arm of the Archdiocese of Santiago.
58. Elena Bergen. Interview by author. Santiago, July 4, 1991.
59. Irene Rojas. Interview by author. Santiago, July 8 1991.
60. Claudio Escobar. Interview by author. Santiago, July 3, 1991.

61. The 1988 national Yes-No election that the military regime lost, initiating a democratization process.

62. José Aldunate. Interview by author. Santiago, June 24, 1991.

63. Ibid.

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Chapter 2

Bending the Rules

An Ambassador's Quest to Save Lives

Pascale Bonnefoy

This chapter centers on the pivotal role played by members of the diplomatic corps in the aftermath of the 1973 coup in Chile that ushered in 17 years of military dictatorship, focusing on the Swedish Ambassador to Chile at the time, Harald Edelstam. Drawing from interviews with former refugees, diplomatic personnel and other witnesses, and government records, this chapter documents Edelstam's efforts to provide refuge to the politically persecuted and highlights the way in which Edelstam and the Swedish embassy secured the safety and exit of victims from a country under severe military repression.

Three months into General Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile, the Ambassador of Sweden in Santiago, Harald Edelstam, had fully exasperated the military junta. In late November 1973, the pro-government newspaper *La Segunda* headlined: "Another incident by the Red Pimpernel. How Long Must We Tolerate Ambassador Edelstam?"[1] Three days later, the paper's front page proclaimed: "Out of Dignity, the Swede Must Go."[2]

The junta that had overthrown Socialist President Salvador Allende declared Edelstam *persona non grata* on December 4, 1973. Ambassador Edelstam had to go. By then, he had bent the rules and official protocol to provide refuge to hundreds of people, pushed other members of the diplomatic corps to open their embassies to asylum-seekers, and negotiated the release of political prisoners with Chilean military officials. As massive, indiscriminate human rights violations were being committed, Edelstam worked closely with other diplomats and humanitarian organizations, while demanding that the new military rulers respect his diplomatic privileges and immunities, which he put to the use of protecting the persecuted.

During the 17-year Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990), the government of Sweden admitted nearly 30,000 Chilean refugees into its territory. Today, the Chilean community in Sweden has swelled to approximately 45,000, and they

continue to pay tribute to Edelstam, who first opened the embassy doors the day of the coup on September 11, 1973.

When Edelstam arrived in Stockholm after his expulsion from Chile, he was greeted as a hero by Chilean and Latin American refugees, but with a cold shoulder from the Swedish Foreign Ministry. His persistent failure to consult or seek authorization for his sometimes unconventional methods had upset his more conservative superiors in government. However, he knew he was fully backed by Prime Minister Ol of Palme. These diplomatic travails were nothing new to the ambassador.

THE MAKING OF A "BLACK PIMPERNEL"

Edelstam was a law graduate, a career diplomat and a descendent of Swedish nobles. His first diplomatic posts in the 1930s and 1940s were hot spots where he did not hesitate to take the side of the victims: first in fascist Italy (1939–1940), then Nazi Germany (1941–1942) and later in occupied Norway (1942–1944). In Oslo, far from being a passive, neutral observer, he contributed to the resistance movement. Edelstam offered refuge to Jews and resistance fighters in his own residence, smuggled them out of the country, set up a clandestine printing press for resistance newspapers and wrote newsletters "that became an important counterweight to the German-controlled Nazi propaganda in Norway."[3]

It was in Norway that Edelstam earned the nickname the "Black Pimpernel," the anger of local authorities and the unease of his superiors. "When Harald returned from Norway, his relationship with the Foreign Ministry had deteriorated and he was assigned a task that seemed more like a punishment for not having followed diplomatic norms: he was placed in a basement and had to carry out menial administrative chores," explains Henrik Janbell, a former Swedish volunteer in Chile imprisoned during the Pinochet dictatorship and now Vice President of the Harald Edelstam Foundation in Stockholm.[4]

Decades later, in Chile, the military regime and its propagandists accused Edelstam of being a radical and pejoratively called him the "Red Pimpernel," alluding to his humanitarian past. In Chile, "Edelstam seemed to relive his years in Oslo, when he tricked the Nazi occupiers. He would joke with us and say that the Germans were much more difficult [than the Chileans]," remarked Pepe Viñoles, a Uruguayan refugee under Swedish protection in Santiago in 1973.[5]

Edelstam climbed the diplomatic ranks in missions in Holland (1949–1952), Poland (1952–1953, 1956–1958), Austria (1959–1962), Turkey (1962–1966), Indonesia (1966–1969)—where he was deeply disturbed by the overthrow of President Sukarno in 1967 and the anticommunist persecution that followed,

Photo 2.1 Ambassador Harald Edelstam in Guatemala, 1971. *Credit*: Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

and Guatemala, concurrent to El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica (1969–1972). In Guatemala, Edelstam again faced problems with government officials for denouncing human rights abuses against indigenous communities and befriending guerrilla leaders.[6]

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB

Edelstam was appointed Ambassador to Chile in 1972, two years after President Allende took office as the first avowed Marxist in Latin America to be democratically elected on a platform of revolutionary change. It was no secret that the Swedish Social Democratic government was sympathetic to Allende, as was Edelstam himself: "Sweden welcomed with satisfaction and joy the results of the Chilean presidential election in 1970," wrote Edelstam in a 1983 book published in México. "The goals of Allende and the Popular Unity [government coalition] fully coincide with those the Swedish nation has set for itself. They wanted to attain, in a short period of time, what Sweden had achieved in 150 years of peace."[7]

Almost immediately after Allende's victory, the Swedish Parliament granted Chile a generous loan.[8] It had already approved funds through the

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) before the presidential election and sent aid to Chile after the 1971 earthquake. In 1972, Chile was included as a program within Sweden's cooperation system and over 20 volunteers from the organization *Utbildning för Biståndsverksamhet* (Education for Cooperation and Development, UBV) arrived in Chile to contribute their professional skills and learn about Allende's peaceful revolution. In late August 1973, less than a month before the military coup d'état, both Sweden and Chile signed a Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agreement.[9] The two countries also struck military deals, contributing to Edelstam's good rapport with Chile's military brass, which would soon prove to be helpful.

Edelstam landed in Santiago in October 1972. "Mr. Edelstam's appointment in Chile could be a very significant, positive step in our mutual relations. . . . We may also assume that Ambassador Edelstam must already be sympathetic to Chile and the social process underway in our country," observed Chilean diplomats in Stockholm.[10]

Edelstam arrived at the height of a deepening political and economic crisis and shortly before a major transportation and business strike rattled the country. Against the backdrop of a United States blockade that was already strangulating the Chilean economy,[11] the month-long strike by truckers, the powerful industrial and business association CPC, professional guilds and port workers, among others, paralyzed the country and set the stage for a military coup almost a year later. Chile was increasingly polarized, political opponents had turned into vicious enemies and the civilian and military conspiracy to overthrow the government, backed by the Nixon Administration,[12] was only a matter of time.

FAIT ACCOMPLI: EDELSTAM AND THE CUBANS

"The Allende government had become relevant to Swedish politics and the coup put the entire Foreign Ministry on alert," recalls Peter Landelius, then Secretary to Swedish Foreign Minister Krister Wickman. "The Ministry's Department for Foreign Aid was particularly outraged, while the Political Department saw new clouds on the horizon."[13]

The day of the coup, President Allende was dead, the presidential palace in ruins and Congress closed indefinitely. A military junta took power, inaugurating 17 years of dictatorship and widespread human rights violations. All civil and political rights were suspended, the press censured and a curfew imposed. Military bulletins began announcing the names of the "most wanted" former government officials and political, social and labor leaders, and hundreds of Allende supporters went into hiding. In the days and weeks that followed, thousands would be arrested; almost no one was spared from

some sort of mistreatment, torture or abuse. Soon, tortured bodies began to appear on the streets, rivers and canals. Bullet-riddled corpses piled up in the morgue.[14] "I was shocked by the military's treason and the brutality and cruelty it unleashed on a defenseless people," wrote Edelstam a decade later.[15]

The Ambassador began irritating the new military rulers almost immediately. The day of the coup, the Cuban embassy in Santiago was under military siege, and the Cubans put up armed resistance. The next day, the junta announced that it was breaking diplomatic ties with Cuba. The military agreed to end the attack on the diplomatic compound and allow the over 120 Cuban embassy staff, family members and others in the mission that day to leave the country.

That evening, as the Cubans prepared to leave, a tense meeting was taking place inside their embassy. Cuban Ambassador Mario García, a handful of other ambassadors, among them Edelstam, and Chilean military officers were discussing the status of the Cuban diplomatic mission. Who would be left in charge of protecting Cuban nationals and interests after they left? Sweden would, Edelstam suddenly announced.

"Edelstam said he would defend with his own life the inviolability of the embassy, as well as Max Marambio[16] and anyone else seeking asylum. . . . If we had left the embassy without that protection and presence, anyone who could have tried to take refuge there would have been arrested and eventually murdered. Ambassador Edelstam was an example of generosity and courage," said Luis Fernández Oña, a Cuban political officer present at the embassy that day, and husband to one of Allende's daughters.[17]

The Cubans left that night; the caravan of vehicles to the airport was escorted by several ambassadors, including Edelstam. The next day, the Swedish flag was raised on the Cuban embassy grounds and at dozens of offices and residences that had been used by the Cuban diplomatic mission.

Edelstam's spontaneous decision to assume responsibility for Cuban interests in Chile ultimately saved hundreds of lives: not only did Sweden protect Cuban nationals in Chile and secure their exit from the country, but the Cuban embassy would also serve as Sweden's main safe haven for refugees, since the building was much larger than the Swedish installations. The Swedes also took charge of a considerable fleet of vehicles that the Cubans left behind, along with their drivers; they would soon be put to use for transporting asylum-seekers.

The day after the coup, Edelstam informed his Foreign Ministry that he already had seven or eight refugees in the Swedish embassy. The following day, he presented his superiors with a *fait accompli* that was practically impossible to revert: Sweden was in charge of the Cuban diplomatic mission.

Edelstam did not request authorization from the Foreign Ministry for these decisions. However, "the defense of Cuban interests was accepted, since it is

Photo 2.2 Ambassador Harald Edelstam meets with Cuban President Fidel Castro in Havana after his expulsion from Chile, January 1974. *Credit*: Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

part of Sweden's longstanding tradition to assist when other countries break diplomatic relations," points out Landelius. "It was obvious for everyone that there was no time to ask. Nobody told Edelstam not to do what he did, or to undo what he had done."

OPENING EMBASSY DOORS

The Ambassador knew he had to act fast. He immediately went about helping the Swedes and Cubans obtain the safe conduct passes from the military authorities that would allow them to leave the country. This included those who had been arrested in the capital and other cities.

Many of the volunteers from Sweden's Education for Cooperation and Development organization (UBV) were working in government agencies at the time of the coup; some would suffer the consequences. UBV volunteer Henrik Janbell, who was working at the Forestry Institute, and Swedish academic Claes Croner were being held in the National Stadium, which was being used as a massive detention and torture center, while Kristian Lund and Maj-Lis Ohlsson were arrested in the southern city of Valdivia. Another Swede, Bobi Sourander, correspondent for the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, would be arrested on October 11 and remained a prisoner

at the National Stadium for 12 days; he was released after several visits by Edelstam to the stadium. Other Swedish volunteers, such as Svante Grände, became involved in local leftist organizations and later engrossed the lists of the disappeared.[18]

At the same time, Edelstam opened the doors of both Swedish and Cuban diplomatic grounds for Chileans, including high-ranking Allende government officials, political and labor leaders, and scores of Latin Americans, particularly the most politically sensitive. Many Latin Americans had fled from military regimes in their home countries and sought asylum in Chile during the Allende government. Some were living in Chile with refugee status, but others were clandestine. Some Uruguayans had even escaped from political prison in their own country and were living in Chile under false names.[19] At the time of the coup, there were an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 Latin American refugees living in Chile.[20]

Hundreds of foreigners were imprisoned, particularly in the National Stadium.[21] Edelstam sought their release under his custody, visiting the detention camp, negotiating with military authorities and coordinating with international humanitarian organizations. Those who were able to avoid arrest desperately tried to leave the country; many rushed to diplomatic asylum. According to a 1974 Amnesty International report, by mid-December 1973, more than 4,000 Chileans had sought asylum in foreign embassies; all but about 500 had been granted safe conduct passes to leave the country by then.[22]

TWO HUNDRED POLITICAL REFUGEES

On September 28, 1973, Swedish Foreign Minister Wickman informed the military junta that his country was willing to receive 200 foreign political refugees and assume responsibility for their travel arrangements, "based on Sweden's traditional policy of neutrality and humanitarianism." That day, Edelstam informed the Chilean Foreign Ministry of his country's offer and requested authorization to select the 200 future refugees himself.[23]

Over the following week, the ambassador selected dozens of people to be admitted as refugees in Sweden and requested the safe conduct passes that would allow them to leave the embassy grounds and travel abroad safely under diplomatic protection. Many of them were Latin Americans detained in the National Stadium and often members of radical leftist organizations who were in imminent danger or would not be accepted in other embassies.

On October 3, Edelstam requested safe conduct passes for 23 Bolivians—almost half of them still imprisoned in the National Stadium, who would compose "the first group of the quota" of 200 refugees. The next day, he requested an additional 59 passes for Latin Americans in the stadium.[24] The

safe conduct passes were not approved for another month. Around the same time, the Swedish government raised the number to 500, and a month later to 600; by January 1974, the Swedish government had offered political asylum to 700 people.[25]

REQUESTING BACK-UP

Given the magnitude and urgency of the events, Edelstam requested more funds and personnel from the Swedish Foreign Ministry and specifically asked for diplomat Ulf Hjertonsson, who had recently served at the embassy in Santiago (1967–1970) and was back in Sweden. Coincidentally, Edelstam's younger brother, Axel, headed the ministry's Political Department in charge of Latin American affairs.

Diplomat Ingemar Lindahl was flown in from the Swedish embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Hjertonsson from Stockholm to temporarily assist the embassy in Santiago. By the time Hjertonsson arrived on September 20, there were about 40 refugees of different ages and nationalities in the Swedish embassy, and about 300 in the Cuban embassy, he said.[26] "All of this implied a huge logistical task," said Hjertonsson. "We spent hours talking about how to solve problems regarding food for the refugees, beds and places to sleep, how to obtain medical assistance for the ill. Edelstam was phenomenal in all of this, distributing tasks to everyone. The staff assumed them very responsibly."[27]

Other non-diplomats offered their help independently. Three Swedish women residing in Santiago began assisting the embassy: the wife of Swedish consul Peter Ahlgren, Eva Ahlgren, Sonja Martinsson and Lilian Indseth would play crucial roles alongside Edelstam in the protection of refugees. Swedish journalist Bengt Oldenburg also volunteered assistance. At the time, he was working in Buenos Aires, Argentina and had met Edelstam on previous trips to Chile. They saw each other in Santiago shortly after the coup and Edelstam asked him to help. Oldenburg moved temporarily to Santiago.

"Edelstam had me live in a home that had been previously used by a Cuban diplomatic official. My duties included receiving refugees, distributing them to the different offices and homes and making sure they were safe. I also assisted in relations with the media and with other diplomats," said Oldenburg.[28]

One of the UBV volunteers, Rolf Bengtsson, an electronic engineer working at the University of Chile's Faculty of Science, offered to help the embassy with the myriad of tasks involved. Edelstam put him in charge of the Cuban consulate building. Within days, it was full of refugees—first other Latin Americans and later Chileans. At its peak, the consulate would provide

shelter to about 50 asylees: "I lived on the grounds permanently. I was responsible for distributing food and there were people in charge of cleaning and cooking. I even taught some basic Swedish to prepare them for their trip to Sweden," said Bengtsson.[29]

Swedish actress Birgitta Frisk was studying at the Catholic University's Art School in Santiago at the time and offered to help the embassy. For months she was put in charge of a group of Uruguayan refugees in one of the Cuban buildings and had to help one of them give birth to twins. "I had to adapt my desk to receive them," she said.[30]

They were all granted diplomatic status to facilitate their work. On October 17, Ambassador Edelstam informed the Chilean Foreign Ministry that he would also assume the position of Consul "in order to take care of the interests and protection of citizens in detention or in danger of being so."[31] Wilkens, Lindahl and Oldenburg were appointed Adjunct Consuls for the same purpose.

SWEDISH "TERRITORY"

During the first few months after the coup, Edelstam "worked without pause," says Martin Wilkens, First Secretary of the Embassy at the time. "He negotiated the freedom of political prisoners from the National Stadium; clandestinely transported people who were being persecuted in the trunk of his car; and deliberately defamed the military regime with undiplomatic statements to the international press."[32]

Marcela Ballara, a Chilean leftist who had sought refuge at the Swedish embassy a few days after the coup, recalls that it was common for embassy officials to hang towels from the balconies of the embassy as a signal that the coast was clear during the short lapse of time when the police guards in the perimeter changed shifts. They would then open the gates to asylum-seekers. "When we saw the towels we got out of the car and rushed to the gate, but some armed civilians appeared out of nowhere and came upon us. Fortunately, Edelstam was driving up. He opened the door of his car and pushed us inside. The Ambassador stood next to the car, put his arm on top of it and told them that his car was Swedish territory and they couldn't violate it," she said.[33]

The issue of diplomatic immunity for embassy vehicles was a permanent source of friction with the military. Ambassador Edelstam, backed by his Indian colleague, demanded the police and military respect the diplomatic immunity that also extended to their means of transportation, according to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations ratified by Chile.[34]

In early November, the junta distributed a note to the diplomatic corps, the military and the police, asserting its right to search diplomatic vehicles,

claiming that according to its interpretation of international treaties, they did not enjoy immunity.[35] But Edelstam paid no attention. He used diplomatic cars to pick up asylum-seekers from their hideouts and sneak them into the embassy, either disguised or hidden in the trunk. Or he drove out during curfew hours to the homes of his asylees to pick up things for them or speak with their families. On several occasions, he went there with the refugees themselves.

Boris Benado had entered the Swedish embassy on September 15 to sign the book of condolences for the death of Swedish King Gustav VI Adolf, or at least that was the excuse. Then and there, he requested and was granted political asylum. Days later, Edelstam took him along to pick up his brother, who was in hiding. Another day, they again drove out together to pick up the wives of the two brothers and their small children. They would all be sheltered in the Cuban embassy under Swedish protection.[36]

Anatailde Paula de Crêspo, a Brazilian resident of Santiago, was arrested by the police and taken to the National Stadium on September 20. Her husband, also Brazilian, and their two children, born in Cuba, were able to seek refuge in the Cuban embassy under Swedish protection. "Edelstam went to the stadium several times to ask about me but the military said they knew nothing. He never stopped insisting until I was finally released. He gave me life," she says.[37] A few days later, Edelstam took her to her apartment to pick up some clothes. "He was driving and I was next to him trying to appear normal. He told me that if the military stopped the car, he would tell them that I was his wife and didn't speak Spanish," she recalls.

Edelstam made a point of frequently visiting the asylees in the different buildings to check on how they were and ask about their needs. He would often spend the night with them, right on the floor, especially in the often-besieged Cuban mission. "He always spoke to us with affection and sincerity; he was concerned about our health and state of mind. Edelstam would take time to lift our spirits and ask us things. I also think he was very brave, because he had to put up with the insults of the military outside every time he arrived," said Hebert Corbo, a Uruguayan released under Swedish protection from the National Stadium in October.[38]

BENDING THE TRUTH

It was the only way Edelstam figured he could take 4-year-old Marina Teitelboim, daughter of Communist senator Volodia Teitelboim, out of the country. Her parents were in Moscow on an official mission when Allende was overthrown and the child needed to be reunited with them. Two days after the coup, Marina was taken to the Swedish embassy, but Edelstam later

transferred her to the Cuban mission, "because there were more children to play with there."[39]

The girl could not be taken out of the country under her real name: "So Edelstam made up a false name for me. . . . He made me half-Swedish, half-Bolivian.[40] Expert hairdressers made me rounded braids and I was dressed up like a typical girl from La Paz. . . . Ambassador Edelstam trained me in case the police at the airport asked me anything so that I would never mention my father's real name," she recalled.[41] Marina was questioned at the airport but practically did not utter a word. "Then two young women from SAS airlines came to get me and Edelstam accompanied me up to the plane, left me seated and said goodbye," she said. She did not speak again for an entire month.

Four years later, when Marina was eight, she received a letter from Edelstam, who was then Ambassador in Algeria. Edelstam ended his letter saying: "The plane took off with you and in a way I was happy but also sad, because you had been very brave and a good companion and I would miss you. I hope we will meet again someday, hopefully in a free and happy Chile."[42]

A SENSE OF HISTORY

The Swedish embassy also rescued crucial archival material. During the Allende government, film director Patricio Guzmán had been working on a documentary, recording the revolutionary process as it unfolded. However, sensing a coup was imminent after a brief military uprising in late June 1973, Guzmán and his producer Federico Elton took the over 200 tins of film footage and hid them in a trunk at a relative's home. Around seven tins were left at Guzmán's own house.[43]

After the coup, Guzmán was arrested and sent to the National Stadium. The tins, meanwhile, needed to be smuggled out of the country, and Edelstam agreed to ship the negatives abroad. The Ambassador asked Lilian Indseth to coordinate with Elton to discreetly deliver the tins to the embassy. "Lilian would arrive in a diplomatic car and I would get in with the tins wrapped in newspapers. I handed her 10 to 15 tins at a time. We took a lot of precautions," said Elton. This lasted several weeks.

In November, Edelstam put the tins in 27 diplomatic pouches and personally oversaw their loading on a ship called Río de Janeiro, in the port of Valparaíso, said Elton. When the tins arrived in Stockholm a month and a half later, Guzmán—who had been released from prison by then, Elton and Edelstam, already expelled from Chile, were waiting at the dock. "Edelstam had realized the historical importance of this material. He told us that he had kept the negatives next to his bed the whole time," says Elton.[44]

The three-part documentary, entitled "The Battle of Chile," was produced by the Cuban Film Institute ICAIC in 1975 and won six major film awards in Europe and Latin America.[45] The cameraman who filmed Allende's revolution, Jorge Müller, was arrested by Pinochet's secret intelligence agency DINA in November 1974 and remains disappeared.

MILITARY HARASSMENT

The embassy grounds—particularly the Cuban buildings—were under constant military and police surveillance and often suffered attacks. The mildest harassment included cutting off water, telephone and electricity services. Some Cuban offices were also vandalized. On September 14, armed civilians broke into the Cuban commercial bureau and stole a typewriter, office supplies and furniture. Weeks later, on October 8, 20 members of the military broke into a Cuban apartment under Swedish protection. It was the third time the military raided the same office, Edelstam complained to the Chilean Foreign Ministry.[46]

It was common for the military to intimidate embassy staff as they entered the grounds. On more than one occasion, the military tried to enter the Cuban embassy by force, once rolling into its grounds with a tank. Edelstam personally stopped it from advancing, recalls Marcela Ballara, a refugee there. "Harald stood in front of the tank and told the officer: If you want to come in, you'll have to run me over," she said.

Refugees often heard shots fired from the outside directed at the embassy building. The most serious incident occurred in December 1973, when Edelstam was already back in Sweden. A shot fired toward the embassy injured Rolando Calderón, a former government official and refugee there, in the head. Sweden sent a doctor to treat him but the government refused to authorize his intervention and had Calderón operated in the Military Hospital. Calderón survived and eventually returned to Swedish protection.

Not even Swedish citizens were exempt. On November 6, Margareta Sourander, wife of Swedish journalist Bobi Sourander, was arrested with two Chilean drivers of the Cuban embassy as they tried to enter the grounds. Military patrols were letting only people with Swedish diplomatic passports enter the Cuban embassy, and none of them had one. Two Embassy officials were impeded by the police from leaving their homes to consult about what had happened, and their phones were cut. They were later barred from visiting the detainees and the government refused to provide reasons for the arrest.

This situation outraged Edelstam as well as Prime Minister Palme, who informed the Swedish Parliament of the events, and reflected: "The bottom line is this: Allende's victory in the 1970 elections gave the poor hope of a

better society and greater human dignity. These hopes were quashed with violence. . . . The overthrow of a government elected by the people in Chile has raised the question of whether, in general, it is possible to carry out profound changes in a poor and unfair society without having privileged groups resorting to violence."[47]

Edelstam did what he often did when colliding with the military: he called the international press. The more media coverage it got, he believed, the more protection. Edelstam's statements to foreign journalists about these arrests angered Chilean officials, who accused him of seeking publicity. They also claimed that asylees in the Cuban embassy had fired on military patrols in the exterior. "Edelstam has apparently been extremely outspoken with members of foreign press corps in his condemnation of new Chilean government," wrote the United States Deputy Chief of Mission in Chile at the time, Herbert Thompson, in a confidential telegram to the State Department. "He has, according to some Chileans, purposefully fostered and revelled in his 'Scarlet Pimpernel' image. Over past weeks Edelstam has engaged in a number of altercations with Government of Chile officials, including one in which he reportedly pushed aside military guards at Cuban Embassy who wanted to inspect documents of passengers he was bringing into compound," he informed.[48]

FORCING OTHERS TO ACT

Other European embassies in Santiago also opened their doors to asylum-seekers, among them France, Finland, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Switzerland. Latin American nations such as México, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia and Panama did the same, but many others were under military rule themselves and were therefore not an option. Most Eastern European nations broke diplomatic ties with Chile after the coup and therefore had no representation in Santiago, although they did welcome and assist hundreds of Chilean exiles in their countries. The United States, which supported the Chilean junta, refused to provide refuge or shelter in its Embassy in Santiago to anyone, not even to their own imperiled citizens.[49]

The Swedish ambassador harshly criticized other diplomats or international organizations he did not believe were doing enough in light of the ongoing human rights violations. "Early on, Edelstam led diplomatic efforts to force the junta to respect the right of asylum and for greater interaction with the embassies of non-Latin American countries," recalls Lindahl.[50] Weeks into the dictatorship, the Norwegian embassy had not admitted any refugees. "Edelstam believed that this was due to the personal position of the ambassador [August Fleischer], whom he considered to be reactionary and

pro-Junta," said Rolf Bengtsson. "We spoke about this and came up with a plan to try to get people inside their embassy and force it to act."

The plan was somewhat extravagant and not free of risk for the asylum-seekers themselves. Edelstam and Bengtsson would mount two parallel operations. The ambassador took two Chilean refugees in his car and dropped them off a short distance from the Norwegian embassy. There were no guards or police in the perimeter, because the Norwegian embassy had no need for it. While Edelstam waited in his car, the Chileans rang at the gate and requested asylum. However, they were turned down and had to return to Edelstam's car.

Meanwhile, Bengtsson drove a Bolivian couple near the Norwegian embassy, and their strategy was to enter the grounds by climbing over a wall. They were able to enter and request asylum, but the Norwegian Ambassador called the police and a patrol arrived to arrest them. "But we had arranged for two Swedish journalists—Jan Sandquist and Bobi Sourander[51]—to stand by and register the scene," recalls Bengtsson. "Before the Bolivian couple was taken out of the embassy by the police, these reporters confronted the diplomats, saying that what they were doing was wrong. The Bolivians ended up staying in the embassy, but the next day the front pages of Swedish and Norwegian papers carried the story of how the Norwegian ambassador was handing over refugees to the police."

The Norwegian government subsequently sent diplomat Frode Nilsen to Chile as a "special Asylum Envoy," and opened the embassy doors; by mid-November, the Norwegian embassy had a dozen refugees.[52] "This action totally changed the Norwegian embassy's policy on political asylum. Edelstam and I were very happy," said Bengtsson.

REFUGEE NETWORK

Ambassador Edelstam's efforts were not isolated. As he and other diplomats took in asylum-seekers and negotiated safe conduct passes, many Chileans, individually or through political, social or church organizations, were setting in motion a modern day underground railroad, providing temporary safe houses and logistical support and securing contacts to get people under diplomatic protection or out of the country. International agencies and religious organizations set up refugee centers, assisted families of the persecuted, and convinced the new regime to respect the rights of refugees.

For the first time in its history, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) opened refugee centers in the same country undergoing conflict. The Swiss Ernest Schlatter headed the Chile mission. In 1973–1974, the UNHCR Santiago resettled about 2,600 foreign refugees, helped those

opting for repatriation to return to their countries of origin, and assisted the ones who chose to remain in Chile.[53]

In early October 1973, the junta authorized the creation of the National Committee to Assist Refugees (CONAR, in Spanish), a Chilean ecumenical group presided by the German Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz.[54] CONAR worked in coordination with the UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)[55] to assist foreigners and Chileans, including those still in detention. CONAR was authorized to operate through February 1974, and during that period helped 4,442 people leave the country,[56] with funds from the UNHCR and the World Council of Churches.

SECURING SAFE CONDUCT PASSES

Getting the junta to respect the bounds of diplomatic immunity and the rights of refugees was one thing, but obtaining safe conduct passes to take them out of the country was an entirely different matter, especially for people the military regime considered "extremists," "terrorists" or even "common criminals." Despite the vast network of people and organizations mobilized to provide a safe exit from Chile, there was a fundamental problem. Sweden, as the rest of Europe, was not part of the 1954 Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, ratified by about half of Latin American countries.[57] This did not mean that they could not offer diplomatic asylum, but that the host country—Chile, in this case—had no obligation to respect it, and much less authorize the safe conduct passes that would allow refugees to leave the embassy grounds and the country under diplomatic protection. These passes were issued by the Foreign Ministry's Office of Protocol.

As of early October, the regime had repeatedly refused to grant a pass to the prominent Communist labor leader Luis Figueroa, claiming he was a "common criminal seeking to evade justice."[58] A few days later, Edelstam moved Figueroa to his personal residence. Axel Edelstam, the ambassador's brother in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, intervened in the matter. He met with Víctor Rioseco, Chile's Chargé d'Affaires in Stockholm, and told him that if his government refused to grant Figueroa a safe conduct pass, Sweden would allow him to stay in the diplomatic mission as long as necessary. But, he warned, if that were to happen, it would seriously damage Chile's international image, because Sweden and other European nations would call for a general protest that would lead to massive demonstrations against the Chilean junta.[59] Figueroa was finally authorized to leave with diplomatic protection in 1974.

Edelstam used a variety of tactics to obtain "courtesy safe conducts." Requests through regular diplomatic channels were often accompanied by direct conversations or negotiations with the Foreign Ministry's Office of Protocol, a "slow and difficult process," according to Bengtsson. Thanks to the contacts he had made during his prior post in Chile, Ulf Hjertonsson was able to arrange a meeting with the director of the Carabineros police force, Gen. César Mendoza, whom Edelstam considered to be more flexible than the other members of the military junta. "The meeting wasn't the most pleasant I've had in my diplomatic career, but we did obtain about 40 safe conducts," said Hjertonsson.[60]

Edelstam also sought the collaboration of Latin American embassies that could invoke the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum to request the safe conduct passes. The Venezuelan and Mexican embassies, among others, would ask for passes for refugees who were actually under the protection of the Swedes. "We were good friends [with Edelstam] and agreed to help us mutually," said former Mexican ambassador Gonzalo Martínez. "I offered to do what we ended up doing: he would take his 'asylees' to the doors of the Mexican embassy, where I would receive them. We would send them to México, and there he would make sure they were transferred to Sweden."[61]

Another means of exit was through tourism agencies, which at the time were allowed to do the paperwork to obtain passports for travelers. "We requested passports for the refugees through these agencies, which weren't aware of who they really were. To our surprise, we got about 50 Chilean passports. This worked especially in cases of people who were from other cities and their background information wasn't in Santiago. I accompanied them to the government office to pick up the passports, because they had to do it personally, and then to the airport. We would usually send them as tourists, without need of a safeconduct, to Buenos Aires, where they would make contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees," explained Bengtsson.

Edelstam even exploited General Pinochet's diplomatic blunders. On October 29, General Pinochet sent the Swedish embassy a greeting card for King Gustav VI Adolf's birthday; however, the king had died over a month earlier. "This was a diplomatic gaffe we were able to use for a long time. During the most complex discussions over safeconducts and other problems, we would shake our heads very seriously, suggesting to government officials that we could send the junta president's unfortunate greeting card to the monarchy," said Lindahl.[62]

One day, Hjertonsson suggested to Edelstam that they invite officials from the Office of Protocol to dinner at the Swedish residence "as a way to thank them for their favors." After dinner, the hosts and guests from the Foreign Ministry sat down in the living room when the doorbell rang. In came a disguised Miria Contreras, known as "Payita," Allende's secretary and confidant,

for whom the military was searching intensely. They had even offered a reward for her capture. "We were very frightened because it was a very complicated situation. Harald, very calm, stood up, excused himself and accompanied her upstairs. When he returned downstairs, he offered the Head of Protocol a good Cuban cigar. We had a lot of cigars thanks to the Cuban embassy," he recalls.[63] Edelstam hid Contreras in the third floor of the Cuban embassy. No one was allowed there and not even the other refugees knew of her presence in the embassy. The military junta would not find out for another two months.

PERSONA NON GRATA

Ambassador Edelstam was facing resistance from his superiors at the Swedish Foreign Ministry. Some officials felt that the Chilean left was using him and that his behavior was reckless. "Edelstam was never a star in the eyes of his colleagues, and at times he was seen as a nuisance. Chile was the most eminent example of the latter," said Peter Landelius. The Ambassador was especially shunned by the ministry's Director of Political Affairs, Count Wilhelm Wachtmeister, a conservative, old-school diplomat who never concealed his dislike of the ambassador and his methods. "I knew Edelstam was receiving telegrams with instructions from the Foreign Ministry, but he largely ignored them. He believed the fascist military had committed serious crimes, violated the constitution and destroyed democracy and that upset him profoundly. He said the situation in Chile was extremely dangerous and exceptional and that required taking actions and positions that were also exceptional," said Bengtsson.

However, Edelstam knew he was fully backed by Prime Minister Palme, as well as by much of Swedish public opinion. "Harald was always supported by Olof Palme, whom he had known for years," wrote Edelstam's son Erik many years later. "Lisbet Palme [the Prime Minister's wife] told me how Harald would call their home at night. Olof Palme would sit in the kitchen and they would discuss over the phone what to do and how to save more lives. That's why Harald felt absolutely confident and could receive the angry criticism from Wilhem Wachtmeister without much concern. But he had no support from the Swedish Foreign Ministry. His brother Axel was the only one there who supported him. Everyone else wanted him to return to Sweden."[64]

In Chile, Edelstam was object of a bitter political and media campaign to discredit him and portray him as a pawn of the left. Chilean newspapers loyal to the new military rulers published a number of articles decrying his actions, with insinuations that Chileans would boycott the Scandinavian airline SAS, or accusations that other European diplomats were facing criticism in their home countries for not adopting similar positions. Already in mid-October of 1973,

the Foreign Ministry's Director of Protocol Tobías Barros had to deny rumors that Chile would declare Edelstam *persona non grata*, which essentially meant that he would be expelled from the country. These rumors, wrote the pro-junta newspaper *La Tercera*, "were based on certain attitudes that the diplomat has maintained since the military pronouncement last September 11."[65]

The regime was particularly infuriated by the release under Swedish protection of 54 Uruguayans detained at the National Stadium on October 16. Although the paperwork and logistics of the massive release of foreign prisoners to the Swedish embassy had been in preparation for weeks, with the coordination and acquiescence of Chilean military officials, the Uruguayan embassy and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, three prisoners had slipped through the cracks.[66] The three, which included Hebert Corbo, were considered "extremists" who were to be prosecuted by a military court, and not released to the Swedish embassy.

During a meeting with the ambassadors of Peru and France to discuss the issue of safe conduct passes, Chile's Foreign Minister Ismael Huerta reportedly called Edelstam a "provocateur." According to a "Latin American colleague" of United States Deputy Chief of Mission in Chile, Herbert Thompson, "Huerta was particularly upset by Edelstam's performance at the National Stadium, where he apparently bluffed military authorities into turning over to him a number of Uruguayan prisoners without having previously received appropriate authorization and safeconducts from the Ministry of Foreign Relations."[67]

In early November, in a telegram to Washington, Thompson described rising tensions between Edelstam and the Chilean junta. A source within the Chilean Foreign Ministry, he said, had mentioned that the junta wanted to declare Edelstam *persona non grata*, but that "given Chile's international image problem this may not be advisable." Thompson then remarked:

> Foreign Ministry professionals' view that Chile should try to avoid expelling Edelstam may not be taken to heart by GOC. There is group of military officers pressuring junta for permission to get into Cuban Embassy primarily to look at arms cache and communications hardware they believe to be there. While it would appear GOC is not about to attack building as Edelstam's press statements would indicate, possibility for further incidents—perhaps even involving gunfire—are very real. GOC spokesman's Nov 7 statement may have been simple warning to Edelstam or may be justificatory prelude to his expulsion. (One report from untested source indicates junta has already decided to expel Edelstam.)[68]

One particular episode in late November marked the last straw for the military regime. In a scene fit for a movie, Edelstam, embassy officials, French

Ambassador Pierre de Menthon, and a UNHCR representative sustained a literal tug-of-war with the military and police in the hallways of a health clinic over a stretcher with a Uruguayan refugee under Swedish protection, Mirtha Fernández. She had been rushed to the clinic for an emergency medical procedure the day before. An army captain in charge of the patrol pointed a gun at Edelstam and the police eventually took over the stretcher with Fernández and arrested her. In the struggle, Edelstam was pushed and fell to the floor.[69]

The incident sparked the immediate protest of the Swedish government, with an equally vehement response from Chile. The Chilean Foreign Ministry presented "its most formal protest for the repeated behavior of the head of that Diplomatic Mission, which in no way corresponds with diplomatic practices and does not contribute to strengthening the cordial relations that have always existed between Chile and Sweden."[70] The regime claimed that Edelstam had not requested appropriate authorization to transfer Fernández to the clinic.

The junta complained about Edelstam to the Swedish government through its Ambassador in Brussels, Carlos Valenzuela, who traveled to Stockholm to meet with Foreign Minister Sven Andersson.[71] According to a telex describing that meeting, Andersson said that regarding the question of refugees, Edelstam had the complete support of his government, but admitted that his behavior "seems to have strayed" from "usual diplomatic practices." Valenzuela then told Andersson that Chile had allowed several countries to take in refugees, even though they were not signatories to the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, but that only Sweden was a "problem," "due to the unfriendly behavior of the Ambassador, and so it was up to the government of Sweden to take the appropriate measures."[72]

In a follow up cable the next day, the Chilean embassy in Stockholm informed Santiago that the issue of granting safe conduct passes for refugees was being hampered by Edelstam's conduct and the Swedish government had to do something about it. "The Minister [Andersson] told me, literally: 'I perfectly understand what you are saying,'" reported Valenzuela.[73] Valenzuela commented that during a private meeting with political officer Knut Thyberg,[74] the latter remarked that "there were ambassadors who acted like politicians" and that their ambassadors in Hanoi and Santiago "had created serious problems for the government." Thyberg told him that Foreign Minister Andersson "shared that concern."[75]

Count Wachtmeister was sent to Santiago on December 2 to resolve the matter, and met with Foreign Minister Huerta. With Wachtmeister still in Santiago, on December 4 the Chilean government declared Edelstam *persona non grata*. Asked by reporters about the reasons behind the decision, the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Carvallo, was brief: "In these cases we have no comment."[76]

After receiving notice of this from the Office of Protocol, Edelstam sent a note back to Chile's Foreign Ministry to request safe conduct passes for Miria Contreras, her daughter, son in law and their small son. For the first time, the junta would have evidence of where "Payita" had been hiding.

The same day Edelstam was declared *persona non grata*, the Chilean government issued a circular to all resident diplomatic missions of countries that were not signatory to the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum stating that since public order was now "completely assured," there was no longer any reason for the presence of "guests" in these missions. No more "courtesy" safe conduct passes for "guests" would be issued after December 11, said the circular, and asylees would have to use regular exit procedures to leave the country. This circular, said the U.S. embassy in Santiago in a telegram to the State Department, "reflects hardening Government of Chile attitude toward the role of European missions in asylee problem."[77]

Edelstam returned to Stockholm less than a week later. With him traveled 20 political refugees from the Swedish embassy, most of them Latin American.[78] In 2007, Wachtmeister wrote in retrospect:

> Our ambassador in Santiago, Harald Edelstam, assumed a very militant attitude towards the Pinochet government. . . . He acted as a sort of miniature Wallenberg. Any dialogue with the Chilean government, given the circumstances, was made difficult, and the work of the embassy was impossible given the number of refugees there. . . . Edelstam was not very receptive to the instructions of the Foreign Ministry. He was driven by his own humanitarian passion and a fervent animosity, supported by radical circles in Stockholm. . . . Chile's decision to expel Edelstam relieved the Swedish government from the need to send him home. An untenable situation received a convenient solution and Chile ended up being the villain in this drama.[79]

Carl-Johan Groth was called in from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to assume as Chargé d'Affaires in Santiago on December 10. He followed Edelstam's general policies on refugees, but acted discreetly to avoid angering local authorities. It was he who had to negotiate safe conduct passes for the most controversial of embassy "guests," among them Miria Contreras, Luis Figueroa and Max Marambio. Most refugees in the Swedish and Cuban diplomatic missions were able to leave the country by mid-1974.

REMEMBERING EDELSTAM

Back in Europe, Edelstam received a warm welcome from the grateful Chilean and other Latin American refugees he had helped save and participated actively in the Chilean solidarity movement. "He did this as a private

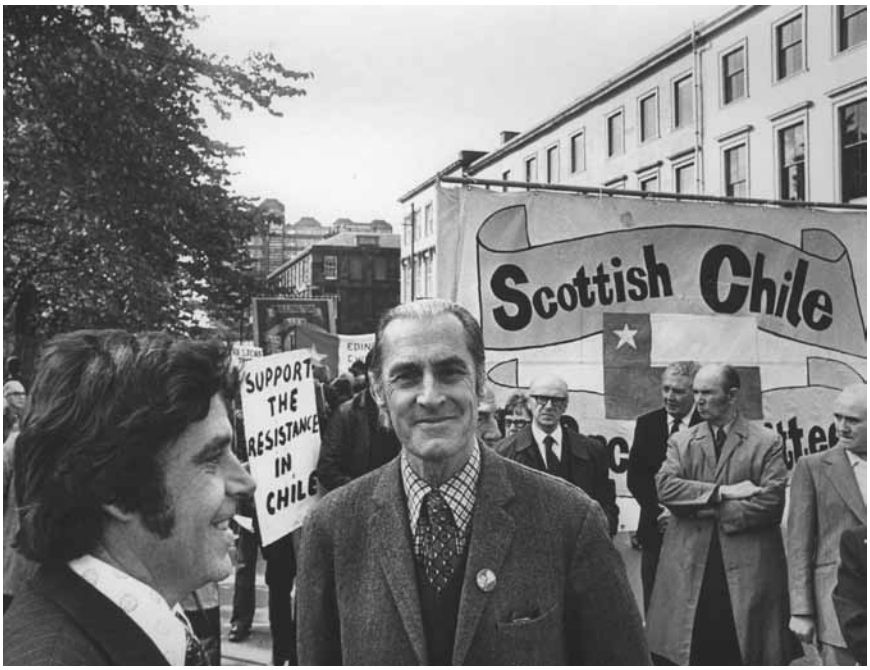

Photo 2.3 Ambassador Harald Edelstam at a demonstration in solidarity with Chile in Glasgow, Scotland, 1974. *Credit*: Courtesy of the Edelstam family.

person, not as a representative of Sweden, but it must have irritated his colleagues, and possibly also the Swedish Government," said Landelius.

In Stockholm, Edelstam faced harsh criticism from his colleagues, particularly Wachtmeister "because he had not obeyed the ministry's instructions and for having saved the lives of communists and revolutionaries," said Henrik Janbell. But he was also shunned by members of his own family and childhood friends, "who saw him as a class traitor," said Janbell. Over a year later, Edelstam was appointed ambassador to Algeria, his last post before retiring in 1980.

Harald Edelstam died of cancer on April 16, 1989 at the age of 76 and was buried in the cemetery of Ekerö, a municipality outside Stockholm. "He died a rather lonely man, as many of his friends and colleagues turned their backs to him after his civil disobedience as the Swedish Ambassador in Chile. My grandfather is better known and more appreciated in Sweden today than when he returned from Chile in 1973, and he has received some redress. However, he is still more regarded as a hero internationally than in Sweden," said Caroline Edelstam, the former ambassador's granddaughter.[80]

Despite being the subject of several books and a fictional movie[81] based on his experience in Chile, Edelstam's humanitarian work as a rescuer is not well

known in Sweden. His life and diplomatic efforts are kept alive primarily by a few family members and the Swedish and Latin Americans he rescued from persecution in Chile.

In Uruguay, former refugees named a park avenue in his honor in 2005, while in Chile, the San Miguel municipal library in the capital carries his name. Chilean human rights activists founded the Harald Edelstam Corporation, which, among other activities, has organized commemorations, and in April 2015 unveiled a "Human Rights Sculpture" in a small plaza in the Municipality of Providencia in Santiago, with a plaque honoring Edelstam's defense of human rights.

In Sweden, a group of Chilean exiles founded the Edelstam Association in 2008. A year later, the Association created the Edelstam Foundation, presided by Caroline Edelstam. Since 2012, the Foundation awards the Edelstam Prize to a nominee "who has acted in Ambassador Harald Edelstam's spirit" and shown "outstanding capabilities in analysing and handling complex situations and in finding ways, even unconventional and creative ones, to defend Human Rights."[82]

In May 2016, during a visit to the Swedish Parliament, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet donated a sculpture of Edelstam in appreciation for his humanitarian actions in Chile after the military coup. "There are notable people whose deeds and values persist through time and are kept alive in the memory of societies. Harald Edelstam is one of those people. He saved many Latin American and Swedish lives in Chile during military dictatorship, risking his own personal safety. That's why he remains in our hearts," she stated.[83]

The first civilian president after Chile's dictatorship, Patricio Aylwin (1990–1994), posthumously awarded Edelstam the Bernardo O'Higgins Order in recognition of his humanitarian assistance after the coup.[84] Caroline Edelstam received it on behalf of her grandfather. "He received the order as an evidence of his extraordinary deeds in the defense of human rights," she said. "My grandfather's spirit is with me every day—the sentiment that the stronger ones must help the weaker ones. We must believe in humanity and its willingness to change. We need to find inspiration in order to be courageous and we need the stronger persons to show us the way. My grandfather was such a man, an inspirer, even if he was just an ordinary grandfather to me."

NOTES

1. "Otro incidente protagoniza el Pimpinela Rojo," *La Segunda*, November 26, 1973, p. 1.
2. "Por dignidad, el sueco debe irse," *La Segunda*, November 29, 1973, p. 1.
3. The Edelstam Foundation, "HE Background," www.edelstam.org/background.

4. Email interview with Henrik Janbell, Stockholm, October 4, 2014.

5. Pepe Viñoles, "Harald en los días de Chile," *Rodelu*, April 19, 2002, www.rodelu.net/perfiles/perfil10.htm.

6. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe militar y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El caso de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), 28.

7. Harald Edelstam, "Allende en mis recuerdos," in *Allende visto por sus contemporáneos* (Casa de Chile, México, 1983), 69.

8. Ibid.

9. This agreement was never implemented, because Sweden broke off all cooperation with Chile after the military coup a few weeks later. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe military y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El case de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), 25–26.

10. "Confidential memo Nº 2094 from the Embassy of Chile in Stockholm to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," *Historical General Archive*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago, June 15, 1972.

11. Paul E. Sigmund, "El bloqueo invisible y la caída de Allende," *Revista Estudios Internacionales* 7, no. 26 (1974), Institute of International Studies, University of Chile, Santiago.

12. Church Report, "Covert Action in Chile 1963–1973," United States Department of State, Washington, D.C., December 18, 1975, http://foia.state.gov/Reports/ChurchReport.asp; and Peter Kornbluh, "The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability," The New Press: New York, 2003.

13. Email interview with Peter Landelius, Santiago, April 11, 2014.

14. Official reports established that over 3,100 people were killed or disappeared and about 38,000 suffered political prison and torture during the dictatorship. Over half of those abuses occurred in the first few months.

15. Harald Edelstam, "Allende en mis recuerdos," in *Allende visto por sus contemporáneos* (Casa de Chile, México, 1983), 74.

16. The only person who remained in the embassy after the Cubans left was the Chilean Max Marambio, of the left-wing MIR movement, a former member of Allende's personal guard and a Cuban Special Troops officer himself. Marambio would end up organizing the living arrangements for the hundreds of asylees who eventually took refuge there until he was finally authorized by the military junta to leave the country ten months later.

17. Hernán Soto, "El yerno cubano de Salvador Allende," *Punto Final* Nº 647, Santiago, September 7, 2007. Retrieved 18 April 2014 from: www.puntofinal.cl/647/yerno.htm.

18. Svante Grände became a member of the Chilean leftist political-military organization MIR. After the coup he entered Argentina clandestinely, participating in a guerrilla movement in Tucumán organized by the Argentinian organization PRT-ERP. He was killed there in 1975. To date, his remains have not been found.

19. Over 100 political prisoners of the Uruguayan Tupamaro guerrilla movement escaped from the high-security prison Punta Carretas in September 1971. Among

them was Uruguay's recent president, José Mujica (2010–2015), who was recaptured a month later. For a testimonial account of Uruguayan refugees and prisoners in Chile, see: Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro and Graciela Jorge Pansera, "Chile roto: Uruguayos en Chile 11/9/73," Ediciones TAE, Montevideo, 1993.

20. Amnesty International, "Chile: An Amnesty International Report," *Amnesty International Publications* (London, September 1974, 64).

21. According to an incomplete list of prisoners published in 2000 by Pinochet's former intelligence chief Manuel Contreras, over 620 foreigners were held in the National Stadium alone. The largest groups came from Bolivia (147), Uruguay (89), Brazil (88) and Argentina (63). See Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda, "La Verdad Histórica, el Ejército Guerrillero," *Ediciones Encina* 29 (Santiago, 2000): 238–55.

22. Amnesty International, "Chile: An Amnesty International Report," *Amnesty International Publications* (London, September 1974, 67).

23. "Diplomatic Note º136 from the Embassy of Sweden to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile. (Santiago, September 28, 1973).

24. "Memorandums N º152 and 215 from the Embassy of Sweden to the Chilean Foreign Ministry," Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile. (Santiago, October 3–4, 1973).

25. Fernando Camacho, "Los asilados de las Embajadas de Europa Occidental en Chile tras el golpe militar y sus consecuencias diplomáticas: El caso de Suecia," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 81 (October 2006), citing Magnus Mörner, "Foundation and Uncertain Developments: 1951–1976," in Jaime Beharç and Mats Lundahl, *Half a Century Retrospect. Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institute of Latin American Studies in Stockholm*. (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003, 7–45).

26. Anna-Karin Gauding, "Collar de Voces. Testimonios sobre Harald Edelstam, un diplomático comprometido," Embassy of Sweden and Chile-Sweden Institute of Culture (Santiago, February 2014, 20).

27. Ibid.

28. Email interview with Bengt Oldenburg, Barcelona, April 30, 2003.

29. Interview with Rolf Bengtsson, Santiago, March 31, 2014.

30. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 30).

31. Memorandum of Swedish embassy in Santiago to Chilean Foreign Ministry, Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago, October 17, 1973.

32. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 25).

33. Interview with Marcela Ballara, Santiago, February 27, 2014.

34. Article 22 (3) of the Convention states: "The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution."

35. "Confusa situación de Embajador sueco," *La Segunda*, November 7, 1973, 1.

36. Interview with Boris Benado, Santiago, February 28, 2014.

37. Email interview with Anatailde Paula de Crêspo, Recife, April 13, 2014.

38. Email interview with Hebert Corbo, Stockholm, March 17, 2014.

39. Letter from Harald Edelstam to Marina Teitelboim, February 22, 1978. Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.

40. She used the name Marina Nordenflycht Farías. Nordenflycht was the last name of her mother's first husband and stepbrother.

41. Testimony of Marina Teitelboim delivered in Oslo, Norway in November 2013 during a conference to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of Harald Edelstam. Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.

42. Letter from Harald Edelstam to Marina Teitelboim.

43. Patricio Guzmán, interviewed for the television program "Chile in flames. The art of censorship," directed by Carmen Luz Parot. Broadcast in Chilevisión, October 28, 2015.

44. Telephone interview with Federico Elton, Santiago, February 28, 2014.

45. The documentary may be downloaded from Patricio Guzmán's webpage: www.patricioguzman.com/index.php?page=films_dett&fid=1.

46. Memorandum of Swedish embassy in Santiago to Chilean Foreign Ministry, October 9, 1973, Historical General Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Santiago.

47. Statements of Prime Minister Olof Palme to the Swedish Parliament, November 7, 1973, translated and transmitted by the Chilean embassy in Stockholm to Chile's Foreign Ministry. Aerogram RIE Nº 69, November 21, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

48. Telegram Nº 5482 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, "Swedish-Chilean Relations at Flash Point," November 8, 1973. United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx.

49. This was the case of Marc Cooper, a former translator for the Allende government who sought help from the U.S. embassy and was turned down, despite the fact that the military had raided his home and stolen his passport. U.S. citizens Joyce Horman and Terry Simon also faced a similar situation when they requested protection after Joyce's husband, Charles Horman, was arrested by the military. Charles Horman was subsequently killed. See Marc Cooper, "Pinochet and Me," New York: Verso, 2001, and Thomas Hauser, "The Execution of Charles Horman," New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

50. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 23).

51. Sourander was released from prison in the National Stadium on October 23.

52. A similar situation was occurring in the Austrian embassy. Ambassador Adolf Hobel had shown scant disposition to admit refugees. He was replaced by Paul Sleifer during the last week of October. By mid-November, Austria had admitted 61 refugees into the country, 20 of whom had received asylum in its embassy in Santiago. "Austria Retira Embajador," *La Segunda*, November 15, 1973.

53. Refugees Magazine, "Chile: When we're no longer needed," 104 UNHCR, Geneva, June 1996. www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3b5695774&query=Chile%201973.

54. Bishop Frenz was one of the founders of the Committee for Peace, which preceded the Vicariate of Solidarity, Chile's most important church-based human rights organization. He was expelled from Chile in 1975.

55. Today the International Organization for Migration.

56. National Committee to Assist Refugees, "Report September 1973-February 1974," Santiago, June 1974, 1.

57. The Convention was ratified by Peru, México, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, among other nations. Chile signed it in 1954 but never ratified it. Nevertheless, Chile generally accepted and respected the customary practice of diplomatic asylum, as did much of the region.

58. Telex Nº 44 from the Office of Protocol of the Chilean Foreign Ministry to the Embassy of Sweden in Santiago, October 16, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

59. Confidential memorandum Nº 567/211 from the Chilean embassy in Stockholm to the Chilean Foreign Ministry, 10 October 1973, Stockholm, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

60. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 20).

61. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 40).

62. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 23).

63. Gauding, (Santiago, February 2014, 21).

64. Erik Edelstam, "Pappa räddade liv – blev mobbad på UD," *Expressen*, September 11, 2007. http://www.expressen.se/debatt/pappa-raddade-liv--blev-mobbad-pa-ud/.

65. *La Tercera*, October 17, 1973, Santiago, 3. "Military pronouncement," is how regime supporters called the coup d'état.

66. Pascale Bonnefoy, "Terrorismo de Estadio. Prisioneros de guerra en un campo de deportes," (Editorial CESOC-América, 2005, Santiago, 167–173).

67. Cable Nº 5583, "Fonmin criticizes Swedish Ambassador," November 14, 1973, United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx.

68. Telegram Nº 5482 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, November 8, 1973.

69. Bonnefoy, 174–75. Mirtha Fernández was incarcerated by the military and expelled to Sweden ten days later.

70. Diplomatic note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile to the Embassy of Sweden, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago, November 27, 1973.

71. Foreign Minister Kirsten Wickman had resigned on October 30 and Andersson, then Minister of Defense, had replaced him.

72. Telex Nº 89 from the Embassy of Chile in Stockholm to the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 26, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

73. Telex Nº 69 from Ambassador Carlos Valenzuela to the Chilean Foreign Ministry, November 27, 1973, Historical General Archive, Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago.

74. Knut Thyberg was head of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry's Bilateral Unit, working under Axel Edelstam.

75. Ibid.

76. "Declaran persona no grata al sueco," *La Segunda*, December 4, 1973, 24.

77. Cable Nº 5986 from the U.S. embassy in Santiago to the State Department, "GOC to bar safe-conducts for diplomatic 'guests,'" December 6, 1973, United States Department of State Document Collection, Chile Declassification Project. http://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx.

78. A five minute video interview with Edelstam during that flight is available (in Swedish) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4l02hoG7H-M.

79. Wilhelm Wachtmeister, "I question Edelstam's opinion," *Expressen*, Stockholm, September 15, 2007. www.expressen.se/debatt/jag-ifragasatter-edelstams-omdome/.

80. Email interview with Caroline Edelstam, October 25, 2014.

81. "The Black Pimpernel" (2007), directed by Åsa Faringer and Ulf Hultberg.

82. The Edelstam Foundation, "Guidelines for Nominations to the Edelstam Prize." http://www.edelstamprize.org/. The 2014 prize consisted of US$ 25,000 and a small art piece and was granted to the Guatemalan of Mayan origin, Benjamin Manuel Jerónimo. In 2012, the Prize was awarded to Iranian political prisoner Bahareh Hedayat.

83. The Edelstam Foundation, "Presidenta de Chile hace entrega de estatua de héroe diplomático Harald Edelstam al Parlamento sueco," Press Release, *MyNewsDesk* (May 11, 2016).

84. The Bernardo O'Higgins Order is awarded to foreign citizens who have made important contributions to the country in different areas, including humanitarian cooperation.

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APPENDICES

AMBASSADE ROYALE DE SUÈDE

Argelia, 22 de febrero, 1978.

Querida Marina,

Hace ya cuatro años y medio desde que llegaste a la residencia de la Embajada Sueca en Santiago y mas tarde te trasladé a la Cancillería Cubana que estaba bajo nuestra custodia. Te llevé ahí porque había muchos niños como tu con quienes podías jugar. Tu hermano tamb ien estuvo ah-í.

Nos hicimos muy buenos amigos y tu parecías contenta jugando con los niños, dando la impresión que ignorabas que la Cancillería estaba rodeada de soldados armados con metralletas que apuntaban a la Embajada. Durante las comidas cantabamos tus bellas canciones chilenas y una vez por semana bailabamos todos para mantener la moral en alto.

Y así llegó el día en que tu partida se hizo posible. Tenías un documento de identificación sueco como Marina Nordenflyght pero tu no querías partir y trataste de esconderte. Yo mismo te llevé al aeropuerto y la policía nos siguió. Le mostré tu salvo conducto a la policía del aeropuerto y tu tarjeta de identidad pero ellos sospechaban algo, y te preguntaron tu nombre y quiénes eran tus padres. Tu respondiste siempre con tu vocecita: "soy Marina y mis padres est an en Suecia." No pudieron sacarte ni una palabra mas. Incluso siguieron interrogándote una vez dentro del avión de la SAS que te conducía a Suecia.

El avión partió contigo y, en cierto modo, me sentí contento pero triste al mismotiempo porque habías sido una valiente y buena compañera y te eché de menos.

Esperemos poder encontrarnos otra vez y que sea en un Chile lib re y feliz.

Con Cariño

Harald Edelstam

(Letterhead) Royal Embassy of Sweden

Argelia, 22 February 1978

Dear Marina,
It's been four and a half years since you arrived at the residence of the Swedish Embassy in Santiago and I later took you to the Cuban mission under our custody. I took you there because there were many other children like you with whom you could play. Your brother was also there.

We became good friends and you seemed to be happy playing the children, giving me the impression that you were oblivious to the fact that the mission was surrounded by soldiers armed with machine guns pointing at the Embassy. During dinner we used to sing your beautiful Chilean songs and once a week we all danced to keep up our morale.

And then the day came when your departure was made possible. You had a Swedish identification card as Marina Nordenflycht, but you didn't want to leave and tried to hide. I myself took you to the airport and the police followed us. I showed your safeconduct pass to the police at the airport and your identity card but they suspected something, and asked you what your name was and who your parents were. You answered with your little voice: "I'm Marina and my parents are in Sweden." They were unable to get anything more out of you. They even continued questioning you aboard the SAS plane that would take you to Sweden.

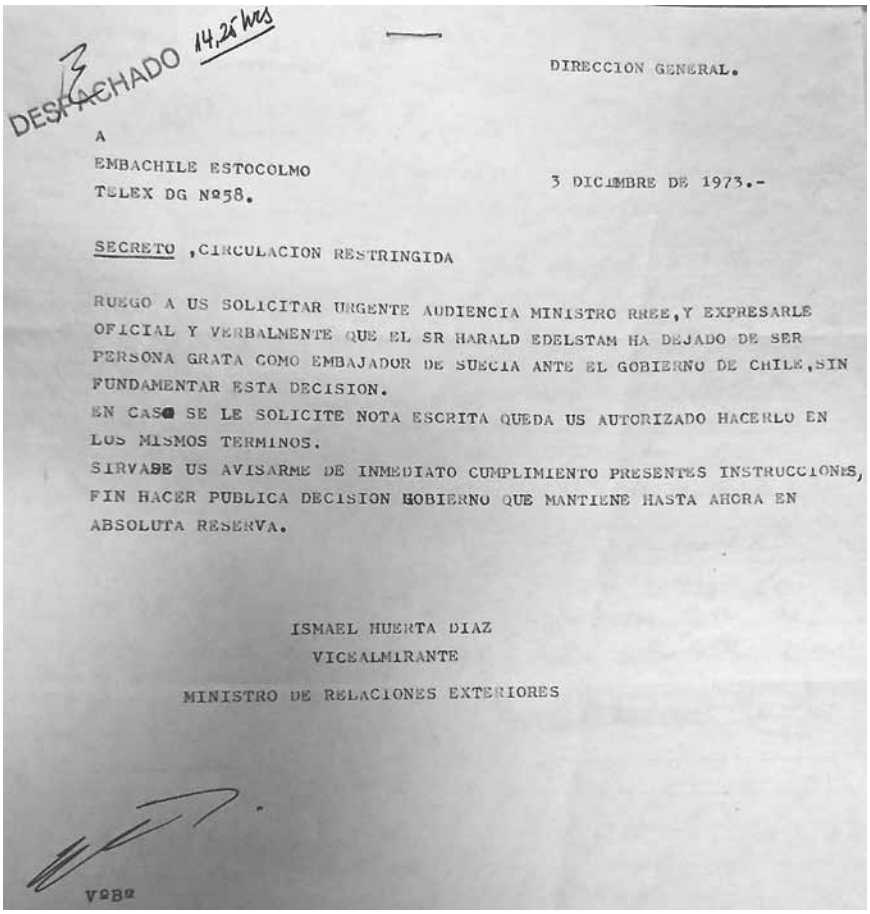
The plane left with you, and in a certain way, I felt happy but also sad, because you had been a brave and good companion and I missed you.

I hope we can meet again in a free and happy Chile.

With affection,
Harald Edelstam

Source: Translation provided by Pascale Bonnefoy.

Appendix 1 "Letter to Marina Teitelboim." Four years after helping four-year-old Marina Teitelboim leave Chile to reunite with her parents in Moscow, Harald Edelstam wrote her a letter. Credit: Courtesy of Marina Teitelboim.



DESPACHADO 14.25 hrs

DIRECCION GENERAL.

A
EMBACHILE ESTOCOLMO
TELEX DG Nº58.

3 DICIEMBRE DE 1973.-

SECRETO ,CIRCULACION RESTRINGIDA

RUEGO A US SOLICITAR URGENTE AUDIENCIA MINISTRO RREE,Y EXPRESARLE OFICIAL Y VERBALMENTE QUE EL SR HARALD EDELSTAM HA DEJADO DE SER PERSONA GRATA COMO EMBAJADOR DE SUECIA ANTE EL GOBIERNO DE CHILE,SIN FUNDAMENTAR ESTA DECISION.
EN CASO SE LE SOLICITE NOTA ESCRITA QUEDA US AUTORIZADO HACERLO EN LOS MISMOS TERMINOS.
SIRVASE US AVISARME DE INMEDIATO CUMPLIMIENTO PRESENTES INSTRUCCIONES, FIN HACER PUBLICA DECISION GOBIERNO QUE MANTIENE HASTA AHORA EN ABSOLUTA RESERVA.

ISMAEL HUERTA DIAZ
VICEALMIRANTE
MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES

VºBº

"Persona non-grata"

To: Embassy of Chile in Stockholm

Telex DG Nº58

3 December 1973

SECRET. Restricted distribution.

Please request an urgent meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to officially and verbally inform him that Mr. Harald Edelstam has ceased to be a persona grata as Ambassador of Sweden before the Government of Chile, without providing reasons.

If a written notice is required, you are authorized to provide one in these same terms.

Please notify me immediately upon compliance of these instructions so as to make public this government decision, which as of now is being kept strictly confidential.

Ismael Huerta Díaz
Vice Admiral
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Source: Translation provided by Pascale Bonnefoy.

Appendix 2 "Persona Non Grata." Secret telex sent by Chile's Foreign Minister, Vice Admiral Ismael Huerta, to the Chilean embassy in Stockholm requesting an urgent meeting with the Swedish Foreign Minister to inform him that Edelstam was considered a persona non grata for the Chilean government.

Chapter 3

The Santo Tomás Chichicastenango's Municipal Firefighters

"Green Pines Covering the Dead Bodies"

Marcia Esparza, Stephanie Alfaro, and Kristy Sanandres

We analyze the untold role the firefighters, or *bomberos*, played in providing rescuing services to the rural Maya population during the genocide in Guatemala (1981–1983). We explore it through the lens of the Santo Tomás Chichicastenango Municipal Firefighters drawing from postcolonial studies and the subfield of rescue studies and thus, we aim at integrating the Chichicastenango's bomberos into the global study of rescuers. The prolonged and bloody war between the right-wing state and the left-wing rebels (1962–1996), the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), involved the launching of callous and genocidal, United States-backed anticommunist counterinsurgency campaigns. Organized sectors of indigenous peoples contesting the status quo were labeled the country's "internal enemy," and particularly targeted by the army.[1] Peasants and communities suspected of affiliation with nonviolent, grassroots groups active since the late 1970s and collaborating or sympathizing with URNG rebels were the army's prime suspects. Of all human rights abuses, 46 percent took place in the department of El Quiché, where 344 of the total 669 massacres were perpetrated—almost entirely by the army.[2]

This research focusing on the role played by the firefighters is part of a larger, unfolding project that began in 1997, when one of the authors, Marcia Esparza, interviewed hundreds of survivors and victims of the armed conflict for the United Nations' Historical Clarification Commission (Truth Commission, Commission, or CEH, in Spanish) (1997–1999) established in the aftermath of the 1996 signing of the Peace Accords. The CEH concluded that acts of genocide against four Indigenous areas had occurred. Echoing the work by American ambulance drivers in World War I, at the heights of

the slaughter, the Chichicastenango fire truck went out into rural areas every day to save peasants badly wounded by machetes and gunshots, taking them to the nearest, and only, hospital in Santa Cruz, the department capital.[3] The bomberos were also tasked with picking up corpses. To record their daily activities, firefighters kept an administrative log of their trips that includes chilling details of what they found lying on communities' pathways and crossroads (See Appendix 1 for a sample of descriptions). Its discovery has allowed for the possibility of creating a rich archive of rescue initiatives that are not usually chronicled, recalling Jacques Sémelin's assertion, ". . .archives pertaining to rescue initiatives are rare."[4]

The rich corpus of literature documenting the experience of Jews during World War II has provided us with pivotal sociological and interdisciplinary insights, shedding light on the salient role of the specific historical context and processes, including structural limitations, that afford opportunities for rescue operations.[5] Scholars have noted that the concept of rescuer is intimately tied to another key concept, "the Righteous," which refers to "a person who had acted with no ulterior motives whatsoever, whether political economic, sexual. . ." to save European Jews.[6] Unlike the recognition of the role of the Righteous during the Holocaust, scholars have pointed out the absence of remembering those who helped others in other contexts, such as in Rwanda. Lars Waldorf, for example, emphasizes the oblivion surrounding the Hôtel des Mille Collines (memorialized in the film *Hotel Rwanda* as an epic memory site where one thousand Tutsi and moderate Hutus were saved by the hotel manager), asserting that "there is no monument bearing witness to the remarkable fact that no one died here in 1994."[7]

As authors in this book stress, remembering those who helped other persecuted victims in wholly different but similarly dire contexts than the Holocaust, such as in Latin America, has been silenced. Against this void, what type of specific operations did the firefighters perform and how they carry them out? Our concern is with exploring rescuers' actions "as a social act performed in an extreme crisis situation," following Sémelin's conceptualization.[8] We argue, however, for the need to not only consider the most immediate extreme conditions of violence, the "crisis," besieging Indigenous communities, but also the broader context of poverty underlying Maya communities, rooted in conditions of internal colonialism. In this way, we can understand the preexisting solidarity links with the bomberos that had been forged, echoing Claire Andrieu's assertion that the rescuers are "not necessarily outside the persecuted community. . ."[9] As anthropologists have long established, Indigenous communities often harbor distrust and resentment against the non-Indigenous institutions, which points to the importance of recasting the role of the rescue during genocide to consider the preexisting

trustful relations between rural Maya communities and the bomberos. Therefore, we will first argue that the rescue role of the bomberos was already normalized within Chichicastenango communities since they were often the only institution providing families with medical services and the transportation of pregnant women, the sick, and those wounded in work accidents. The firefighters also helped out with the transportation of bands during the area's festivities and delivered chairs for schools. This means that the genocidal violence only accentuated the Municipal Firefighters' role and aid efforts, as they were one of the few credible institutions that were already present and that could provide significant help within otherwise forgotten, rural, illiterate communities. The second and most obvious difference with conventional definitions of rescue as "deliberate actions that people took to keep another person from being killed," is the fact that the bomberos didn't keep peasants from being massacred by counterinsurgency campaigns or just saved the lives of the wounded.[10] Against the immediacy of criminal counterinsurgency campaigns, they also picked up the dead and brought them to the nearest Hospital Morgue. We argue that the recovery of corpses can also be considered the result of rescue efforts aiding in protecting the dead because it shows protection of victims' dignity and embodies rescue behavior in line with customary laws.[11] Following a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology needed to uncover the specific structural conditions shaping relations between the bomberos and Maya communities preexisting the genocide, we divide this chapter in two sections. First we provide a description of the extreme poverty impacting communities, together with oral testimonies, and then present a quantitative description, which provides us with a better understanding of the daily contribution made by the bomberos to rural communities.

REMEMBERING THE FIREFIGHTERS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

In the context of her fieldwork with the Truth Commission, Esparza was asked to carry out an in-depth study of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, a Maya township in the southern tip of El Quiché known for its colorful craft market visited every Sunday and Thursday by local and international tourists. In the early 1980s, it was comprised of some 40,000 residents. Like the other twenty ethnic groups, the Maya-K'iché live precarious lives shaped by centuries of internal colonialism upheld by the Ladino, non-Indigenous, oligarchy state that has ruled the country in connivance with the military. We use the term internal colonialism to refer to those conditions of exploitation and subordination kept from colonial times. Briefly, in the 1960s, Mexican

sociologists Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Pablo González Casanova coined the concept of "internal colonialism," asserting that Latin American independence from Spain did not mean the end of the "coloniality of power."[12] As a result, ethnic discrimination against the majority Maya peasantry, together with their exploitation as "peasants," leads them to hold tiny plots of land (less than two acres) as they face the growing threat of landlessness and cultural extinction. This disenfranchisement is dramatically illustrated by communities located in the northwestern corner of Chichicastenango, far from the Interamerican Highway, the main access road to communities.

The Mactzul V community in Chichicastenango is illustrative of this postcoloniality. Situated in the outlying west, accessed through three communities of broken terrain.[13] By 1995, around the time the fieldwork for this research was carried out, there were 176 humble *ranchos* (houses) with an average household size of five people. Sixty-three percent of the total Mactzul V houses have access to *chorro*, which is potable water typically flowing to a hand basin, and 46 percent of the houses have access to *pilas* (recipient for water) that are typically used for washing clothes and other basic needs. One can assume water was limited in this community if, through either outlet, the full community of 176 houses did not have access to an improved water source. Vásquez and many human rights reports have asserted that existing water systems in rural Guatemala are unreliable, frequently interrupted, and the water is likely to be unsafe to consume.[14] This extreme poverty was coupled with preexisting militarization in the area controlling the populations' self-initiatives to collectively organize and mobilize to attain sustainable development for their families and communities, according to Esparza's Silenced Communities.[15]

In Chichicastenango, according to the Truth Commission, 953 people of the reported 107 cases were victims of human rights crimes from 1960–1996. This represents 2.4 percent of the estimated total population of 40,000 in Chichicastenango during 1980 and 1981.[16] Elsewhere, Esparza has shown that the municipality was symbolically divided by the war between the east supporting the rebels, and the west, where the army had built its power base by exploiting families and communities' extreme conditions of poverty.[17]

Esparza came to learn of the role of the bomberos and was directed to speak with Victor Garc*í*a, a Ladino teacher, who was the Second Firefighter Commander from 1978 to 1995. This is how she had initial access to the logs, bundled by year and kept by Garc*í*a, who later gave her Esparza copies of this unique genocide archive. Since she left Guatemala in 2000, she has visited Garc*í*a and his family, who have provided more information over the years about what transpired in the municipality during the war and in its aftermath. In June 2015, Esparza and Alfaro last interviewed him in his Chichicastenango home.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MORAL VALUES

Scholarship on genocide rescue focusing on the European experience during World War II and in Argentina highlights the role of networks and social ties in rescue operations. Analyzing the Argentinean case in this volume, Jessica Casiro observes that rescue behavior is attributed to social networks in which virtuous characteristics and values are subordinate.[18] In the case of Chichicastenango, the firefighters had not only established networks with the local police and the justice of the peace, but they had also forged ties with Maya communities, as noted above. Established in 1977, in the aftermath of the powerful 1976 earthquake that took the lives of over 20,000 people, flattening houses and destroying the few material possessions of the poor, the bomberos began their work in Chichicastenango with very little infrastructure resources, a car donated by a neighbor and some basic equipment donated by firefighters from Guatemala City.

As the genocide unfolded in the early 1980s, with little more than some initial training in first aid, this courageous team carried out humanitarian acts: giving without asking in return. When interviewed in the late 1990s, García remembered news about the early onset of the slaughter as he learned about massacres happening in the Ixil area, one of the four areas where acts of genocide took place, "All the news was like an unbelievable dream, hard to believe." García looked back about how he was first exposed to the war's violence in the late 1970s,

> Until one day, violence came to our doorsteps. I remember that a disabled man was one of the first ones in being killed. He was from the Christian Democrat Party. That took place here in the urban center [known as *el pueblo*]. This was our first experience picking up a body resulting from a cold-blooded assassination. Until then, we had rescued cadavers dead from alcoholism or traffic accidents, or due to another type of accident. But we had never had the experience of picking up a body killed by bullets.

Over time, witnessing the war's horrors numbed his reactions as genocidal violence became routinized, but he never stopped consoling the frightened, grieving families. "They trusted us back then; people would tell us about their sorrows, and they would tell us, in their own words, a little bit about how things were for them in their communities." Undoubtedly, because the bomberos belonged to the municipality their duty was to provide aid. Yet, they went beyond their obligations when they responded to calls made by poor and terrified Maya-peasant families or the local police to save the wounded and to bring the dead to the local morgue in the context of pervasive fear and increased militarization. With poor infrastructure, only one pickup and one ambulance, and as terrifying as it was, assisting those

wounded by bullets did not deter the bomberos from continuing to provide aid to families. Gradually, neighbors would call them every day to pick up two or three bodies. Sometimes, even cadavers from other areas were removed by the army and left in other communities to cover up their crimes and confuse the population. Their earlier experience, dating back to the mid-1970s, had helped the bomberos build the trust with neighbors, families and communities, a trust that was already present as the state-sponsored violence escalated in rural areas.

García explains how the team managed, despite curfew restrictions, to bring relief to the population as the army and rebel groups respected their work:

> And they [the army] didn't take away our right to work because I believe that the firefighters that were there were the only ones in the department who managed to work 24 hours a day. Because the Quiché firefighters told us to no longer go out and established a schedule of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, nothing more, and we worked 24 hours, 3:00 am, 4:00 am, 12:00 midnight, we went out to aid the wounded, the sick, whatever there was, and fortunately they didn't harass us, nor did the guerillas, nor the army, that is, they gave us this opportunity to work and within this context, we were respected.

Unlike the case of human rights defenders and victims in the case of Colombia discussed in this volume, the status held by the bomberos separated them from the rest of the impoverished, otherwise forgotten population. In the specific case of the army's trust for the bomberos, García further observes:

> There were commanders who came running from the highway; they were afraid of rebels' ambushes. A colonel took refuge with us because he had been ambushed and the only place he could find in which he could make it to the morning was with us and we welcomed him, and took him once again to the other military zone for safety. If he asked us for help, we had to give it to him because we have to help people indiscriminately, and in this way, we weren't harassed.

"As a result, we play a humanitarian role for both sides," García concluded, showing great pride for having helped when their services were required—even if they were needed by members of the perpetrating group.

In Chichicastenango, a mountainous place, despite the challenges to reaching remote communities, the firefighters were part of a pivotal network made up of the few institutions serving the poor. Few public institutions were present in the area to issue death certificates and to facilitate the identification of bodies. Without their rescue operations, bodies would have been left there to decompose, or animals would have eaten many massacre victims. Picking up

cadavers, as when the firefighters were called to the Saquillá II community, was crucial in the identification of victims and for survivors to claim the dead.

BEARING WITNESS TO THE SAQUILLÁ II MASSACRE THROUGH THE BOMBEROS' ADMINISTRATIVE LOG

As Esparza investigated the administrative log in the late 1990s, she noticed the Saquillá II Massacre, which had been unreported by the Truth Commission, as had many other countless massacres committed by the army. For the most part, according to the REHMI report (the Catholic Church's own truth commission), the army ordered its victims—as it appeared in 17 percent of the testimonies—to dig pits to throw the dead into and then set them on fire to hide the proof of their crimes.[19] In the Massacre of Saquillá II, however, bodies were left in their beds on the early morning of May 18, 1982, where they had been callously killed. Located in the northwestern corner of Chichicastenango, like Mactzul IV discussed earlier, by the early 1980s, access to the area of Saquillá II was only possible by truck. García remembered the tragedy that unfolded:

> This was in May of '82. Forty-two corpses, mainly women and children, and three or four men, no more, because the custom in our town is that the man goes out to the coast to work, and his women and children remain on their own. Thinking that they were there, they [the perpetrators] arrived at night and took ranch after ranch, with all of the inhabitants sleeping in their houses, and they all received Galil bullet wounds, because the Galil is very particular and it was easy to tell that they had been from a Galil, and also because of the cartridges that had remained, we realized it, and also the police arrived with us along with the justice of the peace.

García remembers the cadavers, which were piled up and covered with nothing but green pine branches to keep neighbors along the road from seeing the macabre spectacle as the corpses were transported in three vehicles. These were taken from the community to the Ministry of Peace, whose authorization was needed to bring the bodies to the Hospital of El Quiché morgue in Santa Cruz. As the vehicles descended from the dusty mountains, victims' blood dripped from the truck, leaving behind the indelible trace of violent death. Writing about the South African experience of burial procedures, Nicky Rousseau also notes the "normal bureaucracy of death: delivery to the mortuary, followed by a burial."[20] In the case of Indigenous communities, family members were prevented by the army from burying their dead either because the army threw them into mass graves or because the army would accuse family members trying to recover remains of being "communists."

García also recounts the lonely acts of rescue he and his team experienced when picking up the corpses:

> We used three vehicles to transport the corpses, as there was no other way to move them, nobody to move them and nobody lent out their vehicle. It deeply hurt us that we had to bring them piled up like pieces of material in the pickup to be able to transport them, one on top of another.

Widespread fear prevented neighbors from collaborating; they remained passive witnesses, contrasting with the empathetic diligence exhibited by the firefighters. When asked about the criminal responsibility for the massacre, García responded:

> During this time period the army was blamed for it, that's to say, it was something that everybody knew but that nobody dared to say openly; but rumors had it that it had been nobody but the army, and that it has been this way, but as for eyewitness accounts, none. And with time they told us and people talked about how they had seen a van enter on that side, I think it was a greenish-white color, and they saw it leave after the occurrences and afterwards they saw it in the Chupol military base, and in that way the people corroborated the facts of it being from there and that they had seen it from within. We know this because they told us and because the very same people who suffered confided in us, showed us their pain and in their pain we saw a bit of how it had been. This was the worst we encountered.

As Sémelin suggests, these actions of goodness only take significant prominence in genocidal times "during which an absolute death threat hangs over the designated victims."[21] Despite García's recollections of the army's "approval" of cleaning up after massacres, he and his crew were afraid as they painstakingly carried out their task, chilled by the surrounding, pervasive war and genocidal violence:

> We did our work without talking, because we didn't know what was around us, and as the reprisals were particularly severe in this time period, without having been given any order or slogan, things were done like this: nobody talked, everybody kept quiet and nothing more, and the mourners cried, nothing more, and came to us, and we consoled them and prayed with them.

In silence, survivors wept when the bomberos arrived. On another occasion, García had to reconstitute the cephalic mass of a military commissioner, (a post similar to that of the rural police in Germany or Poland, tasked with hunting for Jews in the countryside during the Holocaust). Military commissioners committed 15 percent of all human rights crimes, according to the

Truth Commission, yet they also became victims when suspected by the army of collaborating with the URNG rebels or when they were targeted by the rebels. Remembering the bomberos' actions, as sociologist Nechama Tec has observed, gives us a glimpse into those who stood by the helpless, which, in addition to "knowing what factors are involved in the protection of the poor, the dependent and the downtrodden," provides an opportunity for promoting goodness and "positive forces."[22]

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: WHAT DO THE LOGS TELL?

The firefighters' crew painstakingly recorded the chilling details of the genocide as they registered the evidence of mutilated and incinerated headless corpses of women and young children. In general, we found that the descriptive data corresponds with the nationwide information collected by the Truth Commission report regarding the number of human rights crimes perpetrated during the General José Efrain Ríos Montt regime (1982–1983). At the same time, the bomberos' logs registered additional human rights crimes undetected by the Commission, such as the Saquillá II Massacre previously discussed. By examining this archive, we examine the type of injuries identified in the cadavers: strangulation, machete wounds, asphyxiation, and bullet wounds, as well as the ages of the wounded and the dead, and the number of grueling hours the firefighters devoted each day, despite the concomitant chaos of the unfolding genocide and their lack of infrastructure for such circumstances. From this view, the Chichicastenango Firefighters fall into the category of "repeated helpers," as analyzed by Casiro in this volume (see also Appendix 2 for a description between "repeat" and "one-time" helpers).

Many of the causes of death registered in the log are not from bullets or the armed conflict itself, but result from the lack of services depriving communities of their basic human rights and the armed conflict's delaying effect on the economic development of communities. Yet, through the lens of the descriptive daily logs kept by the bomberos, we can see the day-to-day state violence that besieged Chichicastenango, showing the escalation of violence in the years of the genocide: In 1981 there were a total of 690 recorded service entries, in 1982 there was an increase to 878 entries, and in 1983, 503 entries were recorded.

The information listed in the logs was tallied for detailed analysis. Each logged entry provides circumstantial descriptions and undertakings performed by the firefighters. More specifically, the records indicate the date and time their service began and ended, giving us an idea of the amount of cases and hours worked in a day, names of solicitors, as well as patient and/or

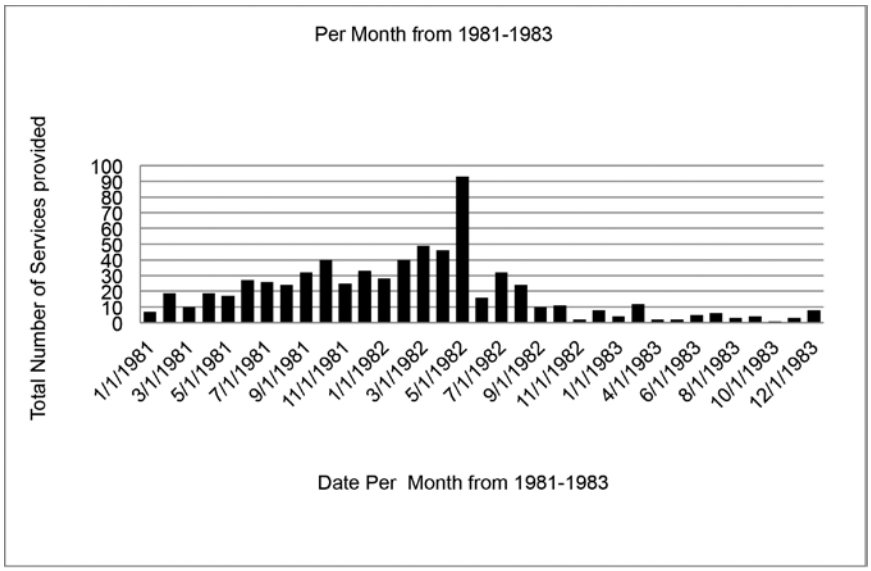


Figure 3.1 Services Provided Per Month from 1981–1983. *Note*: Created by contributors.

victim names, ages, addresses, notes, and actions taken. It reveals information about the firefighters' leadership in heading the rather complex rescue operations as they drove through zigzag mountains and poorly transited roads. At least five volunteers assisted the poverty-stricken Maya-K'iché population targeted for extermination.

Figure 3.1 shows that in 1981 and 1982 the majority of services provided were that of picking up corpses or transporting corpses. In 1983, the number of corpses picked up declined drastically, while instances of medical assistance and social events increases, illustrating that the people went on with their daily lives amidst the engulfing chaos and confusion resulting from genocidal violence. Firefighters' records at the peak of the genocide from 1981 through 1983 compellingly illustrate their rescue role in their posts as not only bomberos, but also as gravediggers and first aid medics, providing ambulance and transportation services.

GENOCIDE'S CORPSES: WHICH COMMUNITIES AND WHY?

Table 3.1 illustrates that the majority of corpses aided were male with a total of 420 reported, against 82 female corpses logged for all three years.

Table 3.1 Number of Corpses Aided

	Reported Per Year			
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*Total*
Female	0.06	0.15	0.24	83
Male	0.69	0.54	0.64	420
Not reported	0.25	0.31	0.12	185
Total	279	359	50	688

Note: Created by contributors.

Figure 3.2 shows that the vast majority of corpses recorded were between twenty to thirty years of age; 71 percent were male, while 9 percent were female, and the remaining 20 percent were unreported. These numbers concur with the Truth Commission report concluding that out of 62 percent of the registered victims, 75 percent were males.[23]

The majority of corpses' addresses were reported to come from the urban center with 38 administrative entries Semeja I and II with 47 entries and Pachot with 16 entries. The Semeja communities are located off the Interamerican Highway and close to Chupol, which the army had identified as red or pro-URNG rebel communities and against whom it launched its scorched earth policy at the height of the genocide.

Figure 3.3 shows that the majority of corpses suffered from gunshot wounds, while knife perforations were the second most common injury in 1981 and

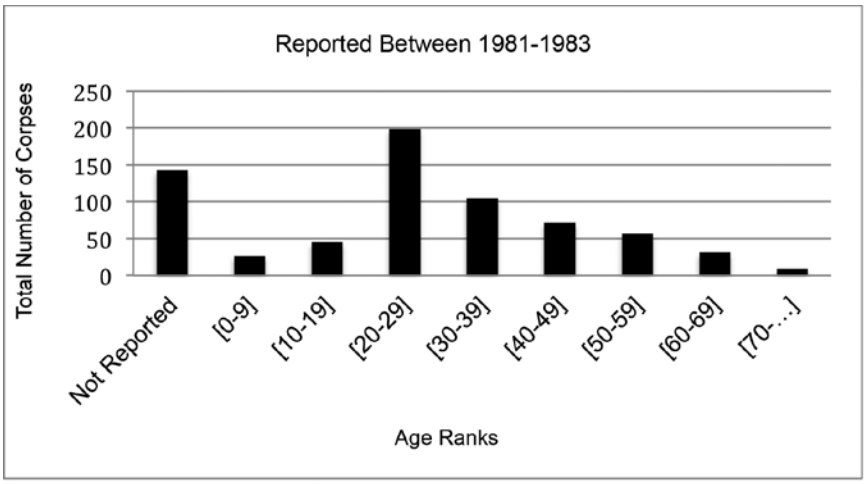


Figure 3.2 Number of Corpses Reported from 1981–1983. *Note*: Created by contributors.

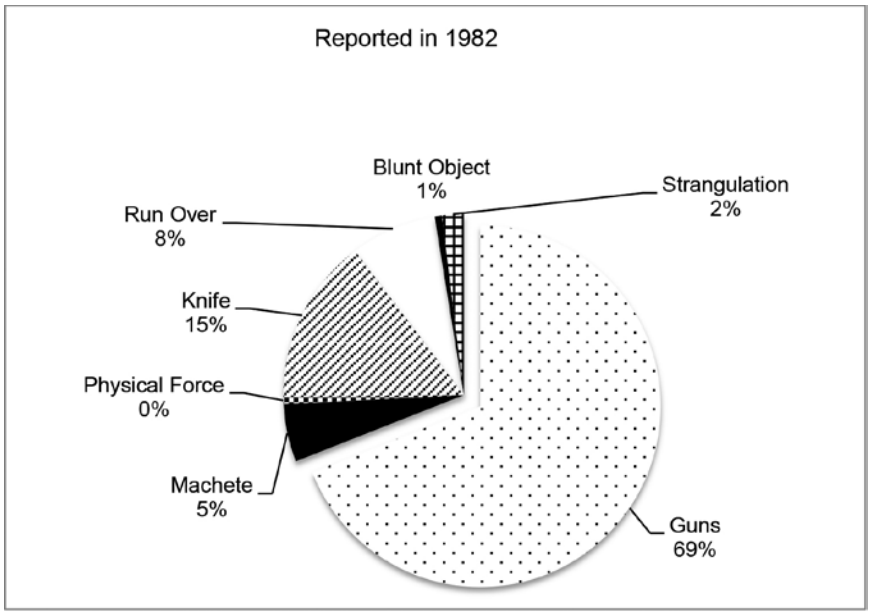


Figure 3.3 Corpse Injuries Reported in 1982. *Note*: Created by contributors.

1982. In 1983 the majority were reported to have died of alcohol intoxication, pesticide or venom. Walter Randolph Adams and John P. Hawkins, in their study of health care in rural Maya communities, argue that sadness and anxiety were related to such self—inflicted causes of death. One such concern they found was about husbands' drinking problems associated with economic hardship, and depression resulting from their spending money needed to pay for basic necessities.[24]

PATIENTS, SURVIVORS

There were 1,099 logs reporting assistance to patients in the three years. The majority of patients were male, by an average of 56 percent and females 42 percent, shown in Table 3.2. The majority of the patients were between the ages of twenty and thirty years, a finding that concurs with the results from the Truth Commission.[25] The most common addresses the patients came from were from the urban center of Chichicastenango and adjacent communities, such as Chucam and Chujupen.

Table 3.2 Patients Assisted from 1981–1983

	Reported Per Year			
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*Total*
Female	0.42	0.41	0.43	460
Male	0.57	0.58	0.54	623
Not reported	0.01	0.01	0.03	16
Total	370	399	330	688

Note: Created by contributors.

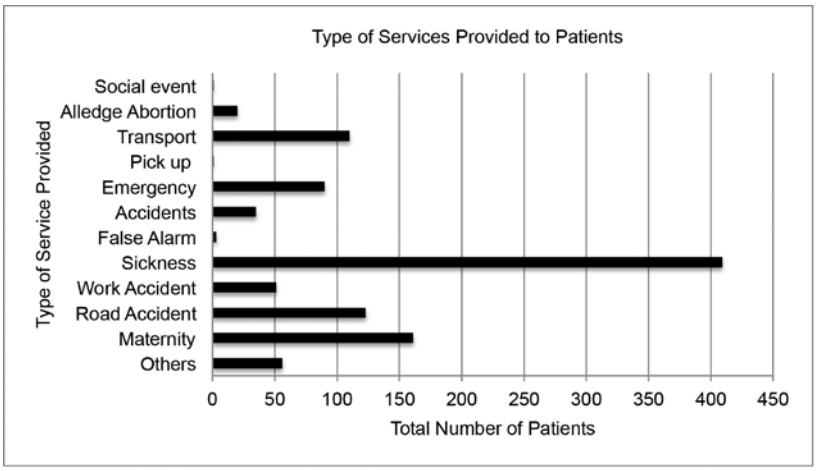


Figure 3.4 Types of Services Provided to Patients. *Note*: Created by contributors.

According to Figure 3.4, it was reported that many of the poverty-stricken patients called the firefighters because they needed transportation to a hospital due to their sickness. If injuries were reported by a patient and observed in their body, a small description was written to further explain the emergency. For example, a person could have been listed as having a bullet wound, subjected to attempted strangulation and reported rape. In this case, each entry was counted and listed separately. There were a total of 1,117 incidents reported by the firefighter of patients with injuries.

Specifically, according to Table 3.3 the most common injury reported was bullet wounds, followed by, "physical aggression," cuts and fractures. It is important to highlight that although there were 321 cases of death by bullets, there were seventeen cases of cut throats showing the brutality of the genocide: the physical immediacy of perpatror and victims.

Table 3.3 Most Common Types of Injury

Type of Injury	*Total*	*Percentage*
Bullets	321	0.29
Physical Aggression	219	0.20
Cut	156	0.10
Patients Found in Groups	107	0.10
Fracture	93	0.08
Intoxication	50	0.04
Burn	37	0.03
Strangulation	37	0.03
Physical Force	33	0.03
Other	30	0.03
Cut Throat	17	0.02
Amputation	9	0.01
Grenade Pieces	4	0.00
Alleged Rape	2	0.00
Nervous Shock	2	0.00
Total	1117	

Note: Created by contributors.

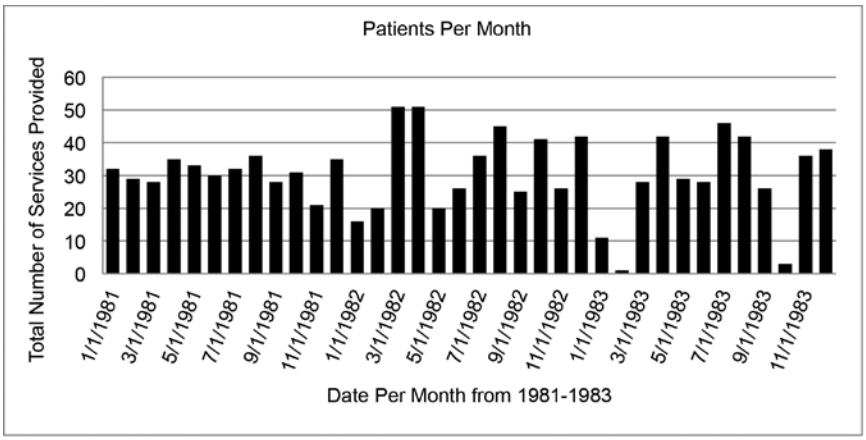


Figure 3.5 Number of Patient Services Per Month from 1981–1983. *Note*: Created by contributors.

Most salient, Figure 3.5 shows the months of March and April 1982 as requiring the most services for patients, when General Montt unleashed his bloody counterinsurgency campaigns nationwide.

In 2015 the general was charged and convicted of genocide at a Guatemalan Court of Law, but the case was annulled soon after making a mockery of the Criminal Justice System in the country.

Appendix 1 Sample of Administrative Logs

Date	*Community*	
January 1, 1982	Chicua II	The patient presented a sharp wound on the outer ear and head, [and] bruises on several parts of his body. Wounded with a bladed weapon.
January 13, 1982	Mactzul II	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the right pectoralis [muscle], one on the lateral wall of the thorax, on the same side, and bruises.
January 24, 1982	Mactzul III	The first one was buried in the same place where he was found. The second person presented bullet holes in the occipital [bone], [and] erosions on the left cheek. The third person [presented] a bullet hole in the infrascapular region, [with] internal organs outside of the body.
January 28, 1982	Mactzul III	The corpse was buried in the place where it was found, because it presented an advanced stage of decomposition and sharp wounds on the neck.
January 28, 1982	Quiejel	The patient presented a sharp wound on her right forearm. (Manuela's) corpse [presented] sharp wounds on the right trapezius [muscle] and in the middle of the nape and on the arms and on the frontal [muscle]. The xx presented bullet holes in the right orbital-temporal region and one on the occipital [bone].
February 3, 1982	N/A	At the request of the police, we went to the scene of the crime. However, the wounded man was already dying, and we did not leave until we made sure that he had died because, when we moved him, his brains spilled out.
March 5, 1982	Pachoj	The corpse presented signs of strangulation, lacerations on the cheekbone, and on the lower back. He was found near kilometer 141 in the Pachoj Chichicastenango district.
March 15, 1982	Santa Cruz	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the left orbital region, one on the right temporal [bone], and the brains hanging out. A maternity service was also performed, as per Juan Carlos Ventura's request.
March 23, 1982	Pachoj	The patient shows a grenade wound on the right frontal [bone].
March 28, 1982	Semeja II	Corpses xx [presented] several bullet holes (Sebastiana), bullet holes and burns on several parts of the body. The patient had aborted.
March 31, 1982	Chuabaj	The corpse presented sharp wounds on the jaw, as well as on the Adam's Apple region. A bullet hole on the lateral region of the thorax, as well as on the mastoid region.
April 16, 1982	Xeabaj II	The patient presented a bullet wound on her patella. The corpse presented several bullet holes in several parts of her body.

(*Continued*)

Appendix 1 Sample of Administrative Logs—*Continued*

Date	*Community*	
May 3, 1982	Pochohil II Pocohil I	The corpses presented, first, sharp puncture wounds on the pectoralis [muscle], on the spinal column, and on the trapezius [muscle]; second, sharp puncture wounds on the back, caused by a bladed weapon.
May 16, 1982	Pocohil I	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the right parietal [bone], sharp wounds on the frontal region, and many sharp wounds on the chin.
May 18, 1982	Paxot III	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the frontal region, one in the region of the right eye, [and] one on the right orbital region.
May 25, 1982	Chicua II	The corpses were completely charred; they were buried in the Chicua primero district by order of the judge. The wounded man presented a bullet hole in the left pectoralis [muscle].
June 4, 1982	Chijtinimit	The corpse presented a bullet wound on the left forearm, signs of strangulation, sharp-pointed wounds on the neck, on the lower back, and on the thorax.
August 4, 1982	Chichicastenango	The corpse presented three bullet holes, one in the head, another one in the right eye, and a third one in the left leg; he was transferred to Quiche General Hospital. A patient showing a blow to the head was also transferred.
September 1, 1982	Semeja II	Juana presented three bullet holes: In the left hip, arm, and leg. The girl [had] a sharp wound extending across her buttocks.
October 4, 1982	Semeja I Semeja II	The two corpses presented multiple bullet holes and sharp puncture wounds. Also, people who presented burns over 100% of their bodies were buried in the Semeja district.
October 5, 1982	Chontolá	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the region of the right collarbone, one along the left side of the Adam's Apple, another one in the middle of the neck.
November 2, 1982	Paquixic	The corpses presented: First, sharp puncture wounds in several parts of his body, a bullet hole in the left temporal [bone], and [he] was decapitated. The second one, bullet holes in: The right auricular, in the area of the Adam's Apple, on the left cheek, and on the left collarbone.
November 3, 1982		The corpse presented bullet holes on his left shoulder, one on his right cheekbone, two bullet holes on his back, on his right side, a bullet graze on his shoulder blade, and his brains hanging out.

November 3, 1982	Pachoj	The corpse presented a bullet hole in the mastoid region and black-and-blue bruises on his eyes.
July 6, 1982		A total of 19 corpses (seven men, eight women, three children, and a child [sic]) were exhumed from a well.
July 19, 1982	Barrio Chilima	The corpse presented a wound on the right auricular, a sharp-pointed wound on the back, and a bullet hole in the left pectoralis [muscle].
August 2, 1982	Chulumal II	The patient shows internal injuries that had been caused by being beaten with a stick.
October 18, 1982	Chulumal II	The corpse presented possible asphyxiation by immersion and was found in the Paquixic district in a river beneath a bridge at a depth of 25 meters.
October 22, 1982	Semeja	The corpses presented signs of strangulation, [and] a bullet hole in the second occipital [bone]. It presented an impact on the right mastoid region, as well as signs of strangulation.
December 7, 1982	Xepocol	Mr. Manuel León Calel's corpse presented machete wounds on the frontal and parietal regions, on the outer ear, [and] on the cheek. Bullet holes in the abdomen, pectoralis [muscle], right collarbone, and his hand's fingers [had been] amputated.
December 20, 1982	Chichicastenango	The young man fell off a cliff; when we arrived, the civil patrol had already rescued him. We limited ourselves to guide him and take him to his place of residence.
May 2, 1982	Chontola	The corpse presents a bullet hole in the area of the right collarbone, one on the left side of the Adam's Apple, another one on the middle of the neck.
May 24, 1982	Semeja I	The corpse presented sharp puncture wounds, caused by a bladed weapon, on his abdomen, thorax, back, neck, [and] chin, and a bullet hole in his hand.
June 2, 1982	Pachoj	He presented bullet holes in the trapezius, shoulder blade, [and] deltoid regions, in the middle of the nape, [and] in the occipital [bone].
June 3, 1982	Xepocol	First Corpse: Bullet holes on the right lateral wall and on Adam's Apple, [and there was] a sharp wound in the middle of the nape. Second Corpse: A bullet in the lateral part of the thorax, on the right side, a deep cut wound on the mastoid region, a chest burn, and the internal organs hanging out.
June 24, 1982	Patzibal	The corpse presented sharp wounds on his right cheek, [and] on his right arm, and his right hand [had been] amputated; these wounds had been caused by a bladed weapon.

Note: Created by contributors.

Appendix 2 Jessica Casiro: Argentine Rescuers: A Study on the "Banality of Good"[1]

"Repeat Helpers" Individuals engaged in multiple helping endeavors.	*"One Time Helpers" Individuals involved in single acts of help.*
Gender: Female/Male	Gender: No particular gender over represented
Age: Under 20, 20s, 30s	Age: Late Teens-80s (on average older)
Marital Status: Married, Single (with and without children)	Marital Status: Married, Single
Economic Standing: Ranged from very poor to rich	Economic Standing: Ranged from very poor to rich
Education: Ranged from elementary education to PhDs	Education: Ranged from elementary education to PhDs
Occupations: Students, Intellectuals, White Color, Blue Color, Medical Professionals, Housewives	Occupations: Students, Intellectuals, White Color, Blue Color, Medical Professors, Housewives
Religion: Ranged from non-religious to devout	Religion: Not overwhelmingly religious
Political Involvement:	Political Involvement (Two Groups):
a. Strongly involved in politics. (Montoneros, UES, PRT, ERP, Communist Party)	a. No interest in politics, uninvolved. (Majority)
b. Apolitical but involved in social activism (Helping Poor, Sick)	b. No political affiliation, but interested in politics (Minority)
Victimization-Direct Victims:	Victimization:
• Spent time in clandestine detention centers or prison	• Not direct victims
• Those held in clandestine detention centers were tortured	• Spent no time in prison
• Forced into exile because of military raid of homes	• Not subject to exile
• Forced to live a clandestine life to avoid being captured	• Not forced to clandestine living
Indirectly Affected-Family members, close friends, life partners	Indirectly Affected-Relatives, close friend persecuted
Assisted-Companeros/friends, family members, workmates, employees, neighbors	Assisted-Family members, close friends, friend's acquaintances or referred strangers
Individuals with similar ideologies	
Individuals that were persecuted by the military	

Note: We are thankful to Angelia Felix for preparing this table.

CONCLUSIONS

In retrospect, the team was not aware of their role as rescuers during the genocide, but later on, García expressed this insight in 2015, making him and his crew witnesses after the event. As collective memory is highly dynamic, contested and highly politicized, with multiple competing narratives, what does the role of the bomberos mean for locally-based processes of memorialization? We have analyzed the role of firefighters by analyzing unique archives and in-depth interviews revealing that the Municipal Firefighters were already fulfilling a humanitarian role in the countryside by aiding Maya communities. Learning about their history, their personal motivations, and what they witnessed as they registered the findings in their logs shows that the firefighters had a crucial role in assisting members of their community in extreme situations of violence far beyond the typical duties of rural firefighters. Remembering the bomberos through the lens of testimonies and the logs they kept reveals the strong bonds established between them and poverty-stricken communities, elucidating those institutions, organizations and individuals involved in rescue efforts in the unfolding of genocidal slaughter affecting Indigenous peoples. Ignoring the bomberos' experience helping the internally colonized would cast their rescue actions into oblivion and would prevent us from recognizing the remarkable acts carried out to bring some sense of dignity and humanity to poverty-stricken Maya peasants. Thus, remembering them contributes to developing a comprehensive literature on rescuers in Latin America.

NOTES

1. The notion of the "internal enemy" rooted in the anticommunist National Security Doctrine (NSD) brought to Latin America during the Cold War years. As other authors discuss in this chapter, what communism meant for those holding the power of violence were arbitrarily applied to workers, peasants, students, journalists and shantytown dwellers. Esparza, "Introduction: Globalizing Latin American Studies," 1–19.

2. The genocide targeted the Maya-Q'anjob'al and Maya-Chuj, in Barillas, Nentón and San Mateo Ixtatán in North Huehuetenango; Maya-Ixil, in Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul, Quiché; Maya-K'iché in Joyabaj, Zacualpa and Chiché, Quiché; and Maya-Achi in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. CEH, Conclusions, 39.

3. See Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers.*

4. Sémelin, From Help to Rescue, 2.

5. Refer to the introduction for this literature.

6. Only a non-Jew who had saved a Jew in a selfless manner should be declared 'Righteous.' Sémelin, From Help to Rescue, 3.

7. Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda," 101–25, 101.

8. Sémelin, From Help to Rescue, 8.

9. Andrieu, "Conclusion: Rescue, A Notion Revisited," 497–98.

10. Fujii, "Rescuers and Killer-Rescuers during the Rwanda Genocide," 146; Ugur Ümit Üngör focusing on the Armenian case "Any 'behavior, clandestine or not," aimed at hiding "the identity of wanted people and/or to help them escape to secure places, "Conversion and Rescue," 203.

11. As H. Wayne Elliott observes in Crimes of War the main obligation to the dead involves, "Where possible, the burial or cremation is to be done in accordance with the religious rites of the deceased. The bodies are to be grouped according to nationality and the cemeteries mapped in such a way as to make later exhumation easier." "Dead and Wounded."

12. "The definition is originally linked to phenomena of conquest, where native populations are not completely eliminated and are part, first, of the colonial state and then, of the state acquiring formal independence, or that initiates a process of liberation, transition to socialism or recolonization and return to neoliberal capitalism." González Casanova, "Colonialismo Interno," 410. See also Stavenhagen, "Class, Colonialism, and Acculturation."

13. FUNCEDE, 1995.

14. Vásquez, "Municipal water services in Guatemala," 362–74.

15. Esparza, Silenced Communities: Legacies of and Resistance to Militarization and Militarism.

16. This number was drawn from 42,275 total victims for Guatemala we drew the 46 from El Quiché, 19,446 victims.

17. Esparza, "Impossible Memory and Post-Colonial Silences."

18. Casiro, "Argentine Rescuers: a Study on the 'Banality of Good.'"

19. Guatemala Never Again, REHMI, 138; Also in the community of Chuchipacá García told of 17 to 19 cadavers buried in a well, men and women recovered by the firefighters.

20. Nicky Rousseau. Death and Dismemberment: The Body and Counter-Insurgency in Apartheid South Africa, University Of The Western Cape, South Africa, Paper presented at the first annual "Corpses of Mass Violence and Genocide" conference in Paris, France on September 12–14, 2012.

21. Sémelin, *Resisting Genocide*, 6.

22. Tec, "When Lights Pierced the Darkness," 5.

23. Compared to 25 percent of the female population, CEH, Vol. II, 322–23, CEH 1999, IV: 73.

24. Walter Randolph Adams and et al. "Health Care in Maya Guatemala," 198, 202–3.

25. This finding is consistent with the Truth Commission's results regarding the age of most war victims: out of 38 percent of the victims, 18 percent were children, 79 percent adults, 3 percent elderly, CEH, Vol. II, 322–23.

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Chapter 4

Strategic Rescue Responses to Genocide

The Guatemalan Case[1]

Roddy Brett

In May 2013, Guatemala's former dictator, General Efraín Ríos Montt (1982–1983), was convicted in a domestic court for genocide and crimes against humanity and sentenced to a total of eighty years,[2] a sentence that was subsequently annulled by the country's Constitutional Court on highly dubious grounds.[3] The trial and guilty verdict against Ríos Montt have not brought closure on Guatemala's past. Rather, the processes have emphatically evidenced the continuing and highly conflictual struggle to define the narrative terms that frame the country's recent brutal history, a history that remains contested over three decades after the genocidal violence itself was committed, attesting to the profound absence of reconciliation in post-conflict Guatemala. While the trial remains in limbo, however, Ríos Montt's condemnation as a *genocidaire* has opened a key space for debate. Significantly, the trial represents a key victory for victims of the genocide, a victory won through the strategic political mobilization and sheer courageous determination of indigenous communities that survived the violence.

The post-conflict mobilization of indigenous communities represents only one chapter in a broader history of indigenous and non-indigenous organization that occurred within the framework of Guatemala's genocide and internal armed conflict. Nevertheless, even in the context of the trial of Ríos Montt, and despite considerable academic scholarship and activist mobilization around Guatemala's genocide, a key dynamic that emerged during and arguably shaped the country's genocide has remained obscured and silenced: genocide rescue. Scholarship on Guatemala's genocide has tended to focus upon the crimes that were perpetrated during the counterinsurgency, the legal ramifications of said crimes and the factors that precipitated them, eschewing engagement with the less visible and, by implication, apparently less remarkable processes of genocide rescue that took place at the height of the brutality.

For the case of Guatemala, as elsewhere, genocide rescue has tended to receive limited attention given that scholars have tended to focus "primarily on the *absence* of intervention."[4] It is the contention of this chapter to redress this disquieting absence by focusing on processes of genocide rescue during Guatemala's internal armed conflict with the goal of remembering the rescuers of human rights victims, those who carry out selfless acts to help others. It is appropriate more than three decades after the violence to revisit this little understood phenomenon and to reclaim meaningful histories of individual and collective dissent and agency, and particularly so in the aftermath of the Ríos Montt conviction.

The extreme callousness of the counterinsurgency forced collective mobilization underground between 1978 and 1983, meaning that civil society organizations were neutered, incapable of overtly confronting violence perpetrated by the state at national level.[5] However, at local level and across national borders, actors organized and developed critical strategies through which to confront state brutality, often combining roles in complementary and, at times, contradictory ways. Indigenous paramilitary civil patrollers, for example, carried out their duties to repel the guerrilla, often violently, sometimes silently combining them with unseen human rights activism.[6] Thousands organized through the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPRs), surviving in mountainous and jungle regions for over a decade. The CPRs assisted entire villages to flee, subsequently guaranteeing their survival with extraordinarily innovative strategies. In Chiapas, México, a *finca* owner gave refuge to thousands of Guatemalan indigenous refugees, feeding and clothing them when conventional institutional mechanisms, including the United Nations System, failed them. At the same time, the Catholic Church and its networks in Chiapas played a critical role in providing humanitarian relief to victims of massacres during the crisis, supported by local Mexican doctors and social workers. Response to genocide, either through collective organization or individually motivated acts ultimately wielded a significant impact, saving the lives of perhaps 25,000 people.

Based upon intensive ethnographic fieldwork and archival research carried out in Guatemala and Chiapas, México between 2002 and 2005, this chapter seeks to document and analyze the processes of genocide rescue—what Casiro has termed "the banality of good"—that took place in Guatemala through the CPRs and in Chiapas, southern México, on the México-Guatemala border. In the case of Guatemala, two predominant rescue patterns emerged: rescue *within* Guatemala characterized by the mobilization of displaced indigenous communities through the CPRs (what we might term endogenous rescue); and rescue driven by non-indigenous, non-Guatemalan actors, *outside of the country* (in México) and thus, to a degree, sheltered from systematic repercussions for rescue activities (what we might term exogenous rescue).

By documenting the processes of genocide rescue carried out by ordinary citizens, both Guatemalan and Mexican, scholarship may begin to elucidate episodes of profound humanity and strategic innovation wielded in the context of genocide and mass atrocities, while demonstrating that the decisive impact of genocidal violence may not itself be uniform. In short, histories of genocide rescue fracture the sweeping narrative that mass violence is terminal and paralyzing, and thus accordingly closes down spaces for agency, resistance and resilience. This chapter documents those moments where the complexities of human behavior and the exercise of agency in both organized and improvised rescue efforts not only represent defiance to enduring horror, but also contribute to the formation of heroic, contestatory political identities. The patterns evident in the Guatemala case study, moreover, suggest we revisit our conceptual framework for comprehending "rescue," as we shall see below.

The chapter will begin with a brief section documenting relevant literature in genocide rescue. It will then turn to an analysis of Guatemala's genocide and internal armed conflict. The sections that follow explore, in turn, the role in genocide rescue of the CPRs and of non-state actors and networks in Chiapas, México. The chapter closes with a series of concluding remarks.

GENOCIDE RESCUERS: CONCEPTUAL THEMES

Scholarship on genocide rescue has grappled with the debate concerning *who rescuers really are*. Discussion in this respect has revolved around whether rescuers demonstrate particular characteristics and why it is that they do what they do. According to Andrieu, Gensburger, Semelin and Schoch, "rescue is generally not normal in the context of genocide" and thus demonstrates a "peculiarity of "goodness" that subsists in the interstices of a universe of social war."[7] This is of significant relevance given the conditions in which genocide occurs and the related consequences of the violence, in contexts where, in the words of Todorov (2003: 12), while "evil" may spread widely, rapidly and without severe difficulty, "goodness" is difficult to affect and problematic to sustain.[8] According to Andrieu et al., "The genocidal process is based upon the breakdown, worse, the destruction of the social tie with the group described as an enemy."[9] Confronting this context, Andrieu et al. raise the critical question of who it is that manages both to resist amidst terror, destruction and stigmatization, while, at the same time, continuing to perceive the *enemy other* as a human being. In the context of the Guatemalan genocide, the issue of otherness is critical: otherness, in this case, was principally determined by ethnic identity and fuelled by profoundly felt and experienced historical and structural racism.[10]

In seeking to answer this question, who rescuers are, scholarship has tended to focus upon religion and religious moral values as providing a definitive and stable psychological and spiritual enabling environment in which rescuers may effectively carry out their work. The values of solidarity, tolerance and conviction are likely to play a part here, as scholarship has evidenced.[11] In the case of Guatemala, as we shall see, while religious actors and networks were key in providing support to victims of the genocide, these values alone were rarely the decisive factor driving rescuers' actions.

Thalhammer et al. respond to the actor/rescuer debate by arguing that rescue demonstrates highly courageous forms of resistance.[12] This and other scholarship, for example Dudai,[13] represent rescuers as heroic and exceptional, yet at the same time ordinary individuals. Thalhammer et al., however, make a key contribution to the debate in their proposal that a focus on awareness of justice and injustice is central to an individual's transformation from bystander and/or perpetrator to rescuer. In short, they argue that values play an instrumental part in driving and sustaining rescuers' actions. The question of values is indeed crucial for the case study presented here. Both endogenous and exogenous rescue depended, to a degree, on a key set of values. In the former case, indigenous community values and indigenous cosmology were crucial in sustaining rescue and survival efforts. In the latter case, values of solidarity, justice and injustice shaped the responses of non-indigenous, non-Guatemalan rescuers.

While to distill definitively the specific personality traits of genocide rescuers is a complex research enterprise, Tec, Oliner and Oliner insist that the act of rescue itself is ultimately and decisively determined by the rescuers' personality. Said authors argue that a critical factor here is how rescuers are "driven by moral values and therefore . . . open to others . . . having a basically altruistic disposition."[14] Tec argues elsewhere that altruism and empathy play a critical role in shaping the actions of rescuers and in the strategies that they are likely to adopt.[15] Andrieu et al., however, challenge these ultimately narrow representations of rescuers and their motivations, arguing that, in certain cases, rescuers may be driven by less essentially 'noble' motivations, including payment or self-interest.[16] The authors' insight here is meaningful given that it incorporates broader factors into the analysis of the process through which individuals may decide to become rescuers, and why we should remember them, including social and political parameters, structural constraints and opportunity/enabling structures. What emerges from this observation then is a key factor of profound relevance to the Guatemala case, in short, the relationship between genocide rescue and the existence of informal and formal networks, both pre-dating the violence and constructed as a consequence of it.

In their analysis, Andrieu et al. present a convincing argument that networks are crucial for successful rescue operations. This conclusion would

seem to contrast with Todorov's findings that, for the case of Bulgarian Jews, rescue was "in some ways quite arbitrary or lucky—a consequence of a long chain of decisions and people."[17] Moore echoes Todorov's findings for the case of Nazi-Occupied Western Europe, arguing that both social networks and *chance* played key roles in precipitating and sustaining successful rescue efforts.[18] However, despite the evident differences in this scholarship, both sets of authors tend to agree upon the fact that chains (or networks) of people are crucial for successful rescue. In the words of Andrieu et al., "resistance is only possible and enduring thanks to a social environment that protects it, an environment of at least partial complicity."[19]

As we have argued for the case of Guatemala, two predominant rescue patterns emerged: rescue within Guatemala characterized by the mobilization of displaced indigenous communities themselves; and rescue driven by non-indigenous, non-Guatemalan actors, *outside of the country* and thus, to a degree, sheltered from systematic repercussions for their activities. Accordingly, Guatemala's exogenous rescuers were linked to the victims of the genocide by a long chain of events, and by pre-existing social and commercial ties stretching back decades. Exogenous rescuers were, moreover, less likely to be seen as contravening national legislation, although they were clearly perceived of as defying Guatemalan national authority and, on several occasions, faced severe repercussion and persecution for doing so. Risk for endogenous rescuers was logically more acute than it was for exogenous rescuers in the Guatemala case, as illustrated below.

For the case of rescue in Argentina, Casiro has followed a similar line of argument, concluding that, while personal ties were also a strong motivation, ultimately, social networks were key for understanding the motive for rescue and informed the rescuers' strategies.[20] Casiro concludes that in those cases where dense networks exist tying victims to those beyond the range of the target group, rescue may be more likely to occur as a result of existing or incipient levels of social trust. For Casiro, social ties will signify that rescuers enjoy a support structure that may be operationalized to assist the victim, providing, for example, possible places to hide and networks of individuals and communities to facilitate escape and survival. For Casiro, moreover, social ties also facilitated rescue by creating "a sense of *we-ness* as opposed to a disdained *otherness.*"[21] In fact, in many cases, rescuers were themselves former victims and therefore the need to remember them, to dignify their role. The *we-ness*, as Casiro terms it, might go some way to overcoming the destruction of social ties and the pernicious othering of the victims; while rescuers may not share the same ethnic, religious, national or political group of the victim (very often they do not), they are able to empathize with them.

While Casiro argues that we should consider both personal traits and social networks as key to genocide rescue, Moore proposes that broader structural

factors, such as specific national legislation, the state of wider resistance and logistical difficulties facing rescuers, are key to understanding how and why rescue takes place.[22] Said frameworks for analysis would take us beyond the reductionist proposition that rescue is contingent exclusively upon heroism and personality. However, ultimately, it is perhaps Thalhammer et al. who offer the most convincing explanation of what shapes and precipitates genocide rescue, defined by the authors as "courageous resistance."[23] It is their integrated framework that is best suited for comprehensively understanding the Guatemalan case. The authors propose a framework of three principal, interacting factors:

- Preconditions: an individual's previous attitudes, experiences and internal resources;
- Networks: the ongoing relationships with people and organizations that offer information, resources, and assistance; and
- Context: including the institutions and political climate.

Having explored a series of relevant conceptual issues relating to genocide rescuers, we now turn to the Guatemala case study.

GUATEMALA'S GENOCIDE

Guatemala's genocidal internal armed conflict was shaped and sustained by the unequivocal bias in the control of economic and political resources by a racist non-indigenous, Spanish-descended oligarchy. This caste system of privilege was historically protected by the country's security forces and managed by a closed lineage-based political and economic elite.[24] The first guerrilla insurgency to challenge this system emerged and was quickly defeated in the 1960s, composed of rebellious ladino military officers. It was only in the 1970s that other armed insurgencies emerged, in particular the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres*, EGP), with the aim of challenging the racist oligarchy not exclusively on classist terms, but through a framework that sought to incorporate indigenous communities and include indigenous and ethnic identity, exclusion and racism as key drivers of armed struggle. Only in 1982 did the four guerrilla factions come together to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*, URNG).

While the conflict appears not to have stemmed from an *indigenous uprising* or *ethnic mobilization* as such, nor was it waged exclusively on ethnic lines, it was characterized by acutely ethnic dimensions. The CEH concluded

that 82% of the victims of the conflict were indigenous Maya.[25] Horizontal inequalities played a key role in precipitating and sustaining conflict, moreover. Guatemala's historically unjust system of land control, distribution and tenure, levels of extreme poverty and lack of access to formal political channels and economic resources, affecting above all the indigenous population, were at the core of the conflict between the Guatemalan military and the URNG. However, the parties to the hostilities did not struggle over or seek to rectify deep-rooted horizontal inequalities based solely upon ethnic group membership.

The operative modality of the Guatemalan genocide was manifest through a "*scorched earth policy*" and characterized by the simultaneous perpetration of instrumentalist and essentialist forms of state-sponsored violence, which served mutually reinforcing purposes. The instrumentalist violence was waged against the guerrilla, particularly against its indigenous social base in rural areas. Indigenous communities were identified as the principal military objective of the counterinsurgency. In this regard, as Valentino et al. have argued for cases elsewhere, a key motive behind the genocide was the counterinsurgency campaign aiming to defeat the guerrilla by *draining the sea to kill the fish*.[26]

The genocide was also characterized by essentialist/essentializing violence, wherein military forces explicitly targeted and subsequently sought to exterminate indigenous Maya with actions deemed necessary to *purify* the imagined community, as Semelin has argued, and *build a consolidated whitened, homogeneous nation-state*.[27] Genocidal violence then represented the extension of a protracted and failed nation-building project that had hitherto failed to eliminate, assimilate or integrate the *indigenous other*, processes driven by political violence that Tilly has identified for other cases.[28]

Racism played a key role in the violence and in the "othering" central to genocide. The State facilitated the stigmatization of the indigenous "other" and the subsequent perpetration of systematic massacres against them through the intentional generation and operationalization of the belief in their natural and immutable inferiority.[29] The mobilization of a discourse and ideology of ethnic hatred by "ethnic entrepreneurs" within the state consolidated an ethnic hierarchy based upon invented criteria of biological, cultural and moral differences.[30] The state then justified and facilitated the brutal military aggression perpetrated by non-indigenous (and subsequently indigenous) troops who believed their enemy was, effectively, *sub-human*. Geographic isolation and the absence of infrastructure within militarized indigenous regions, combined with blanket state censorship, meant that massacres were invisible to an indifferent and structurally racist society.

MASS EXODUS

The savage counterinsurgency campaign sparked a flood of internal displacement and predominantly indigenous Maya refugees. In general terms, those who fled can be divided into four categories: (1) those who were displaced from one indigenous community to another; (2) those who found refuge in Guatemala City and other parts of the country; (3) those who fled to the mountains, where they often joined Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR); and (4) those who sought refuge in México and other countries. Those who did not flee the violence were kept under military surveillance, forced to patrol in paramilitary civil patrols (PAC) and live in "model villages," which were essentially concentration camps aimed at controlling the population.

Various sources attest to the fact that approximately one million Guatemalans were internally displaced, while a further 400,000 individuals were exiled in México, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica and the United Sates. Of those that fled Guatemala, 150,000 sought asylum in México, of which 45,000 were granted refugee status and largely confined to refugee camps, and 200,000 sought asylum in the United States. A further 20,000 displaced Guatemalans joined the CPR.[31] An estimated total of 1.5 million Guatemalans were forcibly displaced, representing almost 20% of the population, and the majority were indigenous Maya. According to the anthropologist Myrna Mack, who was murdered by the Guatemalan military in 1990, the *abrupt and violent* mass displacement of Guatemalans was most keenly felt in the departments of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz and Chimaltenango.[32] The violence directly precipitated then an acute humanitarian crisis.

Mass exodus was a direct consequence of the widespread suffering and terror created by counterinsurgency policies and to a lesser extent, guerrilla-led violence. Those who fled the violence were subsequently pursued through counterinsurgency offensives, to the extent that the internally displaced "were not simply a direct consequence of the violence; they were also directly targeted by counterinsurgency policies, particularly in areas embattled with serious social conflicts, where there was guerrilla presence or influence."[33] Many Guatemalans who were forced to seek refuge in the mountains perished due both to the army's relentless persecution and illnesses caused by the inhospitable climate and lack of basic necessities. According to one interview, "for months on end we were forced to eat leaves and, at times, soft sticks. This was the only thing we could find."[34] In the face of imminent army attacks, the inhabitants of the two regions of the Ixil and Ixcán were forced to flee their communities with nothing more than the clothes and their children on their backs. Even though many displaced Guatemalans attempted to salvage their belongings, the army's deliberate destruction of homes, crops and harvests meant that, in most cases, there was nothing worth recovering. Many children

and elderly people, who were forced to live in these precarious conditions, subsequently died in their place of refuge. According to the REMHI report:

> What at first appeared to be a transitory exodus gave way to a long-term phenomenon which radically altered people's lives, especially within the confines of refugee camps, where community experiences were restructured and new social and cultural problems arose. Many refugees were continually haunted by their past.[35]

ENDOGENOUS RESCUE: THE COMMUNITIES OF POPULATION IN RESISTANCE (CPR)

> We fled to the mountains after they massacred our community. We were on the run and terrified. Little by little we began to organise ourselves into groups. It wasn't easy belonging to the CPR; we were pursued, bombed, machine-gunned and killed. Some of us were captured. The army destroyed many places and burned everything. We had to live like this, to tolerate this terrible situation, for many years. We publicised the work of the CPR on a national and international level, to raise awareness of what was happening to us, and the way in which the army illegally pursued the civilian population.[36]

The above testimony, provided by an ex-CPR member in the Ixcán and a former resident of the village Cuarto Pueblo—where one of the most egregious massacres took place in March 1982—evidences how the CPRs initially began in an improvised manner as a form of collective self-rescue. Communities were obliged to organize as an immediate survival strategy in the aftermath of threats or massacres, when individuals and entire communities would flee to the mountains or jungle to seek refuge. As time passed, however, the CPRs became organized and members assumed survival key strategies, as we shall see. The above testimony also confirms the manner in which the military pursued displaced survivors. The presumption of the military was that all of those who fled were guilty of collaborating with the guerrilla. Given that the objective of counterinsurgency *Operation Victory 82* was to annihilate the guerrilla's logistical support base, the displaced population logically became designated as a military target.

Thousands of Guatemalan civilians organized collectively to seek refuge in the mountains and jungle of the Ixcán either in separate groups or as part of the CPR. The CPR and their governing bodies were created over time as a formal strategic mechanism to confront continuingly hostile conditions.[37] The maximum authority of the CPR, which was elected by means of a general assembly in December of each year, directed working groups that were responsible for coordinating a variety of community tasks: surveillance and security; health committees; development and education; work; essential

supplies; communications and the community's self-defense. CPR members were principally indigenous individuals and communities, victims of the counterinsurgency bound by a sense of collective survival. In many cases, a shared indigenous identity and cosmology brought cohesion to the communities, as did pre-existing commercial and social networks and kinship ties between them.

The CPRs were keenly aware of the likelihood that they might be discovered at any moment, either by soldiers or by civil patrollers. As a result, they built only makeshift homes and an atmosphere of constant fear and necessary alert pervaded their daily lives. Under these circumstances, CPR communities were obliged to be simultaneously mobile and cohesive, and were usually situated close to guerrilla camps for the potential provision of protection.[38] However, hope for protection by the guerrilla was often of little use, given the limited strategic and military capacity of the guerrilla.

In an extraordinary demonstration of humanity and innovation, CPR members developed a series of key survival strategies. While a pervasive sense of "reaction" determined much of the CPRs' activity—communities and individuals were permitted to join whenever they fled military operations—CPR members also actively assisted other communities under threat. Strategically, the CPRs used pioneering survival tactics, developed as they were through everyday learning processes in hostile conditions. Hats were prohibited in order to facilitate the identification of strangers. Dogs were not kept and members were not authorized to cook during daylight hours, so as to avoid being detected through noise or the smoke from fires. Homes and community structures were portable, and could be easily dismantled, concealed and/or transported in emergency situations. According to the REMHI report, life entailed "great suffering and peril; permanently keeping watch and taking precautions; the reorganization of community life in temporary and insecure conditions; organizational processes."[39] According to a survivor of the Pueblo Nuevo Massacre, who fled into the mountains:

> We went to México in 1989, but between 1982 and 1989 we lived in the CPR. We even had hens. We had to find ways of living like families. The hens laid eggs, and we carried the chickens in small boxes. The chickens grew and wanted to squawk. We had to find a way of surviving, because the chickens' squawking would have given us away to the army, but we needed them for the food they provided. Consequently, we put a fine thread through their necks, to cut through their vocal chords, and they never made a sound.[40]

THE ROLE OF THE GUERRILLA

Although the CPRs were formed exclusively by displaced civilians, it is important to note that they often maintained a close relationship with the

guerrilla. The guerrilla generally lacked, however, the military capacity or, perhaps, the political will, to defend the predominantly indigenous CPRs from the military. While the guerrilla often warned the inhabitants of highland communities from the Ixil and Ixcán and the CPRs themselves of imminent military operations, countless massacres were perpetrated throughout the region. Nevertheless, aware of the importance of the CPR to the guerrilla's long-term survival, the EGP invested considerable time and effort supporting these communities. Consequently, the guerrilla played an albeit partial logistical role in facilitating genocide rescue in the region.

Initially the guerrilla provided displaced indigenous communities and the CPR specifically with the tools and materials to build shelters in the mountains and the jungle. The EGP also broadened what had been political activities previously carried out in local communities to include training CPR members in a series of key strategies and tactics. According to REMHI, this included "the creation of surveillance committees; the compilation of emergency guidelines; the construction of shelters; the creation of safe havens and the establishment of communication mechanisms in the eventuality that community members were separated."[41] However, CPR members were generally unarmed and, with few exceptions, did not participate in guerrilla actions. Rather, collaboration with the guerrilla largely consisted of providing emergency refuge, food and other logistical support to them.

According to former CPR leaders, the fact that these communities collaborated with, or were geographically close to guerrilla encampments, did not signify that they were controlled by the EGP. Interviewees have stated that the CPRs were autonomous and directed by their own civilian authorities, which bore no resemblance to the guerrilla's military organizational structure and did not share its goals.[42]

The CPRs were thus "close but independent."[43] According to a former CPR member in Ixcán, originally from Cuarto Pueblo:

> While we were living in the mountains we collaborated quite a lot with the guerrilla, but we were never armed and we always acted as civilians, living in family groups. When the guerrilla needed something, they would purchase it from us, and clearly many families collaborated in this way. No guerrilla can function, work and survive without a social base. The guerrilla's objectives at that time were a reaction to the situation we were in and to the suffering and mistreatment of indigenous peoples. It is also important to recognize the fact that during this time the guerrilla helped the civilian population to survive, both in the CPRs and in México. For us, it was a question of two groups helping each other, but we were never forced to help the guerrilla in the way that we were forced to help the army.

Nevertheless, there is often a fine line between voluntary and obligatory collaboration, as demonstrated throughout the course of the armed

conflict, and as Weinstein and Kalyvas have evidenced for civil wars and internal armed conflicts elsewhere.[44] There is no question that the guerrilla depended upon the constant and unconditional support of the civilian population in order to pursue its revolutionary campaign.[45] The CPR provided logistical support and a safe haven where insurgents could rest between military operations. However, at the same time, some interviewees claimed that while they were hiding in the mountains they were obliged to support the guerrilla: those who refused to collaborate with the EGP were subject to intimidation and death threats. Significantly, the guerrilla's territorial control of the area restricted the communities' freedom of movement, ultimately reinforcing their confinement. According to a former CPR member:

> The guerrilla always said to us: you can't go to México, because if you go, you'll lose everything. They prevented people from leaving. They didn't want anyone to leave, that's what took place in April and May of 1982. But in October, a group of 50 families managed to leave for México. We had no idea that so many people were leaving, that there was an important support structure in México. The guerrilla didn't tell us what was happening. The guerrilla didn't want us to go to México because we were their oxygen, their social base. So we were forced to stay where we were. People began asking questions too, about the security that the guerrilla provided for the communities. The guerrilla didn't defend us very well because they didn't have the capacity.

EXOGENOUS GENOCIDE RESCUE: ACTORS AND NETWORKS IN MÉXICO

Due to their proximity to the Mexican border, a large proportion of Guatemalan civilians, particularly those displaced from the department of Quiché during the first few months of 1982, sought refuge in México. Many of those who crossed the border into México had already built commercial and social networks there. Campesinos from the Ixcán, in particular, had previously worked on plantations in southern Chiapas, especially at the Puerto Rico Estate. As a consequence of these networks and the trust they had built up, in particular with local farmers and religious communities, when the violence broke out, many massacre survivors immediately sought refuge on the Puerto Rico Estate. These indigenous refugees remained in Puerto Rico until the Mexican government formulated a clear policy toward refugees and initiated their transfer to the states of Quintana Roo and Campeche, several years later. According to a campesino from Santa María Tzejá: "The campesinos and small landowners had previously given work to Guatemalan campesinos, so there were already links between them before they fled to México."[46]

Mexican estate owners provided better working conditions and salaries than their Guatemalan counterparts.

Approximately 145,000 Guatemalans sought refuge in México, of whom 45,000 eventually settled in official refugee camps. In response to the growing humanitarian crisis, the Mexican government established the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees (COMAR). COMAR was incorporated into the Mexican Interior Ministry and overseen by the Department of Immigration, "whose previous mandate had been to prevent undocumented Guatemalans from entering México in the first place."[47]

During the first few months of the mass exodus, campesinos from the highlands, particularly from the Ixcán region, fled to southern Chiapas. Initially, the Mexican authorities barely tolerated their presence, channeling assistance and support via COMAR, whose presence was augmented when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) later established an office in the region. However, the human rights situation rapidly deteriorated as refugee numbers swelled, particularly after the massacres carried out in April 1982. In this context, under pressure from the Rios Montt regime, Mexican authorities changed their policy toward Guatemalan refugees. According to a wide range of sources, including political analysts, members of the Catholic Church from the Diocese of Chiapas and Mexican civil servants, the governments of México and Guatemala did not consider it wise to allow refugees to remain close to the Guatemala-México border for a prolonged time, given the security threats to both states. It was in this context that non-state actors provided the safety net for refugees, as Mexican state institutions failed them.

Both governments coincided in perceiving that it would be dangerous to allow a "hostile" population to remain close to the border zone, largely because it would provide fertile ground for clandestine guerrilla operations, creating a "safe haven" in which guerrillas could move freely and take refuge when necessary. Given that the Ríos Montt regime regarded refugees as an extension of the guerrilla, it feared that refugee camps close to the border zone would facilitate the flow of arms between both countries. The presence of Guatemalan refugees in México would also likely have provided the international community, including the UN system, with access to information about the mass atrocities being committed by the Guatemalan Army, thus undermining the government's repeated public denial of state terrorism. The Mexican government itself feared that the presence of organized, socially conscious refugees in Chiapas, one of the poorest states in México, might itself generate widespread unrest among its own indigenous population. Consequently, in 1984 Mexican authorities forcibly transferred Guatemalan refugees to the states of Campeche and Quitana Roo, claiming that the move was designed to guarantee their safety. Hardly a decade later, as we know,

Chiapas was to experience its own guerrilla insurgency, when the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) emerged.

PUERTO RICO, CHIAPAS, MÉXICO: MASS RESCUE

The Puerto Rico estate rests on the border with Guatemala, approximately six hours' walk from the community of Cuarto Pueblo. According to interviews with the estate owner, Don Antonio, and campesinos from the Ixil and Ixcán, prior to the armed conflict, Guatemalan campesinos, mainly from Cuarto Pueblo, Mayalán and Los Ángeles, regularly worked on the Puerto Rico Estate. The laborers developed a close relationship with the estate owner and other workers, which extended to the exchange of produce and labor. The estate owner's family itself often visited Cuarto Pueblo's market. Trust and collaboration were determinant factors in the relationship that had been built up with time.

According to those interviewed, following an initial confrontation between the guerrilla and military forces in Cuarto Pueblo in April 1981, displaced campesinos sought refuge in territories bordering on Puerto Rico. Displaced campesinos remained in these territories for several days, until a Guatemalan helicopter arrived to transport them back to Guatemala. However, the continuing violence meant that life was intolerable and the campesinos soon returned to México.

Over the next few months, levels of violence diminished as the military strategically withdrew from Ixcán in preparation for its final, and most brutal, counterinsurgency offensive; consequently the flow of Guatemalan refugees to Puerto Rico decreased significantly. However, on the 14th of March 1982:

> At midday, two children from Cuarto Pueblo came to our house on the estate. *We think that lots of people have been killed in a massacre and we don't know where our parents are*, they told us. At 8 pm we began to hear a commotion and we saw light coming from the mountains. About 16 or 22 women arrived without their husbands, with their small children and what they had been able to carry, things from their homes, food, but not much. *They've destroyed us*, they said. *They've killed our entire family*. They couldn't explain what had happened because they were crying so deeply; I've never seen people in such a state. They stayed for about a month in the house, and there was a time when we couldn't walk here because there were so many people on the floor. Later we began to build a camp.[48]

From this moment, a dramatic increase in the flow of refugees from the Ixil and Ixcán (in the department of Quiché) to México, and from other regions of the Guatemalan highlands, took place. Over time, a series of refugee camps

were built in Chiapas and the largest camps were based in Puerto Rico, El Chupadero and La Sombra. Although approximately 15,000 Guatemalans, predominantly indigenous Maya, passed through Puerto Rico, the camp was home to 5,500 permanent residents until the Mexican government began to transfer Guatemalan refugees to other Mexican states, in 1984.

According to Don Antonio, the estate owner providing rescue:

> Each day they arrived from the mountains, their shirts in shreds. They had injuries from bullets and machetes; they were bleeding and crying. Sometimes children arrived without their parents and sometimes women came alone. They were traumatized. Many of them couldn't speak. One day 1,900 people arrived. They slept just here. They were terrified that the army, the Kaibiles (special forces), would come for them. So we created a surveillance system. There wasn't a day that went by without someone dying from their injuries, or from illness or malnutrition. Many died from sadness. We dug mass graves where we buried the bones of all those who died; there were mountains of bones, and it was a terrible sight to see. *Only someone without a heart can think about this and not feel sad*.[49]

Don Antonio's prior relationship and networks constructed with some of the massacred communities, his indignation at the violence they had suffered, and his belief in the injustice of the killings drove his efforts to support the indigenous refugees. His links with the religious and medical communities in Chiapas itself, however, would become decisive in broadening the rescue effort to include other actors, who were themselves driven by a set of humanitarian values. The consolidation of a network of rescuers furnished with human and material resources ultimately sustained the rescue.

Gradually, and with the support of COMAR and UNHCR, the camp was furnished with a basic infrastructure, including a shelter for refugees to sleep in, a warehouse, and a runway for landing light aircraft used to transport medical supplies and doctors from nearby Comitán.

According to a Mexican doctor who treated refugees during this period:

> At first, the question of mental health was not very visible, although later on it became extremely evident. The refugees were civilians, mainly indigenous, and many of them had bullet and machete wounds, and signs of torture. They were all terrified. The women didn't want to eat anything. They always said that the Guatemalan Army wanted to massacre them, to annihilate them.[50]

The former Director of Comitán hospital (1975–1986) describes how refugees from the Ixcán began to flow into México toward the end of 1982 and 1983. They arrived starving and miserable, and each day there were several fatalities due to tuberculosis, malnutrition and severe infections.[51]

Within this context, the owner of the Cuarto Pueblo estate, together with his family, saved the lives of thousands of refugees, as recognized by the UNCHR.[52] Comitán Hospital and the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas played an important role in providing refugees with short and long-term assistance. As recounted by a Catholic sister from the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas:

> A steady flow of people started to arrive in 1982. In each camp there were different ethnic groups. They were really scared, even of the Catholic Church, especially when foreigners came. They explained that they had left Guatemala because they were fleeing from the Kaibiles, the Guatemalan Army's Special Forces. At first they hardly spoke, but gradually they began to share their stories. Many people from Cuarto Pueblo lived with us. One of the women was experiencing severe psychological trauma. These women had been abused and raped by the soldiers. One of the girls always kept watch to see who was nearby. I told the woman to prepare the meat for lunch. But she couldn't. She started to shake and cry uncontrollably when she saw the meat. She said, *I can't eat this, because it reminds me of the women who were spread out on the road, cut open like cows*. She told me how mothers had drowned their children so that the army wouldn't hear them crying.[53]

The estate owner, doctors and members of the Catholic Church, have consistently confirmed that none of the refugees carried weapons. According to interviews, the only "weapons" that presented serious difficulties for the refugees had been their Bibles. Those who had not already buried their Bibles in Guatemala did so as soon as they arrived in México. They were afraid that the Guatemalan military would catch them with their Bibles, and many refused to admit that they were Catholic, for fear of being persecuted, given that many direct targets of the military had been those involved in Catholic catechism.[54]

The structures established by non-state actors in Chiapas represented the primary initial response to the crisis; a response that was, at first, improvised, but that later grew into a structured network that followed clear strategic policy patterns. As the refugee flow became increasingly acute, the UNHCR, COMAR and the Catholic Church collectively responded with material support. As the crisis continued, they offered training and lectures for refugees in the Puerto Rico camp, related to the war and its origins, Mayan culture, human rights, and national and international law. However, these courses were suspended in 1989, when there was a shift toward the teaching of Mexican history. Everyday life in the camps was highly structured so as to ensure maximum participation in pedagogical activities. As a result of this process, the refugees who eventually returned to Guatemala were comparatively more educated and politically aware than those who had stayed behind and survived.

THE RISKS FACED BY RESCUERS IN MÉXICO

In contrast to the case of the CPR, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which refugees in México collaborated with or were supported by the EGP. According to one refugee who remained in México:

> From México we always organised ourselves with the guerrilla and we coordinated with members of the guerrilla in order to provide them with food, medicine and sometimes refuge. But at the same time, people were afraid of the guerrilla. We took food to the border with Guatemala, to leave it with members of the CPR. People who decided to join the Irregular Local Forces, the guerrilla's local support base, were armed, but we never had weapons in México and the civilian population was always unarmed. There were always members of the guerrilla among us and we often had to hide them so that they wouldn't be found. The army patrolled the border and captured people. Helicopters circled the area.[55]

Although this interviewee attests that refugees provided the guerrilla with logistical support, several other refugees who remained in México deny that such collaboration took place. Nevertheless, a wide range of sources, including employees of Comitán Hospital, have confirmed that the inhabitants of refugee camps were unarmed.[56] According to Taylor:

> Many of the refugees had some sort of connection with the guerrilla, and they maintained strategic alliances with rebel groups while they were living in exile. However, it is important to emphasise that the refugees were civilians, and it was in this condition that they made plans to return to Guatemala. The refugees shared some of the guerrilla's ideas, but they were never subordinate to the guerrilla.[57]

As evidenced, the Guatemalan military relentlessly persecuted and pursued both CPR members and refugees, including those who fled to México. According to survivors of the massacres who fled to México and Mexican citizens interviewed as part of this research, the Guatemalan military carried out cross-border military operations on several occasions, in contravention of international law, putting both the lives of the victims and the rescuers at risk. These border violations often occurred when the Guatemalan military flew over Puerto Rico, although no formal complaints appear to have been lodged by the Mexican government against the Guatemalan state. On one occasion in 1983, when armed Guatemalan soldiers attempted to enter the Puerto Rico Estate illegally (and forcibly), the estate owner reported the situation at the local army barracks: "As a result, Mexican soldiers threw them [Guatemalan soldiers] out of the country."[58] On another occasion when the Guatemalan

military entered their estate, Don Antonio and his sons confronted them, armed only with hunting rifles. The military withdrew without incident.

In the words of a Catholic sister from the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, "I saw the Guatemalan military flying over Puerto Rico a couple of times during 1982. They aimed their guns at us. In 1982, in Chajul, México, Guatemalan soldiers threatened us. They were armed and they kept us hostage all night."[59]

The Guatemalan military then conducted ground incursions and aerial bombardments with the aim of capturing and killing refugees. Those interviewed testify to the fact that Mexican citizens were also killed during these military operations. According to several testimonies, the most serious incursion occurred in El Chupadero in April 1984: seven people were killed, including women and children. As explained by the Praxis study: "The constant persecution of these communities reveals the extent to which the objective was to eliminate or capture [Guatemalan refugees] at all cost, despite knowledge of the fact that they were members of the civilian population."[60]

The Guatemalan military threatened Guatemalan refugees, and put at risk the lives of Mexican citizens, including civil servants and members of the Catholic Church who provided the refugees with humanitarian aid. Significantly, members of the Catholic Church and civil servants who were interviewed as part of this research also claimed that, during this period, they were harassed by *both* Mexican and Guatemalan authorities, in response to their work with Guatemalan refugees. In contrast to rescuers in other contexts, rescuers in México were not breaking domestic legislation, nor were they contravening international law.

Exile seriously affected and altered important aspects of indigenous culture. The destruction of indigenous culture had been a direct objective of the massacres perpetrated in indigenous communities within the framework of the scorched earth counterinsurgency campaign.[61] Nevertheless, the impact upon indigenous culture was made yet more acute even for those who sought refuge outside of Guatemala. In fact, it is arguable that refuge in México exacerbated the genocidal impact of the counterinsurgency in this respect. According to a member of the Catholic Church in San Cristobal de las Casas:

> The women wore ordinary clothing when they arrived; they didn't want to wear their indigenous dress because they were scared that the Guatemalan Military would realise that they were indigenous and attack them. They were therefore conscious of the link between the violence they had suffered and the fact that they were indigenous. They always said, *they want to annihilate us*. They were all terrified, and many of them didn't want to go near the border zone. They started to wear the clothes of indigenous Mexicans, so that they wouldn't stand

> out so much. They also started to speak with a Mexican accent, so that it would be more difficult to identify them as Guatemalan. They didn't want to admit that they were Catholic, either.[62]

Between 1983 and 1984, Guatemalan refugees were forcibly transferred to the Mexican states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, provoking widespread fear, as it was widely believed that they were being returned to Guatemala. As a result, those interviewed confirm that many refugees evaded the Mexican authorities by hiding in the jungle area, where they later perished. There is no access to reliable data regarding the exact number of refugees who died en route to México, or once they had arrived in the country. However, as occurred with the CPR, counterinsurgency operations aggravated the already dire and inhumane conditions suffered by the refugees, in the process contravening international law. Even when the massacres perpetrated within the framework of the counterinsurgency came to an end after 1984, the army continued to regard Guatemalan refugees as a serious threat to national security. Consequently, the military maintained high levels of control in areas of former conflict, such as northern Quiché. When refugees began to return to Guatemala informally (after 1983) and formally (after 1994), they continued to face considerable difficulties.

CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS ON THE GUATEMALAN CASE

This chapter has evidenced histories of individual and collective response in the face of the brutal violence that characterized Guatemala's genocide, exploring how initially improvised rescue processes became sustainable through the organization and consolidation of rescue communities and networks. The processes that emerged in a context of prevailing and intentional horror, were anything but banal, demonstrating histories of resilience previously silenced in academic scholarship and how agency exercised in the context of genocide confronted egregious violence—thus the need to remember the rescuers and what they did to provide shelter to victims.

A series of factors, including preconditions, networks and context, precipitated and shaped both endogenous and exogenous rescue efforts in the Guatemalan case, as Thalhammer et al. have convincingly argued for processes of rescue elsewhere.[63] In the immediate context of the violence, lacking resources and connections with external actors, internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled to urban areas of the country or, as explored here, went into hiding in mountainous and jungle areas bordering on their communities. As the likelihood that displacement would be a protracted process became clear to IDPs, and in the context of ongoing counterinsurgency operations, IDPs

developed innovative survival strategies and organized themselves into regulated networks and clandestine communities. CPRs became highly structured and organized entities where rescue and collective self-rescue merged into a singular process. Cohesion within the CPRs was consolidated by social sanction and pre-existing indigenous values of reciprocity and solidarity, while survival was sustained by sheer strategic innovation and the prior cosmological knowledge of plants and animals that facilitated living off the land. The CPRs benefitted from previously structured networks with the guerrilla, who trained them in tactical methods to withstand the hostile conditions and state-sponsored political violence faced by the CPRs, conditions that the insurgency itself had confronted. However, the guerrilla was unable to protect the CPRs from the vicious counterinsurgency, and its role was only partial in endogenous rescue, and non-existent in exogenous rescue. The capacity of indigenous communities to withstand the acutely adverse conditions of internal displacement for over a decade was in itself profoundly courageous. However, tales of heroism do not adequately explain the capacity of indigenous agency and resilience to resist mass violence and, not insignificantly, partially limit its impact: approximately 20,000 lives were saved through the CPRs.

Exogenous rescue in Guatemala was itself determined by the social and commercial networks built up over decades between individuals and communities on either side of the México-Guatemala border. While a degree of chance may have molded these relationships, indigenous victims took advantage of the opportunities that they afforded and their previous experiences with the estate owner and his family, driven partly by the personality of Don Antonio. Pre-existing networks in this case were critical in facilitating an enabling environment for genocide rescue, as were the values of those individuals involved. In short, driven by his humanistic values, Don Antonio had always displayed his moral values: treated his workers well, paying them decent wages and providing dignified working conditions. Significantly, by remembering the resources that Don Antonio was able to provide in the immediate aftermath of the genocide, we can see how they were critical to the survival of the victims in the most acute moments of Guatemala's humanitarian crisis: over five thousand individuals lived permanently in Puerto Rico.

Moreover, as the refugee flow spiraled, infrastructure was accordingly built on the estate and food and clothing were supplied in response to the deepening humanitarian crisis. However, it was the networks between individual and institutional rescuers, including those in the religious and medical communities that guaranteed the sustainability of exogenous rescue by structuring a broader enabling environment that itself made use of wider resources, institutional, legal and social opportunities and legitimacy and credible information. While moral and religious values may have driven the actions of particular individuals, it was broader structural preconditions and evolving conditions

that defined which paths would be more feasible to follow and subsequently have greater impact. Breaking no laws, Mexican rescuers responded to the tardiness of the Mexican government and, in some cases, to the institutional closure that refugees were subject to, itself contingent upon foreign policy and relations between México and Guatemala.

The histories of genocide rescue documented in this chapter fracture the all-encompassing narrative that mass violence perpetrated in the framework of genocide consumes and destroys all order, leads to atrophy, closes down human agency. The resistance asserted by genocide rescuers and victims who commissioned "collective self-rescue" in Guatemala attests to human defiance against horror, resilience to state organized and perpetrated barbarity and the reordering of community in the face of social destruction and unhinged brutality.

NOTES

1. Adapted from Roddy Brett, *The Origins and Dynamics of Genocide: Political Violence in Guatemala*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Reproduced with permission from Palgrave Macmillan and Roddy Brett.

2. The Guatemalan State's obligations to protect human rights, guarantee equal treatment and sanction discrimination are enshrined within the 1985 Political Constitution of the Republic and domestic legislation, as well as in international treaties and conventions ratified by the Guatemalan state, including those that constitute part of the international bill of rights. The United Nations sponsored Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) concluded that the Guatemalan state had commissioned "acts of genocide" in four regions of the country during the counterinsurgency that was executed between 1978 and 1983 as part of the thirty-six year internal armed conflict (CEH 1999). The CEH recommended that these acts be investigated and sanctioned. Partially on the strength of these recommendations, in 1999, national human rights organizations representing indigenous victims of the genocide filed legal charges both domestically and before the Spanish National Court against former Presidents General Fernando Romeo Lucas García (1978–1982), General Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores (1983–1985), ex-military dictator General Efraín Ríos Montt (1982–1983) and their military high commands for genocide, war crimes, torture, state terrorism, assassination and illegal arrest.

3. See Roddy Brett, "Peace without Social Reconciliation? Indigenous Political Subjectivity and the Politics of Validation in the Wake of Guatemala's Genocide." *Journal of Genocide Research*, Diane Nelson and Elizabeth Oglesby, eds. (Forthcoming).

4. Jessica Casiro, "Argentine Rescuers: A Study on the 'Banality of Good,'" *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (Dec. 2006): 2.

5. Roddy Brett, *Indigenous Politics and the Guatemalan Process of Democratisation, 1985–1996* (Leiden and Boston: Brill-CEDLA Latin American Studies Series, 2008).

6. Roddy Brett, *Una Guerra sin Batallas: del Odio, la Violencia y el Miedo en el Ixil y el Icxán, 1972–1983* (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2007).

7. Claire Andrieu, S. Gensburger, J. Semelin, and C. Schoch, *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7.

8. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 12.

9. Claire Andrieu, S. Gensburger, J. Semelin, and C. Schoch, *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7.

10. Marta Casaus Arzú, *Genocidio ¿La máxima expresión del racismo en Guatemala?* (Guatemala: F & G Editores, 2008); Marta Casaus Arzú, *Guatemala, Linaje y racism* (Guatemala: F & G Editores, 2007); Roddy Brett, "Confronting Racism From Within the Guatemalan State: the Challenges faced by the Indigenous Rights Defender of Guatemala's Human Rights Ombudsman," *Oxford Development Studies* 39.2 (2011); Roddy Brett, "State Racism in Guatemala: transformations and continuities," *Racism in Guatemala: Historical Tendencies and Actual Debates*, *Stockholm Review of Latin American Studies* 6 (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, Stockholm University, 2010).

11. Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 178; Philip Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Claire Andrieu, S. Gensburger, J. Semelin, and C. Schoch, *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 14.

12. Kristina E. Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance. The Power of Ordinary People* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

13. Ron Dudai, "'Rescues for Humanity': Rescuers, Mass Atrocities, and Transitional Justice," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34.1 (Feb. 2012): 6. According to Dudai, "In the same way that crimes against humanity offend the very idea of humanity, acts of rescue, accomplished against a background of widespread and systematic violence, affirm the idea of humanity. They become rescues *for* humanity. . . acts of rescue in the context of mass atrocities are rescues of a special nature, to which a special degree of moral recognition should be attached." (7).

14. Cited in Claire Andrieu et al., *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7–8.

15. Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 178–79.

16. Claire Andrieu, S. Gensburger, J. Semelin, and C. Schoch, *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7–10.

17. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 12.

18. Philip Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

19. Claire Andrieu, S. Gensburger, J. Semelin, and C. Schoch, *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 8.

20. Jessica Casiro, "Argentine Rescuers: A Study on the 'Banality of Good,'" *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (Dec. 2006): 9.

21. Ibid, p. 12, emphasis added.

22. Philip Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

23. Kristina E. Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance. The Power of Ordinary People* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

24. See Arturo Arias, "Culture, Genocide and Ethnocide in Guatemala," in Susanne Jonas et al., *Guatemala—Tyranny on Trial: Testimony of the Permanent People's Tribunal* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1984); Tom Barry, *Guatemala: The Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Albequerque N.M.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Centre, 1986); Ricardo Falla, "Struggle for Survival in the Mountains: Hunger and Other Privations Inflicted on the Internal Refugees from the Central Highlands," in Robert M. Carmack et al., ed. *Harvest of Violence: The Mayan Indians the Guatemalan Crisis* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Beatriz Manz, *Refugees of a Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA), *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*, Vols. 1–4 (Guatemala: ODHA, 1998); Jennifer G. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Comisión del Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio. Tomo III. Las Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos y los Hechos de Violencia* (Guatemala: CEH, 1999); Clark Taylor, *El Retorno de los Refugiados Guatemaltecos: Reconstruyendo el Tejido Social* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Victoria Sanford, *Violencia y Genocidio en Guatemala* (Guatemala: F & G Editores, 2003); Roddy Brett, *Una Guerra sin Batallas: del Odio, la Violencia y el Miedo en el Ixil y el Icxán, 1972–1983*, (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2007); Roddy Brett, "Peace Stillborn? Guatemala's Liberal Peace and the Indigenous Movement," *Peacebuilding*, 1.2 (2013); Marta Casaus Arzú, *La Metamorfisos del Racismo en Guatemala*. (Guatemala: Cholsamaj, 2002); and Marta Casaus Arzú, *Genocidio ¿La máxima expresión del racismo en Guatemala?* (Guatemala: F & G Editores, 2008).

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26. Benjamin A. Valentino, *Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

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31. Comisión del Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio. Tomo III. Las Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos y los Hechos de*

Violencia (Guatemala: CEH, 1999); Ricardo Falla, "Struggle for Survival in the Mountains: Hunger and Other Privations Inflicted on the Internal Refugees from the Central Highlands," in Robert M. Carmack et al., ed. *Harvest of Violence: The Mayan Indians the Guatemalan Crisis* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Beatriz Manz, *Refugees of a Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA), *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*, Vols. 1–4 (Guatemala: ODHA, 1998); Clark Taylor, *El Retorno de los Refugiados Guatemaltecos: Reconstruyendo el Tejido Social* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

32. Myrna Mack, cited in Liz Oglesby, *Return and Reintegration of Guatemala Refugees and Internally Displaced Populations: A Presentation of the Research of Myrna Mack* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 9.

33. Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA), *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*, Vols. 1–4 (Guatemala: ODHA, 1998), 155.

34. Interview, Nebaj, Ixil, April 2002.

35. Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA), *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*. Vols. 1–4. (Guatemala: ODHA, 1998), 155.

36. Interview, Guatemala City, December 2003.

37. The CPRs in Ixcán we based on land belonging to the villages of Xecoyeu, Santa Clara, Amajchel, Cabá, Paal, Los Cimientos, Xeputul, Xaxboj, Santa Rosa, and Chaxa to the north of Chajul. These villages were mainly inhabited by families from the municipalities of Chicamán, Uspantán, Cunén, Sacapulas, Nebaj, Cotzal, Playa Grande, Chajul, Aguacatán and Chiantla (in the department of Huehuetenango).

38. Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA) (1998) *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*. Vols. 1–4. Guatemala: ODHA (164).

39. Ibid, (160).

40. Interview, Cantabal, Quiché, October 2003.

41. Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHA) (1998) *Guatemala: Nunca Mas*. Vols. 1–4. Guatemala: ODHA (182).

42. Ibid, (165).

43. Ibid.

44. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

45. Roddy Brett, *Una Guerra sin Batallas: del Odio, la Violencia y el Miedo en el Ixil y el Icxán, 1972–1983* (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2007).

46. Interview, Santa María Tzejá, Quiché, September 2003.

47. Editorial Praxis. *Guatemala: Polos de Desarrollo. El Caso de la Desestructuración de las Comunidades Indígenas.* Vol. I. (Praxis, M.C.: Guatemala, 1988), 113.

48. Interview, Don Antonio, Chiapas, México, September 2003.

49. Interview, Chiapas, México, September 2002 (emphasis added).

50. Ibid.

51. According to the hospital's statistics, between October and November 1982, an average of two people died each day in the Puerto Rico camp, and during the last three months of 1982, 90 deaths were recorded.

52. Don Antonio was awarded a prize by UNHCR in 2005. His daughter died from tuberculosis contracted from refugees living on the estate.
53. Interview, Chiapas, México, September 2003.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Clark Taylor, *El Retorno de los Refugiados Guatemaltecos: Reconstruyendo el Tejido Social* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 60.
58. Interview, Chiapas, México, September 2003.
59. Ibid.
60. Editorial Praxis. *Guatemala: Polos de Desarrollo. El Caso de la Desestructuración de las Comunidades Indígenas.* Vol. I. (Praxis, M.C.: Guatemala, 1988), 158.
61. Roddy Brett, *Una Guerra sin Batallas: del Odio, la Violencia y el Miedo en el Ixil y el Icxán, 1972–1983* (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2007).
62. Interview, Chiapas, México, September 2003.
63. Kristina E. Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance. The Power of Ordinary People* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

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Chapter 5

Between Memory and Oblivion

The Cases of Eureka and Afadem

Isabel de León Olivares, Maribel Rivas-Vasconcelos, and Miriam Rodriguez

On September 26, 2014, a crime against humanity left Mexican society stricken with fear when 43 students of the Escuela Normal Rural "Isidro Burgos," were disappeared at the hands of the police and military of the Iguala municipality in the state of Guerrero, home of the work of Partido de los Pobres, guerilla directed by a teacher named Lucio Cabañas. While it is known that such crimes have been, for years, one of the Mexican state's strategies for eradicating political opponents—human rights defenders, activists, among others—of the current establishment, such enforced disappearances have been silenced crimes, invisible and often forgotten by the Mexican society. Calls of "They took them alive; we want them alive!" filled the streets across México that night, as the country was forced to remember that crimes committed by the state were still taking place. Mass marches and class cancelations became ways in which the population has shown their empathy with the pain and anger of parents of the missing youth—who have managed to attract national and international attention and support. The problem of enforced disappearances in México is longstanding and possesses characteristics reflecting the state's obscured social and political practices. The specter of the disappearances continues to roam the streets, accompanied by the historic impunity that has paved the way for such crimes to continue unpunished.

This chapter addresses the study of civil groups seeking to end the practice of enforced disappearance from a rescue studies framework: individuals, groups, and organizations who help the victims of gruesome human rights crimes without demanding any retribution or recompense, even when they put their own lives or the lives of those close to them in danger.

AN EARLY BEGINNING

The problem of enforced disappearances in México is characterized by their continuing reoccurrence since the late 1960s. Enforced disappearances were first used as a counterinsurgency practice within the context of the Cold War to annihilate the "internal enemy" and to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the population.[1] The first documented case of enforced disappearance in México was the arrest and disappearance of Epifanio Avilés Rojas in 1969 during the Gustavo Díaz Ordaz administration.[2] Rojas was a teacher and member of the Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria (ACNR). The number of disappeared by the state substantially increased following the reemergence of various guerrilla movements throughout the 1970s within both rural and urban areas of México. According to the Special Report on Enforced Disappearances by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), 532 cases of enforced disappearances between the late 1970s and early 1980s were registered. From the 532 cases, 351 occurred in rural areas and 181 occurred in urban areas. Of 351 rural cases of disappearances, an incredible 332 cases occurred in Guerrero.[3] Enforced disappearances have continued to increase ever since. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, president of México between 2006 and 2012, declared the so-called "Mexican Drug War" in 2006, during which approximately 27,000 cases of disappearances have been registered. These disappearances are attributed equally to the state and to organized crime.[4]

IMPUNITY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

A second aspect that characterizes the problem of enforced disappearances in México is the impunity that shields perpetrators. Authorities have not been tried for the crime of enforced disappearances since the 1970s. The process of the so-called "democratization" that México underwent toward the end of the 1990s was a process that favored impunity of such crimes.[5] Unlike other Latin American countries, the transition of the Mexican government did not bring about truth commissions that registered enforced disappearances and other crimes against humanity that were committed by the Mexican state during the Cold War. In fact, the change from a "Priísta" hegemony to a multiparty system was characterized by an amnesty pact between different actors of the political elite, which led to the invisibility of enforced disappearances.[6] This invisibility and impunity continues to this day and is manifested in the case of police and political authorities of Iguala, who have been under investigation due to the events revolving the 43 missing students. Some police and authorities of Iguala have been incarcerated under charges of homicide,

organized delinquency, and kidnapping. However, they have not been accused of enforced disappearances—once again leaving this crime in complete impunity with tremendous repercussions for the perpetuation of a criminal state. By failing to prosecute the crime of enforced disappearance the criminal justice system renders invisible crimes against humanity committed by the state.

In this historical context of impunity and silence that has encompassed the enforced disappearances in México since 1975, there exist a number of diverse, unarmed, and peaceful popular organizations. Organizations such as the Comité ¡Eureka! and Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos y Víctimas de Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos en México (AFADEM) hold the search for the disappeared and the demand for justice and punishment for those responsible as their core objectives.

THE RESCUER: AN EXPANDING CONCEPT

The organizations chosen for this study undertook collective responses to confront the violence perpetrated by the state. They will be examined from a socio-historical perspective that takes into consideration both the personal history of some of their members, as well as the political and social relations of the organization, and the historical context in which these relations occur. It is from this perspective that we will analyze their origins, development, demands, actions, and motivations, but also show the differences and similarities that exist between organizations with the same goals.

The concept of rescuer that was derived from Holocaust research carried out by the Yad Vashem Institute of Jerusalem was originally used to refer to those who, without receiving any reward, actively risked their lives to save the lives of others within contexts of genocide, war, massacres, and other crimes against humanity. Similar to perpetrators of genocide, the intentions of the "rescuers" were crucial to determining if their act could or could not be considered an act of rescue. Some researchers analyzing the Holocaust[7] propose to go beyond psychological or moral analysis to attain a better understating of the social, political, and geographical contexts in which the rescuers appear and succeed or fail. Studies have sought to explain the motivations and behaviors of the rescuers, not only from their own personal histories but also within the contexts in which they arise, including their networks and relationships that provide them with information, resources, and assistance. At the same time, it is necessary to analyze not only isolated individuals acting selflessly toward others but also communities and institutions that are effectively active when grave injustices arise, as argued in *Courageous Resistance: The Power of Ordinary People*,[8] which defines rescuers by considering three aspects. First, rescuers are those who offer help toward others selflessly at a high risk

or cost to themselves or members of their networks. Second, their actions are the result of a conscious decision stemming from their understanding of the context in which they carried out their actions. Finally, their efforts are sustained over time. This is the manner in which rescuers are distinguished from "heroes," whose actions are relatively spontaneous and brief.

Different authors in this volume have proposed the need to broaden these traditional concepts of rescuers in order to capture the Latin American experience. They suggest building a theory that allows for the inclusion of the rescuer during the Cold War into the larger scholarship. Our work aims at analyzing those humanitarian organizations that were fundamental to the search for political prisoners and the enforced disappeared, as well as the rescue of historical memory as a demand for justice during the Cold War and its aftermath. Members of Comité Eureka and AFADEM are included within the category of rescuers that Scott Strauss proposes, in which rescue can be understood as "not so much selfless attempts to save lives of those who were targeted for genocide than a risky behavior that was in opposition to genocidal violence and thereby saved lives."[9] Eureka and AFADEM clearly perform risky behaviors in the Mexican context where enforced disappearances and impunity are ever-present, as members of Eureka and AFADEM have been subjected to intimidations from multiple political actors, including harassment and death threats.

As in many other Latin American countries throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, it has been an extremely complicated endeavor to hear the voices of victims of state violence in México. Additionally, the right to conserve and respect the memory of deceased and disappeared persons has been denied, since it is considered a threat to the official narrative of the state. Terror strategies of the Cold War, in addition to imposed silence and impunity, uphold the feeling of helplessness of the population violated by state violence. Within this context, an examination of the Comité Eureka and AFADEM is a contribution to the rescue field for their labor in defense of victims and their denouncement of human rights crimes. Their work has been essential and necessary to remembering that México—although it did not have a military dictatorship like Chile or a revolutionary armed conflict—also has its share among Latin American countries' experiences with policies of extermination. These policies include torture, displacements, and enforced disappearances, among others. Without the relentless work that the organizations have continued despite setbacks and disadvantages, the struggle and solidarity that Mexicans and the international community has shown to family members of the 43 disappeared of Ayotzinapa would be significantly less.

We believe it necessary to reformulate the concept of rescue to go beyond a semantic definition, as observed by Clarie Andrieu.[10] We propose to deconstruct the term "rescuers" because of the different forms the term adopts, ranging from different rescue acts carried out by organizations or individuals

that seek to rescue victims and cadavers, to the retrieval of the memory of what occurred. As shown in the following pages, the search for the bodies in clandestine graves headed by AFADEM has been fundamental to demonstrating the guilt of the Mexican government in these crimes.

The rescue of bodies is extremely important to ending the agony that people feel when a member of their family is disappeared, living between pain and uncertainty about what has happened to their child, father, mother, sibling, or spouse (see also Chapter 3). We argue that rescuers take different forms in accordance to their social, political and historical context. In other words, human beings accept the possibility of helping others according to the opportunities presented to them by the context in which they find themselves.[11] For a relevant analysis of the rescuer in the case of México, and in relation to the organizations analyzed here, we provide a historical overview of what has shaped the existence and actions of these organizations. We analyze those who become involved in these organizations, their reasons, and the social segments to which they belong. Finally, we consider the relationship between the general population and these organizations.

COMMON ORIGINS: COMITÉ EUREKA AND AFADEM

Aside from the release of 148 political detainees, the rescue of memory on enforced disappearances in México has been one of the most important achievements of Comité Eureka. In this sense, Comité Eureka has been a pioneer that not only invented slogans such as, "They took them alive! We want them alive!" that continue to be heard in marches and protests in México, but also in the appropriation of public space where the denouncement of enforced disappearances can hold a privileged space. The Casa de la Memoria Indómita, founded in México City in 2009, is such a place. It functions as a museum, exhibiting documents (such as photographs) and objects related to enforced disappearances that occurred throughout the so-called "Dirty War." Comité Eureka leads the demand for justice regarding disappearances in the cultural and judicial arena, demanding the opening of archives and the declassification of secret information, and denouncing the cultural and educational policies of the state for their lack of memory regarding past atrocities.

According to historian Evangelina Sánchez,[12] organizations in opposition to enforced disappearances in México have a common origin: the "Comité de Familiares de Presos y Ex Presos Políticos," composed in 1975 as a direct response to the environment of repression imposed by the state after the student movement of 1968 on the one hand, and the proliferation of urban and rural guerillas in the 1970s on the other. Wives and family members of political prisoners and dissidents against the government comprised this committee. The committee's objective was the legal defense of victims by

following up on judicial processes until securing their release. This committee carried out the pioneering work of gathering information on political prisoners, demonstrating the problem of politically motivated enforced disappearances for the first time in México, even as the instances of these considerably increased between 1974 and 1978.[13] It was then that the committee became increasingly complex, paving the way for the creation of various regional committees in Guerrero, Nuevo León, Jalisco, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and México City. Their tasks were to piece together information regarding the disappeared in each of these states: full names, ages, birthplaces, places of detention, and other pieces of pivotal information for their search.

The committee of Nuevo León was of vital importance to the beginning of Eureka. Rosario Ibarra de Piedra founded the Nuevo León committee on April 16, 1977. Ibarra de Piedra was a housewife whose son, Jesús de Piedra, a militant in the Communist League, was disappeared in 1975. Piedra was disappeared along with family members of other political and disappeared prisoners in Monterrey. The Nuevo León committee was able to quickly expand its scope of action, establishing contact with wives and mothers of disappeared persons from other states of the Mexican Republic. In August 1977, the Nuevo León Committee became Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de Presos, Perseguidos, Desaparecidos, y Exiliados Políticos and by 1984 the committee had become the Comité Eureka.

Earlier, in October 1978 a new division within Comité Nacional paved the way for the emergence of Comité Nacional *Independiente* Pro-Defensa de Presos, Perseguidos Desaparecidos, y Exiliados Políticos, adding "Independiente," to distinguish it from the group headed by Ibarra de Piedra. The principal leaders of this new committee were Josefina Martínez de Martínez and Felipe Martinez Soriano. Martinez Soriano was a pediatrician from Oaxaca, linked to the guerrilla movement there, known as Unión del Pueblo.[14] This independent committee was the direct precursor of the current AFADEM, founded in 1997, in which most relatives of the dissappeared from Guerrero came together. Despite this common origin and their pursuit of the same goal, both the Comité Eureka and AFADEM have important differences in terms of organizational structure, demands, actions, and political relations at a national and international level, as well as in members and discourse. These are differences that largely explain the scope and limitations of these organizations.

ORIGINS OF COMITÉ EUREKA

June 9, 1977 marked a point of departure in the life of Sara Hernández de Ramírez Duarte. On that day, her husband, Rafael Ramírez Duarte, was

kidnapped by police officers, along with his borthers Guillermo and Carlos. Although Guillermo and Carlos returned home, Rafael did not. In fact, Rafael was last seen in Mexican army prison cells located in Millitary Camp No. 1, where a number of detained persons were held in captivity. Ramírez Duarte's arrest reflected the fact that one of his brothers, Juan Manuel Ramírez Duarte, the *Bolchevique*, was the leader of the "23rd of September Communist League," México's most important urban guerilla group of the 1970s. Prior to the Ramírez Duarte's disappeareance, Sara Hernández had led an ordinary and "wonderful" life beside her husband, son, and future daughter.[15] She was forced to begin the tireless search for her partner after his diappearance, a search that led to her active integration in Comité Eureka. In this regard, Hernández states,

> In September of 1977, my mother in law, Delia Duarte, learned about an organization of family members who searched for their sons or daughters that were kidnapped by the state, too. My mother in law came into contact with the organization by phone. It was a phone number from Monterrey City. Around those days, she learned that the person with whom she had spoken would be in México City. They met in person and this was how my mother in law met Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, who was also searching for her son. [. . .] In 1978, I joined, worked, and in my spare time, participated in activites of the then National Committee for the Defense of Prisoners, Persecuted, Exiled, and Political Disappeared of México.[16]

According to Sara Hernández, from the begining, the committee was mainly composed of women—mothers and daughters. The principal motivation was simple and forceful: "the search for our family members." Elizabeth Mair explains that this motivation radically changed their daily lives:

> They left their homes in search of their children and they found themselves immersed in a new way of life that was previously unimaginable. A life which—beside indelible pain of the loss—consisted of meetings, marches, events, confereces, hunger strikes, solidarity, and daily encounters with officials. Husbands and other family members empowering them to rebuild themselves into different women from who they were before the repressive drama.[17]

Without a doubt, the strength of the Comité Eureka is attributed to the fortitude and committment of "las Doñas," a term that was used to identify the female members of the committee. Yet, the scope and achievements of this organization should be understood against the specific historical context in which it was developed and the political and social relations that have been established with other sectors of Mexican society—especially with the country's leftist political parties. Against this background, Comité Eureka,

even earlier, through its existence as the National Committee for the Defense of Prisoners, Persecuted, Disappeared, and Politically Exiled, was characterized by a vertical structure with Rosario Ibarra de Piedra at the top. Ibarra de Piedra was from Monterrey, the housewife of a well-known doctor from that northern province who had decided to move to México City in search of her son. For this and more, she became one of the most visible activists in the struggle against enforced disappearances in México.

In 1977, Ibarra de Piedra managed to place the topic of enforced disappearances at the forefront of national public debate through various factors. First, Ibarra de Piedra organized new and ongoing civic mobilizations with las Doñas, such as the so-called "paradas," which means "standing." At these paradas, las Doñas dressed in black with photographs of their family members hanging on their chests in high-traffic areas. In this same respect, Ibarra de Piedra organized hunger strikes in important public spaces, such as the Metropolitan Cathedral in México City. Second, she was able to arrange meetings with Mexican presidents. For example, the National Committee managed to hold four hearings with López Portillo during his government, on April 19, 1977, August 31, 1978, December 7, 1978, and on August 31, 1982. The government has not always proven to respond well to committees. By contrast, the Comité Nacional Independiente received hostile treatment from the government: constant, violent evictions and hearings with the governor's undersecretary, as opposed to López Portillo himself.[18] Thirdly, Ibarra de Piedra gained international presence for el Comité through different trips that allowed for meetings with different organizations. These organizations included Amnesty International (England, 1978), Pen Club International with Mexican Writer Elena Poniatowska (1980) and meetings with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance of the United Nations based in Geneva, Switzerland (1980). Lastly, thanks to the relations that Ibarra de Piedra was able to establish with left-wing political parties, the Comité pushed for greater presence and participation in the Mexican political system controlled by priísmo, following the 1977 Electoral Act.

Regarding these last efforts, a very fruitful association between the Comité Nacional and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRN) was established in the course of the 1980s. Together with this leftist political party, the Ibarra de Piedra's Comité founded the Frente Nacional Contra la Represión, por la Solidaridad y las Libertades Democráticas (FCNR) toward the end of 1970. Sara Hernández considers this front one of the main achievements of the Comité because it managed to gather together more than 60 social organizations that not only render visible the topic of enforced disappearances in México, but also pressured the government to release hundreds of political disappeared that were in clandestine prisons, including the liberation of 148 prisoners in 1979. It is from this event that Comité Nacional de

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra changed its name to ¡Comité Eureka! that connotes "¡he encontrado!," I have found it!. The Comité's association with PRN opened the doors to Ibarra de Piedra's political participation in three elections: two presidental ones in 1982 and 1988, and one for federal deputy (representative to the Congress) in 1985. Although the PRN disappeared toward the end of the 1980s, the relationship of Comité Eureka with leftist parties did not cease. In fact, its ties were consolidated by networks and connections with the Partido de la Revolución Democratica (PRD), whose political power in México City has made it possible to maintain Ibarra de Piedra's presence and her struggle against enforced disappearances in the capital of the nation to this day.

AFADEM IN GUERRERO

As we have previously mentioned, the state of Guerrero was the most damaged by the strategy of enforced disappearances. Historically and to this day, Guerrero has been marked by great, rural social inequality. In 1960, 74.25 percent of the population was rural and 25.75 percent was urban, and the majority of its population was illiterate (62.1 percent). Guerrero had the largest peasant labor force in the country, while contributing just 1 percent of the national agricultural activity. Guerrero also held the title of the poorest state in México. In fact, 93 percent of homes in the state did not have running water and only 23.5 percent had electricity.[19] In 1960, more than three quarters of households had just one room per family and an average of five occupants. Only 10 percent of homes had sewage and the predominant building material was adobe (this profile is similar to the one found in communities in Guatemala analyzed in this book).[20] The *caciquiles* structure (which still persists) controlled the buying and selling of coffee.[21] Political parties took advantage of these structures to establish convenient relations of social control and to gain votes in the polls.

In addition, vast exploitation of forests by four national corporations and one international company devastated 80 percent of Guerrero's forests. The production of coffee and coconut oil, some of the highest in the country in previous decades, began to drop significantly. Beginning in 1955, peasant groups were no longer entitled to government loans. While structural and political violence always took place in Guerrero, the 1960s and 1970s brought forward a greater amount of political violence that stained the population, especially the population of Atoyac. The results of state's terrorism were murders, rapes, and enforced disappearances. At least two armed movements converged in Guerrero. One of the armed groups was composed of civics, headed by Genaro Vasquez. The second armed group was the Partido de los

Pobres, headed by Lucio Cabañas. Cabañas was a teacher and graduate from the Escuela Normal de Ayotzinapa, a fact that highlights the importance of Ayotzinapa in the disappearance of the 43 students in 2014. Toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, peasant workers in the region saw Cabañas as a figure who would lead their economic and justice demands. Against guerrilla presence, and especially the Partido de los Pobres, the Mexican state executed at least five types of counterinsurgency strategies, including the participation of paramilitary groups known as "white guards," which were linked to the caciques. Violent raids in the shantytowns opened new ways to penetrate rural mountains communities in Guerrero without much opposition.

Cabaña's family members, sympathizers of guerrilla movements, and many members of the general population were detained. According the Cold War doctrine of national security, counterinsurgency strategies to "eradicate the water where the fish swim" were carried out. This was the internal enemy and the "annihilate the hope of social change" period. Many of the detained ended up in the Military Camp Number One. Airstrikes and consecutive extrajudicial executions followed.

Despite the state violence, the struggle of family members to find their siblings, children and parents did not come to a halt. One of the disappeared of that period was Rosendo Radilla. His crime was said to be composing *corridos*, Mexican traditional songs, with political content. Radilla had also done outstanding work on issues of social justice in his community. Radilla was detained while traveling with his son on August 25, 1974. His disappearance paved the way for bringing enforced disappearances to international courts and to accusing the Mexican state of the crimes. Radilla's family members began to use their mutual pain and vulnerability as a point of unity and support. This was how, over time, AFADEM was formed. Violence by the state destroyed family and community ties, but failed to impede collective efforts from rising.

People who have been linked to AFADEM are mainly family members or victims of the repression by the state, like Julio Mata, who serves as the organization's general secretary and also occupies the post of secretary of communications with the Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (FEDEFAM). Mata was politically persecuted, and the situation forced him to distance himself from his family and to abandon his old life. Mata spent years hiding from the police until he reached Guerrero and AFADEM helped him resolve his situation. Soon after, he decided to join the work of this AFADEM, although his case had already been resolved and he did not have a disappeared family member.

AFADEM's fight is rooted in the search for disappeared family members and going beyond the demand to bring them back alive.[22] This organization has directed their struggle on an institutional level, through national and

international courts. AFADEM has carried out political, legal, and public denunciations. Surpasing momentary and personal justice, AFADEM has made national and international demands, challenging the selfishness that is said to be representative of the human condition.

Unlike Eureka!, AFADEM has stayed away from political parties with the intention of avoiding commitments that might limit their behavior. At first, AFADEM brought people from various states of the Mexican Republic together, especially people from rural areas. The composition of the members of AFADEM was heterogenous. However, over the years, only members from Guerrero remained, particularly the people of Atoyac. While the passing of time has wreaked havoc on the number of AFADEM members, its influence and strong participation in human rights organizations has continued to thrive. Among the great achievements of AFADEM is having brought Rosendo Radilla's case to the Inter-American court and obtaining a favorable ruling in 2009. The statement indicated the Mexican state's responsibility in the violation of the rights to personal liberty, failure to recognize a legal personality and life, urged the Mexican state to investigate Radilla's the case and to comply with the criminal proceedings in connection to his arrest and disappearance. The Mexican state was also urged to continue to search for and locate Radilla or his remains. The state was also pressed to organize a public act of acknowledgment of responsability in relation to the facts of the case and to honor the memory of Radilla.

AFADEM has also collaborated in the foundation of other associations, such as Diego Lucero, whose objective is the search for the politically and socially disappeared in this new wave of violence in México since 2006. A second goal is to have a more complete database of this period. The figures indicate that there are about 820 disappeared on a national level, 600 of whom are from Guerrero. However, this organization acknowledges that much remains to denounce, but that people remain silenced due to fear to voice their grievances.

AFADEM's trajectory has not been simple, but, as mentioned by Julio Mata, one of its main sources of strength is its ideology and certainty that it will not capitulate to the state. AFADEM asserts that it will take cases to ultimate consequences, and to "not sell out to the state or to a political party."[23] Being a family member of a disappeared person has not always been the reason why people become involved in this struggle. Within the narratives that interviewees have provided, there are cases where parents, siblings, and others decided to continue their lives and leave that painful side of their lives in the past. Perhaps rescue stories of organizations go beyond kinship ties or perhaps it is in the sense of humanity within everyone. For some, being a victim of the political violence of the state led them find their place in life; others turned their grief into strength. For example, Tita Radilla, Rosendo's

daughter, always kept the lessons of her father close to heart, and for that same reason, never ignored the search for justice.[24] She was very close to her father and among the lessons that she remembers from him, are these words:

> I was 17 years old and I asked him: "Api—that's what I used to call him—they say that everyone has a price, how much are you worth?" He thought about it for a moment and said: "Well, perhaps I am so small that there is not a coin that is worth what I am worth." This lesson stayed with me and has helped me in life, like that of loyalty. And he was someone who kept his word no matter what. That is the lesson, to never sell out.[25]

Nowadays, there exists a reality in México in which political and social violence has not been stopped. On the contrary, cases of enforced disappearances continue to rise. In light of the new wave of disappearances and with the legacies of the past still prevalent, new groups of people searching for their family members have begun to emerge. However, this new generation of organizations arising from enforced disappearances that have taken place since the presidency of Felipe Calderón, do not always recover from the legacies of the past. Julio Mata would say that this is one of the limitations of AFADEM: its members can no longer be active, and the new generations don't seem to be as completely committed to mobilizing as activists. The results are somewhat contradictory: widespread impunity, while at the same time leading some people to use of their capacity to resist and empowers them to take action.[26]

According to historian Anleu Hernandez, resilience is the ability of humans to adapt to adverse living conditions, to overcome them, and become strengthened. Resilience is comprised of two levels. The first level is the ability to resist destruction and the second is to preserve integrity in difficult circumstances, as well as the attitude to react positively despite those difficulties. In fact, Mata affirms that as a victim of the repression, he was able to find his purpose in life through this repression. Mata found social struggle in the social work.[27]

The economic aspect is another limitation. The autonomy of AFADEM has been very costly; although it has opened doors little by little, along with other organizations, it has not been able to make use of public spaces that other organizations have. Even so, from its struggle, AFADEM has been able to collaborate with academics such as Evangelina Sánchez and Claudia Rangel, who have embraced their struggle through Andrea Radilla, another the daughter of Rosendo Radilla. Their collaboration resulted in the book *Desaparición Forzada y Terrorismo de Estado en México.* This book is relevant for the rescue of memory of organizations such as AFADEM and it is one of the works that illustrates the acts of repressions committed by the Mexican

state toward the end of the twentieth century. This organization's journey has been difficult, and has required a great deal of patience. For instance, Andrea Radilla came to occupy a place as a professor in the University of Guerrero to receive the support of Evangelina Sánchez and Claudia Rangel, to obtain economic resources that allowed for the book project to be published. Meanwhile, Tita Radilla also had to wait several years in order to become involved in the struggle. Following the above, she narrates:

> I spent time giving birth and raising my children during the first years of his disappearance, although I do not remember details of my children. When my second daughter was born, my mother in law, who was a midwife, helped me. Before leaving, she told me that she would leave the door unlocked in case my husband came. Suddenly, I heard that the door was opening and as I peered I saw that it was my father with his farmer suit, his hat, and his satchel. I shouted, "Api, you came!" He smiled at me and suddenly I felt goose bumps. I closed my eyes and he disappeared. I got up and I looked for him everywhere, but he was not there. When my third daughter was born in Acapulco, a nurse moved me from a room where there were other women, to a room where I was alone. When he left, the door opened and it was my father. He smiled at me and I stayed quiet while looking at him until I fell asleep.[28]

Interest in collaborating with this type of organization crosses between life experiences, and socioeconomic, political, and cultural environments. Unlike the perception of humans as selfish by nature, some schools of anthropological thought have shown another image of human beings, highlighting that depending on the cooperation and mutual understanding, as a being formed from their birth among relatives, who in turn exist in wider communities of collaboration.[29] In rural contexts, it is common that these ties become closer. However, it does not mean that in large cities these ties of support and solidarity cannot exist. Anarchist theorist Piotr Kropotkin developed the theory of mutual support that argues that the "anti-natural" ways of governments and authoritarian states destroy the natural principle of human community: solidarity.[30] These processes of extreme violence, in which the state makes use of all its tools with the intent to terrorize, divide communities, and make accomplices of traitors, lead to the destruction of solidarity, as suggested by Kropotkin—yet, in such contexts, there is also human resilience. Political repression is confronted in various ways depending on the heterogeneous experiences of each individual of each community.

There are many variables that influence the way in which solidarity ties are valued, such as loyalty, family, community, and social injustices. Economic deprivation may lead one to accept certain agreements or to lose the fear of fighting—after all, how much more damage can they cause? Perhaps, it is in

that moment in that people analyze what they cannot stand to see happening to them or to the rest of the population, because the decision to stay distant or to support does not always come from blood ties. In this context, personal interests, obstacles, and benefits in México have led sometimes to situating the memory of crimes as a space for struggling over the meaning of what happened in the past. This struggle, however, does not necessary unmask the role of the state, mainly because accusations are often made without individualizing those responsible for planning and perpetrating the crimes.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this essay we have provided a glimpse of two organizations that exist in México, their struggle for justice and the rescue of memory that comes from various political "trenches," sometimes radical, symbolic or political, among others. The life stories of each and every one of the members of these organizations are just as diverse. We consider México as having a backward justice and reconciliation process. These processes are trying to be rebuilt, but the new waves of political violence complicate the consolidation of these attempts to know the other story, the story hidden in trenches dug decades ago. Because of this, it is more complicated to identify and sketch out figures that are part of these episodes of violence. México comes with years of delays to the process of compensations and recognition of crimes against humanity.

Comité Eureka emerged from a tragic event in common, forging ties between people who would have never expected to meet, people from different states and different social sectors. In this organization, the mother figure subsumes the discourse of sisters and wives that are involved. Rosario Ibarra de Piedra's figure allowed her to gain support with left-wing political parties that ultimately enabled the organization to highlight their discourse and put forward their petitions.

While AFADEM also emerged from a tragic event, it is composed of people with ongoing community ties and history that goes back to the 1970s. AFADEM is composed of the people from Atoyac, Guerrero, bounded by their shared happy and sad moments. This is precisely why, when the government attempted to undermine their will through a financial remuneration, at least in the case of Rosendo Radilla, the family refused to sell out. To think that everyone in the community resisted the government's bribe is truly extraordinary in light of the living conditions and life stories of the people in this community. There is no one predominant representative in this organization. Tita and Andrea did not position themselves within the organization as daughters of a victim, but rather as part of a tragedy that was carried out

against the population of Atoyac, because of impunity. The choice to take Radilla's case to court was made from legal requirements, as opposed to personal ones. Julio Mata is proof that it is not necessary to be a family member of a disappeared person to become involved in these organizations.

There is more to say about these organizations filled with strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and vices and human virtues. They still stand nonetheless—despite the presence of the state machinery used for economic bribery, corruption, political persecution, and threats. Human virtues to help others may be contaminated, but not exterminated. They adapt and sometimes lose their clarity, but it is within these organizations that we find the ideally incorrupt rescue organization that we want to preserve in the search for the disappeared, memory, and justice.

NOTES

1. The "internal enemy" category used to label political opponents can be understood as a key aspect of the Cold War anticommunist period. Instead of an external enemy threatening the country, the internal enemy was inside the nation's border. Rather than an enemy resulting from a confrontation between or among countries, it is an internal battle against any social movement perceived by the state at aiming to overthrow the state. In this dynamic, the internal enemy could range anywhere from social activists to union members, or any group that made socio-political, cultural and economic demands from the government. See Marcia Esparza, Henry R. Huttenbach and Daniel Feierstein, eds. *State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold War Years* (New York: Routledge Critical Terrorism Studies, 2009).

2. Retrieved from: www.hijosméxico.org/file/que_es_y_que_hace_h.i.j.o.s._méxico, May 15, 2016.

3. Special report on complaints on enforced disappearances that occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s. CNDH, (CNDH, 12). In the state of Guerrero two groups of guerrillas emerged and worked in the 1970s. The first being el Partido de lo Pobres represented by Lucio Cabañas, and the second was the Asociación Cívica Guerrense (Guerrense Civic Association) whose main leader was professor Genero Vázquez.

4. Human Rights Watch, "Informe Mundial 2014: México," Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2014/country-chapters/121995

5. For a critical analysis of this process see, Nina Schneider and Marcia Esparza, *Legacies of State Violence and Transitional Justice in Latin America: A Janus-Faced Paradigm* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015).

6. The term "priísta hegemony" is in reference to the supremacy that the political party PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) (Institutional Revolutionary Party) held within the different levels of the government since the 1940s.

7. See Bob Moore, *Jewish Self Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ron Dudai, "Rescuers for Humanity: Rescuers, Mass Atrocities and Transitional Justice" *Human Rights Quarterly* 34,

no. 1(2012); Jessica Casiro. "Argentine Rescuers: A Study on the "Banality of Good," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006).

8. Kristina Thalhammer et al., *Courageous Resistance: The Power of Ordinary People* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

9. Scott Straus, "From 'Rescue' to Violence. Overcoming Local Opposition to Genocide in Rwanda," in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, eds. Jacques Semelin, Claire Andrieu, Sarah Gensburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

10. Claire Andrieu, "A Comparative Approach to Assistance Given to the Jews and to Allied Soldiers and Airmen in France," in *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue,* eds. Jacques Semelin, Claire. Andrieu and S. Gensburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

11. A reference to studies on contexts of shaping the view of the rescuer can be found in Jacques Sémelin et al., eds. *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

12. Evangelina Sánchez, "AFADEM: Desaparecidos: Presentación," in *Desaparición Forzada y Terrorismo de Estado en México: Memorias de la Represión en Atoyac, Guerrero Durante la Década de los Setenta*, eds. Andrea Radilla Martínez and Claudia E. G. Rangel Lozano (México: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 2012): 179–83.

13. Libertad Argüello, *Apertura política y violencia en México (1976–1988). Condiciones de visibilidad de agentes sociopolíticos no convencionales: el caso del Comité ¡Eureka!*, Tesis de Maestría en Estudios Políticos y Sociales, (México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010): 63–64.

14. Evangelina Sánchez, *op. cit.*, 184.

15. Word used by Sara Hernández to describe her life for the interview in April 2014.

16. Interview of Sara Hernández conducted by Isabel de León in April 2014.

17. Elizabeth Maier, *Las Madres de los Desaparecidos: ¿Un Nuevo Mito Materno en América Latina?* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana/El Colegio de la Frontera Norte/La Jornada Ediciones, 2001): 139–40.

18. Libertad Argüello, *op. cit*., 71.

19. Moisés Ochoa,*Guerrero, Análisis de un Estado Problema*. (México: Trillas, 1964).

20. Carlos Illades, *Guerrero: Historia Breve* (México: COLMEX-FCE, 2010): 148.

21. In contemporary history, caciques, or chiefs, are seen, as figures of power that may potentially be intermediaries between political authorities and the population. The possibility of being potential intermediaries derives from their favorable economic stance.

22. AFADEM has branches in states such as Guerrero, Chihuahua, Puebla, Jalisco, and State of México.

23. Interview. Julio Mata by Maribel Rivas, March 2014.

24. Tita is president of the AFADEM.

25. Gloria Diaz, "Tita y la Guerra Sucia," *Revista Proceso*, 2011, 2.

26. Claudia Anelu Hernandez, *Resiliencia, La Fuerza de la Vida: Un Estudio Sobre Familiares de Niñez Desaparecida Por el Conflicto Armado Interno en Guatemala* (Guatemala: ECAP, 2005): 5.

27. Interview. Julio Mata by Maribel Rivas. March 2014.

28. Gloria Diaz, "Tita y la Guerra Sucia," *Revista Proceso*, 2011, 3.

29. Marshall Sahlins, "*La Ilusión Occidental de la Naturaleza Humana*" (México: FCE, 2008): 10.

30. Pedro Kropotkin, *El Apoyo Mutuo: Un Factor de la Evolución*. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1970.

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Chapter 6

From Rescue to Solidarity

(Re) Humanizing Relationships for Social Transformation

Jenny Escobar and Angie Tamayo

INTRODUCTION

Writing about the role of "rescuers" in the context of Colombia brings some challenging questions. We find it difficult to use the term to describe the solidarity and collective efforts of survival and justice we have witnessed and been part of. The concept of "rescuer" implies a person saving another from a dangerous situation. There is an implied separation between the rescuer and rescued that is embedded in power differentials evident in the role of victim (rescued) versus savior (rescuer).

The underlying belief, drawing from the Holocaust literature on the topic, is that the rescuer is greatly impacting the life of the rescued by their altruistic behavior, and if the lives of the rescuers are changed by their helping behavior is a by-product of the relationship and not necessarily the intention. In this conceptualization of rescuing, the rescuer is motivated by reasons of morality (doing good for others) and/or cultural/religious notions of helping others. This is not to deny the great risks and severe consequences that people who helped those persecuted during the Holocaust faced in response to their helping initiatives. Rather, it is to highlight that this literature assumes people engage in rescuing acts for the protection and well-being of others and not necessarily for themselves. In this chapter, we want to propose a different view of "rescuing" behavior that takes into account historical understandings of rescuing acts and highlights the transformative aspects that these acts can have on those engage in helping others.

The concept of rescuer in the Americas has a different connotation when situated within the long history of colonization that gave birth to the present day nation-states. In the Americas, the discourse of rescuing the "savage and uncivilized" from their "backward" ways was and is used as a justification

to commit genocide against indigenous, black, and other marginalized communities. As a result, a "rescue" is not an apolitical act of helping another. Instead rescuer is a term that justifies and upholds years of oppression for communities that have been historically marginalized through genocidal practices and present day forms of institutional exclusion. Similar to the savior complex, "rescuers" is a racialized concept that situates the "white, middle class, western body" as the one doing the rescuing of the "non-white, poor, 'third-world' people."

What we have witnessed in Colombia working alongside human rights defenders, victims of political violence and their families is not "rescuing" acts, but rather strategies of survival embedded in a deep sense of solidarity and an urge to rehumanize generations of broken relationships due to an ongoing, protracted war. Humans are social beings that require relationships to survive; the idea of the independent or autonomous individual doesn't exist in practice. In Colombia, these broken relationships are rooted in a context of prolonged internal armed conflict where violence even in its extreme forms such as massacres, mass disappearances, and torture have become a normal state of affairs. The most evident example of damaged social relationships in a time of war is the polarization of a society where people are forced to take positions of opposite extremes of "us" versus "them."[1] For civilians caught in the middle of the Colombian conflict, armed actors do not believe in the idea of neutrality. Instead, these groups often offer civilians a stark choice with only three options: "to join them, leave the area, or die."[2] Not identifying with one group is seen automatically as being an enemy of the other and for survivors of state violence that choose to collectively organize around their trauma, they are categorized by state agents as an "enemy of the state," "unpatriotic," "terrorists of the left," and an overall "threat" to the national security of the country.[3] Polarization and other forms of breaking social cohesion result in a climate of fear and distrust that permeates every aspect of society and it is within this context of dehumanizing relationships that traumatic events (i.e. human rights violations) occur. Therefore, individual and collective acts of solidarity can be understood as part of the process to rebuild and rehumanize broken, formerly dehumanizing relationships. Thus relationship building, in this case by the act of helping others and each other, in a context of war and dehumanization becomes a political act, because it allows individuals to become empowered to reclaim their human and political rights after being stripped of their humanity.

Also, within the context of a country embroiled in war for decades it becomes difficult to identify who is the rescuer? Who is not affected by the armed conflict? In this context, violence permeates daily life and is not restricted to one group of victims. Therefore, for the remaining of this chapter, we will use the concept of solidarity to capture "helping" behaviors and

strategies that we have been part of and/or witness in Colombia. In order to begin unpacking the process in which people come together during a time of war to help each other survive and (re)build their life we ask the following questions: What does solidarity look like in Colombia? How can we capture the interconnected relationships of "helping" that take place in a context of ongoing violence such as Colombia? How does solidarity rehumanize broken relationships?

As two scholar-activists who identify our roots, upbringing, and social justice commitment with the people of Colombia, we begin answering these questions by situating our own lived experiences as part of the human rights movement. We believe that is important to start with our own experiences not because they are necessarily exemplary of and/or generalizable to the acts of solidarity found in Colombia, but rather because by focusing within our own selves, we can best describe the psychological, emotional, and spiritual process in by which we choose to join others in their survival and quest for social justice.

We begin our stories of solidarity with a brief summary of Colombia's socio-political conflict noting the most important events that contributed to the present day violence and its main armed groups. We then transition to each of our *testimonios* to highlight how acts of solidarity begin, develop, and are maintain in a context of ongoing violence. Finally, we conclude with highlighting some of the broad themes running throughout our stories and propose our vision for continuing to understand, implement and foster acts of solidarity in our beloved Latin American continent.

COLOMBIA'S RELENTLESS WAR

Tracing the emergence and development of the Colombian conflict is a challenging endeavor given the multiple, complex histories and actors that intersect throughout time to today's present day iteration of the conflict. For example, Colombia's conflict can be understood from various perspectives such as: historical (as a by-product of colonization), socio-political (stemming from institutionalize inequalities such as racism, classism, sexism, and Christian dominance), economic (as a result of feudal, neoliberal policies, transnational extractive projects), and political (conflicts for political power). The purpose of this chapter is to give you a brief glimpse of this puzzle as it relates to our lived experiences in solidarity movements. We will be focusing on the violence committed by Colombian state-sponsored actors, particularly military and paramilitary groups, since we have witnessed the impact of this violence on the communities we have organized with in Colombia. Our solidarity efforts have been mostly with survivors of state violence mainly

because they are at the center of the human rights movement as a result of the massive amount of human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed toward them. As part of the human rights movement, we focus on shedding light on these crimes and provide spaces for survivors to be seen, organize and carry out individual and collective efforts toward social justice. By summarizing some of the key moments that explain the emergence of paramilitarism and state violence, we aim to provide a context in which to situate our solidarity efforts.

CONTESTED TRUTHS: STATE VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

Although not officially considered a dictatorship, Colombia's dirty war against its own people has the same characteristics of the prior dictatorships in Latin America.

Human rights violations such as forced disappearances, massacres, extermination of political parties and, social groups, forced displacement, torture, sexual violence, and selective killings of social leaders has been committed in a systematic way. Even though there have been multiple actors perpetrating these horrific acts of violence such as, guerilla groups and drug cartels, the Colombian government through its military, police, and paramilitary actors have played a main role by directly planning and committing violence against Afro-Colombian indigenous communities, *campesinos* and Unionized working class. Furthermore, the Colombian government has also used tactics of omission to perpetuate violence by either denying their responsibility, looking the other way when its sponsored armed actors commit the violence, and by politically and legally blocking any initiatives that seek to bring justice for the wrongdoing.

Colombia's present-day conflict is often traced to the emergence of armed struggles throughout Latin America and the War on Drugs. During the 1950's and 1960's Colombia saw the birth and strengthening of left-wing guerrillas groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Movimiento 19 (M-19) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). These groups were mainly led by campesinos, intellectuals, and communities whose main claims focused on reforming economic, political and social inequalities. As a response to these movements, by 1974, the Colombian government similar to other Latin American dictatorships adopted the United States sponsored National Security Doctrine to fight communism. As it has been extensively documented, the label "communist" was up for interpretation and application to any groups or individuals who were perceived to be against the status quo. Most often than not conclusions of who and what constituted communism were arbitrarily applied and thus everyone, but particularly those in less positions of power, were at risk of becoming the next "enemy of the state."

In order to increase its efforts to eliminate any threat to the existing political and social powers, in the 1980s similar to the governments of the Guatemala and El Salvador, the Colombian state formed paramilitary groups also known as death squads, whose main task was to eliminate all guerrilla groups and any social movement.[4] In the years to come, Colombia saw the birth and development of different paramilitaries groups, such as Asociación Campesina de Agricultores y Ganaderos del Magdalena Medio (ACDEGAM) and surveillance cooperatives known as Convivir. The Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP), a research center with one of the most extensive database of human rights violations in the country, reported that 60 massacres were committed by paramilitaries in the year 1988 alone. Some examples of these massacres are: La Mejor Esquina in Cordoba with 38 victims, Los Coquitos in Turbo, Antioquia with 25 victims, and Segovia in the region of Antioquia with 43 victims.[5] By the 1990s, paramilitary groups acting with economic support of the Colombian State and ensured impunity were responsible for committing most of the horrific violence in the country. In 1997, the paramilitary groups called Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), led by Carlos Castaño, controlled large parts of the country and accumulated a lot of power. With the continued financial and military support of the United States to the Colombian government, and the channeling of this money to private paramilitary groups by officials in government, the paramilitaries still operate in Colombia despite official allegations of demobilization.[6] Former president Alvaro Uribe Velez carried out his national Democratic Security Doctrine through the usage of paramilitary groups and the army as a way to eliminate the two major guerrilla groups still fighting today: the ELN and the FARC and any other opposition.[7]

Throughout the conflict, the production and selling of drugs has been one of the main financial strategies use by the various armed groups operating in the country. Moreover, drug cartels fight for power over land and resources similar to and in connection with these groups. The violence emerging from the convergence of the drug trade has been insurmountable and unfortunately has been reinforce by the U.S. War on Drugs foreign policies such as, Plan Colombia that supposedly aim to curtail drug trafficking. Instead, this United States led effort, has strengthened the power of Colombia's military and continues to be tied to human rights violations and paramilitary groups. This policy is also responsible for causing the displacement of thousands of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities whose livelihoods were attacked by toxic fumigation of their lands.

Despite the fact that the violence in Colombia is being perpetrated by these different armed groups, including state actors, the mainstream Colombian and international press has attributed most of the violence to the actions of the "illegal" armed actors of the conflict, particularly the offenses

committed by the FARC guerrillas. In contrast, according to various national and international human rights organizations, government forces (military and police) and their paramilitary allies actually commit the vast majority of human rights abuses.[8] Yet, the victims of this violence are silenced and their experiences are erased from the public record.[9] Even though victims of the Colombian conflict have been harmed by one or multiple armed actors of the conflict, this chapter focuses in particular on the experiences of survival and solidarity of survivors of state terror given the lack of institutional support and recognition they receive compared to other victims. For example, victims of the FARC guerrilla group are able to readily find social outlets that help them speak out about their experiences of violence and receive help as victims of the conflict. These outlets include for example continuous media coverage of the violence committed by the FARC in public news channels, which includes a national radio program produced by Caracol (one of the largest media outlets in the country) called "Las Voces del Secuestro" "The Voices of the Kidnapped." Through the radio station family members of people who have been kidnapped by the guerrilla groups can speak out about their experiences and express messages of love and hope to their kidnapped loved ones. For victims of state violence these types of media exposure are very limited or non-existent, and they are faced with the added burden of finding ways to be recognized as victims of the conflict and receive help from others, a burden that victims of the guerrilla violence usually do not carry with them.

For many years, human rights defenders and survivors of state violence have organized to denounce the crimes committed by the state. As a consequence, they have been persecuted and stigmatized. According to the non-profit project Somos Defensores/We are Defenders, which has a national registry of cases documenting violence committed against human rights defenders, one hundred and sixty three cases of aggressions were reported in the first six months of 2012.[10] These aggressions consisted of eighty-one threats, twenty-nine assassinations, twenty-nine assassination attempts, and seventeen arbitrary detentions. The report notes that between January 27 and June of 2012, on average a human rights defender was attacked every day, and killed every six days.

For the National Movement of Victims of State Crime (referred to by its Spanish acronym MOVICE) many survivors of state violence who are part of their movement have been subjected to further revictimization, which they explain is a consequence of identifying their perpetrators as part of the State:

> Al reconocer como responsable de la violación de sus derechos a quienes han generado la violencia y a quienes mantienen el control social les expone fácilmente a ser revictimizadas con la intensión de debilitar, dominar y doblegar la voluntad de las personas para intentar hacerles desistir de sus procesos de

> exigibilidad de sus derechos a través de la denuncia y en el peor de los casos eliminar a quienes no responden al propósito de dominación para el diseño de modelo de sociedad que se pretende.
>
> Recognizing those who generate violence and maintain social control as responsible for violating their rights, exposes [victims of state violence] to be easily revictimized with the goal to undermine, dominate and defeat people's will as a way to make them desist their processes of denouncement demanding their rights, and in the worst of cases to eliminate those who do not respond to the design of domination they have for society.[11]

For survivors of state-sponsored violence the failure of the Colombian state to provide accountability and justice for the violations committed against them is a result of the (in) direct involvement of state agents in these crimes. A report on the levels of impunity in Colombia explains this inaction as a mechanism of impunity where silence is a result of the state's complicity with perpetrators. This complicity is evident in state representatives offering special protections such as increased salary and other promotions to civil and military servants who have been found to have ties with paramilitary groups. The lack of investigation of crimes and the minimization of the political nature of violations are other ways impunity is employed by the Colombian state.[12]

The separation between human rights defenders and victims become blurry for once they identified the Colombian state agents as perpetrators of violence, they become and are once again targets of violence. Therefore, if we were to understand human rights defenders as the rescuers, that is those helping victims of state violence in their journey for survival and justice, and the victims as the ones being rescued, then the concept of rescuer, is not applicable in a context where once you take a stand against the State you face the same repercussions as the victims. It is in this context of ongoing violence and silence that solidarity efforts, not rescuing acts, have been taking place.

TESTIMONIES OF SOLIDARITY

Theories such as Feminist Standpoint theory and Chicana Feminist Epistemologies have guided the process by which scholars interrogate their positionality in terms of power and knowledge building. The power of situating ourselves as researchers is that it centers our prior knowledge and experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge. Thus, it challenges the idea that good scientific research is one that controls personal biases and aspires to be objective, rather it posits that as researchers we bring knowledge that shapes every aspect of the research to the questions we ask, to how and what kind of information we gather, and to how we analyze it.[13] Moreover, this framework

also centers the experiences of marginalized groups, where the experiences and voices of oppressed groups are centered in the research and analysis, rather than acting as mere objects of observation by others (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

In this section, we reflect on our lived experiences to trace our trajectories of solidarity. Our *testimonios* show the way in which our solidarity practices go beyond a set of acts to help others but rather stem from our recognition that our lives and our ability to heal are tied to each others' livelihoods. As a result, the concept of rescuers is not enough to capture our long-life commitment to social justice and solidarity for its emphasis on one-way benevolence falls short on the mutual desire of building in community to live, heal, and rehumanize relationships.

LOOKING FOR ROOTS OF SOLIDARITY IN MY JOURNEY

I was born in 1991, the same the year that the Colombian government passed a series of constitutional reforms. This new constitution was revolutionary, to the point that it was known as the constitution of human rights. This new constitution said that I as an Afro-Indigenous womx had the right to justice, work, equality, freedom and peace. However, those words did not match the reality I lived in.

I was born in a very traditional Colombian family. My dad, a carpenter, learned this art from his father, he was the bread provider of the family; my mom a housewife committed to her children and her husband and my two older brothers, who enjoyed a lot playing soccer.

I grew up in the border of el Distrito de Aguablanca, a settlement that started in the 70's with the arrival of Afro-Colombian communities due to the political violence in the countryside. With the years this area became one of the most populated areas of the city of Cali, Colombia sheltering a mixture of people with different cultural backgrounds and roots. Most of the people that live in El Distrito live within their means, have very limited resources, and it has a long history of violence, social cleansing, and resistance.

While growing up I was aware of the danger in the streets of my neighborhood. I knew there were gangs fighting to control the territory. I knew teenagers were killed; as part of my reality, that became normal. It was normal to hear shots at night and see kids running away to escape from death. I lived in the same home for over 15 years, therefore, my neighbors became my family too. I was a very "lucky" girl. I always had a plate of food on my table. I did not have luxuries, but my parents always gave me what I needed: food, a safe shelter, education, and love. However, I knew that some of my neighbors were in a very tough economic situation and they had a hard time earning money

to have at least one meal per day. That made me very sad, but I saw how my mom sometimes invited their kids to our home to eat, or share with them portions of rice or beans, even though we did not have much either. Although I did not speak out about it, I always questioned the role of government on these daily life situations I saw around me.

In 2001, I switched from public to private school. In general, the public education in El Distrito instead of the area was very low quality. Therefore, those who wanted a better education had to send their kids to private schools, but still these were not very good either. Nevertheless, I started attending the Instituto. The Instituto Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (INSA) which a project led by the Basilian Priests religious organization. The school made emphasis on foreign languages and computer science which was different from other institutions because the academic curriculum and the structure of the school made it to be at level of many elite schools of the city, but for a very affordable price to only kids that lived around the area. With my experience in this school I learned that education can help to keep society's oppressed or empower people and communities.

The key components that helped me to developed my critical consciousness, were the education I got, some of the professors I had and my interest to keep learning about the political history of Colombia. I learned from school that organizing as a collective was important to build community, join forces and make claims to have a unify voice, in 2005 in 9th grade when with a groups of classmates that are still my girlfriends-sister, created the Collective Gioconda Belli, a group dedicated to run activities for the student community related to human rights and gender to foster a healthy dialogue with topics of our concern. With the guidance of professors and members of the community we took our first steps on political agency and community work.

Working with the community for a minimum of 120 hours was a requirement to graduate from INSA. That was not a problem to me, because it was something that I was already doing and I enjoyed a lot. I was working in one of the few hospitals in the area in a program about sexually transmitted diseases. I also spent a couple of hours in the nursing home keeping company and feeding the elderly. And other times, I was a math tutor for kids that were in 3rd grade and had some challenges with the numbers. By the middle of my last school year I was only missing 10 hours to complete the community work requirement.

Nonetheless, that year the school launched an outstanding project to help students accomplish the community work requirement. Students were invited to travel for a week to Trujillo to do the 120 hours in a row. Trujillo is a small rural town located two hours away from Cali. The purpose of the trip was to work at the Memory Park with the Trujillo Massacre Victims' Relatives Association (AFAVIT). Even though I was missing very few hours to

complete the requirement, I was curious to go because I wanted to know what had happened in the community and how they organized. Trujillo is a small town in the middle of mountains north of the state of Valle del Cauca. It is a region of coffee, blackberries and *campesinos*. Our trip began in the Memory Park with a ritual to remember and honor the victims. In the center of the room, there was a piece of cloth with the names of the 342 people. These were the victims killed by the government in complicity with paramilitary groups between 1986 and 1994. During that week we met relatives of the victims, who shared with us stories about their beloved ones, who they were, what they liked to do, and the crimes committed against their humanity. Living in a culture where the rites and customs to overcome the death of a beloved one tell you to let them go, rest in peace and forget them. However, in this case doing political memory . . . to remember the victims was part of the mourning process to overcome the trauma of the political violence. Since the death of their relatives had not occurred for a "natural" reason, rather it had been a consequence of the political violence, the mourning process required other elements like, truth and justice, which are not clearly present or available for State victims in Colombia.

One of the reasons why we were there, to help the community to do the sculptures of the victims in the ossuaries located in the Memory Park. Each sculpture represented who the victim was when she/he was alive, for this reason the Memory Park was not about death, it was all about life. In the Monument Park I learned about the importance of the memory, as a tool to remember our own history with dignity, heal the trauma of crimes against humanity, and speak up against injustices and the political violence of the country. I was amazed by their creativity to remember their history and their victims. It was an act of resistance, telling everyone: "here we are and won't rest until we find justice."

By the end of the trip I already knew that Trujillo was an example of the political repression that many other communities had had to live in the country due to the social, political and armed conflict. I simply could not turn away after listening to their story. I wanted to do something. It was clear to me that by joining a human rights organization I was not going to rescue the victims and save the world. But I wanted to do something. Anything I could do. I was outraged by what was happening. It was in that moment that I decided to transform my outrage into energy and actions for the change I wanted to see.

When I finish high school I did not go to the university because neither my parents nor I had the money to pay. Education is a privilege. So, I was a recent graduated high school student. I was not sure what I had to offer to victims, but at least I had an inner energy driving me to work in pro of social justice. So, I decided to join the Fundación Guagua, a non-governmental human rights organization, which led and developed

educational, research and organizing projects to contribute to the collective construction of peace, democracy and human rights in the country. One of our main projects was the Memory Gallery Tiberio Fernandez Mafla named after the priest killed in Trujillo in 1991 for denouncing the crimes and defending the community. The purpose of the memory gallery was to research, protect and promulgate the historical memory of crimes against humanity done in Colombia. It was a place for healing. We used memory as a tool to reclaim the dreams and projects of those who were victims of the political violence of the country. We thought that telling people about the memory, the hidden history of the country, was a pivotal task to contribute to social justice in Colombia.

At this point, I was already in love with the social movement. The Fundación Guagua became my second home, I even spent more time there than in my own home. The Fundación was my university, my professors were the work team, the victims and the communities. My participation in local and national events was essential for my learning process, where I got to meet amazing people committed with social justice in the country. It was very encouraging to know that I (we) was not alone. In every event, marching, meeting, I met many *compañerx* that were also denouncing human rights violations, organizing for social justice and peace. It was very satisfactory to know that we were walking together from different regions of the country for the same purposes.

I did not have an excuse for not being there. I always thought if these people (the victims) that have been through so many things still had the strength to continue fighting, despite the danger and the pain, why would I not have the energy? I just could not pretend anything was happening because anyways it was part of my reality. Even though there was not a stable economic remuneration for anyone in the team, we were very committed with the people. In Colombia funding for NGOs, especially human rights organizations is very limit, there were times (most of the time) where there was not funding at all. This became my daily life. Going to Trujillo every month, for example, became part of my routine, because it was totally worth it. Every trip was a life lesson. Learning from the matriarch acts of resistance, their love, smiles, and willingness keep living and fighting for their relatives' memory. It was in the people where I was finding so much hope. I understood that it was there in "doing" where I were able to transform our lives. Those are beautiful memories and I would do it again. During these years I learned about one thousand and one different forms of resistance created by the people.

I was motivated not just for doing good for others, rather it was the path that I wanted to walk, because it was on the side (supporting) human life. It became my philosophy, belief, my social and moral values and norms. I knew that people were not completely responsible for what had happened, but it

was the economic, social and political system of oppression. I was not getting any recognition for doing this, instead I was judged by my family, it was a forbidden topic due to the risk.

In my personal experience the development of my critical consciousness was pivotal to continue to work with the community. It was a little bit about forgetting about myself as an individual to see myself as a collective, part of the community; but it was also about my own self because I was working for the change I wanted to see in the world I lived. It was about transforming my thoughts into actions for the benefit of the community. I was not helping because I had the means to help, but I had the will, an important element, that might gave me energy, ideas, creativity to do things. It was a horizontal relationship.

Solidarity in the Colombian context where many people learn to normalize violence due to the longevity of the war, implies to challenge the status quo and create new forms of relationships based on love and justice.

TESTIMONY OF SOLIDARITY OF A COLOMBIANA NEW YORKINA

I grew up in Cali, Colombia's third largest city, known as the mecca for salsa music and the Feria de Cali, an annual two-week festival at the end of December with music concerts, food, and many block parties. My earliest memories of living in Cali are of eating homemade soups, salsa music blasting through businesses and home speakers, block parties and weekend trips to the countryside to my grandparents' farm. These memories also consist of episodes of domestic and community violence. One of my earliest childhood memories involve witnessing a man get shot while playing outside of my house with my sister and friends. As we were playing outside, we saw a man running down the block being chase by two guys in a motorcycle shooting at him. My sister and friends were able to run into a neighbor's house but all I had time to do was to kneel behind a small block of concrete. I saw panic for the first time in this man's face. It was also the first time I had heard gunshots so close to me. As soon as the men turned the corner my sister and I made our way to our house, and to our surprise we found the man who had just been chased bleeding in our living room. He was one of our neighbors. My mom was helping him control his bleeding as we waited for his family to come for him. When I asked my mom what led her to help this man out, she said "out of solidarity, it's what we do for our neighbors, for our family." This is my earliest memory of someone close to me helping another person at great risk.

I left Colombia in 1989 at the age of nine and arrived to the heart of Jackson Heights, New York City, the second home for many Colombians living in

the United States. Although my life was drastically different in many ways, there were some similarities. Once I came to the United States, growing up in Jackson Heights provided me with tangible connections to the traditions I had left behind: Colombian restaurants, music, festivals and community. The violence also continued to happen around me. Growing up working class and undocumented in a majority Latino neighborhood I experienced a lot of the structural violence immigrants face in the United States: poverty, racism and xenophobia. As part of a large Colombian community in the 1990's, I witnessed how drug cartels operating in New York and Colombia had a stronghold of our community. Many of my friends and I knew of drug lords that controlled our neighborhoods in New York and who worked directly with others back in Colombia. There was an unspoken understanding that these groups controlled the businesses and drug trafficking happening in Jackson Heights and many of my Colombian high school friends were involved in them. I went to high school with youth who were employed by these groups to sell and transport drugs in and out of New York, some were involved in money laundering operations, and others served as *cobradores* (debt collectors) for the leaders often resorting to threats and violence if people did not pay on time. Although we all knew that this was happening in our neighborhood, nobody dared to report it to the authorities given that we all feared retribution. I had a friend who escaped to Colombia to avoid being persecuted by one of the drug rings in our neighborhood and after two weeks of being there was killed. I learned that silence and avoiding at all cost becoming involved with the drug cartels were key to our survival. It was not until I left my neighborhood to attend college in Manhattan that I dared to start asking questions about the violence I had witnessed around me both in Colombia and New York City.

My desire to be in solidarity with people in Colombia was not born out a need to help or rescue anyone. It was driven by my need to make sense of the violence I experienced and witnessed growing up. Although I was the first one in my family to attend college, looking back I realized that I was meant to be there not only to develop as a scholar but to begin healing the wounds I had and will continue to experience. Attending college became the grounds in which I began to reflect and learn about the larger forces that contributed to the major events of my life. For example, I learned about Plan Colombia which supposedly aim to curtail drug production but instead has contributed to the fumigation of Colombia's natural resources, increase displacement of thousands of peasant farmers, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities, and had little effect in changing the realities of my community both in Colombia and New York dealing with drug abuse, cartels and violence. I also learned about neoliberal policies and the militarization of foreign aid that contextualized the reasons the majority of my family decided to migrate to the

United States. All of this information provided me with a context in which to situate my experiences. It also led me to question about the human capacity to endure these types of violence.

I came into human rights and social justice efforts full of questions about people that suffer political violence: how did people who stayed in a context of violence unlike many who had migrated to other countries like myself, survive living in a war? What is it like to grow up in extreme poverty as seen in the shantytowns of the major cities and in the rural areas? How does one recover from surviving a massacre, being tortured, raped, forcibly displaced? How does one continue living after experiencing these horrific acts of violence? Although I was asking these questions about other people's experiences and ability to survive, I was in search of answers that could help explain my own survival story. How did I survive sexual molestation as a young girl? How did I not fall victim to physical violence from the partners addicted to drugs I had as a teenager? How did I survive being invisible in a country that despises immigrants and people of color? How did I not let fear paralyzed me? How did I make it out of alive when I was surrounded by other young immigrant Colombians who worked with drug cartels in New York City as hired assassins, drug lords and drug addicts. How did I survive that reality? You see my solidarity work was tie to my own journey of continuing to understand myself.

I continued my search for answers to these questions as a graduate student in a social psychology doctorate program. I dealt with many conflicting feelings that come with trying to bridge academic practices with social justice initiatives. I knew that I was not going to be the impartial, objective, social scientist that was going to separate herself from the problem of study. I believe that research and the resources of the academy had to be put to the service of communities that experience structural violence. We owe it to ourselves, to our careers. At first, I struggle with finding professors and other students who shared my vision of research as a healing practice, but eventually I found my home in the writings of women of color who for decades had been positioning our lives as legitimate sources of knowledge. I found other students, mostly first generation college students, who were unequivocally determined to bring their lived realities into academia. I learned how to navigate the silencing, psychological and emotional abusive culture of academia by strategizing with colleagues on best tactics to push our research and social justice commitments forward. In 2008, I was able to travel back to Colombia on a human rights delegation after receiving my green card almost twenty years after arriving to the United States. During the delegation, I met people from all parts of the country who shared one thing in common, experiences of severe violence perpetrated by state armed actors and a great sense of courage and resilience to survive and demand justice for the wrongdoing

committed against them. Although it was overwhelmingly heartbreaking to listen to their testimonies of violence and hear the multiple answers to my question about what happened to those who stayed in contexts of war, what I found most impactful was their willingness to live and fight for their right to exist and demand social justice. I connected their *testimonios* of survival to those I had heard from Guatemalan community in New York City as they recalled their experiences with the war in their country. I recognized the urgency in their eyes to not be invisible and criminalized by a government, as I had seen in the faces of the Middle Eastern community in New York after 9/11. The graphic accounts of the atrocities they had survived were almost identical to the testimonies of Black South Africans who had endured the violence of apartheid.

I decided to expand my solidarity efforts with the human rights movement in Colombia by merging my academic goals with my social justice ones. I focused my dissertation research on understanding how survivors of human rights violations are able to endure such violence and become social justice advocates. This allowed me to go to Colombia and organized side by side with survivors who were risking their lives everyday by publicly speaking out about their experiences of state violence and demanding accountability for the wrongdoing. Consequently, these acts put them at a greater risk of being victims of further violence. It was during this time that I witnessed once again acts of helping others and oneself while facing grave risks.

I was part of a group of people, a movement of individuals, coming together to help each other survive the effects of an ongoing war and although I may have helped some people in their daily struggle of survival, I was greatly transformed by them. Survivors of human rights violations gave me the tools to investigate my own life. As I began to unwrap myself and shine the light into the darkness of my memories and wounds, it was their lives that helped me have courage to keep digging in. You see I did not do solidarity work in Colombia only for them, I did this not knowingly at the time for me as well. For my survival. To understand how I survived so that I could then live. I see this a lot in solidarity movements when we focus so much on others because our own pain and wounds are hard to see. We even go as far as using our compañeros lives as a way to silence our own voice. I remember feeling guilty for thinking that I had anything in my own life that compared to the people I was working with. That my truth, experiences of violence, loss, pain and fear did not matter in comparison. I used them as a way to stay more silent. But it was when I gave myself permission to connect and not compared that I began to see the mirrors between us. The stories are different, vastly at times, but our responses of anger, indignation, perseverance, fear, and an unbreakable need for justice and accountability were the same. It was through them that I got to reconnect with all of me. It was through them and their stories that I found

my voice. My strength to say my story. This is why the concept of rescuers cannot capture the type of solidarity that I did and witness in Colombia. This is beyond doing something for other. Solidarity is about realizing that our liberation is intertwined and working together toward it.

SOLIDARITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

While writing our *testimonios* we found similar reasons that led us to choose solidarity as a way of life. One of these similarities is that we both grew up in a violent context that resulted in us questioning our own experiences of violence and the violence happening around us. This led us in our search for answers that helped us to develop a political critical consciousness.

Solidarity became our medicine to heal our personal and collective trauma. We had the need to release all the anger and the pain and transform it into action for social change. We saw the same process while working with victims of state violence. For them, their healing was tied to not only expressing the psychological and emotional impact of the violence they suffered but their need for truth and justice in a context of impunity. Thus, their search for answers to explain the violence against them and their loved ones led them to connect with others who were in a similar predicament. Their healing and quest for social justice is at the center of developing relationships based on solidarity.

A clear example is the memory movement that has emerged during the last years in Colombia. Driven by the need to learn from the mistakes of the war and to dignify the lives of all those who have died and are disappeared, many people have come together to remember, share and reconstruct the memory of a country that has lived decades at war. Remembering is a long-term commitment similar to solidarity. When living in a context of violence, solidarity and memory become a daily duty and a political act of resistance. Similar to the Trujillo Memory Park, in Medellin, Antioquia in la Comuna 13 the organization Agroarte cultivate the land and make art such as hip hop to commemorate the lives of those who had been disappeared and survived Operation Orion, a four day military offensive carried out by the Colombian army in 2002.

Aka, one of the leaders of the organization explained in a video documenting their work:[14]

> La tierra contiene nuestra historia y nuestra memoria tambien. Nuestras luchas y esas memorias individuales, forman una memoria colectiva. Esas memorias nos permiten reconocer muchas cosas que han pasado para desde alli dignificar. Hay personas que echaron frutos y dejaron su semilla, y vuelven a brotar muchas cosas.

> The land contains our history and our memory too. Our struggles and those individual memories, form a collective memory. Those memories allow us to recognize many things that have happened and from there, to dignify. There are people that produced fruits and left their seeds, and sprout again many things.

The number of organizations and victim groups working around the topic of memory keeps growing rapidly. For example there is the Salon del Nunca Mas in Granada, Antioquia created by the group ASOVIDA Victims Association of Granada; in Tumaco, Nariño, La Casa de la Memoria del Pacifico Narinese, led by the Archdiocese; in Cali, Valle the Galeria de la Memoria Tiberio Fernandez Mafla, led by the Fundacion Guagua; in Buenaventura, Valle, La Casa de la Memoria, led by the women of Triana, and then there are the itinerary memory galleries led by H.I.J.O.S., MOVICE, ASFADDES and many other organizations that live in solidarity to contribute to the social change in Colombia.

These memory acts become the way individuals and communities reclaim their power. Through public and private commemorations of their own lived trauma and those of their loved ones, they are able to connect with others who have had similar experiences. They also get to tell their own truths. This becomes an important aspect of their healing given the negation and violent silencing of their experiences. They also are able to commemorate not only the violence but the lives, dreams and richness that the violence took away. This shows a clear consequence of such violence beyond the number of people harmed. It allows for (re) humanization of the victims to take place. Memory similar to solidarity is a long term reclaiming of our humanity and weaving of relationships across similarities and difference.

As a result, rescuing and solidarity cannot be used interchangeably because they have different purposes, motivations, and connotations. The word rescuer implies a vertical relationship of power where the "rescuer" has the agency and the means to help the "rescued" who is separate from the rescuer and may be seen as not possessing much power to change their circumstances. Rescuing acts are more in line with acts of charity which are guided by one way relationships and motivated by notions of doing good for religious or moral reasons, rather than a conscious political decision to transform an oppressive society. Moreover, rescuing implies one specific set of actions, set in a particular time and moment. In contrast, solidarity is a lifestyle where relationships are ongoing and the focus is on decolonizing and rehumanizing our relationships and society as a whole.

NOTES

1. Hernández, 2002; Lykes, Beristain, Perez-Arminan, 2007, Martin-Baro, 1994.

2. AFSC & FOR, 2004, 19.
3. Gómez et al., Para no Olvidar, 2007.
4. Colombia Nunca Más, 2008.
5. Ibid.
6. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) & Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), 2004; Hylton, 2006.
7. Gonzáles, The Colombian Conflict, 2004.
8. Garcia-Duran, Movimiento por la Paz, 2006; Tate, Counting the Dead, 2007.
9. Hylton, Evil Hour in Colombia, 2006; Toledo et al., War in Colombia, 2003.
10. Somos Defensores: Un camino solitario, 8 August, 2012.
11. Movimiento Nacional de Victimas de Estado, 2010.
12. Defender la vida y los derechos: Serie Impunidad 1 April, 2010.
13. Harding, The Feminist Standpoint, 2004.
14. Pérez, Comuna Trece del Proyecto, nd.

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Chapter 7

Argentine Rescuers

A Study on the "Banality of Good"[1]

Jessica Casiro

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the twentieth century, genocides have taken place so frequently that most people have lost the capacity to be shocked whenever they learn of a new case. Many other instances of mass murder have occurred that do not qualify as genocide according to the United Nations' definition, due to the fact that, for example, the victims were targeted because of their (either real or alleged) political orientation or economic position, as opposed to being persecuted for national, racial, ethnic or religious reasons. If we added all these cases to the list of genocides, it would be much larger.

In response to the increase in the number of genocides and similar crimes that occurred in the twentieth century, we have witnessed the development of the field of genocide studies, especially in the last three decades. This growth has been quantitative (in terms of the number of studies) and qualitative (in terms of the diversity of cases analyzed).

However, unfortunately the same cannot be said about the subfield of "rescue studies," which has received very limited attention. In particular scholars *studying* those crimes that occurred most recently tend to focus primarily on the absence of intervention during these tragic events rather than on the exceptional acts of courage that were also present at the time (Balakian, 2003; Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996; Dallaire, 2005; Elkins, 2005; Power, 2003). This is understandable, given that the cruelty and violence that characterize crimes like these clearly overshadow the very scarce acts of compassion that co-exist with them.

But if, as most scholars on genocide seem to agree, passive bystanders are a sine-qua-non condition for this type of crimes to occur, wouldn't it be essential to understand what (if anything) distinguishes rescuers from the rest

of the population? The very limited knowledge that we have about rescuers comes almost exclusively from studies of those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. Rescuers in other genocidal contexts have never been studied, with the exception of biographical accounts of particular individuals. This is why, in order to broaden our understanding of rescue in particular and of helping behavior in general, it is important to analyze rescue in other historical contexts. This study attempts to do exactly that, by means of analyzing the characteristics and motives behind those who acted on behalf of the persecuted in Argentina, during the military rule of 1976–1983. While previous studies of rescue have used, for the most part, a psychological approach, the present work attempts to study the phenomenon sociologically.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are two main limitations in our current knowledge of rescue. First, very few scholars have undertaken systematic studies of rescue that attempt to *explain* the phenomenon rather than to *describe* it. Second, as I said before, those studies that are indeed explanatory are based almost entirely on the analysis of Christians who saved Jews during the Holocaust.

Many existing studies of rescue are biographical descriptions of particular individuals who risked their lives to save others, for example, Oskar Schindler during the Holocaust (Keneally, 1983) and Paul Rusesabagina during the Rwandan genocide (George, 2005). Even though these projects are very interesting per se, they do not attempt to find patterns among rescuers or to analyze what (if anything) makes them different from the great majority of the population who remained passive while these crimes occurred.

Our understanding of this phenomenon comes primarily from the work of scholars who *have* indeed studied *rescue* as opposed to studying a *particular rescuer*, trying to draw generalizable conclusions. These scholars found that the key to rescue was the rescuers' ability to disregard all other attributes of the needy except for their helplessness and dependence, something that Nechama Tec called a "universalistic perception of the needy" (Tec, 1986, p. 154), and that Pearl and Samuel Oliner (1988, p. 144) described as a strong sense of "inclusiveness." Regardless of the existence of other conflicting findings, all scholars studying rescue described rescuers of Jews as people who saw the persecuted as human beings above all, and who did not care about any specific characteristics that they might possess (such as their Jewishness) (Fogelman, 1994; Hallie, 1994; London, 1970; Oliner and Oliner, 1988; Tec, 1986). In fact, rescuers during the Second World War engaged overwhelmingly in the aid of complete strangers (Tec, 1986). Non-rescuers, on the contrary, were found to be lacking this sense of "inclusiveness" (Oliner and

Oliner, 1988), their universe of moral obligation was bounded, and it included only those who were viewed as similar to themselves.

But these conclusions were not convincing enough for me. I found them to be incompatible with other findings within the field of genocide studies. Specifically, most genocide scholars share the view that the perpetrators of this and other similar crimes are ordinary individuals, and that in order to understand their actions it is more relevant to look at their social context than to analyze their personalities (Arendt, 1963; Katz, 1993). However, while evil is thought to be a question of circumstance, good is considered to be a question of moral character.[2] And this, for me, is contradictory. This is why I decided to use a different case study, that of Argentine rescuers, to test existing theories of rescue and possibly offer alternative ones. As it will become clear later, the Argentine case suggests that social networks can be more important in explaining rescue than personal attributes and values.

The idea that belonging to groups can have positive effects on individuals and communities is very salient among contemporary scholars. Granovetter, for example, finds the analysis of social networks to be "the most fruitful micro—macro bridge" (1973, p. 1360), and he shows that social ties have a powerful impact on the diffusion of influence and information, mobility opportunity and community organization. One area of study in which social networks occupy a central place in explaining behavior is the collective action field. In particular, "empirical studies of social movements point increasingly to the role of networks of social relations in recruitment and mobilization" (Gould, 1993, p. 182). Until recently, researchers had tried to explain social movement participation on the basis of the individual characteristics of movement activists, but these types of explanations have been weak, and they have given place to alternative microstructural analyses that focus on structural factors. "A number of recent studies appear to demonstrate the strength of structural or network factors in accounting for activism" (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993).

In part due to its power in explaining collective action, the social network approach has also been used in studies dealing with yet another form of behavior: helping acts such as volunteering, charitable giving and blood donation (Healy, 2000; Sokolowski, 1996).

Sokolowski, for example, found that social ties and interaction among individuals are better predictors of both "volunteering" and "charitable giving" than personal values and attitudes (1996, p. 273). Eckstein (2001) also criticizes most studies on contemporary volunteerism for their almost exclusive focus on the individualistic roots of giving. Putnam (2000), following the same logic, notes that the decline in donations to charities and volunteering that has taken place in the United States since 1960 is mainly explicable by the parallel decline in group participation. Social networks were also found to be very

important in explaining blood donation (Healy, 2000). The present study suggests that, similar to what happens in the study of other forms of helping behavior, in understanding rescue "relational ties among individuals are primary and attributes of actors are secondary" (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, p. 8).

METHODOLOGY

In exploring the factors that contributed to the rescue of those who were being persecuted by the military government in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 I defined rescuers simply as those who helped the persecuted without receiving any material rewards as compensation for their actions. I included in the definition both those who were involved in single acts of help (one-time helpers) and those who engaged in multiple helping endeavors (repeat helpers), because I found that there were significant differences between the two groups that were worth analyzing. I focused on those who acted individually (as opposed to being part of a human rights' organization), and who provided help inside the borders of the country and outside of detention centers.

I used three sources of information: personal interviews conducted by myself, written testimonies published in books, memoirs and archives, and oral testimonies that were part of the "archive of oral history" project undertaken by Memoria Abierta.[3]

I interviewed 37 subjects, of whom 14 were rescuers and 19 were non-rescuers. I also interviewed four subjects who do not fall into any of the two categories mentioned above, given that they were not able to help others because they were either in jail or in exile, but who were recipients of help themselves. I used a snowballing technique to gather the sample of rescuers and recipients of help and I randomly selected a sample of non-rescuers to use as a control group. The quotes that are reproduced in this article are excerpts from these interviews; however, the conclusions presented in the study are based not only on the interviews but also on the other two sources of information that have provided me with a bigger picture of the issue of rescue in Argentina.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish and then summarized and translated into English. The interview schedule consisted of 34 open-ended questions and eight closed-ended questions. All subjects were assured confidentiality, and hence, the names used throughout the study are not real.

In terms of the analysis of the data, the responses to both the open-ended and the closed-ended questions in my interview schedule were coded into a number of standard categories in order to make the responses comparable. The information emerging from other written and oral testimonies was, to the best of my ability, classified to match the information gathered through personal interviews. The data were used to make comparisons between groups

but primarily the analysis was qualitative. Statistical analyses were not performed because, on the one hand, the samples were too small, and, on the other hand, I was more interested in grasping the type of "impressions" that only qualitative analysis can provide.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RESCUE

Violence and repression were widespread in Argentina before 1976, but the military juntas that ruled the country after the 1976 coup took these two concepts to a whole new level. First, repressive actions became the *official policy*. After the coup, repression was organized, planned and executed systematically by the state. And, second, the military "created" a new form of repression: the *disappearance*. Political assassinations and torture to political and regular prisoners had been constant features in Argentina before 1976, but the concept of the "disappearance" is different. The person simply vanishes, without leaving any trace of life or death.[4] After the 1976 coup, the Argentine military juntas kidnapped, tortured and *disappeared* tens of thousands of people with total impunity.[5]

The National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) received the testimonies of the family members of 8,961 individuals who, to this day, remain *disappeared*. But it is presumed that the number is much larger.

What was the Argentine society's reaction to the disappearances? When the coup took place in March 1976, Argentina was flooded with insecurity and violence, coming both from the extreme left and the extreme right. Therefore, the majority of the population contemplated the overthrow of Isabel Peron's government with relief (Mignone, 1991).[6]

The victims of repression and their relatives overwhelmingly use the word "hell" in their testimonies when describing this period. But even though when asked about the response of society they all talk about "indifference" and "rejection," they also mention the existence of acts of "help," "solidarity" and "rescue." These were the exception, clearly not the rule, but they saved the lives of many, and they are therefore worth studying.

ARGENTINE RESCUERS: THE FINDINGS

As I mentioned before, throughout this study I have chosen to include in the definition of rescuers both "one-time helpers" and "repeat helpers," given that, as it will become clear shortly, they differ in terms of who they are, the type of help they provide, the recipients of their help, and the motives behind their actions. The following description of rescuers was supported by the

testimonies of the rescuers and recipients of help that I interviewed, and by the oral and written accounts of rescuers and recipients of help that I used as secondary sources.

In terms of age, in 1976, a great majority of repeat helpers were in their 20s and 30s, some were under 20, and very few were over 40. They were both men and women,[7] married and single, people with children and people without children (two of the repeat helpers in my sample were pregnant at the time), in terms of income they ranged from the very poor to the very rich and, with regards to education, they ranged from people with only an elementary qualification to people with a PhD or an MD. They were students, intellectuals, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, physicians, psychiatrists, and housewives.

They came from different religions and there were some for whom religion was completely unimportant and others who were very devout. Most repeat helpers were at the time strongly or very strongly involved in politics, and only a small minority considered themselves to be apolitical. However, even those who did not belong to any *political* organization were usually involved in some sort of *social* activism such as doing grassroots work in shanty towns, helping the poor or the sick, or teaching children how to read. Those who were politically involved came from different organizations among which the following were the most common: Montoneros, UES (High School Student Union), PRT (Revolutionary Workers' Party), ERP (Revolutionary Army of the People), Communist Party, several university student unions, several trade unions, and other Peronist groups.

Most repeat rescuers were direct victims of the repression in one (or more) of three ways: (a) some spent time (ranging from some days to several years) in clandestine detention centers or in regular prisons, and most of those held in clandestine centers were tortured (one of them lost her unborn baby after several brutal torture sessions): (b) some had to go into exile either because their house had been raided by military forces or because a family member, a close friend, or a *compañero*[8] had been caught; and (c) some had to live clandestinely to avoid being captured. Also, most repeat helpers were *indirectly* affected by repression in that they have a family member, a close friend, or a life partner who is (or was at some point in time) among the disappeared. Only one of the repeat helpers I interviewed was not affected by the dictatorship either directly or indirectly, in the sense that he did not suffer the effects of persecution himself and neither did his loved ones.[9]

In most cases, the recipients of repeat helpers' aid were either *compañeros* or friends. As analyzed in depth later, in the case of political activists, the line between *compañeros* and friends is very thin. Some repeat rescuers reported having helped a stranger or someone they knew very little. Some helped family members, workmates, employees, or neighbors.

One-time helpers had a wider age range than repeat helpers. They included people in their late teens and went all the way to people in their 80s. In other words, when compared to the population of repeat helpers, one-time helpers seemed to be on average somewhat older.

No gender was particularly overrepresented among one-time helpers. And the same was true about marital status, level of income, type of dwelling and place of residence. In other words, one-time helpers were found among the poor and the rich, those who lived in houses and those who lived in apartment buildings, those who were small town dwellers and those who lived in big cities. They were housewives, teachers, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, intellectuals, doctors, and others. And they were also very heterogeneous with regards to their level of education. Just like repeat helpers, one-time rescuers were not overwhelmingly religious, and they were not overwhelmingly of one particular creed.

In terms of their political involvement, one-time helpers can be divided into two groups. Members of the first group (which accounts for the great majority of one- time rescuers) had no interest in politics and, therefore, they were uninvolved in political matters. They tended to have no political affiliation and to be politically inactive. Those in the second group (accounting for a tiny minority of one-time rescuers) were usually not affiliated to any political organization, but the difference with the first group is that they were indeed interested in politics. For the most part this type of rescuer had an ideological leaning similar to that of the persecuted group (although they tended to disagree with their violent methods). In other words, one-time helpers were either inactive and not very concerned about politics, or interested in politics but not actively involved in it.

With regards to the ways in which they were affected by the repression, most one-time helpers did not spend time in jail or a detention center, they did not have to go into exile, and they were not forced to live a clandestine life in order to save themselves. Thus, they were not, for the most part, *direct* victims of repression. However, the majority of them were *indirectly* affected by repression in that they had a relative or close friend who was being persecuted.

One-time rescuers of the first type mentioned above, those who were not interested in politics, for the most part helped family members, usually very close ones. One-time helpers of the second type, those who were not involved in politics but who were interested in it and who shared the ideals of the persecuted groups, tended to help friends, acquaintances, or strangers referred to them by friends, but, once again, they account only for a minority of rescuers.

While repeat helpers and one-time helpers of the first type did not expect any recognition from those whom they assisted, and shared a "matter of fact" attitude toward their involvement in rescuing activities, one-time rescuers of

the second type, who usually helped people that were not very close to them, felt that their contribution was not recognized enough, and they do not view their past actions simply as a duty.

Now that we have answered the "who" question, let us move on to analyze the more interesting "why" question. Why did these individuals get involved in helping activities while most of the population remained passive? At this point we need to move from the descriptive level to the explanatory level.[10] As I mentioned before, previous studies on rescue have concluded that rescuers were different from non-rescuers in that the former tended to see others as fellow human beings above all, and disregard the characteristics and group affiliations of individuals, while the latter did not. Rescuers were found to have an extremely inclusive universe of obligation, in the sense that they felt morally obliged to help *anybody* in need.

What does the evidence emerging from the Argentine case suggest? A strong sense of "inclusiveness" did not seem to be the main motive among Argentine rescuers. Repeat helpers for the most part helped people who were similar to them- selves in terms of their ideology. Ricardo, a member of Montoneros who was 26 at the time, gave me an answer that is representative of the responses provided by most repeat helpers in my sample: "I wouldn't have helped just anybody. Not a right wing person. I helped people who shared with me an ideology, a way of seeing the world." Although the repeat helpers' universe of obligation in some cases seemed to go beyond the borders of their particular organizations to include all those who were being persecuted by the military, this is by no means comparable to the type of "strong inclusiveness" that previous scholars have found in those who risked their lives to save Jews. In fact, while during the Holocaust many rescuers helped complete strangers, this was the exception during the Argentine persecutions.

In the case of one-time helpers, universality was not relevant in explaining rescue either, given that, as I have argued earlier, most one-time rescuers helped family members or close friends. There were some scattered cases of people who helped complete strangers and some might have done it for humanitarian reasons, but they account for a very small minority of rescuers. For the most part, one-time helpers helped particular individuals with whom they had a strong bond.

In conclusion, this study suggests that Argentine rescuers did not engage in rescue because they had a higher morality than the rest. This being the case, what should we pay attention to in order to understand their actions? I propose that, in order to deeply understand the behavior of Argentine rescuers, we should focus on learning about who they *know* rather than about who they *are*. My main hypothesis is that an individual's social network might be key in understanding rescue. Given that all Argentine rescuers seemed to be connected to the persons they helped, either directly or through a third party

acting as a bridge, it is clear that in order to under- stand their involvement in rescue, social networks are very important.

But this is a very broad statement. The next question would be: what are the channels through which individuals' social networks are related to rescuing activities? I suggest six main avenues through which social ties might have an effect on rescue.

1. A pre-existent tie between a certain individual and someone who is being persecuted increases the chances that the former will be asked for help

   This first point is very straightforward and simple. So simple that it might sound obvious. In his study of volunteerism in the United States, Putnam (2000) argued that people are more likely to volunteer if they are asked for help, and that the more involved people are in social networks the more likely they are to be asked for assistance.

   My findings are consistent with this assertion. They suggest that the main characteristic that rescuers shared, and that non-rescuers seemed to be lacking, was either first or second hand knowledge of someone in the persecuted group. When asked if during the dictatorship (and before getting involved in rescue) they knew somebody who was being persecuted, either directly or through someone close to them, all rescuers answered in an affirmative way. On the contrary, when asked the same question, all non-rescuers said that they did not. Mario, for example, a doorman who lived in greater Buenos Aires in a low class neighborhood, gave me an answer very similar in essence to that proposed by all other non-rescuers in my sample, regardless of their demographic characteristics such as occupation, level of income, education, or gender.

   > Nobody close to me disappeared. In fact, I don't know anybody who knows someone who has disappeared. I did hear people in the neighborhood talk about some dead bodies that were found by the pond. But that is just gossip, I'm not sure that what they say is true. I don't know it first hand.

   In contrast, most rescuers claimed not only that they had a relationship with at least someone in the persecuted group, but also, on several occasions, they described the relationship as "strong" or "close." Alejandro, for example, who was a repeat rescuer, described how his whole social circle began to be affected by the repression:

   And as time went by everything became worse and worse, your friends disappeared, your relatives had to go into exile, all your loved ones were suffering in one way or another.

   The fact that rescuers had strong connections with at least someone in the targeted groups resulted in the following: each particular rescuer was viewed by at least one persecuted individual as an option in a set of

possible sources of help. On the contrary, non-rescuers did not even exist in the persecuted person's head. This being the case, each rescuer in my sample was more likely to be asked for help than non-rescuers.

2. Social ties might increase an individual's ability to provide help

In particular for repeat helpers (who, as I have explained before, were usually involved in politics or other forms of activism), having ties with others in the persecuted groups not only led to higher chances of being asked for help, but also to a greater likelihood of being *able* to help indirectly, if direct help was not possible, as Javier, a Peronist heavy weight militant, who was 24 at the time, explained:

> If a compañero asked for help and I couldn't make it for him, I still could help indirectly. I knew people. I knew where to send him.

In this sense, too, social ties were crucial. Activists were not only potential rescuers, but also, potential bridges between those in need of help and those able to provide it.

3. Certain social ties might increase an individual's willingness to help

So far, I have argued that social ties can affect rescue by increasing the chances that someone will be asked for help, and by improving his ability to help. Now I want to go further to argue that social ties can have an effect on people's *willingness* to help.

Individuals, who belong to a different circle than our own, might have "access to information different from that we receive" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1371). The tie does not need to be extremely strong for this flow of information to take place. "It is remarkable that people receive crucial information from individuals whose very existence they have forgotten" (p. 1372).

While the mass media is one of the main sources through which people receive information, "studies of diffusion and mass communication have shown that people rarely *act* on mass-media information unless it is also transmitted through personal ties" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1374). Therefore, in understanding people's involvement (or lack of it) in rescuing activities, it is extremely important to analyze the information that they might have received from personal ties, that they would have been unable to get from other sources.

In 1977 groups of relatives of the disappeared were protesting in downtown Buenos Aires asking about the whereabouts of their loved ones, the list of names of disappeared people was being published in some newspapers, and the kidnapping operations took place everywhere, including

public places, with many witnesses. In other words, evidence of what was going on was abundant (Calveiro, 2001). However, the *interpretation* of the facts is subjective. From the mass media we get a framed, packaged, and then delivered version of events. There are always alternative stories that can be told in relation to the same set of data.

Those who were not targeted themselves but who had contact with someone in the persecuted groups had, through this tie, access to an alternative version of events. Through conversations with those they knew in the persecuted groups, rescuers formed an alternative story that challenged the *official story* presented by the government through the mass media, according to which people did not disappear, they either escaped voluntarily or they were killed in armed combat; those killed were portrayed as very dangerous guerrilla members and by killing them the government claimed to be fighting to restore a highly prized national security. This is the type of story that non-rescuers repeatedly told during the interviews when asked to describe what they knew about the disappearances, as becomes clear in the following testimony by Alicia, a 28-year-old housewife:

> If you were not involved in something strange, you had nothing to fear. It is probably true that some people died, but many people died on the other side too, it was a war, nobody talks about that. Those who talk about the disappeared all the time, don't they remember about the bombs, etc.?

Alternative stories varied. There was not one but many versions depending on the source. But in general they had in common the fact that they challenged, on the one hand, the official denial of the disappearances, and, on the other hand, the official description of victims as dangerous terrorists. Mirta, a former "*Montonera*," described her view of the events as follows:

> One thing that I want to make very clear is that this story of the two demons that we have the disgrace of hearing so often is bullshit. Excuse the term, but that is what it is. You know, those who argue that what happened here was a war, that there were two devils fighting against each other, the military on the one side and the guerrillas on the other. That is bullshit. There was no war. We were not terrorists; we were kids dreaming about a better world. Most of the people who disappeared had never seen a gun in their entire lives. What kind of terrorist could they be? And even if they had been, how can people justify what the military did?

An individual's ties with members of the persecuted group (who had challenging views of what was going on, similar in spirit to the one presented above) made some alternative version/s available to him. On the contrary, *unofficial stories* were usually unavailable to those who had no contact with targeted individuals. Since these alternative views tended to describe targeted individuals as victims of cruel and unfair treatment (as opposed to describing them as dangerous people who deserved their fate), they

were likely to increase a previously passive individual's willingness to act on behalf of the persecuted. Wanda, for example, whose son (now disappeared) was a member of the ERP mentioned:

> Before I started to listen to my son, I was clueless. Try to put yourself in my shoes. I was an upper class housewife who didn't care about politics, but who celebrated after the military coup. I was happy that someone had come to restore some order. I was clueless. My son's friends said I was "bourgeois," and I didn't even know what that meant. Was it a compliment? told me about the disappearances, I thought he was exaggerating. He said he was afraid for his own life, and at first I didn't understand why. But then I realized how worried and sad he was, his friends were disappearing. And so I started to take him seriously. At this point I did my best to help him, but it was too late. I wish I would have been as smart as these kids were.

It is important to note, however, that I am not trying to argue that the existence of a tie between two individuals will for sure lead to a flow of information from one to the other; instead, I am arguing that this *might* be the case. Also, the fact of receiving certain information will not *necessarily* lead an individual to action. I view the relationship between social ties and rescue as a probabilistic and not deterministic one.

4. Social ties might have an effect on rescue by creating a sense of "we-ness" as opposed to a disdained "otherness"

Leftist groups were clearly a subculture in the sense that members, who account for most part of repeat helpers, shared a particular way of acting, thinking, and even talking. In addition to these common ideals, members of leftist organizations shared something else: an enemy, namely, the military regime. They also shared a condition: that of being considered *subversive* and hence being persecuted. Members of these groups were bonded tightly by a set of shared beliefs and ideals, and their bond and feeling of *sameness* with other members of the group grew as they started to be persecuted. They felt very close *spiritually*, especially when comparing themselves to the rest. Laura, who was 19 at the time, and who had to leave the country in 1977, when talking about her *compañeros*, mentioned that:

> We were brothers . . . [pause] . . . more than brothers, because we chose each other, we respected each other, we were on the same side, fighting for something we truly believed in. We believed in justice, in fairness, in solidarity. And our group itself was all about solidarity, about helping our brothers, our compañeros. This view reflects the feeling of all the other activists in my sample.

These similarities in terms of ideals and the feeling of fighting for a cause against a strong enemy, and against a group of *others* who were *different* and *indifferent*, created a strong sense of we-ness, of brotherhood among

members of the persecuted organizations. And these strong ties, in turn, led to high levels of empathy and commitment to help those in need. In this sense, homogeneity within groups resulted in a mass of individuals who, as Sonia, a repeat helper and recipient of help said, were willing to do anything for a compañero in need, because a compañero was someone "just like you."

5. Membership in tight-knit groups might result in a high cost for non-compliance to the norm of solidarity

In the last section, I argued that the homogeneity of the targeted organizations created a sense of we-ness among members that in turn led to a strong level of empathy and hence to a powerful willingness to help those *compañeros* in need. In this section, I want to give a less romantic view of the determinants of rescue. Helping *compañeros* was not only a question of empathy and caring, it was also a question of fear.

Several subjects in my sample who were, during the period under study, members of different targeted organizations described these organizations as "total." By this they meant that the organization was the militant's whole life; it was the realm where not only the member's activism took place, but also where his social life evolved. In other words, the relationships among members of these organizations were usually multi-stranded, in the sense that activists were involved in many different ways; they did not only share their militancy, but they also went out together, spent leisure time together, some worked or studied together, or they might even date or get married. As Pedro, a 19-year-old militant (who is now married to a former compañera whom he started dating in 1977), claimed:

Militancy was not only about politics, it was also about friendship. Your *compañeros* were also your friends, and in many cases your girlfriends or boyfriends.

> When you belonged to one of these organizations, usually all your friends and your significant others belonged as well. Not that the organization explicitly required it, but it was too hard to make your social life and your political life compatible with one another unless they were one and the same. If most of your friends, your family, your girlfriend, were from outside, you ended up leaving them or leaving the organization.

In addition to being "total" organizations in this sense, these groups not only fostered (by their homogeneity, as explained above), but also encouraged respect for the norm of solidarity among members. One of the things that, in the activists' minds, distinguished them from the "others" was that they were not individualistic or selfish, but instead, they thought for the group and lived for the group. Solidarity among members was not just *a* norm, it was *the* norm, and it is a characteristic that is used constantly

to describe these organizations. In other words, solidarity toward fellow members was a key "rule" within these groups, a defining trait of the groups. Actors who violated that norm were either directly or indirectly punished and ostracized. The main way in which a member who did not respect the norm of solidarity was "punished" was with the risk of losing membership in the group, and this was a high price to pay in "total" organizations such as these, as Pedro suggests. . . .

> If you are a militant, then militants are your social life. If you behave in a way that is not accepted within the organization, for example, if you mention that you are contemplating the possibility of exile, you are not only risking your membership in the organization, you are also risking losing all your friends. And at that age, having friends, belonging to a group, is so important that you don't want to risk losing all that.

The norm of solidarity among members was usually internalized by militants to such an extent that rescuers ended up having a "matter of fact" attitude toward their actions. To sum up, in these "total" organizations that encouraged and praised solidarity among members, breaking the "rule" of helping fellow *compañeros* could result in the loss of one's entire social circle. Hence, rescue was not only the consequence of having empathy toward other *compañeros*, who were similar to the rescuers themselves, it was also a question of following rules to avoid losing one's social ties.

In more general terms, an individual's membership in a tight-knit group, in which most relations are multi-stranded, increases the cost of non-compliance with the group's norms, and in groups where in-group solidarity is a cardinal rule; it increases the likelihood that flows of help will exist among members.

6. Heterogeneity in an individual's social network might widen his set of potential rescuers

I have explained before that when an individual belongs to a very homogeneous social network (such as the persecuted organizations in our study), a sense of we-ness and brotherhood emerges that is likely to lead to solidarity among members.

But in this section, I want to argue that, while the homogeneity in the social ties of the persecuted can be key in explaining rescue, the heterogeneity of those ties can be equally helpful. An individual's membership to more than one social circle, and the heterogeneity of his set of social circles, enables the targeted individual to have more options in terms of potential rescuers, and this increases his chances of being helped.

Given that most rescuers, in particular repeat helpers, were themselves members of the targeted organizations, a majority of subjects claimed to have been helped at one point or another by *compañeros*, by individuals

who were very similar to themselves in many respects. However, *compañeros* were able to provide help, only during the first months of state repression. Later, when the groups started to be decimated, members isolated, and all of them targeted, it was those individuals with a heterogeneous set of social relationships who found help more easily. Those in their social networks who were not involved in the "activists' subculture" were better able to help than those who were so similar to the targeted individual that they were extremely likely to be targeted themselves.

Marta (a heavy weight Montonera) explained this very clearly:

> What saved me was the fact that I always kept contact with my non-militant relations. Some people didn't, their whole social life gravitated around the organization, and for these people finding help was very hard in the end. The organization had been decimated, and those who hadn't been caught had left voluntarily. But because I still had friends who were not in politics, I was able to find some safe places to spend the night several times, a luxury that others didn't enjoy.

The ability to turn to non-militants for help was something possessed only by those who had been able to maintain an heterogeneous set of social ties throughout the years.

To sum up, there are six different ways in which social ties are important in understanding rescuing activities. First, the mere existence of a tie between a certain individual and someone who is being persecuted increases the likelihood that the former will be asked for help. Second, social ties between potential repeat helpers lead to the situation that if one is not able to provide help, he will at least probably be able to refer the person in need to someone who is better able to aid him. Third, the existence of a tie between someone in a persecuted group and someone outside this group permits a flow of information from the former to the later. Assuming that people in different groups have access to different interpretations of data, the flow of information from the persecuted to the non-persecuted is likely to modify the way in which the latter "understands" and "frames" the ongoing events, and it might increase his willingness to help those in need. Fourth, the sense of *sameness* that exists in tightly knit persecuted groups leads to a sense of empathy among members that increases the solidarity between them. Fifth, the multi-strandedness that exists in the relationships among members of these tight-knit groups leads to the fact that non-compliance to the groups' norms (a central norm being that of solidarity among members) has a very high cost, because the non-compliant member is risking losing his whole social life for failing to behave in accordance to the group's expectations. In this way, fear of social rejection might lead to involvement in rescue. Finally, a strong heterogeneity in a persecuted individual's social ties might lead to higher chances of being helped, by increasing the quantity and qualityof this individual's list of potential rescuers.[11]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study of Argentine rescuers suggests that any attempts to explain rescuing endeavors by focusing exclusively on the characteristics and values of rescuers, as opposed to paying attention to their social networks, will lead, at the most, to a partial understanding of the phenomenon. The main conclusion emerging from this study is that rescuers are not necessarily *angels* who possess a higher morality than the rest of us mortals. On the contrary, they can be as *normal* as the perpetrators of the atrocities they are trying to prevent.

This study shows that just as there is a "banality of evil" there is also a "banality of good." None of us is exempt from hurting others, but none of us is exempt from helping others either. However, our likelihood of becoming rescuers seems to increase the more people we know, the more we belong to tight-knit groups that encourage solidarity among members, and the more we make an effort to maintain a certain degree of heterogeneity in our social ties.

Even though our social networks have a strong influence on how we behave, this does not mean that we lack agency; on the contrary, as adults, we choose most of our social ties and by doing so we are, indirectly, affecting our chances of being asked for help, being able to help, and being willing to help.

How do these findings relate to those of previous studies of rescue during the Holocaust? My study is an extension to the ones undertaken by other scholars. The latter, as I mentioned before, analyzed the acts of people who helped for the most part strangers, while the case I study here is different in nature, because Argentine rescuers, for the most part, assisted people that they knew. Therefore, social networks seem to be much more important in explaining the actions of Argentine rescuers than they were in understanding the rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. What can account for these differences in the phenomenon of rescue? Is the phenomenon of rescue different during periods of political killings than it is during genocides? And if so, why? One hypothesis could be that it is "easier" to view those who are persecuted for ethnic, racial, or religious reasons (which, for the most part, are innate conditions) as undeserving victims, than it is to feel the same way about those persecuted for political reasons (given that political involvement is not something that the victims are born with, but rather some- thing that they choose). If this were the case, it could account for the fact that those persecuted for political reasons are for the most part helped by either people who share their ideology or people with whom they have a close relationship, while victims of genocide are much more likely to be helped by strangers who get involved in rescue out of a strong sense of inclusiveness. In other words, the characteristics of the victims and the reason for their persecution might generate a difference in terms of who becomes a rescuer. However, to test this and other alternative hypotheses it would be necessary to study

rescue in other contexts, for example, in other Latin American countries in which political killings occurred as well.

PITFALLS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are some problems with the sample of rescuers and recipients of help used for this study. First, the sample is small, and, hence, it is hard to know how generalizable the conclusions are. This is why I consider this project to be a first step toward the goal of diversifying the field of genocide studies by analyzing rescue in cases other than the Holocaust. Although the sample size makes it hard to generalize the conclusions, this study does allow us to gain some preliminary findings that should be tested in other cases to see their applicability.

Second, given that the population of Argentine rescuers is not known (we must keep in mind that this is the first attempt to study this topic) it was not possible to build a random sample. Since no one so far has embarked on the study of Argentine rescuers, my only option was to start by using my own social networks and then apply a snowballing technique to amplify the sample. The problem with this type of sampling technique, however, is that the sample might end up not being very representative. One way in which I tried to solve the problem of the homogeneity of the subjects was by using alternative sources of information such as written and oral testimonies gathered by others. Although these sources did not focus on the topic of rescue specifically, the issue of solidarity tended to emerge throughout the narrative at one point or another. The authors of these testimonies did talk about their own acts of help or about those who had aided them or their loved ones, and, hence, through these other testimonies I learned about rescue either directly or indirectly.

There is a lot of room for future improvement in terms of sample size and het-erogeneity of the samples, but support (both from the government and from the Argentine people) is necessary for the entire population of rescuers to be identified, and hence for a random sampling technique to be possible. This type of support is still inexistent in Argentina today. However, in the last couple of years there have been signs of improvement in terms of willingness to talk about the past on the one hand, and willingness to listen about the past on the other hand. Hopefully, if this tendency toward memory continues, future studies will be able to solve some of the methodological imperfections that this work presents.

There are several avenues for future research that emerge from this project. First, as I mentioned before, it would be very interesting to replicate this study in other countries that were also victims of either genocides or political killings in order to test the generalizability of the results. Second, given

that throughout this study I have focused on the help provided by rescuers outside of detention centers and within Argentine borders, it would be good to analyze the acts of solidarity that existed both inside detention centers and in foreign countries toward those in exile. To the best of my knowledge so far, nobody has embarked on the study of these two other forms of help, and it would be enriching to explore them.

In particular, some interviewees in my sample have suggested that there were more acts of solidarity among female inmates than among their male counterparts. Also, some subjects have argued that the Brazilian population was much more supportive of Argentines who had sought exile in Brazil than Argentines were of the Chileans who had chosen Argentina as their final destiny after Pinochet's coup. These two hypotheses are worth studying.

I hope that this project appeals to a large enough number of scholars and non- academics so as to motivate them to learn more about this bloody period in Argentine and Latin American history, about the possibility of the parallel existence of evil and good, and about solidarity in general terms.

NOTES

1. Reprinted from Jessica Casiro. "Argentine rescuers: a study on the 'banality of good.'" *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 437–54.

2. Throughout this project I have used the terms "personality," "personal attributes," "traits" and "character" when referring to the findings of previous studies regarding the causes of rescue. In using these terms I am simply reproducing the exact concepts suggested by the authors who made these arguments (who are, for the most part, psychologists). The word "character," for example, is often used by Oliner and Oliner (1988). Chapter 5 in their book is called: "Saving others: was it opportunity or character?" and the book itself is called *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*. I have chosen to utilize the same terms as the original authors because they are experts in the field of psychology, while I am not.

3. Memoria *Abierta* is an alliance of Human Rights organizations that gathered in 1999 to promote the preservation of memory with regards to the state repression that took place in Argentina in the period 1976–1983. The construction of an archive of oral history is one of the projects through which Memoria Abierta seeks to collect and store the testimonies of those affected by the repression in different ways. I want to express my immense gratitude to this organization for letting me listen to some of these testimonies.

4. There were a few disappearances between 1966 and 1976, but they were sporadic and they were the work of some paramilitary group, with a loose and unclear link with the government, but not acting officially on its behalf.

5. Throughout the study I sometimes use the phrase "to disappear someone." I do so in order to express that the disappearance is not a passive occurrence, but instead, there is an actor in charge of it. Disappearing is not something that simply happens

to the victim, but instead, it is something that is done to the victim. In addition, on some occasions I talk about people who "are disappeared." By doing this I intend to give continuity to the concept. The whereabouts of the person are still not known, and although we can presume that he is dead, technically, he is still disappeared. I use these two phrases in order to try to stick to the Spanish versions of them: *lo desaparecieron and está Desaparecido.*

6. In many cases individuals or certain groups (such as political or religious institutions) not only remained passive spectators of the persecutions, but they supported the actions of the perpetrators. The present study focuses on the parallel (and exceptional) existence of rescue; however, the interested reader can find a brief description of the actions of some non-state agents who supported the persecutions in Casiró (2005).

7. Repeat helpers in my sample of interviewees are overwhelmingly female; however, this is only a sampling problem. The information gathered through my personal interviews as well as the data emerging from the written and oral testimonies that were analyzed in this study suggest very firmly that both genders are equally represented among repeat helpers.

8. The word "*compañero*" is used by political activists from the targeted organizations to refer to other members of the same group. It is sometimes also extended to include members of other persecuted groups.

9. It is hard to know how representative these percentages are of the whole population of repeat helpers. However, the information gathered about repeat helpers in all the testimonies makes me quite confident of the fact that an overwhelming majority of them were actually part of the persecuted group (or groups) and that they were directly affected by the repression.

10. The excerpts used to support my conclusions on the motives behind the rescuers' actions are the translated versions of parts of the interviews that I had with rescuers, passive bystanders and recipients of help. These conclusions are supported as well by the data emerging from the oral and written testimonies that were used as additional sources of information.

11. By quality here I am simply referring to a person's ability to provide "safe" help.

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Conclusion

On the Moral Value of Rescue and Remembering Rescuers

Jeffrey Blustein

CONCEPTUALIZING RESCUE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

The papers in this collection deal with rescuers during genocide and other atrocities in several countries in Latin America, including Chile, Guatemala, México, Colombia, and Argentina. This is a welcome addition to the human rights and transitional justice literature since rescuers, like bystanders, are not much discussed there, at least as compared with the victims and perpetrators of those abuses. In addressing rescue, the volume also contributes to its re-conceptualization. What emerges from these various case studies is a conception of rescue that is both similar to and in important respects different from the conception of rescue implicit in the commemorations of "righteous gentiles" who saved Jews during the Holocaust. In the latter cases, individuals, and sometimes organized groups of individuals, acted to save Jews at considerable risk to themselves, motivated in part by altruism and in part by revulsion toward the atrocities of Nazism. Risk-taking, altruism, and resistance to injustice also play a part in explaining the activities of rescuers discussed in this volume. But there are differences as well, and it is one of the main purposes of this collection to point out distinctive features of rescue in the Latin American context.

The non-Jewish rescuers during the Holocaust often started out as bystanders and were complete strangers to those they saved. Moreover, many rescuers were not themselves among the persecuted and, as the persecution of Jews escalated, led lives that were markedly segregated from those they helped. In a number of the Latin American cases discussed here, however,

rescuers were often themselves victims of repression and had this bond as well as other strong social ties with those in the persecuted group. They did not approach rescue from the initial standpoint of a bystander, but were often deeply enmeshed in the communities whose members they were trying to save. Angie Tamayo and Jenny Escobar, for example, reject the term "rescuer" as inapt for the Colombian case because it connotes a "separation between the rescuer and the rescued," whereas in reality those helping others survive were also helping themselves and their community survive. This meant too, from the other side, that the rescued were not passive recipients of the aid of rescuers—"non-white, poor, 'third-world people,'" as Tamayo and Escobar put it—but active participants in their own rescue. To be sure, the rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust also often belonged to persecuted groups. "Righteous gentiles" were not the only ones who saved or attempted to save Jews from Nazi plans for their annihilation, and the rescued too did not just sit by waiting to be rescued. But for complex reasons it is those righteous rescuers who have received the lion's share of attention in the human rights and rescue literature, and this misrepresents the distinctive character of a number of cases of rescue in Latin America. They are also the rescuers who have received the most national and international attention in terms of commemorations.

Re-conceptualizing rescue in these ways in order to take account of the specific historical, political, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions in Latin American countries is not only important for conceptual reasons, to show the variety of forms that rescue can take. It also has implications for its moral evaluation, for this depends on the conditions in which rescue takes place; on how rescue is carried out in particular contexts; and on the values that the particular forms of rescue embody in these contexts. To assess acts of rescue in Latin America from a moral standpoint, therefore, we need to attend to how they are similar to but *also* different from the paradigmatic Holocaust-rescuer case. This brings me to the subject of these comments.

There is a massive literature on the psychology and sociology of rescue, some of it referenced in footnotes to the chapters in this anthology. It is not to my purpose, however, to review it here. Rather, I want to take up questions that have received considerably less attention. These are questions of moral value and moral significance pertaining to rescue that belong to moral philosophy not the social sciences. My comments about moral value are divided into two parts, one dealing with acts of rescue and their agents (section 2), the other with remembering the rescuers and their acts (section 3). In the first part I ask: why are acts of rescue that incur significant risks for the rescuer, in general and in the Latin American context, particularly morally commendable and why are the rescuers deserving of especially high moral esteem, as most people intuitively believe? In the second part I address a question that

belongs to the ethics of remembrance: what is the moral value of remembering rescuers and their acts of rescue? Memory of human rights abuses is held by many to be a critical part of any transitional justice process, and I will say something about why. But the moral value of remembering rescue and rescuers is not exhausted by its contribution to a more just and democratic society, that is, by its morally desirable consequences, and despite the intuitive appeal of an alternative way of conceptualizing the moral value of rescue, this conception is seldom made explicit. I will end with some brief remarks about this as well.

THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RESCUE

According to the standard classification, rescue is what philosophers call a *supererogatory act*. I begin with a brief explication of the concept and follow with a few remarks about the moral significance of this particular supererogatory act.

The contemporary discussion of supererogation in the philosophical literature began with a classic 1958 article by J. O. Urmson. Urmson challenged the traditional three-fold classification of moral action: the obligatory, the permitted, and the prohibited.[1] In more general terms, the classification divides actions as follows:

1. Actions that are good for an agent to do and bad for an agent not to do;
2. Actions that are neither good for an agent to do nor bad for an agent not to do; and
3. Actions that are bad for an agent to do and good for an agent not to do.

   Urmson claimed that there is a morally significant category of action that is left out of this classification, namely saintly and heroic action. He referred to these actions as praiseworthy but not morally obligatory, that is, as
4. Actions that are good (morally praiseworthy or valuable) to do but not bad not to do (i.e. their omission is not blameworthy).[2]

Actions of the fourth type are supererogatory. They are said to go "beyond the call of duty," and one way of doing this is to engage in heroic acts of rescue in perilous circumstances. People have an obligation not to harm others, but according to commonsense morality, the scope of their obligations to help others is quite limited. That is, they are not expected to take significant risks with their own health and well-being in order to benefit other people.[3] It is partly because of this fact about supererogation that the actions of rescuers, including those in the Latin American context, have particular moral value.

To be precise, it is not the risk-taking itself that is the source of the value of their supererogatory acts, but the morally optional character of their acts as revealed by their taking risks beyond those we can reasonably expect ordinary people to take. The risk-taking is voluntary, free of external constraint or threat, and an expression of personal choice. Those who engage in acts of rescue understood this way are not bound by conventional notions of duty or by strict adherence to what others can legitimately demand of them,[4] and there is moral value in their choice not just to take significant risks with their lives and well-being but, more to the point, to do so even though they would *not* be blameworthy if they didn't. I don't mean to suggest that rescuers typically think of their actions in this way, that is, that they think of them as morally optional. Indeed, quite the opposite. Rescuers commonly think of their actions as something they felt they had to do, that they could not but do, even as they do not hold others to the same standard. And they generally resist the label "hero."

Risk comes in degrees, and other things being equal the more risk the more morally optional the action, that is, the more it goes beyond the call of duty, and the more it goes beyond the call of duty the more morally commendable it is. In the accounts of Latin American rescuers, significant risk is ever-present and always something that has to be reckoned with. In some cases, the rescuers were themselves members of the persecuted groups, so the harm they faced came from two sources: their membership in these groups and their rescue activities. In Guatemala, for example, Roddy Brett notes that many Mayan refugees joined Communities of Population in Resistance [CPRs] which became "highly structured and organized entities where rescue and collective self-rescue merged into a single process." Joining these meant that the repercussions of being a rescuer and the repercussions of being an indigenous person were inextricably intertwined.

Risk-taking took different forms in different social contexts. Though perhaps more an example of protest than rescue,[5] the members of the Sebastián Acevedo movement, according to Christopher Ney, "risked their own safety and security to denounce the widespread practice of torture" during the Pinochet regime. The case of Harald Edelstam, ambassador to Chile at the time of the Pinochet coup, more closely fits the standard conception of the rescuer derived from rescue during the Holocaust. Like Raoul Wallenberg, who is widely celebrated for saving tens of thousands of Jews while serving as Sweden's special envoy in Budapest in 1944, Edelstam faced considerable danger from the military for his efforts to secure "the safety and exit [of politically persecuted individuals] from a country under severe military repression." In this connection, it is interesting to note that since "the rescue role of the bomberos [Municipal Firefighters in Guatemala] was already normalized within Chichicastenango communities," it is likely that their standing

within Mayan communities had an impact on the level of risk they took in rescuing the victims of genocide. Nevertheless, even if their work was already accepted within Mayan communities before the genocide, they were never entirely free of the threat of harassment or the fear of reprisals.

These remarks, and the ones to follow, have to do with the moral value of supererogatory acts of rescue, which should be distinguished from the moral praise we often assign to the rescuer for doing them. The two are obviously connected but they are distinct foci of moral evaluation. Persons do not win any credit or praise for just doing their duty: they only did what they had to do and were expected to do. But they may win praise for going beyond the call of duty, especially when doing so involves risking significant harm to themselves or overcoming special obstacles or difficulties.

Another source of the moral value of acts of rescue, in addition to their morally optional and discretionary character because of the high risks they entail, is the good they are intended to promote, typically altruistically. Altruism, by which I mean a direct or unself-interested concern for the well-being of another for that person's own sake, is a source of moral value, even if the altruistic acts do not succeed in saving the persecuted.[6] It is a type of motivation that is intrinsically, and not just instrumentally, valuable. As to the scope of altruism, it is tempting to define it inclusively, as involving a concern for others simply as human beings, but altruism is often conditioned by pre-existing relations with the persecuted. Speaking of Argentine rescuers during the years of the military junta between 1976 and 1983, Jessica Casiro notes that "a strong sense of 'inclusiveness' did not seem to be the main motive among Argentine rescuers. Repeat helpers for the most part helped people who were similar to themselves in terms of their ideology. . . . In the case of one-time helpers, universality was not relevant in explaining rescue either, given that, as I have argued earlier, most one-time rescuers helped family members or close friends."

Whenever rescue is an expression of group solidarity, as it is in a number of the cases discussed in this volume, and the rescuers act altruistically, the altruism is selective. In these cases, group membership affects one's altruism by limiting its eliciting conditions: individuals are rescued not just because they are human beings but also and perhaps mainly because they are related to the rescuer in specific ways. Abstractly considered, rescuing someone simply because he or she is a human being may be a higher expression of altruism than rescuing someone because he or she belongs to one's community. But the selective character of the altruism exhibited in the Latin American cases is not a sufficient reason to regard the agent as less than admirable or the agent's acts as less than laudable,[7] and in any case, a person's reasons for helping others are usually a mixture of universal and particular considerations that are not easily disentangled.

The moral value of altruistic motivation, whether or not it achieves its aim, and the personal choice to do what one is not obligated to do, by placing oneself at significant risk to help others, provide a partial explanation of the value of supererogatory acts of rescue like those discussed in this volume. The story is not yet complete, however, for rescue of the persecuted can also be seen as a type of morally valuable protest. Acts of rescue are sometimes *accompanied* by overt or clandestine acts of resistance to repressive rule characterized by extensive human rights abuses. What I have in mind, however, is that acts of rescue can also be *instruments* of resistance to such abuses, as was typically the case for the rescuers discussed in this volume. The resistance to injustice that is an element of (some) acts of rescue, while a source of rescue's moral value, should be distinguished from rescue's *central* function, which is to save the lives of, and in other ways to protect, those who are presently persecuted. Psychologist Krzysztof Konarzewski puts the distinction this way: "protest is a response that is primarily destructive: it aims at eliminating the malefactor, not saving his victims."[8] Obviously these are not unconnected. If the protest is successful and the malefactor is eliminated, this would save others who are not yet persecuted from being targeted, so protest could be thought of as aimed at eliminating the need for further acts of rescue. This would not be rescue as it is usually understood, but if one wants to describe it in these terms, it would be more accurate to call it preemptive rescue.[9]

The moral value of rescue is partly a function of the resistance to injustice that it expresses, and resistance to injustice is both intrinsically and, in some instances, instrumentally morally valuable. It is intrinsically valuable because resistance expresses one's allegiance to justice, puts one on the side of what is good and right, so to speak, and it is intrinsically valuable to put oneself there, something good in itself. Resistance is also instrumentally valuable if, in addition to helping individuals in need, it leads to the undermining of projects of state-sponsored terrorism and repression. In this way, rescue, as an instrument of resistance to injustice, might actually help promote a more just society over the long term, one based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. Remembrance too, as we will see in a moment, can be instrumentally valuable for this reason. Of course, resistance may be stamped out and memory may be overwhelmed by denial: the consequences of both are uncertain and sometimes involve an escalation of violence. But the moral value of rescue, regarded as intrinsic to the act itself, is not necessarily undermined by its negative consequences, even if these are costly.

Another important feature of several of the Latin American cases that is relevant to their moral evaluation concerns the relationship between rescue and cultural survival. Lawrence Blum, in his analysis of the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust, calls this feature "affirming cultures," and he regards it as a "general value" that is instantiated in the rescue of others as bearers of

specific cultural and religious traditions.[10] Charles Taylor thinks of this value as guiding how we should approach other cultures with which we are not familiar: there is a presumption that we ought to give all cultures that "[since they] have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time [they] have something important to say to all human beings."[11] It may not be evident to us initially what gives another culture its worth, but the presumption directs us to take this possibility seriously and to search for what its valuable contribution might involve. Once discovered, as it almost surely will be, we should affirm their value non-provisionally, as objectively confirmed. On this view, rescuing imperiled others whose culture is under attack has moral value because it accords their culture a kind of recognition that it deserves by virtue of being an objectively valuable way of life. The value of a particular culture, moreover, is distinctive, that is, it belongs to the culture because of its distinctive, differentiating features. It is important to distinguish distinctive value from comparative value. Saving the Mayan community of Guatemala is a valuable activity because this culture has value as the particular culture that it is, not because it has greater value than other cultures.

The idea that cultures have worth as distinctively valuable ways of life (and that we might be able to deepen our understanding of our own way of life by engaging with theirs) is part of an account of the moral value of rescue in certain types of cases, namely, those where entire cultures and the communities that embody them are targets of persecution and destruction. It explains the distinctive evil of genocide and the moral value of genocide rescue. Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term, defined genocide as follows:

> By "genocide" we mean the destruction of an ethnic group. . . . Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.[12]

As Lemkin makes clear, genocide is a holistic concept. It targets groups as such, and these are understood as different from aggregates of the individuals who make them up. Though genocide commonly involves massive and systematic loss of lives, a cultural group can be destroyed without destroying all or even most of the individuals who belong to it, and many individuals can be killed without destroying the culture to which they belong. Destruction of a culture is over and above the deaths of individuals, and the value of affirming

a persecuted culture through rescue is over and above the value of preserving the lives of those whose culture it is.

At the same time, in affirming a culture, we also affirm the cultural identities of those who belong to it, which is essential to maintaining or regaining their self-respect as individuals. At bottom rescuers save individuals, and apart from whether their culture has something important to say to humanity, their human rights as individuals (with certain cultural identities) demand protection as well. Thus, affirming cultures also affirms the rights of individuals to maintain their particular cultural identities. This too is part of an account of the moral value of rescue.

Valuable as Blum's suggestion is, I don't think his notion of a general value of affirming cultures exactly captures all that it at stake in some of the cases of rescue discussed in this book.[13] Tamayo and Escobar's analysis of the situation in Colombia offers a view of rescuing behavior that takes "affirming cultures" one step further:

> Strategies of survival [are] embedded in a deep sense of solidarity and urge to re-humanize generations of broken relationships due to an ongoing, protracted war . . . individual and collective acts of solidarity can be understood as part of the process to rebuild and re-humanize broken, formerly dehumanizing relationships.

Here rescue is not just a matter of "us" saving "them," even if the term "them" refers both to the individual bearers of a culture and the culture itself. Rather it involves us, as defenders of a cultural community to which we ourselves belong, engaging in acts of group solidarity. When this occurs, "people create communities of solidarity and support to speak up, remember, and stop crimes against humanity." Rescue can create or re-create communities of solidarity and help sustain them as a force to combat persecution.

Not all of the cases discussed in this book can plausibly be regarded as instances of affirming a culture or, beyond this, rebuilding and rehumanizing a broken culture. The Edelstam and Argentina cases arguably cannot. But for those that can, these attributes give us compelling grounds to recognize them as a distinctive and distinctively valuable category of rescue.

THE MORAL VALUE OF REMEMBRANCE

If the supererogatory acts of rescuers have moral value for the reasons I have suggested, and if rescuers themselves are praiseworthy for engaging in these dangerous activities, then it stands to reason that they and their deeds should not—morally should not—go unrecognized and unrecorded. That this is so

may be intuitively obvious, but the reasons for it are not always explicitly identified or well understood. Partly the reason is that recognizing them and recording their deeds may inspire others to undertake similar actions, or perhaps shame them into doing so, if circumstances arise when they might be needed. Partly this is to help ensure that circumstances do not arise when rescue is once again needed, for by recognizing rescue one also exposes the nature of the crimes that it resisted, and this in turn may undercut efforts to deny that they happened and prompt greater vigilance to prevent their recurrence.

There are other reasons as well, some that have the same means-ends structure as the ones just mentioned and others of a very different kind. I mean by a different kind of reason one that does not look to the wider social benefits of bringing rescuers and their courageous acts to light. For example, we might give as a reason of this kind that it is fitting and proper for rescuers and their meritorious acts to be duly recognized, simply as a gesture of respect for morality or the moral order itself: we act consistently with the value that morality has by giving due recognition to actions that have moral value, especially those that go beyond the call of duty and involve serious risks for the agent. Or if this is hard to grasp, perhaps due recognition is an expression of respect for the rescuers, rather than or in addition to respect for morality. I say more about this below.

Whatever the reason for recognizing rescuers and their deeds, and there are several, memory is the medium through which this recognition is maintained over time and commemoration the manner in which it is done. First I will say something about how rescuers and their deeds may remembered and commemorated, and then I will discuss the moral value of doing so.

Commemoration is an umbrella term that refers both to any sort of process, private or public, that is designed to preserve remembrance of persons and/or events as well as to anything that serves as a vehicle of remembrance.[14] Examples of the latter include museums, monuments, sites of conscience, and ceremonies and rituals. The courage of rescuers and the altruism of their actions can be commemorated by processes that employ any of these means, but there is one commemorative activity in particular that I want to highlight: recording and disseminating rescuer stories, most notably those told by the rescuers themselves.

To begin with, what is an autobiographical story of rescue? A rescuer story is a narrative that recounts what the rescuer thought, felt, and did in committing to help the persecuted, and if it is an autobiographical story of rescue, it is how the rescuer makes sense of all this. The narrative can be cast in molds of varying degrees of complexity and organization: at one end of a spectrum, it is structured in highly conventional ways, with a plot consisting of a beginning, middle, and end; at the opposite end, it consists of a series of

disjointed memories that is more like a chronicle than a full-fledged narrative of what happened; in between there are narratives that have elements of both types. Whatever the form, the story relates the twists and turns of events as the rescuers remember having lived through and experienced them. We see examples (or fragments) of rescuer stories in some of the case studies in this book: in reflections of the members of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement in Chile; in the testimony of the fire fighters in Guatemala; and in the recollections of rescuers of Argentines persecuted by the military during the Dirty War. Despite the risks, storytellers may tell their stories of rescue for any number of reasons: to expose human rights abuses and their perpetrators; to correct distortions of fact; to galvanize opposition to a repressive regime; to express solidarity with a persecuted group; and so on. It is a further question whether we should believe everything they say. The tellers of autobiographical stories of rescue, like the tellers of autobiographical stories of abuse, can behave unethically by making up or embellishing incidents; exaggerating the seriousness of the risks they faced; failing to disclose material facts; giving undue prominence to their situation; and so on. Storytellers of both sorts are obligated to tell the truth and, more than this, to be truthful. The telling of stories, however, is not my focus here.

It is rather the *uses* to which rescuer stories may be put. I single out one of these: the use of rescuer stories, by journalists, truth commissions, memoirists, archivists, staffs of genocide museums, and others, to commemorate rescuers and their activities.[15] Rescuer stories are highly personal. Marshaled to support remembrance, they have a special power and efficacy that other modes of commemoration lack. They awaken our affective responses, activate our imaginations, and rivet our attention. Monuments to rescuers may do little to preserve their memory; dissemination of their stories can do more, especially if their stories are told repeatedly. At the same time, putting rescuer stories to work to commemorate the rescuers themselves raises certain concerns, the root of which is a peculiar tension in the use of rescuer stories by others whatever the purpose. On the one hand, rescuers own their own stories and have the right to control them; on the other, when used by others, they may lose that control to a greater or lesser extent. Those who disseminate rescuer stories to promote remembrance of rescuers might have their own agendas, political and otherwise, that are in tension or conflict with the ethical aims and requirements of commemoration. Plainly there are ethical norms governing the use of rescuer stories for commemorative purposes just as there are ethical norms governing the telling of autobiographical stories of rescue. I do not pursue these issues in what follows since I am mainly interested in the uses of rescuer stories that adhere to these norms.[16]

Commemoration itself can be a morally valuable activity, irrespective of the further ends it might promote, and I will say why shortly. I begin,

however, in what I think is more familiar territory by considering some of the other ends that the commemoration of rescuers through dissemination of their stories might promote. Ron Dudai's analysis of types of "rescue-memory" is a helpful starting point. One of these he calls "rescue-memory as reconciliation," the other "rescue-memory as denunciation."[17] I will say something about each and then add two more types: *rescue-memory as truth telling* (which Dudai alludes to) and *rescue-memory as honor* (which Dudai does not mention at all).

Rescue-memory as reconciliation and rescue-memory as denunciation view the morality of disseminating rescuer stories through the same evaluative lens, an instrumentalist one. This is explained by the fact that Dudai is interested in the contribution of memory to transitional justice. Proposals advocating the use of rescuer stories to commemorate the acts of rescuers "must . . . be based on an analysis that points out the potential wider benefits of such interventions" for transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction (21). It is important to note that the commemorative use of rescuer stories does not always promote these goals. On the contrary, it can be counterproductive. For one thing, rescuers, because they stand out as exceptions to the rule, may receive too much attention from the media, human rights organizations, and others, thereby overshadowing the victims and the efforts they made on their own behalf to survive. Tamayo and Escobar apparently think this is virtually inevitable whenever the term "rescuer" is used: "The word rescuer implies a vertical relationship of power where the 'rescuer' has the privilege, the agency, and the means to help the 'rescued' who is separate from the rescuer and may be seen as not possessing much power to change their circumstances." Even if one is not willing to jettison the term "rescuer," and Casiro for one adopts it without misgivings, one should take seriously the possibility that rescuer stories can be impediments to post-conflict reconstruction precisely for the reason that Tamayo and Escobar mention. As Dudai observes, they can lead to "bitterness, alienation, and resentment from victims" (29), who believe that their own agency is being discounted. In this commemoration of rescuers, rescuers emerge as the true heroes and those they rescue as pathetic victims.[18]

A related danger is that commemoration of rescuers will present an "overly rosy and sentimental picture of the past" (29). Rescuers may receive the lions' share of attention from the media and elsewhere to counterbalance the impression that everyone who belonged to the enemy group was bad. In the process, one might be led to overlook the fact that the rescuers were a distinct minority, and that most of the enemy consisted of perpetrators, collaborators, and passive bystanders, all of whom in their different ways contributed to the persecution of victims. Thus, in an effort to convey a more nuanced picture of the enemy, the enemy comes to be represented by its least repugnant members.

Of course, things can work out very differently. Rather than present an overly positive view of the past, the commemoration of rescuers might only serve to underscore how different they were from the vast majority of their countrymen. The worst of the enemy do not fade into the background. On contrary, the enemy is painted in even more starkly negative terms. This too does not contribute to post-conflict reconstruction.

So there are "pitfalls," as Dudai puts it, in the commemoration of rescuers by disseminating their stories. But commemoration of rescuers can also help advance the goals of transitional justice in several ways: by furthering reconciliation within deeply divided societies, by contributing to accountability for human rights violations, and by combating their denial. Commemoration of victims can also help advance transitional justice goals, but commemoration of rescuers can complement this in distinctive ways.

As Dudai describes it, rescue-memory has reconciliatory potential because while the rescuers nominally belong to the enemy group, in reality they set themselves apart from it by their heroic acts. The dissemination of stories of German rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, for example, or of Hutu rescuers of Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide, undermines the stark either/or of perpetrators or victims by showing that not all Germans stood by as the Nazis carried out their extermination plans or collaborated with them, and not all Hutus joined in the genocidal rampage. Not everyone was either a criminal or a victim, for there were some who were neither victims nor simply criminals, and arguably notions of collective guilt and collective innocence should be avoided because they tend to perpetuate social divisions and stereotypes. In this way, the dissemination of rescuer stories has the potential to "humanize" the enemy, and this may facilitate social reconstruction and reconciliation between former enemies.

Rescuer stories can do this by destabilizing what Ernesto Verdeja calls "the strongly binary logic of identity" that characterizes repressive and divided societies. "In-groups use language that constructs a tightly knit community while simultaneously disparaging and dehumanizing out-groups."[19] For reconciliation to be possible, he argues, the passion with which the in-group/out-group distinction is defended by antagonistic groups must be defused. Obviously this means that perpetrators must come to recognize and acknowledge the humanity of the victims. But no less important from the standpoint of reconciliation, victims must come to recognize and acknowledge that not all of the "enemy" are inhuman monsters. This is the contribution that dissemination of rescuer stories can make, although obviously much more than this is needed to move enemies beyond their exclusionary logic. In addition to humanizing the enemy, disseminating rescuer stories supports reconciliation in other ways, according to Dudai. It helps neutralize criticism of those victims who are attacked for seeking reconciliation with former enemies and,

when it is the victims who tell them, the stories help relieve anxiety among the enemy that the victims simply want revenge.

Rescue-memory as reconciliation, explained this way, has limited application to the telling of stories of rescue discussed in this book, however. As the authors note, rescue was often a manifestation of group solidarity in which the ones who were helped belonged to the same group as the ones who helped them. These were not cases of "them" (defectors from the enemy group) rescuing "us" (the persecuted). Disseminating these stories would thus not serve to humanize the enemy and undercut the binary logic of political violence and repression.

Another use of telling stories of rescuers, and of commemorating them by doing so, is to provide evidence that resistance to a repressive regime was not impossible and that passivity in the face of evil was not the only position that one could take. It thereby exposes as rationalizations the claims of passive bystanders that there was nothing they could do to resist. This is the function of rescue-memory as denunciation and, like rescue-memory as reconciliation, it can be an avenue to social repair. It is also entirely pertinent to the Latin American cases discussed in this book. Rescuer stories, by indirectly indicting passive bystanders, can advance the goals of transitional justice by contributing to a complete accounting of responsibility for past wrongdoing. As Laurel Fletcher and Harvey Weinstein note, "rebuilding a society requires communities to acknowledge the full range of acts in which their members participated for reconciliation to be a realizable possibility," and this includes the myriad of ways in which individuals participated in mass violence, "ranging from killing to acquiescence."[20]

Related to this, rescue-memory can have a truth telling function, and this is why I call the third type rescue-memory as truth telling. Commemorating acts of rescuers exposes the crimes and atrocities they resisted and from which they attempted to save the persecuted, and it thereby counters the evasions, obfuscations, and outright denials of past wrongdoing that those who bear some responsibility for it often engage in. In addition to this, rescue-memory as truth telling vindicates the claims of victims to have suffered wrongful harm and implicitly repudiates the denial of their standing as equal members of society. Like eroding the binary "us vs. them" logic of repressive societies and countering bystander excuses for inaction, this also is a critical part of reconstructing inter-community relations.

The final type of rescue-memory is rescue-memory as honor, and this has a rationale significantly different from the other three types. Each of the other types of commemoration is advocated on the grounds that it promotes social reconstruction and political reconciliation. This, as I said earlier, is an instrumentalist justification, in that its interest is the contribution that memory can make to realizing the goals of transitional justice. Rescue-memory as honor

does not readily fit this into this mold. We can of course try to make it fit by claiming that honoring rescuers by telling their stories will likely promote better inter-community relations or will serve as an example to inspire others to act similarly. But this fails to register what is distinctive about honor as a response to persons who are worthy of it. Honor is given to the worthy, including rescuers of the persecuted, not primarily to advance some further social goal or to encourage similar actions from others, but simply because they deserve it. Honor is one of the ways that we value other people for what they have done or who they are.[21] Compare honoring rescuers with honoring those who gave their lives defending our country. "It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this," as Lincoln said, just by itself, even if no one else will emulate them or desirable social consequences will not flow from it. Honor is an intrinsically valuable response to a particular kind of value that only human beings can possess. And we do ourselves credit by honoring them, although this is not our motive for doing so.

Honor is what philosophers call an evaluative attitude, and there are positive as well as negative instances of such attitudes. Among the positives, we admire, revere, respect, and love others; among the negatives, we humiliate, mock, disrespect, and despise others. Rescue-memory as honor—which we can think of it as an umbrella expression encompassing a cluster of positive evaluative attitudes toward rescuers, including admiration and respect—is justified not by the outcomes it is likely to bring about, but by the intrinsically morally valuable attitudes it expresses. An exclusively instrumentalist framework for evaluating the morality of remembering rescuers diverts attention from the rescuers themselves by only looking to the greater good that remembering them brings about. In so doing, it fails to properly take account of the honor they have earned and that we owe them.

NOTES

1. Urmson, J. 1958. "Saints and Heroes," in A.I. Melden (Ed.), *Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

2. See the entry "Supererogation" by David Heyd in the on-line *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

3. Under current Good Samaritan laws in the United States, individuals are under no legal obligation to rescue others in need, even when there is little risk to themselves in doing so. The law of rescue and the morality of rescue diverge.

4. This is explicit in one of the principles of the Sebastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture in Chile: "We make decisions about the actions together and we participate freely. There is a commitment but not an obligation."

5. For more on the protest/rescue distinction see below.

6. See in this connection Ney's remark that the members of the Acevedo movement in Chile "felt an ethical imperative" to protest against torture but "did not rescue

torture victims from the jails of the secret police." Taking the short-term view, their protest failed to achieve its objective. Nevertheless it was certainly admirable: courageous, empathic, and justice seeking.

7. These judgments would be different if one's selective altruism prevented one from considering the needs of those with whom one did not have a pre-existing relationship and whom one could help without jeopardizing the former.

8. K. Konarzewski, 1992. "Empathy and Protest," in P.M. Oliner, et al. (eds.), *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism.* New York: New York University Press, 22–29, 27.

9. This, I take it, is why members of the Acevedo movement in Chile considered what they were doing to be rescue, even though they did not achieve their goal of rescuing torture victims from jail. "Intuitively, the leaders of the movement understood that the importance of their actions extended beyond the immediate rescue of individual torture victims."

Another case that is interesting from the standpoint of how rescue is to be interpreted concerns two humanitarian organizations in México (EUREKA and AFADEM) that continue to press for return of the 43 students who were disappeared in Ayotzinapa, México in September 2014. In what sense are they engaged in acts of rescue? The parents of the disappeared children continue to believe that they are alive: "Alive they were taken, alive we want them back," they proclaim. As they see it, they aim to rescue their children in the sense of getting them back alive. This is rescue in a straightforward sense. However, one can still regard what they are doing as rescue even if the students are dead and at some point the parents accept this: it would in this event be rescue of *remains* and their return to their grieving parents. Failing this, the organizations may help to rescue the *memory* of these students from official cover-ups and details. "Rescue" here is being used metaphorically.

10. Lawrence A. Blum, "Altruism and the Moral Value of Rescue: Resisting Persecution, Racism, and Genocide," in *Embracing the Other*, op. cit., 30–47, 42.

11. Charles Taylor, 1994, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

12. Raphel Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, ix. 79.

13. For one thing, it is introduced to account for the value of rescue of Jews during the Holocaust, which as I have already noted is not a conceptualization of rescue that comfortably fits many of the Latin American cases.

14. Though there are private as well as public commemorative activities, it is the justification of the latter that I am interested in here.

15. Of course rescuer stories can also be used to promote remembrance of victims. Here I am interested in remembrance of the rescuers, something that gets relatively little attention in the human rights literature.

16. On ethical norms for the use of rescuer stories, see the related discussion of the ethics of using victim stories in Diana T. Meyers, *Victims' Stories and the Advancement of Human Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 5.

17. Ron Dudai, February 2012. "'Rescues for Humanity': Rescuers, Mass Atrocities, and Transitional Justice," *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1: 1–38, especially 20–32.

18. For a critical examination of this conception of the victim, see Meyers, op. cit., chapter 2.

19. Ernesto Verdeja. 2009. *Unchopping a Tree: Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Political Violence.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 63.

20. Laurel E. Fletcher and Harvey M. Weinstein. August 2002. "Violence and Social Repair: Rethinking the Contribution of Justice to Reconciliation," *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 303: 573–639, 612.

21. In ancient and medieval times, honor was attached to persons in virtue of their occupying a certain position within a social hierarchy. Though remnants of this view survive, honor as we think of it today is largely unmoored from social status. For more on honor, see Anthony K. Appiah. 2010. *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen.* New York: Norton.

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About the Contributors and Editors

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Zachary McKiernan specializes in public history and Latin American studies. He recently co-authored and co-edited *Strengthening Memory, Justice, and Human Rights in Brazil and the Southern Hemisphere* in collaboration with the International Coalitions of Sites of Conscience, the Brazilian Federal Government, and Amnesty Commission. He is currently converting his dissertation—*The Public History of a Concentration Camp: Memories of Tragedy and Hope at the National Stadium of Chile*—into a book manuscript.

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Angie Tamayo is a Colombian woman, a human rights activist, and dreamer. She is the youngest of 3 siblings and the first person in her family to attend college. She is currently studying psychology at the University of Washington in Seattle. Angie has been involved in human rights organizations that support victims of state violence as a youth activist in Colombia and presently as a student-activist in the United States. She has co-authored the book Ecos: Palabras de Mujeres with a group of women from the Cultural Center El Chontaduro.