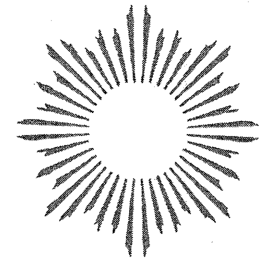
OPENING MEXICO

The Making of a Democracy



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Tlatelolco, 1968

Luis González de Alba was a twenty-four-year-old psy
chology major at the National Autonomous Universit
of Mexico when he first glimpsed the beginnings of th
student revolt in July 1968. A slender student with a black Zapata-styl
mustache, the son of a Guadalajara pharmacist, González de Alba was i
a lounge at the university campus in the southern suburbs of the capit
the evening of July 26 when word arrived that street battles were ragir
all over downtown Mexico City. He decided to drive into the city in
friend's Volkswagen Beetle to see for himself.

Arriving at the edge of the colonial center at 11 p.m., González
Alba found streets littered with rocks and broken glass, several buses
flames, and squadrons of helmeted riot police menacing from eve
corner. He parked near the Zócalo and walked the cobbled streets
San Ildefonso, an eighteenth-century colonial palace housing two hi
schools administered by the UNAM. As he entered San Ildefonso, ri
police charged down the street, and a panicked group of teenag
pulled the heavy wooden doors shut and barred them. Inside, the bui
ing resembled a medieval castle under siege. Students were wanderi
through the corridors, dazed. Moving in the darkness past murals by t
revolutionary painter José Clemente Orozco, teenagers were hauli
stones and bricks to the roof to hurl down on police. Others were asse
bling Molotov cocktails.

An antiauthoritarian mutiny was under way. It had begun four d
earlier, when teenagers from two rival high schools had gotten int
brawl during a touch-football game in a downtown park. Riot police l
waded in, swinging their clubs. When the students retreated int

nearby vocational school, the police had charged through the schoolhouse doors after them, beating teachers and students alike. That led to days of skirmishes between hundreds of stone-throwing adolescents and the police.

Those protests provoked more repression, which provoked more protests. Now students had declared strikes at San Ildefonso and several other downtown high schools. Street fighting had paralyzed the city center. Police were beating practically every pedestrian they could corner. Students built barricades. Along some streets, neighborhood women lobbed flowerpots down on the heads of police from their balconies. The air was foul with tear gas and the smoke of burning vehicles.

The spectacle of longhaired students taunting authorities in the streets outside the National Palace infuriated President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. As a personality, he was obsessive about order and discipline. In sharp contrast to his playboy predecessor, Adolfo López Mateos, Díaz Ordaz was an ascetic, never seen to enjoy a stiff drink or a rich meal. With a prominent deck of buckteeth, he was genuinely unattractive and had few close friends. The world kept its distance from him, and he in turn regarded the world with suspicion. He believed that the fundamental job of the Mexican President was to preserve order, and he could not tolerate the rowdy protesters who were thumbing their noses at him and his office.

So, characteristically, Díaz Ordaz responded to the strike at San Ildefonso with overwhelming force, sending army troops to take up positions in front of the high school's three-hundred-year-old wooden door, ornately carved by indigenous craftsmen. The soldiers blew the door apart with the blast of a bazooka and rushed in to beat and detain the terrified teenagers inside. Troops invaded several other high schools, clubbing and arresting students. By the end of the day four hundred people had been hospitalized and one thousand arrested.

The country had seen Díaz Ordaz suppress dissent before. But the army attack on a high school stunned many Mexicans. The rector of the university, Javier Barros Sierra, a distinguished and politically moderate engineer, ordered the flag on the campus commons lowered to half-mast. The following day he walked at the head of a march of more than fifty thousand students and professors through the city's southern neighborhoods.

The rector's dignified protest earned him Díaz Ordaz's contem and later that summer cost him his job. But it inspired thousands previously apathetic students into fervid political action. Overnigh the UNAM, the largest university in Latin America, with more tha 100,000 students, became virtually united in opposition to the Díaz O daz government and its violent tactics.

Thirteen miles across Mexico City at a campus on the far northe edge of the metropolis, the country's other large federal center of high learning, the National Polytechnic Institute, the Politécnico, was also rebellion. Raúl Álvarez Garín, then a twenty-seven-year-old physics st dent, was attending a mathematics seminar outside Mexico City duri the first student-police clashes. But when word reached him of t bazooka attack on the San Ildefonso school, he rushed back to t Politécnico and, offering direction to an inchoate, virtually leaderl movement, began to help draw up a list of student demands.

Álvarez Garín, a stocky, mustachioed fellow, came from a radi family. His grandfather had been an aide to the revolutionary Gene Álvaro Obregón, his parents were Communists, and his wife was t daughter of Valentín Campa, a leader of the railway strike that Díaz (daz had crushed when he was Government Secretary in 1959. Álva Garín showed himself to be a natural strategist, and he helped to outli a concise list of straightforward demands: the government should fi jailed students as well as railway union leaders imprisoned since 19 pay compensation to the families of injured protesters, disband the r police, and repeal vague laws used to jail dissenters.

Álvarez Garín was not a great speaker; sometimes he stuttered. I when he first outlined the demands in a speech before students and f ulty on the Politécnico campus, he electrified the crowd. Thousands voices drowned him out with roars of approval and defiant chants.

"It was one of those emotions that you experience only a few time life," Álvarez Garín said of that moment. "They interrupted me ten or teen times in the few minutes that I spoke."

The demands Álvarez Garín helped to conceive were quickly ta up by the movement as a whole. The simplicity and elemental justic the students' petitions gave them tremendous moral authority. Over next weeks, as the students resisted escalating attacks from the gov

ment, their street demonstrations and raucous public presence became a symbol to many of criticism of the PRI system that the wider public had felt but left unspoken. Suddenly the regime that had presented itself as the Mexican people's revolutionary benefactor looked like an emperor parading with no clothes.

In the days following Álvarez Garín's stirring speech, students declared strikes at the Politécnico, the UNAM, and virtually every other college, preparatory, and private school in and around Mexico City. University campuses in many of the thirty-one Mexican states were also shut down. Almost overnight, students at dozens of schools sent representatives to a two-hundred-member National Strike Council.

The council's first major test came when it called for a march and rally on August 13, setting its destination at the Zócalo in Mexico City. Student leaders had no way of knowing how the public would react to their impertinent invitation. But the depth of public disaffection with decades of PRI government became clear along the route, when thousands of onlookers cheered the marchers from balconies and sidewalks. Eventually 200,000 Mexicans marched into the central square. Many were parents of protesting students. Others were teachers, nurses, and independent workers of all stripes.

The unexpected size of the crowd proved that the students were voicing frustrations felt by Mexicans of all ages in a modernizing Mexico. Like Álvarez Garín and González de Alba, many of the student leaders considered themselves revolutionaries, à la Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. But they attracted wide public support because the demands they pressed publicly were not to overthrow the government but to make it more democratic.

During August the campuses became centers of feverish political activity. By day at the Politécnico, Álvarez Garín was working to arrange a disciplined strike; he helped organize student brigades, a communal kitchen, and the purchase of a sound system for rallies. By night he was sleeping in one of his professors' cubicles.

At the UNAM, González de Alba, who had been chosen to represent the philosophy department on the National Strike Council, began living on the eighth floor of the Humanities Tower in a carpeted hallway where he could close the doors at night to shut out the incessant whine of the [illegible] the students' latest handbill.

For González de Alba the student movement was not all pro test and persecution. It was also an exhilarating cultural revolution, i which he and a whole generation of students broke gloriously out c the stifling, static confines of mid-century Mexican society. "It was party," González de Alba said, "an explosion after fifty years of goo behavior."

"We slept in the dean's leather chairs; we breakfasted without payin in cafeterias that we'd taken over," González de Alba recounted. "W went to the rally feeling like a bullfighter before the pens were to b opened to let in the bull-as-riot-policeman; we boarded the buses to giv speeches to people, to sing, to present skits; we fled from the bull, d lighted, when a patrol car would stop the bus; at night we'd light cam fires and sing songs of the Spanish civil war; we'd form couples, and we look for the vacant cubicle to be alone with our lover; we'd swim at th pool without a credential. We did everything without any ticket or a permission."

On August 27, another march to the Zócalo drew an overwhelmi crowd: 400,000 Mexicans, who tramped into the square for four straig hours. Students climbed into the tower of the sixteenth-century cath dral and set its ancient bells ringing. Some demonstrators gathered u der the National Palace's central balcony, where Mexican Presidents tradition officiate over Independence Day ceremonies, to hurl perso insults at Díaz Ordaz.

"*¡Sal al balcón, chango hocicón!*" they shouted. "Come on out, mo key big-snout!"

Díaz Ordaz was not amused. By late evening most of the protest had gone home, but a few thousand stayed behind, building bonfi and vowing to maintain an encampment to pressure the President to spond to their demands. At midnight three battalions of federal troo marched out of the National Palace and converged on the Zóca joined by twelve armored personnel carriers from other garrisons. Sho ing through loudspeakers, they ordered the youths out of the Zóca Most fled; those who dawdled were chased down and beaten.

In his annual State of the Union message the following Sunday, S tember 1, Díaz Ordaz issued an unmistakable threat: "We can't al our legal order to continue to be ruptured so inexcusably," he said. " wouldn't like to find ourselves in a situation where we would have

take measures we don't want. But we'll take them if we have to. We'll go as far as we have to go."

If at first the protests had angered Díaz Ordaz simply because of the challenge they posed to his authoritarian views, as the summer closed he saw in them a larger threat. The government regarded Mexico's designation to host the Olympic Games as an extraordinary opportunity to portray the country as a success story in economic development with social justice. The Games were scheduled to begin October 12. Díaz Ordaz was determined to quiet the student protests well before that date, so in the days after his annual address the authorities cracked down hard.

The government-controlled papers attacked the student movement with mounting vehemence, and scores of activists were arrested. One of the university leaders whom Díaz Ordaz's secret police, the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, or Federal Security Directorate, pursued most relentlessly was Heberto Castillo Martínez, a professor of mechanical engineering.

Castillo was well known in Mexico not only for his distinguished engineering career but also because of his close association with General Lázaro Cárdenas, the immensely popular President who, after nationalizing Mexico's petroleum industry in 1938, had for decades thereafter been a senior statesman in the country's leftist causes. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the General's son, had been a student of Castillo's in the 1950s, and through Cuauhtémoc, Castillo had met General Cárdenas, with whom he formed a warm political association and friendship. From 1959 through 1964 Castillo had been the General's personal secretary.

Castillo had embraced the 1968 student strike enthusiastically, and in the tumultuous assemblies of the students' National Strike Council he often stood to outline his own and other leftist professors' views.

Castillo's involvement in the protests especially infuriated Díaz Ordaz. The President used the memoirs he wrote in his private moments to vent his envy of the professor, raging about all the adulation Castillo was receiving.

On one occasion Castillo helped to organize a meeting at General Cárdenas's Mexico City home between the General and a dozen student leaders, including González de Alba. General Cárdenas, who was following the movement's development with great interest, spoke to the students with respect but also with considerable concern. He had been a General during the revolution, a leader of the Mexican left, and a respected member of the PRI elite, and he saw that the movement was rattling the postrevolutionary society he had helped build.

After the meeting Cárdenas encouraged Castillo to continue to support the protesters. He also pooh-poohed Castillo's worries that Díaz Ordaz might deploy the army against the UNAM.

That proved to be a miscalculation. On September 18, tanks rumbled onto the UNAM campus, and troops arrested five hundred students. Castillo barely escaped capture.

He was in the science department that night, writing the script fo a documentary film about the movement, when a panicked studen rushed in with the news. Castillo raced out of the building toward th edge of campus, where, at an overpass, a soldier on the turret of a tan shined a spotlight on him.

"Halt!" the soldier called.

"If I stop, they'll kill me—and if I don't, maybe not," Castillo tol himself. He sprinted a few paces, dived into a gully, and crawled throug rocks and shrubs to escape. He spent several harrowing days hiding i the cactus-covered hills around the campus, finally approaching a ta that drove him to the home of sympathizers who gave him lodging.

The army takeover of the UNAM met with no resistance. But whe authorities sought to seize the Politécnico days later, students defende the campus fiercely, hurling Molotov cocktails and setting police veh cles on fire. When army troops arrived in reinforcement, residents nearby buildings hurled garbage, bottles, and pots of boiling water dow on the tanks. The clashes lasted three days.

In the last days of September, Mexico City was in a de facto state siege. There were scores of illegal arrests, detainees were held witho access to lawyers, and state security agents routinely searched homes an cars with no warrant. Yet most of the strike leaders were still free. A González de Alba, Álvarez Garín, and others on the National Stri Council scheduled another protest rally for October 2 in the cent commons of a downtown housing project known as Tlatelolco.

They picked the site because the thirteen-story Chihuahua apartme building overlooking the square had a broad third-floor balcony th

would serve well as a speaker's platform. But the commons, the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, was a space with extraordinary historical significance: it was the site where, in the 1521 battle of Tlatelolco, the conquistador Hernán Cortés conquered Cuauhtémoc, the last of the Aztec Emperors. When, in the early 1960s, the government inaugurated the vast modern Tlatelolco project around the ruins of an Aztec ceremonial temple, a plaque was erected to commemorate that fateful battle between Aztec and Spaniard. "It was neither a triumph nor a defeat," the plaque says. "It was the painful birth of the mestizo nation that is Mexico today."

The student rally on October 2, 1968, at the Tlatelolco plaza proved to be another painful birth: that of a new Mexican generation.

The rally was to start at 5 p.m. When González de Alba arrived half an hour late, a light drizzle was falling and leaders of the strike council were already making speeches.

"The movement will continue!" a student was telling the crowd. González de Alba climbed the stairs of the Chihuahua building to the third-floor balcony, which student leaders had equipped with a sound system. Perhaps twenty other leaders of the strike council were already on the balcony, along with many Mexican journalists. With the Olympic Games approaching, some one hundred foreign reporters were also present at the rally, and many were crowded onto the balcony as well.

From the Chihuahua building González de Alba had a great view of the rally. To the left of the plaza was a sixteenth-century stone chapel; towering behind it was the white twenty-story building housing the Foreign Relations Secretariat, completing the plaza's three cultures: Aztec, Spanish colonial, and modern. To the right were more blocky apartment buildings. Perhaps eight thousand demonstrators were packed into the plaza, some holding protest banners, others huddling under umbrellas. Mingling with the students were residents of the housing project, including many children.

At the same time, hundreds of plainclothes state security agents were also visible, betrayed by their military haircuts and, on this occasion, another curious detail: many were wearing one white glove. Uniformed troops in light tanks and jeeps had taken up positions in parking lots and

streets on all sides of the housing project. Analysts calculated later that more than ten thousand soldiers and police were at Tlatelolco.

The military presence was so ominous that shortly after González de Alba's arrival, a student approached him to urge that the rally be canceled immediately. González de Alba brushed the suggestion aside. After all, the student movement had seen plenty of troops and police at previous demonstrations that summer.

Two military helicopters had been circling the zone. At 6:10 p.m. they moved down to hover menacingly above the plaza, well below the roofs of the surrounding buildings. At that moment two military flares crackled in the air, panicking the demonstrators.

"Don't run, *compañeros*!" a student shouted over the sound system. "Keep calm! It's a provocation!" The multitude began to run anyway. Soldiers with bayonets, however, were advancing in formation toward the plaza from several sides, blocking the few escape routes between the surrounding buildings. The crowds were turned back, forming a vas whirlpool of terrified humanity.

Shots rang out amid the shouts and cries, first the sharp pinging o light weaponry, then the rhythmic rattle of machine-gun fire. Gunme posted on the rooftops were firing on the crowd; so were some soldiers o the ground.

Dozens of the white-gloved state security agents charged up the stair onto the balcony of the Chihuahua building, brandishing pistols and au tomatic rifles. "Don't turn around or we'll blow your heads off," the shouted, throwing students and journalists alike against the wall and rip ping out the wires of the sound system.

His head pressed against the wall, González de Alba nonetheless wa able to see some of what was happening on the balcony out of the corne of his eye. After detaining him and the other student leaders, the state se curity agents moved to the edge of the balcony, raised their weapons, an began shooting down on the crowd. To the agents' apparent surpris however, their shots were immediately returned by soldiers firing aut matic rifles and machine guns.

The balcony was engulfed in chaos. Many of the white-gloved agen dived to the cement floor, ordering the detained students down as well t avoid the bullets slamming into the balcony. Even so, some studen

were hit. Machine-gun fire punctured the building's water pipes, and water rained down on the students' heads. The stairwells became waterfalls.

"Olympia Battalion!" some of the state security agents shouted. "Don't shoot!"

Álvarez Garín had joined the rally at a spot at the southern edge of the plaza, near the chapel. When the shots began to rain down on the crowd from the rooftops and from several flanks, he and hundreds of other demonstrators sprinted along the stone wall, seeking to escape the plaza along the church's eastern edge. But when the protesters rounded the corner of the chapel, they faced a line of bayonet-carrying troops twenty-five yards away, shouting for them to halt. Many protesters were hit there by gunfire. Álvarez Garín saw the dead fall into a heap, one on top of the other, at the corner of the church.

During the first minutes of riotous gunfire from hundreds of weapons, students dropped to the ground and found it wet with blood. "When the gunfire was most intense, you couldn't even lift your head," one student said. "We covered ourselves with the bodies of the dead."

Amid this firestorm a little girl appeared, clutching a bag of bread and wandering, dazed, through the bodies. Frantic students screamed at her to get down, but she appeared not to hear.

The machine-gun fire was so intense that four upper floors of the Chihuahua building caught fire, forcing many families to flee the building. The gunfire continued intermittently for ninety minutes, until 7:45 p.m.

Students detained on the balcony saw state security agents dragging bodies by the legs down the stairwell of the Chihuahua building. Many residents were killed or wounded in their homes as machine-gun fire tore through the Chihuahua and at least seven nearby apartment buildings. A young woman seeking to drive away was killed by gunfire in her car. The horn shrieked as she slumped on the steering wheel. Many of the victims were later found to have been killed by bayonets; a photographer for the newspaper *Excélsior* was bayoneted in the hand.

At 11 p.m., when the first of the 2,360 persons detained at the rally were being kicked and beaten aboard army trucks and buses, the government forces fired on the plaza again, this time for about an hour.

At one point after his detention but before he was trucked away to a

military camp, Álvarez Garín watched army troops strafing the front wall of the Chihuahua building with tracer bullets from a machine gun. Their objective, if they had one, was not clear. When the last detainees were bused from the plaza, soldiers were setting up camp along the streets surrounding the housing project. Some were eating. Some shouted insults at the student prisoners.

Until ten o'clock the night of the massacre, Mexican radio and TV stations reported that the army had dispersed a student rally with gunfire and that there were many dead. But the newscasts thereafter and the newspapers the following day reported a revised government version of the events: that "terrorist" snipers located in buildings overlooking the plaza had fired on the army, forcing the army to shoot back in self-defense; the government implied that the terrorists were students but

October 2, 1968: Detainees at the Chihuahua building

produced no evidence. The official body count: twenty dead and seventy-six wounded. Among the wounded was General José Hernández Toledo, the commander of the paratroop battalion that participated in the Tlatelolco operation.

President Díaz Ordaz followed the media coverage in minute detail. Televisa, the television monopoly, had broadcast no taped footage of the attack on the students, and Jacobo Zabludovsky, the network's anchorman, had faithfully conveyed the government's version of events. But Díaz Ordaz noticed that Zabludovsky was wearing a solid black tie. Zabludovsky always wore a plain black tie on the air, but Díaz Ordaz didn't know that. Imagining enemies on all sides, the President viewed the newscaster's tie as a surreptitious sign that Zabludovsky disapproved of the killing. Díaz Ordaz called Zabludovsky and chewed him out ferociously.

Heberto Castillo was not at the plaza, because he was already in hiding on the night of October 2, sheltered at the home of a sympathetic university professor. He sat in anguish listening to the sketchy radio reports of the violence. Telephoning friends, he learned that the government had unleashed all its fury on the movement.

General Cárdenas, who had helped build the modern Mexican army and had been increasingly distraught throughout the summer of 1968 as he watched it deployed with mounting ferocity against the student protesters, was at his Polanco home the night of the Tlatelolco operation. His wife stayed up with him until three o'clock in the morning as the General paced fitfully, unable even to lie down. At that point a friend of the General's who had been at the plaza burst in, pouring out his account. He told General Cárdenas how "in the staircases they had chased the boys down and left them there dead." The man broke down in tears.

"And I believe that the General shed some tears, too," Cárdenas's wife said.

On the evening of October 2, Elena Poniatowska, a thirty-five-year-old reporter for the newspaper *Novedades*, heard sobbing at the door of her home in Coyoacán, in the south of Mexico City. On the step she found two of her friends, both anthropologists, weeping and mumbling about

events they had seen at the Tlatelolco rally. The two were crying so hys-terically that it took a while for Poniatowska to form a clear picture o what had happened: soldiers bayoneting students; tanks firing at apart-ment buildings; rivers of blood.

One of the women, Margarita Nolasco, told Poniatowska that she hac watched as crowds stampeded toward her to escape gunfire from soldier on the far side of the plaza, only to turn and race away, falling over eacl other, when they heard bullets raining down on them from sniper above. Women and children had been cut down by gunfire before he eyes.

Nolasco's companion lived in a flat on the fourth floor of the Chi huahua building. Amid the gunfire and screaming, she and Nolasco hac somehow managed to climb the stairwell back to her apartment. There from a window, Nolasco had watched soldiers dragging bodies througl the rain and laying them out in pools of blood on a sidewalk below. Sh had counted sixty-eight dead, she told Poniatowska.

What made Nolasco most distraught was that her teenage son ha gone missing at the plaza. After telling their story, the two women heade back out into the rain to search for him.

"They were so beside themselves, I thought they were crazy," Ponia towska said.

Poniatowska was not a typical newspaper reporter. She had been bor in Paris to French aristocrats with noble roots tracing back to a Polisl king. Her father was a senior executive in the Belgian branch of Inte national Telephone and Telegraph. Her maternal grandparents wer wealthy sugar planters who fled from Mexico to Paris after the 1910 rev olution, when Emiliano Zapata's rebels attacked their vast plantation i the state of Morelos. Poniatowska had first come to Mexico in 1942, a age nine, when her mother fled wartime Europe with Elena and he brother. Attending elementary schools in Mexico City, she never lost he French accent. She was sent to high school at the Sacred Heart Conven in Philadelphia. Her father came to Mexico and brought Elena bac from North America before she got her high-school diploma, urging he to take advantage of her fluency in French, English, and Spanish by be coming an executive secretary.

Poniatowska, however, had her own ideas. She wanted to be a jou

nalist. She took the only newspaper job open to aspiring young female reporters in Mexico of the 1950s, writing about society luncheons and debutantes for the social column of the newspaper *Excélsior.*

After one year she left the paper to write as a freelancer for *Novedades*, a yellow broadsheet that nevertheless allowed her to write about politics. As a reporter, she had a knack for insinuating herself into the right place at the right time. On first impression, she seemed like a harmless, light-headed housewife, an appearance that helped her gain access to all sorts of difficult situations. She also branched out, publishing short stories and essays. By 1968 Poniatowska had become a seasoned journalist who had interviewed many of the era's prominent figures, including Lázaro Cárdenas and Fidel Castro.

Although her friends' account of the events at the Tlatelolco plaza sounded exaggerated, Poniatowska wanted to see for herself. She rose at five the next morning and took a taxi north toward Tlatelolco.

Along the way she bought a copy of *Novedades*, which, like most Mexican newspapers of the period, adhered strictly to daily editorial "suggestions" from the Government Secretariat and other PRI authorities. FIREFIGHT BETWEEN SNIPERS AND THE ARMY IN TLATELOLCO! the headline said.

Poniatowska reached the plaza at dawn. Dozens of tanks and jeeps jammed the surrounding streets, and soldiers milled around, but nobody prevented her from walking into the housing project. Hundreds of windows were smashed. Building facades were pockmarked from thousands of bullet holes. Women from the project were lined up with buckets at a single outside water faucet; high-caliber shells had destroyed the plumbing in the apartment buildings. An anguished soldier was talking into a pay phone. "I don't know how many days I'm going to be here," he said. "Let me talk to my son. I want to hear his voice."

The bodies Nolasco had seen soldiers lay out on the cement had been trucked away. But dozens of shoes—women's pumps, boys' tennis shoes—were piled in the trampled mud of the pre-Hispanic ruins, where crowds had sought refuge from the shooting.

Poniatowska was familiar with repression: in 1959 she had covered the strike in which Díaz Ordaz, then Government Secretary, had ordered the arrest of ten thousand railroad workers. Still, Poniatowska

never imagined that the authorities would send soldiers to fire on peaceful crowd in the heart of Mexico City.

Poniatowska had a four-month-old baby, whom she was breas feeding, and she had been working only part-time. But now, sensing th significance of the events, she shifted into overdrive.

In *Excélsior* she read that Oriana Fallaci, a prominent Italian jou nalist in the country to cover the Olympic Games, had attended th Tlatelolco rally and had been wounded. Poniatowska went to intervie her in her hospital bed and found Fallaci seething with fury.

"What savagery!" Fallaci told Poniatowska. "Police dragging studen away by the hair. I saw many people get hit, until I was hit, too. I lay in pool of my own blood for forty-five minutes." Instead of helping, she saic the white-gloved state security agents stole her watch from her wrist, the moved on. Poniatowska wrote up the interview and took it to *Novedade*

Her editor rejected the article immediately. "There's an order," h said. "We're going to concentrate on the Olympic Games. We're nc printing anything more about Tlatelolco."

The International Olympic Committee learned of the Tlatelolco vi lence, both from the international press and from a senior committee o ficial who was in Mexico on October 2 and drove to the plaza, where h saw soldiers piling bodies onto trucks. The committee considered how t respond during a four-hour emergency session on October 3. Membe of the Italian delegation were indignant, partly because Fallaci's exper ences had received much coverage, and Italian and Australian membe sent a protest, albeit tepid, to the Mexican government. But the commi tee nonetheless resolved that the Games should proceed as scheduled o October 12. And they did.

Díaz Ordaz formally inaugurated the Nineteenth Olympiad before crowd of 100,000 at a newly constructed stadium near the UNAM can pus. *The New York Times* described "a setting of pageantry, brotherhoo and peace." A British television documentary took a similar tone:

> It was an impressive ceremony, but one of apprehension, for the threat of a civil disturbance was present. As the flag was raised

> above the heads of the crowd, hopes for a peaceful ceremony began to run high. The excitement of the occasion was electric . . . Forgotten were the underlying threats, forgotten the huge force of plainclothes police mingling with the crowd. As thousands of doves soared away from their captivity, the Olympic flame burned brightly . . . All was well in Mexico, the city of 1968.

Sports fans would remember those Games for the debate they provoked about the effects of Mexico City's 7,350-foot altitude. Perhaps the biggest story for Americans was the Black Power protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos, winners of the gold and bronze medals in the two-hundred-meter race, who stood barefoot during the playing of the "Star-Spangled Banner," each raising one black-gloved fist. The International Olympic Committee expelled them for their protest.