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The infamous events started to unfold at 6.10 p.m. as two firework rockets were shot from La Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco district of the capital, where the demonstration was taking place. *Granadero* troops entered the square, surrounded it and opened fire. The shooting was so indiscriminate that in addition to dozens of protesters and bystanders being killed and wounded, four *granadero* soldiers and a general were wounded.

There are no exact official figures for the number of people killed or wounded in the square. According to the first report from Tlatelolco given by Fernando M. Garza, the director of public relations in the Cabinet, at the press conference on the night of 2 October, 20 people were killed and 75 wounded.[4] Later, the report was amended, and the government released new official figures of 37 killed and wounded.[5] The numbers reported by the journalists who witnessed the massacre are as high as 325 killed and further 500 wounded.[6] The suffering continued as the arrested were taken to an army barracks, tortured, raped and imprisoned.[7]

Numerous eyewitness accounts of the shooting make it hard to believe that the government would try to deny the extent of the tragedy or accept responsibility for the massacre. Nonetheless, government officials laid blame on the students and their parents: 'El jefe de la policía capitalina, general Luis Cueto Ramírez, señaló ayer que en su parte, los padres de familia son los culpables de las recientes tragedias, porque no han sabido aconsejar o encauzar debidamente a sus hijos.'[8] Still, world media offered an extensive coverage of the shooting, including eyewitness accounts by the journalists present in the square at the time.[9] *Combat*, a Paris newspaper, summarized the shooting in a succinct statement: 'Una matanza tan fríamente organizada [...] mostraba hasta dónde puede llegar un gobierno que tiene miedo.'[10]

The reaction of many intellectuals to the massacre was one of indignation on the grounds that society's attempts to improve the image of the nation cannot be made at the expense of its members' life, freedom, and dignity. 'La más reciente herida mexicana se abrió el 2 de octubre de 1968 en Tlatelolco [...] La herida mexicana, desde entonces, se llama falta de democracia con falta de desarollo.'[11] Héctor Manjarrez states that after the Tlatelolco shooting the Mexican student movement 'gozaba de la simpatia pasiva de muchísimos habitantes de la ciudad de México pero de nada más.'[12] Eric Zolov summarizes the perception of the aftermath as follows: 'a minority took to organizing armed revolutionary struggle. But for the majority, the massacre produced feelings of "a terrible sense of impotence", in the words of one participant.'[13]

The difference between the official account of the shooting (or lack thereof), and the eyewitness narratives fuelled a reaction from contemporary artists. As a result, Mexican literature now included 'la literatura de Tlatelolco', represented by documentary writings, such as, *La noche de Tlatelolco* by Elena Poniatowska; *Tlatelolco, reflexiones de un testigo* by Gilberto Balám; fiction – *Palinuro de México* by Fernando del Paso, *La Plaza* by Luis Spota; and poetry – the works of Jesús Arellano, Rosario Castellanos, José Pacheco, Octavio Paz, Jaime Sabines and many others. Tlatelolco poetry can be divided into two categories: accounts of the event and analyzes of the aftermath. This study focuses on poetic accounts written immediately or shortly after the event, examining the relationship between the degree of violence of a crime and the level of incomprehensibility assigned to it by

4 The press conference appears in the newspaper *El Excelsior*, 3 October 1968.
5 Hellman 1978: 205n.
6 Hellman, 142.
7 See De Mora 1973: 121–37.
8 'The police chief of the capital, general Luis Cueto Ramirez, pointed out yesterday that, in his opinion, the parents were responsible for the recent tragedies because they did not think to advise or guide their children accordingly' (Payán 1968: np).
9 Hellman 1978: 143.
10 'A massacre so coldly organized showed how far a scared government can go' (*Combat*, Paris, 7 November 1969; translated from De Mora 1973: 122).
11 'The most recent Mexican wound opened up on 2 October 1968 in Tlatelolco [...] The Mexican wound, of course, is called the lack of democracy and development' (Fuentes 1994: 84).
12 'enjoyed the passive sympathy of many residents of Mexico City but nothing else' (cited in Kohut 1995: 85).
13 Zolov 1999: 133.