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Social Representations during the Occupation of Monterrey by American Troops, (1846-1848).

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ABSTRACT

This essay tries to establish the social representations during the occupation of Monterrey by American troops (1846-1848), through a documentary investigation where local documents and archives are reviewed to clarify the perception of Mexicans about the Americans' Nuevo León's capital occupation for 22 months. There were new ways of violence done in Monterrey for the first time, those infringed by a modern war which used artillery, urban combat in the downtown, professional military forces and new knowledge to legitimize the control of the people. War was the mirror where Mexicans verified their otherness, they saw other clothing, heard a new language and met Protestant religious expressions. Since then, the otherness vision was that of natives' attacks, then, it turned into white men who exercised their ethnic and military supremacy and uncountable abuses to the civilians - both of the regular forces and the fearsome volunteers - . Now, categories such as savage, civilized, foreign, and invasive, constitute painful ways of experiencing otherness, almost always mediated by a power relationship. The documentary review allows us to measure on a microhistorical scale how the social representations that still exist about the other, are forged in the long term in this border area between two neighboring and asymmetric countries: Mexico and the United States.

Keywords: Otherness, Social Representations, Monterrey, México-American War.

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1. Methodological aspects

What role does the otherness play in the configuration of the social representations between the people of two neighboring countries whose first contact was war, the invasion of one over the other? How could that border territories conflict, which is doomed to an inalienable coexistence, be solved? What was the origin of this relationship and how was it experienced by the neighbors on their daily life? To what extent did the city become into another protagonist of the warlike conflict? We consider answers could be found in the possibilities that social representations can offer to us, which we conceive here as meaning systems that can classify, categorize and name people, objects and

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events. They are social constructions because they are configured and shared by the social group belonging, whose identity provides them with values, codes and ideologies with which they apprehend and interpret their time-space contexts where they are located at (Hall 1997; Moscovici 2001).

We start from the fact that social representations are configured and reproduced through the interaction of subjects in space. For the purposes of this work, we are interested in getting the interactions produced between Mexicans and Americans at the time of the occupation of Monterrey during the War between Mexico and the United States (1846-1848). This study is part of a broader investigation about the configuration of social relations in border territories between both countries, as part of a line of research: "Border and Migration", from the Consolidated Academic Group " Estudios Sociales e Históricos del Noreste de México, which belongs to the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León.

The city of Monterrey was chosen for being the first state capital and the longest city occupied by foreign troops during the war, and it was one of the most impacted at the end of it, with the movement of the southern border of the United States, to the Rio Bravo, just about 200 kilometers from the capital of Monterrey, triggering an uncomfortable neighborhood between two expanding national states, whose proximity, migratory flow, commercial exchange and cultural contact outline it as a useful laboratory, to see how the social representation process began among the demographic groups that populated the territory at the time of the war.

In order to gain a better understanding of the social representations that were being configured, an approach is done from a qualitative approach, reviewing historical research in order to locate discourses in the vast bunch of papers that speak of war, those that in our opinion constitute strong evidence to outline our objectives, that is, a socio-historically situated interpretation that transcends the focus of mere critical analysis of discourse.

Of course, we have given a substantive role to the place where discourses are generated, in this case the city, the urban world of the mid-19th century, conceived here in a broad sense as an "heterogeneous socio-cultural space, socially and historically produced by a network of relationships, complex materialization of social practices in constant change, and not exempt contradictions in time" (Bettin 1982, p. 10). With this we want to capture the multiple characteristics of the scenarios configured by the tension/conflict that arises in the presence of otherness, both old and new.

The urban space characterized by constant changes, uncertainties, conflicts and contradictions, refers to considering the social space as a symbolic space that may involve tensions derived from the different perceptions of social reality: individual and collective, which refers to the presence of symbolic struggles by the perception of the social world (Bourdieu, 1988). So we wonder how it is that these people -Mexicans and foreigners- internalized and externalized the experiences of the urban space of Monterrey in the middle of a war situation in which for the first time they fought in an urban area, an aspect for which they were not ready neither of the belligerent armies, not even the Americans who were just graduated from the most prestigious military academy of the moment: West Point. Suddenly, the urban layout became the warzone.

To visualize the social representations that occurred between both military forces, 12 historical archives of Nuevo León were reviewed, 2,500 historical documents produced between 1835-1848 were located - the result was the publication of Papers that speak of the war. Catalog of documentary sources about Nuevo León during the war between Mexico and the United States (Morado, 2009) - and subsequently categories were defined to pinpoint the documents that provided perceptions about the others. From the universe studied, it is not possible to obtain a sample designed to the liking of the researcher, but to stick to the few signs, the traces that reflect the points of contact. This is how it is worked on categories such as: civilized, savage, regular army, guerrilla, invaders, invader, and neighbors. It is worked on these concepts, contextualizing them, and exploiting their meaning load in the context of modern warfare.

2. Neighbors recruitment and seize properties. Who is the owner of their bodies?

Studies concerning to the military occupation of cities generally include the time of the troops' incursion. For this essay we start from previous forms of violence, not for it less shocking, in other words, what happened before the "Battle of Monterrey", understood as the set of military operations

that took place in this capital city of Nuevo León, between September 20th and 24th, 1846, 172 years ago, it was carried out by the striving of the Mexican and American armies, the first one for defense and the second one for this city occupation, in the warfare between both countries, (1846-1848). Following Foucault's words, the battle has to be studied before the battle: "... war has to do with the distribution of weapons, the fighting and recruiting techniques, the retribution of the soldiers, army taxes: in essence, war is given as an internal institution and not only as a brute event of the battle"². For the center of Mexico, the invasion began in 1847, in the studied region the matter began at least from 1835 with the expedition of Santa Anna from Mexico City to Béjar, currently San Antonio Texas, to repress the "white illegals", which were getting in Mexican territory without papers. The border had to be defended and soldiers, horses and supplies were required for this.

At that time, Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza Evia, who had Santiago Vidaurri as the government secretary, was the governor of Nuevo León. Both had to face Santa Anna and tell him that Nuevo León could not send all the requests for men, horses, seeds and money that Santa Anna "in the name of the homeland" was requesting. Nuevo León was not the industrial state that we know today. Most of its 110 thousand inhabitants subsisted on agriculture and livestock, barely making a profit for a living. The aforementioned military campaign would end up in the San Jacinto catastrophe, currently Houston, and a second campaign would come from Texas to ask for the cooperation of the neighbors one more time. Mules, corn, butter, and money; they could donate, were demanded.

If we also consider the constant problem of the Indian attacks on the Nuevo Leon towns, we will understand why people were already exhausted by 1846 and very reluctant to cooperate with the government, no matter how patriotic the war might be. The battle between nomads and sedentary that was generated from the very moment of contact in the XVI century was a first otherness experience.

From it, we only preserve the discourse of the colonizers who label the Indians as "savage, cruel, inhuman, Chichimecas - lineage of dogs -" against "people of reason, Christians, civilized." By then, the neighbors had already had more than two centuries of conflict over the occupation. There were three wars already: against the Indian, the Texans, and now against the North Americans. This is an important regional difference. This does not happen neither in Guadalajara, nor in Puebla, or in Veracruz. Local governments were also worn and exhausted by the time the North American occupation came.

President James Polk's military plan was to penetrate Mexico from the north, reaching Monterrey, Saltillo and then from there to the capital of Mexico. The pretext of the war had also occurred in the region, in the famous strip located between the Nueces River and the Bravo where Mexican and Texan troops, that one day were going to collide, were prowling, the dreaded skirmish took place in Carricitos, near the present-day Brownsville, where there were Texan casualties for what in their view "*American blood had been shed on American soil*". With this pretext, he convinces the Congress of the United States to declare war on Mexico, which had rejected his offers to obtain territories. Thus, an old imperial strategy was inaugurated to provoke the attack, to later victimize itself and unleash the war.

War broke out, followed later by a rise of violence against the neighbors who would suffer the ravages of the supply and the levy. We follow Foucault on the fundamentals of supply, logistics, and recruitment systems. Since the beginning of the year 1846, parallel to the organization of military bodies, the Nuevo Leon political authorities contributed to the aid of the Mexican troops stationed in Matamoros, Tamaulipas against the North Americans camped on the other side of the Bravo. Obviously, as the enemy troops approached the region, the demands for food, mules and seeds intensified; which were covered with relative efficiency. We have a document where the Secretary of Government Vidaurri bursts out annoyed at the resistance to providing them and threatens the mayors saying that it was sent "*under his highest responsibility*" and that, therefore, "*there is no valid pretext*". He explained that Governor Garza y Evia was extremely outraged when they knew that they had hidden the requested mules, with serious damage to the national cause.³ Mules and horses were not only a

² Foucault, Michel. *Society must be defended*. p. 169.

³ Letter from Santiago Vidaurri, From the Government Secretary of Nuevo León to the mayors of Salinas Victoria and Santa Catarina. Monterrey, April 15th, 1846, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 44.

means of transport for the neighbors but also their work instrument, hence the opposition to sending them.

2.1 The first invaders of Monterrey: The Mexican army

At first glance, the Americans are the invaders, the Mexicans the invaded. But when we focus in more detail, new edges emerge among the local actors involved in the conflict. From Monterrey, the local press expresses their concern about the outcome of the first battle between the two armies that took place in Palo Alto and La Resaca, -May 1846- in the vicinity of Matamoros Tamaulipas. When the news of the Mexican defeat spread, the people of Monterrey began to panic for fear that the next attacked area would be Monterrey. With sadness they got to know that the remains of the troops led by Mariano Arista with numerous wounded and hungry soldiers were seeking refuge on the Mexican side of the Bravo and had decided that the only city that could aid them was Linares.

The challenge was then to gather food to help them at a time when everyone was thinking about where to flee. We have a significant case of Vidaurri's management, who as secretary of government negotiated with various political authorities of the Pilón valley —Montemorelos, Linares— the remittance of more than 500 bushels of corn to the point of Magueyitos for the Mexican troops in retreat, which were already coming back defeated from Palo Alto.⁴ Such was the reluctance to providing the required aid that the state government practically had to resort to seizing mules and food from the neighbors. This, despite the recognized leadership of Santiago Vidaurri in the secretary of the Nuevo Leon government and Mariano Arista being at the head of the Mexican army, both highly respected politicians in Monterrey.

As Arista, the Mexican commander, was asking for more money, he justified the defeat, communicated to the governor of Nuevo León - Garza y Evia - in a military report the reasons for the disaster: 1) the numerical superiority of Taylor's troops, 2) the fact that Matamoros was not fortified but the North American troops were; 3) the enemy had 35 pieces of artillery, much more than the Mexican. He explained that he decided, through a "Generals' board", to evacuate the town of Matamoros, clarifying that its inhabitants "have behaved with determined patriotism in defense of the rights of their country and this circumstance, as well as leaving my wounded in the population, took me away the idea of burning the city as it seemed necessary".⁵

Immediately, Arista detailed the existence of a serious forecast error because he recognized that it had been impossible for him to transport the 360 wounded that his troops had, although he sentenced he had hopes that the North Americans would help them because it was "a war between 'civilized' people and our wounded will not be disturbed" so he chose to leave them, in other words, to abandon them to their fate in Matamoros. Although nothing justifies his lack of foresight, we are powerfully struck by the fact that he appeals in his speech to the existence of a modern conflict, "a war between 'civilized'", evidencing the social representation that the military had of their armies.

It fully indicates the awareness that it is in the midst of a civilized war, which he assumes as rational, in which two armies are facing each other, equally imbued with this modern logic of combat. The sad reality was another, without antibiotics, without the "International Red Cross" involved, the wounded Mexican soldiers howled and crawled through the streets of Matamoros fearing falling into the hands of the "terrible volunteers", authentic hitmen who had been accompanying the US army. Later we will detail the distinction of social representation that Mexicans made in front of "regular" and "volunteer" North Americans. With a headache, the Nuevo León governor Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza y Evia must have received Arista's decision to camp a whole defeated and demoralized army, he was especially in need of all kinds of ammunition; in Linares, one of the most prosperous towns in the state.

⁴ Letter from Santiago Vidaurri, From the Government Secretary of Nuevo León to Mariano Arista. Monterrey, April 18th, 1846, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 44. He exposes the claim of the mayor of Linares about the payment of 250 loads of corn that they sent to Matamoros.

⁵ Militar part of the battle in Palo Alto and in La Resaca given by Mariano Arista to Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza y Evia. Vaquerías HQ, May 25th, 1846, AGENL, Block: Militares, Box 45. It was not the first time that Arista had problems regarding his military prestige and honor; as a leading military figure, he was the constant target of criticism and political intrigue. Just a year ago -May 1845- he had defended himself against the Tamaulipas press which, through the *Monitor Constitucional* newspaper, which accused him of allying with the Texans, stealing Army funds, protecting Antonio Canales, among other crimes. At that time, he proceeded to prove his innocence point by point and to ask for "solidarity in the slander"; this time he would do it at a court-martial. Despite the numerous intrigues and lost battles, Arista would come out well, as he would become President of the Republic in 1851.

What Mariano Arista skipped on his detailed "military part surrendered to authority" is that he decided to fight the US army without having an open front in the rear, which would facilitate its withdrawal in case of defeat, as indicated in the basic combat manuals, circumstance that extremely complicated his retirement to Matamoros. The reports reveal Mexican soldiers fleeing the battles and trying to cross the Rio Grande in fear of the US army persecution: "the lack of boats makes the scattered miserable fall in despair... they search for a ford or a rush to the river dressed and armed, almost drowning all and saving only a few on the swim".⁶ It was the first time that the death of Mexicans crossing the Bravo had been documented, something that would continue to this day due to the illegal migratory flow.

The general government of Mexico chose to blame the commander and determined Arista as the person responsible for the defeat. In a singular act of military ethics, Arista informed the Nuevo León government that he was retiring to live on the Mamulique hacienda - Salinas Victoria jurisdiction, Nuevo León -, where he would remain available as a simple soldier "if the homeland called him on its defense".⁷ Mexico had chosen the best man to fight and the best man had lost. It was Monterrey's turn. How to organize to face the attack of an unknown military power? Should the city be evacuated to protect the families? What was more pertinent, attacking the invaders on the way or defending the city by fortifying it? Garza y Evia, Vidaurri, and the Mexican elite had to answer these dilemmas. While the adjustments were being made in the command of the Mexican army, it remained detached in Linares from May to the beginning of July 1846, which implied a great challenge for the local and state authority.

Linares was, at the time of the war, a city located in the central area of the state with about seven thousand inhabitants dedicated to the cultivation of sugarcane, corn and beans respectively. The arrival of several thousand members of the Mexican army to this town implied a "real invasion" because they had to be provided with food, clothing, horses and lodging in the neighbors' houses, since there were no hotels or inns to host them at. In addition, the effect of the defeat filled the population with psychological fear, who did not know what the pierce route of the US army to Nuevo León would be, neither the fate that their families and livestock would have at the hands of the invaders.

2.2 The city as a war scenario: Logistics and fortification of Monterrey

How does the city prepare for war? Since its foundation in 1596, it had only been attacked by the Indians, but in the immediate vicinity. During the War of Independence, Mariano Jiménez's troops occupied the Plaza de Armas - today Zaragoza - without fighting, but now the threat was great. As far as the documents can be seen, a group of men with different conceptions of power, of their exercise and responsibility of the territory they seek to defend, emerge, men who collect all the resources that modernity has provided for war: weapons, harangues, fortifications, press, military formations, espionage techniques, cartography, that is to say, "a battle that involves everything: bodies, discursive formations and institutional mediations".⁸

The files reviewed allow us to assess the importance of a set of activities that in military terms are conceived as military logistics: "the practical art of mobilizing armies and keeping them supplied"⁹. Many of the aspects of logistics that have to do with the sufficient and timely supply of food, clothing, ammunition, transportation, fuel and medicine, are developed away from the fighting, but its realization of course is decisive in war and it was in the battle for Monterrey, not everything was "essentially combat" as Clausewitz would say.

The first urgent action that the Nuevo Leon's government implemented was to resume the strategy of forced recruitment, -commonly known as a levy- and for this it resumed the call to join the Local Militias, issued in June 1846, which established that all males between 18 and 50 years must defend the Department, with the exception of ecclesiastics and servants. A clear example of biopolitics as Foucault say: modernity organizes and disciplines bodies for battle. Garza y Evia, acting jointly with Arista, made up a total of eleven auxiliary squadrons and a light cavalry squad between July and December 1845. We have located many documents on how the men avoided military service and made

⁶ Apuntes, 1991, p. 91.

⁷ Letter from Mariano Arista to Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza y Evia. Linares, June 4th, 1846, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 45.

⁸ Foucault, *Microphysics of Power*, 1993, p. 189.

⁹ Borreguero, *Diccionario*, 2000.

all sorts of pretexts to be able to stay with their families and not abandon them or their animals in these times of urgency. There were significant cases. The mayor of García, who faced with the demand for recruitment and not finding any volunteer, made a levy at Sunday mass. Another one more ingenious was the mayor of Cadereyta, who organized a ball and recruited the men at the end of this.

Arista, —even without reading Clausewitz's book¹⁰— bet for the effectiveness of the defense rather than attacking the US aggressors on their way to Monterrey, for which he gathered all his knowledge of logistics that he had learned from the Spanish military manuals. One of his first actions was to send Garza y Evia a list of the effects that the maintenance of the troops required: "dried meat, red chili, lard, rice with a double blanket coat, corn, barley, salt, shoes, soap, piloncillo and rein horses".¹¹

Returning to the details of logistics, taking advantage of the location of Monterrey, located in the heart of the Extremadura valley, and the defensive tradition of the Spanish prison, the Mexican military elite decided to turn the city into a prison, using the orography as natural walls. The city of Monterrey is crossed to the east by the Cerro de la Silla, to the south by the Sierra Madre Oriental and to the west by the Cerro de las Mitras, so that the decision to defend a fortified Monterrey forced the US troops to take the city by two single routes, the north and the east. To reject them from the north was the headquarters of the Citadel and from the east the forts would take care of them: Tenería, del Diablo, la Purísima, Obispado, del Soldado and de la Federación. It is interesting how the social representation that mountains protect is displayed. Of how the territory shelters the urban fabric and appeals to that possibility.

Immediately, the first body of "citizen soldiers" ready to fight was put into service, it was the Auxiliary Battalion of Monterrey. This corps of militiamen was not free of difficulties in starting their operations. Miguel Nieto reported the "state of weapons, ammunition and clothing" where he highlighted the existence of only 135 rifles when he needed 800, he reported ammunition for 25 soldiers when he was urged for 1,600 and regretted that he only had clothing for half the troop.¹² We do not know precisely the exact number of citizen-soldiers who participated in the battles for the capture of Monterrey. Meanwhile, General Pedro Ampudia, who assumed political and military control of the state since September 1st, had no choice but to order a general levy of bricklayers and carpenters to be able to complete the military logistics work on time: fortification, men recruitment, weapons, provisions and horses. The division was evident and would have consequences. In his opinion, the leader of the Mexican army should have certain attributes: "it should be of notorious judgment, of well-known instruction and of prestige among his subordinates, because only in this way will it be possible to extinguish the discontent that today is noted in all classes, [so that] there is unity of action and that the enemy is promptly repelled".¹³ In his opinion, Pedro Ampudia was in breach with these requirements. At least one point of his diagnosis was unobjectionable "the lack of teamwork in action", a fact that would have a higher impact on subsequent military actions.

The fact that the governor of a state on the edge of war questioned, and even demanded the resignation of the head of the Mexican army from the central government, is highly significant. Meanwhile, Ampudia, evading the blockades of Garza y Evia, attempted to organize the defense and, avoiding the questioning of his military extraction, handed over the command to a civil authority: Francisco de Paula Morales, who took office in a state that turned federalist. To attack or to defend? Another difficult issue to solve was the place and the confrontation strategy. Ampudia wanted to fight in Marín, Arista had proposed to do it in the Sierra de Mamulique, located about a hundred kilometers at the north of Monterrey, using it as a natural fortress. Finally, the military leaders, meeting in a war board, agreed that the orographic conditions of Monterrey made it a natural fortress.

¹⁰ Carl Von, Clausewitz (1780-1831) It is impossible that Mariano Arista had read Clausewitz's book "On War", we consider that his interest on defensive logic came from the tradition of the Spanish prison.

¹¹ Letter from Mariano Arista to Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza y Evia. Monterrey, April 11th, 1846, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 46. There is extensive documentation in the AGENL Military Fund that shows the remittance of food to Monterrey, collected by the Nuevo Leon towns Homeland Aid Boards.

¹² A statement that declares the weaponry of the Defense Auxiliary Battalion of Monterrey, Nuevo León. Signed by Manuel María de Llano and Pedro Gómez, July 7th, 1845, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 41.

¹³ Letter from Juan Nepomuceno de la Garza y Evia to the Foreign Minister, August 23th, 1846, AGENL, Fondo: Militares, Caja 49. The political leadership wear of Garza Evia and the blue interim of Francisco de Paula Morales would facilitate the rise of the new spokesman of the liberal elite in power: José María Parás.

3. The city as a “war theater” actor

We have said before that the American invasion; the city of Monterrey also suffered the invasion of the Mexican troops. For a city with a population of just 15,000 inhabitants, which did not have hotels or infrastructure to house an army, the unexpected arrival of more than 3,500 Mexican troops led by Pedro Ampudia was a chaotic event. They had to be housed in private homes and many were practically on the streets. They had to be fed food both for themselves and their horses. In addition to fulfilling the tasks of the fortification of the city, for which a lot of wood was used among other materials. In short, it was an unprecedented logistical challenge, which the authorities and civilians met to the best of their ability.

Monterrey as a city, due to its orography, its urban appearance, was an actor and recipient of the war, since the fighting took place in the heart, in the urban center¹⁴. In the opinion of an American soldier quoted by Dishman, the mountains that surround the city were seen by some as an insurmountable barrier, as a "perfect Gibraltar" in allusion to said European fortress¹⁵. Neither on the agenda of the Mexican, nor the American army did they imagine that they were going to fight in an urban area. As far as we know, this form of combat did not appear in the war manuals of the period, so everything had to be improvised by both sides. The 23rd day was catastrophic for all those who still remained in the capital and risked everything to defend it. The chronicle emits doom: *“The fire spread and rised burning down even the houses in the main square. In those moments... Miss Doña María Josefa Zozaya appears at the house of Mr. Garza Flores —[current northeast corner of the streets of Zuazua and Corregidora]— among the soldiers fighting on the roof; she encourages and ammunition them She was a beautiful personification of the homeland itself: she was the beautiful ideal of heroism against all its spells, with all its tender seduction!”*¹⁶

Female heroism, the "tender seduction" referred to by the romantic chronicler, was not exclusive to México; the role played by Josefa Zozaya, María de Jesús Dosamantes and many other anonymous women, was also recorded by foreigners. It is very significant that even when it was an exclusive and discriminatory society towards women, to the extent that they did not even have the category of citizens, there have been beings willing to heal the wounded and die in solidarity with their husbands, colleagues or neighbors. Here it is relevant not only the social representation of women but their metamorphosis in the Homeland, which we will review later.

Yet the cruelty of war overcame isolated outbreaks of heroism. The North Americans took the Quinta de Arista —Hidalgo and Martín de Zavala— going down Hidalgo and Padre Mier piercing the walls of the houses. *“The junior officers, those below the captain, had been commanded to fight like mere soldiers: the officers put on their fittings without mumbling; they take their rifles; a generous emulation is established”*¹⁷. By the afternoon of the 23rd day, General Pedro Ampudia proposed in a Generals board to dialogue with the enemy.

3.1 A “modern and civilized” act: The capitulation of Monterrey

In the early morning of the 24th day, Pedro Ampudia and William Worth met to attempt a capitulation, demanding the last one mentioned an unconditional surrender. A second interview had been done now with Ampudia and Taylor. The relative success of the Capitulation of Monterrey was the work of the negotiation skills of two Mexican generals: Tomás Requena and José García Conde, along with the presence of Manuel María de Llano, who managed to make the agreement more flexible. How is it possible to dialogue in the midst of the deaths caused by both sides? How is it possible to produce sociability between antagonistic actors in the war? Although it may seem incredible to us, men did not lose their ability to reach agreements. As Habrard points out: *“albeit it is difficult to speak of sociability in a country at war, which is synonymous in the first place with dislocation of the social body and the production of a hatred speech towards the other... brutality in social bonds is also a form of sociability”*¹⁸.

¹⁴ Hebrard, Veronique. La ciudad y la guerra en la historiografía latinoamericana (19th Century). Anuario Americanístico Europeo. 2003. No. 1, p.41-58.

¹⁵ Dishman, Christopher. A Perfect Gibraltar: The Battle of Monterrey, Mexico, University of Oklahoma Press. 2010

¹⁶ Hebrard, op cit , p. 105.

¹⁷ Apuntes, 1991, p. 106.

¹⁸ Hebrard, op cit, p. 51.

When the news of the capitulation and its terms reached Washington, President James Polk was very upset, due to his desire for a quick and effective war, to the extent that he conspired to proceed with the removal of Taylor from military command, but fame and prestige given by the victorious military man from Monterrey had already rise significantly by then thanks to the presence of war reporters who, for the first time, wrote their chronicles from the battlefield, sent them to New Orleans and later were published in Washington and New York.

The troops evacuated Monterrey on September 26th and 27th. The Mexican chroniclers, who gathered in Querétaro to take stock of the armed conflict, wrote: *"the inhabitants of Monterrey... leaving behind their houses and interests, carrying their children, followed by their wives, walked on foot after the troops. Monterrey was turned into a great cemetery. The unburied corpses, the dead and rotten animals..."*¹⁹. Each side suffered more than 400 casualties between dead and wounded. The Mexicans were buried in singular pits or wherever they could, the North Americans in an expressly designed Pantheon in the Santo Domingo Forest. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the entire war. From then on, Monterrey became the first Mexican state capital - along with Santa Fe New Mexico, taken in August - to be subdued by the US troops. It was also the one that remained occupied for the longest time by enemy troops, from September 20th, 1846 to June 18th, 1848, a total of 22 months.

4. Even more violence during the occupation: Living the otherness

Once the battered Mexican troops evacuated the city in "a triumphant victory", the initial panic was compounded by the bewilderment of the people of Monterrey. Who could now defend them? Would the invaders stay forever? What would happen to their lives, plots, animals and other properties? The revised documentation allows us to visualize that those who had the resources to leave Monterrey did, such as the governor who took refuge in Linares, and many families fled to Villa de Santiago and other families to the towns in the south of the state, but the poorest stayed. They had no choice but to resign themselves to receiving orders from unknown, white men who spoke an untranslatable language they had never heard.

An American chronicler pointed out that during the occupation there was a new bustle in the city, whose center was the Plaza de Armas: "billiards halls, restaurants and local bars are already located here... it was amazing the number of foreigners who had emerged as if by magic among this occupation army"²⁰. The North American troops were made up of two forces, the regular army commanded by Zachary Taylor, the army professionals and the volunteers who were supposedly under his command. Realizing that he could not contain all the conceivable humiliations on the civilian population, Taylor camped out on the outskirts of the city, in El Nogalar - today Santo Domingo, San Nicolás - but still he could not contain them. The abuses were uncountable, particularly from the volunteers - rapes, kidnappings, robberies and pillages - who were nothing more than hitmen sold to the highest bidder. The regulars, in general, presented a different behavior in order to not blacken their records. Robert Henry, an American chronicler, reported this attitude. "The [Mexican] people are very polite to the regulars, but they hate volunteers like the devil itself"²¹.

The Mexican government went practically extinct. The governor had gone into exile to the south of Nuevo León, the local deputies fled, and the magistrates of the judicial branch did not appear. Given this lack of powers, many crimes were never reported and therefore not documented. Perhaps the mayors remained fearful in their positions. The documents and chronicles reflect the inevitability of sociability between conquerors and invaded. They had different skin color, clothing, language, religion and customs. A representative case of violence against the inhabitants of Monterrey occurred in April 1847. On the night of June 13th around nine o'clock, the neighbor Manuel Peña was walking through the streets of Monterrey downtown when he heard an odd voice that he did not understand. Within seconds he was riddled with bullets by American soldiers. When doing the investigation, the soldiers declared that they yelled at him three times: "Who lives?" And due to not having an answer, they fired. It is logical to think that the neighbor was gripped in fright and that he would never ever answer what

¹⁹ *Ibíd.*, p. 107.

²⁰ Quoted in Vizcaya Canales, Isidro. *Un siglo...* op cit. p. 62.

²¹ Henry, Robert. *The History of the Mexican War*. Quoted by Raúl Martínez in *Doce textos...* op cit p. 75.

he was asked in English. The facts were of course unpunished. The least the mayor of Monterrey could do was to recommend that the inhabitants abstained from going out at night²².

In August 1847, a man from Monterrey was running seeking for shelter so as not to be caught by American troops and took refuge in the town hall building, thinking that he would thus be freed from persecution. But it was useless, the American soldier entered the capital's most emblematic public building and dragged him out. The case served to ventilate a frequent practice of the occupation forces that, claiming that there was no judicial authority, they themselves had to prosecute and punish crimes.²³ The mayor protested to the American governor so that "*the peaceful inhabitants do not suffer harassment*", warning that otherwise "*they will leave the city until it is deserted*"²⁴. Monterrey had between 13 and 15 thousand inhabitants before the occupation, we do not know the number of those who left or stayed during this period.

The incidents went on and on. Towards the end of August 1847, the news that several Mexicans had been flogged by North American troops came out. The mayor of Monterrey Santiago García, following "very reserved" instructions from the Secretary of the Government, Simón de la Garza Melo, found that the residents Juan Dávila, Gregorio Guillen, Luciano Ortiz and Antonio de Anda had indeed been whipped on the public highway by the foreign guards.²⁵

Which was the representation that the US military commands of this occupation war had? Generally, judging by the documentation reviewed, they minimized outrages and exalted good treatment, such as the purchase of grains and livestock that they occasionally paid for. John Wool, one of the many who served as Commander of the American Occupation Forces, defined that this had been "mild and moderate" since neutral civilians "have been treated with kindness" although he warned that "*whoever does not remain neutral will pay the consequences... with heavy contributions or severe punishments.*"²⁶

But it was not only the Americans who exercised violence against Nuevo León people. Towards 1847, the Mexican army, convinced that through the tactics of modern warfare they would not defeat the invaders, authorized the organization of guerrillas to harass the enemy wherever they could. According to the investigation,²⁷ there were three signals of guerrillas in Nuevo León detected that, far from protecting, they dedicated themselves to vexing the neighbors, demanding all kinds of support that, when they resigned to cooperate, they took them by force. The in-charge governor Francisco de Paula Morales proposed to José Urrea to elaborate a regulation to avoid their abuses. As the disorders continued, there was no choice but to dissolve them. The Secretary of Government, Simón de la Garza Melo, when dissolving the "Guerrilla de Galán", based it on three arguments: 1) "*the main occupation had been to assault the peaceful walkers*" 2) it is "*It is made up of men seasoned to crime, who cannot harbor any sentiment of patriotism, humanity, or order*" 3) the impossibility of they being helped by the people due to "*the poverty to which they have been lead to*"²⁸.

In terms of effectiveness, the only relevant action of the Mexican guerrilla that we have been able to document is the one that occurred on February 24, 1847 in the vicinity of Parás Nuevo León when José Urrea's troops seized a total of 250 food carts from the Americans, plus 50 prisoners. The reaction of the invading government was immediate and demanded compensation of 95 thousand Mexican pesos. The most serious issue, however, was that when the Texas Rangers found it out, they decided not to follow the diplomatic route for the claim, but instead they decided to do justice on their own²⁹.

²² Letter from the Mayor of Monterrey to the governor José de Jesús Dávila y Prieto. Archivo Municipal de Monterrey. Ramo Civil. Monterrey, June 15th, 1847.

²³ More about these incidents in Jesús Ávila: "*Entre la jara del salvaje y el rifle del extranjero*" in the paperwork "La guerra México- Estados Unidos. Su impacto en Nuevo León". Leticia Martínez, César Morado, Jesús Ávila. México. Senado de la República. 2003. pp. 217-294.

²⁴ Monterrey council minute protesting due to the warrants in search of thieves. Archivo Municipal de Monterrey. Fondo Actas de cabildo. Monterrey, August 30th, 1847.

²⁵ File composed by Santiago García on neighbors whipped by North Americans. Archivo General de Nuevo León. Fondo Militares. Monterrey, November 3rd, 1847.

²⁶ Quoted by Jesús Ávila, op cit. p. 275.

²⁷ More about on the text written by César Morado "*El sistema mexicano de guerrillas*" in Leticia Martínez, César Morado y Jesús Ávila. La guerra México- Estados Unidos. Su impacto en Nuevo León. México. Senado de la república. 2003. pp., 120-125.

²⁸ Letter from Simón de la Garza Melo, Government Secretary, to Norberto Galán. Linares, November 12th, 1847. Archivo General de Nuevo León. Fondo: Militares.

²⁹ Letter from Jorge Treviño to Francisco de Paula Morales. Hualahuises. February 25th, 1847. Archivo General de Nuevo León. Fondo Militares.

4.1 The Marín massacre

On March 28, 1847, a group of Texas Rangers commanded by Mabry Gray, arguing that they were looking for those responsible for the Urrea Guerrilla, entered the Hacienda de Guadalupe, jurisdiction of Marín, inspected the place and at the moment they located North American belongings, that a month ago had been seized, they took it out on the residents of the place, apprehended 25 of the residents whose ages ranged between 14 and 73 years, and were murdered in a partial summary trial. Among the victims, there was the grandfather of the one who would later be worthy of education: Pablo Livas. The victims were buried in the foretold place and their bodies were found until October 1847; actions were reported by Antonio Canales Rosillo. This is one of the many crimes that transcended even on the press of that time. Many others had remained covered.³⁰

Marín was one of the most punished towns during the occupation. In 1846, during the arrival of the American army, it was burned down almost entirely. It had about 3,000 inhabitants at the time of the war. The livestock, which was the most important activity in this community, had been greatly affected. It had 80 thousand livestock heads in 1845 and was reduced to only 17 thousand in 1850.³¹

It was clear to most of the residents that this was a cruel and ruthless invasion. What is also interesting is how this historical fact is seen depending of whose point of view we are looking at. There is an opinion of the editors of the only press that circulated in Monterrey, which interprets the United States as “*the natural and implacable enemy, that the Providence has assigned us*”³². Let us remember that it was a time when the separation between the Church and the State had not yet happened. The war was another more quest that had to be overcome. Something similar to the way the Americans understood that North America had been reserved for them, but at the cost of conquering the natives, which was the quest given by the Providence.

Remarkable is also the social representation that some liberals had constructed about the North Americans. It is well known that beyond the name - United Mexican States - many Mexican institutions were designed just as those from the North American ones. It was the model country to follow in order to leave the backwardness, symbolized by the Spanish heritage. One of them was Pedro Treviño y Pereyra, an enlightened man, liberal, alderman on several occasions, who did not remain silent when he stated in a letter addressed to the Monterrey council that it was a mistake to see an enemy nation in the United States when it was in reality “*our sister and protector*” and assured that the North Americans were not making war against the Mexican people “*but against the hundreds of evil rulers*”³³. We have only found one letter of that kind in the local archives, but it is logical that he was not the only liberal with great admiration for this country, as it will be seen during the times of Juárez. For them, Mexico had two afflictions: the corruption and the Catholic Church. Occupation would help to remove them.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this essay we have sought to characterize the social representations that emerged in the city of Monterrey, the capital of Nuevo León, during its occupation by North American troops (1846-1848). We have seen how this city became an actor and a receptor of the war, on the scene of one of the harshest battles of the war between Mexico and the United States. It was the Mexican capital that remained occupied for the longest time by the US forces – a total of 22 months between September 1846 and July 1848.

Although it was an old prison and a New Spain capital populated by citizens and soldiers who historically defended their settlement against Indian attacks, the arrival of more than 3,000 Mexican troops represented a major logistical challenge, in addition to the tasks of fortification of the city. Arrival that was perceived by the neighbors as a first invasion due to the large amount of supplies required.

³⁰ Battle of Monterrey webpage. <http://labatallademonterrey1846.blogspot.com/>. Retrieved on March 25th, 2018.

³¹ Archivo General de Nuevo León. Fondo Estadística de Municipios. Serie Marín, 1845-1850.

³² AGENL. *Seminario Político de Nuevo León*. Monterrey, June 6th, 1844.

³³ Archivo Municipal de Monterrey. Ramo civil. 1847. Letter from Pedro Treviño to the Town Hall. Monterrey, May 27th, 1847.

The outcome of the battle between the Mexican and the US forces made it the scene of a modern war that began with artillery and cavalry tactics, but which culminated in the fierce house-to-house fighting in the urban center of Monterrey, something very far from the military manuals of West Point, to the bewilderment of the first graduates of this prestigious military academy. The chaos was such in this battle that eleven high ranking officers were killed, something unprecedented in their military history.

Subsequently, for 22 months, the city was the scene of a forced coexistence between the invaders, more than 5,000 American men between regulars and volunteers with the thousands of residents who had no way to evacuate Monterrey after the Mexican defeat. Otherness manifested itself in its cruelest form, revealing forms of domination between invaders and invaded, white and brown, Protestant and Catholic, English and Spanish-speaking, North Americans and Mexicans. The forms of violence included murder, kidnapping, robbery, whipping in the case of men and abduction and other humiliations in the case of women.

The prevalence of alcohol abuse in the occupation troops was an incentive for these acts, to the extent that the commander ordered everyone to camp in the Santo Domingo Forest, outside the city, as a strategy to reduce abuse.

Finally, these would end in July 1848, with the departure of the US troops from the city, once Mexico had agreed to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, yielding half of its territory to the United States. From then on, Monterrey was able to resume its development and gradually become the economic and social epicenter of the Mexican northeast, within the framework of a new frontier.

The history of this occupation and the violence it entailed for the residents remained for a century and a half out of the local history books and out of public opinion. How to overcome the fact of going frequently for supplies to the neighboring country that was clearly the invader of Monterrey? Undoubtedly, this is one of many contradictions that prevails on the social representations between Mexicans and North Americans who share a common border. National borders are usually drawn in blood, and wounds take a long time to heal.

Against the widespread opinion in the non-academic world that we already know almost everything about the war between Mexico and the United States, the archival work carried out in unexplored documentary collections provides us with materials to continue shaping the way in which the capital of Nuevo León was scene and matrix of social representations that even nowadays are held in this border area that got divided by an international war in the mid-nineteenth century.

Acknowledgement

*“...war has to do with the distribution of weapons,
the fighting and recruiting techniques,
the retribution of the soldiers,
army taxes:
and not only as a brute event of the battle”*

Michel Foucault

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