

Human Rights in Latin America: Spotlight on Argentina

Unit 4 Truth and Justice

I Prologue to *Nunca Mas*

Essential Questions

- *What causes human beings to terrorize other human beings?*
- *How can we use primary source documents to learn about the past?*
- *How do traumatized nations begin to heal?*
- *Is truth based on one's perception?*
- *What is the process of uncovering secret truths?*

Raul Alfonsín's civilian government replaced the military junta on December 10, 1983 and, by December 15, he created CONADEP (La Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas). Alfonsín created the Commission because he wanted to identify the people who planned and issued orders, people who followed orders, and the people who carried orders to excess during the Dirty War. In 1984, the Commission compiled *Nunca Más*, " ... a comprehensive catalogue of contemporary savagery."

The prologue, written by Ernesto Sábato, discusses the Commission's task, people who were vulnerable to human rights violations from 1976-1983 and the reaction of the repressors to investigations. They also considered the need for truth and justice as opposed to vindictiveness or vengeance. However, Sábato's prologue, considered by many to be controversial, was rewritten under current President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. In this lesson, students will analyze the prologue to learn about the Commission's task, human rights, truth, justice, and why this document is controversial.

Read the prologue online at http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/neveragain/neveragain_002.htm then complete the activity sheet.

1. Describe the global context in which Ernesto Sábato places the Argentine Dirty War.
2. What was the mission of the Commission?
3. How does Sábato define individual rights?
4. Did the Commission consider the atrocities a planned campaign of terror or were they the result of individual excesses? Explain your answer.
5. What happened to the "disappeared," *los desaparecidos*? How did they become disappeared?

6. What became of their identity?

7. According to Sábato, who was at risk during *El Proceso* 1976-1983?

8. Why was this period called a “demented generalized repression”?

9. How did the repressors react to the Commission?

10. What was the information-gathering task like for the members of the Commission?

11. Why is the Commission’s report entitled *Nunca Más*?

12. What sentence or sentences are considered controversial in the Prologue? Explain your answer.

13. Reflect on one memorable quote from the Prologue.