

Gilbert M. Joseph, Daniela Spenser. *In From the Cold: Latin America's new Encounter with the Cold War.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. 439 S. \$99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-4102-4; \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-4121-5.



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G. M. Joseph u.a. (Hrsg.): *Latin America's Encounter with the Cold War*

This book convincingly argues that Latin American nations and people acted autonomously and in their own interests within the confines of the Cold War dichotomy. It also notes with some bitterness, as Daniela Spenser alludes to in the conclusion, the immense human toll and the political limits the Cold War placed on Latin American politics. As the authors in this collection make clear, the Cold War in Latin America was marked by violence, neoliberal economics, and revolution, limiting the possibilities for social democracy in the region. This volume emerged out of a 2002 conference in Mexico and a subsequent Spanish language collection *Espejos de la Guerra Fria* (2004). This English-language collection draws from the earlier volume and adds new essays on the roles of non-state actors, namely students, activists, and workers. The collection calls on historians to read across regional boundaries and to integrate Latin America in the larger narrative of the Cold War.

One of the volume's principal strengths lies in its masterful introductions by Gilbert Joseph and Thomas Blanton, which succinctly lay out the recent historiography, disciplinary debates, and new sources, which have

emerged since the end of the Cold War. Both of these essays along with their extensive footnotes provide a compelling framework, not just for this book, but for the wider field of study.

Joseph sets the terms of the debate and argues that diplomatic historians, who have traditionally concentrated on "grand strategy," need to learn from social and cultural historians in Latin America. Joseph also argues how the Cold War intersected with domestic Latin American politics, and in turn, developed in conjunction with older histories of class, racial, ideological, and religious hierarchies in the region: "The emerging Cold War reinforced a domestic anti-Communism that went back decades and was ingrained in the military, the catholic hierarchy, and segments of the middle class â independent of US prompting" (pp. 21-2).

One of the few points on which one might want to question Joseph's call for more research on international relations "from below" is that this is exactly what seems to be well underway and in full-swing. Rather than a marginal field, international or diplomatic history has been booming of late, precisely because historians

have taken up Joseph's central questions. His very footnotes demonstrate the growing strength of cultural and social history in the field, and he cites almost twenty monographs to that end. One imagines that when this project and the Mexico City-based conference were first conceived the field was only beginning to respond to questions related to culture and Latin American autonomy, while now both seem to be well established. As such, Joseph's essay provides an excellent assessment of the 'cultural turn' and the growing concentration of research on the US-empire and Latin America over the past decade.

Complementing Joseph's introduction, Thomas Blanton, the director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University, writes evocatively about truth commissions, memory, and declassification in the wake of brutal violence in Latin America. These new archives demonstrate the US complicity and outright lies about torture and military dictatorships. Unlike Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union, Blanton argues, Latin America has grappled explicitly with histories of repression and violence: 'Suffice it here to say that the opportunity for memory and the struggle against power was seized in Latin America in ways that have not yet come to Russia, and only fitfully across Eastern Europe' (p. 51). By focusing on Latin American nations' public debates and discourse over memory, Blanton makes a compelling case for how the study of Latin America can contribute to international studies of the Cold War throughout the globe.

Following these introductory essays, the volume is divided into two main sections. First the 'traditional' diplomatic historians' perspective of the Cold War, followed by the second section made up of six case studies combining diplomatic, social, and cultural history. Hence, it can therefore be maintained that the 'traditional' diplomatic scholars still deserve a prominent position among historians.

The artful pairing of Piero Gleijeses' article, 'The View from Havana: Lessons from Cuba's African Journey,' with Ariel C. Armony, 'Transnationalizing the Dirty War in Central America,' demonstrates how Latin American countries with ideologies as divergent as Cuba and Argentina, brought their own independent initiatives to the international Cold War. Gleijeses' work on Cuba's foreign policy in Africa has been published before in the ground-breaking, *Conflicted Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*. Its inclusion in this volume, however, remains prescient. He argues boldly that Cuba

did not, at least in foreign affairs, act as a puppet of the Soviet Union, but rather that Cuba in this respect, acted independently out of idealism, anti-colonial revolutionary ideology, and a commitment to racial justice. As such his work stands out in the field, uncovering new documents and also re-centering Cuba as a powerful and autonomous actor within the Cold War binary.

In turn, Ariel Armony reveals how Argentina's government exported its techniques in right-wing repression and torture to governments and counter-revolutionaries in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. He contends that 'The Argentine anti-Communist crusade should be considered as part of a transnational ideological network determined to destroy what it perceived as a multifaceted international enemy that threatened Western society' (p. 135). Both of these works demonstrate the ongoing value in traditional diplomatic history's focus on formal political decisions and the military, but their creative approaches open the field to new actors and raise questions about the social and cultural experience for these transnational actors, be they Cuban soldiers in Angola or Argentine military personnel in Honduras.

The third section of the book highlights new work on the cultural histories of the Cold War by Seth Fein, Eric Zolov, Steven Bachelar, Stephen Pitti, Victoria Langland, and Carlota McAllister. These essays are well-written and conceived, however like many edited volumes and unlike the previous essays, they do not all interact with each other as directly as one might wish them to do. All of the articles take up the challenge of writing history from 'below' or the 'margins,' and to that end they successfully re-frame gender, sexuality, popular culture, student activists, factory workers, and market women as key concepts and figures in the Cold War.

Eric Zolov's piece, 'Cuba's "Yanquis, no!"' is one of the more provocative essays, arguing how Mexican reactions to the Cuban revolution and the Bay of Pigs invasion mapped onto public debates over the legacy and content of Mexico's own revolutionary history. He concentrates on Mexico's ambivalent relationship to Cuba, and the eventual development of its own internal state control. Victoria Langland's 'Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails,' turns the reader's attention to Brazil and gender politics. She successfully argues for the sexualization of female militants and the 'profoundly gendered battles' which combined fears of unrestrained female sexuality and political activism (p. 310). Stephen Pitti's analysis of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) in the United States also offers an im-

portant corrective look at the farm workersâ campaign in a transnational and Cold War framework.

Finally Daniela Spenser, who also contributes a valuable essay on the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis or the âCaribbean Crisisâ in Latin America, forcefully concludes by urging scholars to continue their research with attention to everyday actors and to the depths of Cold War legacies in the region. When taken together, it is clear that these authors are at the forefront of what promises to be a proliferation of valuable monographs, which look closely at the textured and multivalent histories of the Cold War.

This book may encourage cultural historians to continue taking military and political history seriously. Gleijeses, Armony, and Spenserâs work all raise pertinent

questions for social historians: Who were the Cubans who went to Africa? How did Cuban racial politics play out in its international relations for Cubans of color? How did African students in Cuba articulate or respond to Cubaâs foreign policy? What were the experiences of Argentinaâs military personnel in Central America? How did gendered ideas of masculinity and the military translate in these international missions? Moreover, the cultural and social historiansâ research on everyday actors and the daily life of the Cold War forces scholars to reconsider âwhereâ the Cold War happened and to redefine our understandings of international history.

In short, this collection succeeds in its mission to create intellectual dialogue between diplomatic historians and Latin Americanists, and as such, one hopes it is a model for future research and exchange.

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