Review of Jason Parker’s *Hearts, Minds, Voices*

This is the first in a series of reviews written by Temple graduate students of new books considering the study of force, diplomacy, and international history. These reviews will be posted on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The books you’ll see reviewed here are brand new -- they often haven’t made it into the pages of major scholarly journals yet, allowing our reviewers to get their say in before the dust has settled. If you would like to participate as a reviewer, or have a book to suggest, please contact Brian McNamara, CENFAD’s Thomas J. Davis Fellow, at brian.mcnamara@temple.edu.

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Ultimately, *Hearts, Minds, and Voices* argues that U.S. and Soviet efforts at public diplomacy in Asia, Africa, and Latin America inspired a rejection of Cold War alliances and an emphasis on the shared political and economic conditions of the non-West. As Parker shows, the Cold War began a dialogue between two superpowers, yet, over time, came to also encompass the voices of those emerging from years of colonialism and governmental systems that prioritized the needs of a select few at the expense of a larger populace. In this sense, Parker’s analysis presents the Cold War, decolonization in Asia and Africa, and emerging leftist political struggles in Latin America as developments that reacted and responded to one another rather than dichotomous entities.

Parker’s powerful argument comes across in his example of the United States Information Agency’s (USIA) propaganda work in Guatemala after the CIA-led coup that deposed progressive leader Jacobo Arbenz. The USIA worked with the CIA to prevent Guatemalan government-led radio broadcasts and replace them with anti-Communist messages. The USIA even pursued similar tactics in neighboring El Salvador and Cuba, broadcasting pro-Guatemalan coup messages to the countries’ populaces. In doing so, the USIA hoped to enlist the peoples of the Americas in the United States’ global struggle against Soviet dominance. As Parker shows, however, such a strategy ultimately backfired. After the coup, depictions of the United States as imperialists circulated around Latin America and the broader Global South. “Outside the hemisphere, the United States simply lost the battle of the headlines... A left-leaning Arab newspaper blasted that ‘directed intervention in the affairs of other countries was replacing the older US policy of only indirectly supporting European Imperialism as in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.” (76) In this sense, USIA’s Latin American propaganda campaign and the 1954 Guatemalan coup that accompanied it did not perpetuate an image of the United States as liberators, but as a power whose interests stood in opposition to those of the Global South. Decolonizing nations stood with Guatemala, displaying a solidarity born out of their own similar challenges. Such an example shows the forming of a Third World consciousness that stood in opposition to Cold War conflicts emerging from a rejection of American foreign policy.

Parker pushes this argument even further with his example of emerging Pan-African discourses. Following the assassination of Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba and the CIA’s support for opposition leader Joseph Mobutu, the All-African Peoples’ Conference of 1961 sharply criticized the United States and emphasized their shared political and economic conditions with that of Congo. During this period, Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah exalted Lumumba as a martyr of the anticolonialist cause. As Parker shows, the early 1960s marked a period in which Nkrumah and other African leaders distributed publications and established far-reaching radio networks that broadcasted messages of African unity and urged leaders to avoid involvement in the U.S.-Soviet Cold War. “These activities included distribution of the print edition of *Voice of Africa* – ‘a monthly hate sheet’ – along with other audiovisual media. Virtually all of them presented Lumumba as the personification – and victim – of a continent-wide struggle whose legitimate endpoint was Pan-African solidarity and sovereignty,” writes Parker. (156-7)

Thus, U.S. Cold War efforts once again inspired a sense of solidarity amongst decolonizing nations rather than an alignment with United States’ Cold War politics. As Parker argues, from United States’ efforts
emerged a political rejection on behalf of its supposed beneficiaries culminating in a furthered Third World consciousness. Jason C. Parker’s *Hearts, Minds, Voices* provides historians with an inclusive interpretation of Cold War struggles that stresses connections between the politics of the Global North and South traditionally understood as in opposition to one another. The book’s Cold War focus, however, also obscures other manners in which anti-imperialist, Third World solidarities formed. In the case of the Central American leftist political struggles of Nicaragua and El Salvador, guerrilla groups like the Sandinista National Liberation Front formed in 1961 in opposition to U.S. imperialism. Yet despite the Sandinistas’ emergence at the height of the Cold War, they traced their politics back to the example of Nicaraguan insurrectionary Augusto Sandino who led a peasant uprising against U.S. marines during the United States’ occupation of Nicaragua during the 1930s. Similarly, the Sandinistas evoked the attempted colonization of the country by American citizen William Walker during the nineteenth century as a reason for anti-Yankee sentiment. Inspired by these historical precedents, the Sandinistas stood in solidarity with other leftist struggles in El Salvador and Cuba, as James Dunkerley discusses in his book *Power in the Isthmus* (New York, 1988, 237-240). Jason Parker’s focus on the Cold War ignores other legacies of U.S. aggression upon the Global South that sparked similar sentiments among developing nations of the postwar period. The Cold War absolutely played a factor in the development of a Third World consciousness, yet such politics often had roots in earlier periods. Despite these critiques, Parker’s work remains an important contribution to the historiography of the Cold War and illuminates the conflict’s ideological effects beyond the United States’ borders.