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Entrevista

Interview with James G. Hershberg: Cold War in Latin America

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Born in New York City in 1960, Professor James G. Hershberg is a major reference in Cold War studies and contemporary international history. His name is attached to important initiatives for the democratization of the Cold War field regarding knowledge dissemination and availability of primary sources. He directed the Cold War International History Project (and edited the project's Bulletin) at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, from 1991-97. He now edits the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) book series co-published by the Stanford University and Wilson Center Presses. Five years after earning his Ph.D. from Tufts University, he received the 1994 Stuart Bernath Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations for *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993; Stanford University Press, 1995). Before coming to George Washington University (GWU) in 1997, he taught at Tufts and California Institute of Technology (1989-91). At GWU, he is a co-founder of the GW Cold War Group, a studies group for both faculty and students. He works closely with the National Security Archive, a declassified documents repository and research institute based at the University. In 2012, he published *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Stanford/Washington, DC: Stanford University Press/Wilson Center Press). In addition to his expertise in nuclear history, the

Vietnam and Afghanistan Wars, and the Iran-contra affair, Hershberg is a staunch defender of multi-archival research – especially in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Latin America.

That methodological approach was key for fostering an interest in Brazil as a research topic. One of the world's leading experts on the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, he published a two-part article analyzing the Brazilian mediation attempt (2004) and another regarding Brazilian/Soviet relations during the same crisis (2020). In the following year, he published an article that deals with Brazilian contacts with the Left in Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China throughout 1963. The subject of his current study is analyzing U.S. relations with Brazil regarding Cuba from Castro's revolution against Batista through the military coup that overthrew João Goulart (1956-1964).

In this interview, the focus is on the Cold War in Latin America. Professor Hershberg commented on the consequences of writing histories of the Cold War that were mostly Washington-centric, the importance of perspectives from Latin American scholars, the critical agency issue, and the influence of American domestic politics in U.S. historiography on the Latin American Cold War. In addition, he recalls a conversation he had with Fidel Castro in 2001 about the availability of Cuban primary sources and the Brazilian mediation attempt during the Cuban Missile Crisis, analyses Mao Zedong's contacts with Latin American communists, the Sino-Soviet split's repercussions in Brazil, the long-term legacy of the anticommunist political discourse, and the evolution towards broader perspectives and inclusiveness with feminist, gender, LGBT, civil rights, environmental and Hispanic rights studies connected to Cold War.

Gianfranco Caterina: Could you give us a historiographic overview of the Cold War in Latin America, how it is evolved over the last 20 years, since you published your articles, parts one and two in the Journal of Cold War Studies analysing the Brazilian mediation attempt during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

James Hershberg: Okay. First of all, I should just caution, I am a broad historian of the Cold War, and not a Latin American specialist *per se*. My Spanish is *malo,* my Portuguese is very bad also, so I have followed the scholarship as carefully as I can, but I am not a serious detailed scholar. I have never spent years, actually, in Latin America as a scholar, but I've tried to follow the historiographical debate, and probably the most interesting aspect parallels the broader development of Cold War historiography. Since the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the Soviet Union and the modernization of the People's Republic of China and the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, and in both cases the Cold War in Latin America and the Cold War generally, the most important development has been an attempt that now has lasted for more than three decades to move away from the previous tendency to write the history of the Cold War as it was viewed from Washington. Focusing on using American English language sources which clearly led to a distortion of the history because there were millions of pages of documents available in the American archives and to a more limited extent, if the

events were more than 30 years old, in the British archives at the Public Record Office outside London, and so overwhelmingly the narratives both of the Cold War generally, and of the Cold War in Latin America, specifically, reflected this evidentiary bias and led to a narrative that was mostly Washington-centric, and had very detailed discussions of American – meaning United States decision making – , because you not only had declassified documents, you had a proliferation of memoirs and you had a very active press that was benefiting from leaks from official sources. And so you would have very detailed discussions of decisions, controversies, important conflicts within the American government and the American perspective on relations with other countries, but relatively scarce evidence about the other side of that dialogue, the other side of those interactions, but also the interactions of other countries who were dealing with relations with America either as their superpower patron, or in the case of Latin America, the superpower that tended to dominate the continent economically and politically or in the case of the Communist world, their main adversary.

And so really the historiography of the Cold War generally, and the Cold War in Latin America, in particular, has most importantly been an effort to draw in not only the evidence, but also the perspectives of the scholars from the non-US, non-English language world. And this has led to some fascinating developments both in terms of East-West relations as we've discussed in the Cold War Project that I used to run at the Woodrow Wilson Center and in U.S./Latin American relations.

I've been involved in particular with the story of the Cuban Revolution and the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, but this applies more broadly to relations with Mexico, relations with Argentina, relations with all of the important countries in the Western Hemisphere, south of the United States, because, of course, the Canadian Archives are also very open and very beneficial, but in terms of the Cold War in South America, which is really what you were asking about, the most important historiographical controversy that has emerged, I would say, in the last couple of decades, is to what extent the old commonly used trope of U.S. superpower, domination, monopoly, hegemony - there are different words for it, of course – over Latin America truly applies, and it was simply a matter of the United States moving pawns on the Latin American and the global chessboard. And to what extent that is inaccurate because there was more agency than was usually attributed to Latin Americans, both the States and the governments and the peoples.

When you get more deeply into the sources, both in the archives and in the memories of the decision makers, but also of the ordinary people, and, most importantly, of the scholars, such as you, what you find is far more complexity. In my own work, for example, I told you I've been working on Cuba. And, you know, you not only look at U.S. relations with Brazil regarding Cuba, which is the subject of my current study, but you also find, for example, under Quadros and Goulart some efforts, a conspiracy or collaboration between Brazil and other countries who were trying to resist U.S. pressure to join their campaign against Fidel Castro. So, example, Mexico, Ecuador, sometimes Chile – and until March 1962, also, Argentina under Frondizi – would attempt to cooperate with Brazil to resist the pressure from, say, the Kennedy Administration and Dean Rusk at, for example, the Punta del Este Conference of the Organization of American States and Foreign Ministers in January 1962.

To my mind, that leads to a far more nuanced and fascinating interpretation then simply the Cold War, as it looked from Washington, because previously there were many books and many excellent books about U.S. relations with Latin America written by scholars who primarily use the United States archives and did not use any Latin American archives, and or nor Spanish language sources. And inevitably this is going to lead to distortions, and of course this is most controversial when you also get deeply into the human rights abuses of dictatorships that came to power in large countries, mostly in the early to mid-1960s, with the progressive failure of the Alliance for Progress, the *Alianza para el Progreso*, and to what extent the human rights atrocities and abuses committed by governments, and say, Argentina, Brazil, and later, after 1970, when Pinochet came to power in Chile. Now there is to what extent that was caused by, exacerbated by United States encouragement or complicity.

This also goes for the coups in these respective countries. You know whether it is the military overthrowing Frondizi in 1962, in Argentina, or the military overthrowing Goulart in 1964, in Brazil, or overthrowing Allende in Chile, in 1973, in each of those cases and others there is always a debate. Was this, as a result of American meddling and United States meddling and interference? And conspiracy, because, of course, you know, there are cases of the U.S. creating regime changes in places like Iran in 1953, and Guatemala in 1954, and attempting to do so in Cuba, 1961. To what extent are these more examples of United States interference or to what extent does the agency come from hardline, anti-communist, or oligarchs, or others in the Latin American countries themselves. Who might have received encouragement before, during or after the fact from Washington, but who would have acted anyway?

So, I would say the single most important controversy, certainly not the only one, and not the only interesting historiographical development, is over this issue of agency in each country in different contexts. But, certainly, Latin America tended to be dismissed as an American dominion by much of the rest of the world and that was reflected in some of the historiography. But there is been a tendency, that I think is a healthy tendency, to incorporate Latin American sources, perspectives, evidence and to test that proposition in every case.

Gianfranco Caterina: Sure, I was thinking about how my second question is very linked to your answer because I would ask you about the Brazilian and Argentinean specific cases during the Cold War and how they were neglected. I would say, especially by the historiography on Cold War in Latin America, especially published in English.

James Hershberg: I think much of the English historiography about those countries was very influenced by American domestic politics in the 1970s – truly as a carry-over from the 1960s – which essentially departed from the general consensus supporting the U.S. Government and the Cold War policies of the U.S. Government – just to considerable extent – in the 1950s. The 1960s, of course, saw the Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the women's movement, the

hippies, the yippies, the counterculture, and in general much more scepticism about U.S. policy. Most intensively, this was reflected in the anti-Vietnam War movement, but this led to a broader question of the containment policy and the tactics that the U.S. used to oppose Communism that was alleged to be part of a Soviet, or even Sino-Soviet conspiracy, until the Sino-Soviet split change that, but it led to a lot of criticism that many of these policies were inappropriate or even immoral and this, in turn, coincided in the mid-1970s not only with the rise of Watergate which led, of course, to the resignation of Richard Nixon in August 1974, but also to the revelation, the exposure of CIA activities and interferences whether in Guatemala, in 1954; Iran, in 1953; Cuba, including assassination plotting against Fidel Castro in the early 1960s; it also coincided with the charges that there was a assassination campaign in Vietnam, Operation Phoenix – run by the guy who later became the CIA's director – , but all of this led to a call for a greater emphasis on human rights in American foreign policy, and of course this also coincided with the controversy over the events in Chile of 1970 to 73, climaxing in the coup that overthrew Allende in September 1973, and the rise of the Pinochet government with massive human rights abuses and even public revelated, understanding of that, and of course intensified the criticism of Henry Kissinger and both the Nixon and Ford administrations for tolerating human rights abuses in the interest of opposing Communism, whether in Chile, whether in Indonesia and it is operations in East Timor in 1976, various Latin American dictatorships, the Congo and Mobutu.

So, it really raised the importance of human rights as a more important consideration, of course, this was most famously brought to the fore by Jimmy Carter, when he was elected in 1976, and of course one of the countries he applied this to was Brazil and of course he got into a huge controversy with Brazil to prevent what was seen as a Brazilian effort to possibly develop nuclear weapons, and Carter leaned on both Brazil and West Germany, The Federal Republic of Germany, to prevent a technology deal that would have increased Brazil's capability to enrich uranium and possibly move toward a nuclear weapon. But what all of this has led to is to the extent that there is much attention in the historiography – the English language historiography, especially – towards Brazil and Argentina. It really tends to focus on the question of the extent of American complicity in the human rights atrocities and, especially coming to the mid-70s, to Operation Condor and the cooperation of the various South American dictatorships to pursue and target leftist or Communist dissidents, many of whom had fled those countries when they were persecuted or arrested by those governments. And so there have been intense investigations by journalists and more recently the American governments – at least under Clinton, Obama and Biden – have attempted to cooperate in declassifying evidence about U.S. relations with countries that were led by dictatorships that have been accused, very convincingly, of very significant human rights abuses.

There has been a lot of historiographies about that. Once you'd mentioned the contribution of the National Security Archive, for example, in pushing for the declassification of documents. But again, it is been a much slower process to begin to incorporate the evidence from those countries, scholars and archives themselves, which are the archives, are, of course, in each case, limited in some cases by the secrecy of those dictatorships or by the efforts of those dictatorships to destroy evidence.

But, of course, they've been enhanced in several cases by truth commissions that have investigated human rights abuses and that is slowly also contributing to a new history and, of course, in terms of the broad Cold War history, there are some exceptional cases, for example, obviously Cuba. Even though archival access to Cuban records is still extremely limited, although some scholars – most famously Piero Gleijeses – has gotten some access to good high-level material. A good deal of information on Cuba's role in the Cold War after the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959 took place has emerged in part do such an intense oral history effort on the Cuban missile crisis, which in turn led to some declassification of Cuban evidence. I remember at one of a conference on the Bay of Pigs in 2001. I actually had a conversation with Fidel Castro about this, and Fidel Castro was bragging: "Now you know the Cuban side of the Cuban missile crisis because we had a conference in 1992", and I showed him a copy of the Cold War Project Bulletin. I said: "No, 99% of what we know about Cuba's actions in the Cuban missile crisis we come from the American archives or the Russian archives. We're missing Cuba's side of the story". And he actually thought about that and the next night announced that we were going to meet again the next year to have a conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis in Havana, for which he released over a thousand pages of Cuban documents. So, it is not a substitute for real access to the Cuban archives, but at least it is something that has led, in part, to the histories of the Cuban Missile Crisis that have appeared in the last 20 years or so. And I am thinking of books like *One Hell of a Gamble* by Naftali and Fursenko and *One Minute to Midnight*, by Michael Dobbs, pay far more attention to Cuba's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis than previous accounts. For example, Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision,* which came out in 1971 and was mostly based on background interviews with Kennedy administration officials, almost completely ignored the idea that Cuba had any autonomous decision-making power and basically treated it as a Soviet aircraft carrier or Soviet base. But in the last couple of decades there is far more attention given to Cuba. And I've tried through those journal articles that I've written about Brazil and the Cuban Missile Crisis to add Brazil to the story.

Also, the other example I was going to stress is the Mexican archives are excellent and although they're very confusing to deal with. But scholars like Renata Keller have written some very good books. A very good material about Mexico's relations with the United States, and more broadly to Cuba, and the Cold War in Latin America, using Mexican sources. So, these are steps towards a more balanced history and a less Washington-centric approach.

Gianfranco Caterina: So, is it about the availability of sources, right? Especially during the seventies[1970s], the Human Rights issue was important for almost every country in Latin America. But, at the same time, you touched on a very important issue that I think it was not so much clear for a non-American. That is, the influence of American domestic politics.

James Hershberg: Yes.

Gianfranco Caterina: [...] in American historiography.

James Hershberg: Well, not only in the historiography, but in the policy. A good example, of course, is like American relations with Cuba. You know the only reason the United States did not normalize relations with Cuba many decades ago is because United States domestic politics. Because the Cubans who emigrated from Cuba at the time of the Revolution and Castro's takeover, many tens of thousands, became an important voting bloc in Florida. And candidates did not want to alienate them by any friendly gestures towards Fidel Castro's rule. And so, if you talk to people in Washington, especially in the Pentagon, there is no national security reason why not to recognize Cuba, it is purely domestic politics. And, of course, the U.S. recognized the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China... U.S. even recognized Germany, for many years after Hitler took over. So domestic politics can interfere with decision making, but it can also interfere with the atmosphere and the discourse in the public and that, of course, is going to influence any human being who lives in that country, including people who become historians.

So, U.S. Government attitudes are going to influence historiography, either in a positive or a negative or sometimes in a balanced way, whereas until the 1970s, many of the human rights abuses in Latin America received only very limited attention in the United States, because essentially the U.S. public got so distracted by Vietnam and so did the media. They did not have the attention span or the resources, do you know, very much investigate the human rights controversies and the abuses taking place under dictatorships in Latin America. It only became linked to the discourse, in the context of the Vietnam war coming to an end, but also the rise of Watergate, CIA abuses, and the rise of human rights and ethics and morality as a greater concern in foreign policy.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes, I noticed. I think we can say that American historiography of Latin American Cold War until, roughly, the end of the twentieth century was centered at the study of acute episodes only. So, coups, interventions, crises, revolutions...

James Hershberg: Yes, not exclusively. Of course. You know, some people wrote, you know, very competent, readable...

Gianfranco Caterina: I mean a tendency. A general tendency.

James Hershberg: [...] but the focus was on the crises. Of course, 1954, Guatemala; Cuba, the Revolution, Bay of Pigs, Missile Crisis, Chile.

Gianfranco Caterina: And Central America in the 1980s.

James Hershberg: Of course.

Gianfranco Caterina: [...] especially Nicaragua and El Salvador.

James Hershberg: I remember when I was in grad school at Columbia University going on a bus to go to a protest about the Contras, and then, of course, the Iran-contra affair. I worked on an investigation of the Iran-contra Affair. It was fascinating! And, by the way, I should recommend the best book on the Iran-contra Affair was just published a few years ago by my friend Malcolm Byrne, from the National Security Archive. That is how I became friends working with him and with Thomas Blanton at the National Security Archive on the Iran-contra Affair, 1987. But you are right. You know, the focus has been much more episodic, because of the limited attention.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes. So, moving to a more specific topic in your article about the Brazilian Far Left, Cuba, and the Sino-Soviet Division, 1963. What really strikes me are three things. The first: Mao's direct participation in contacts with Latin Americans.

James Hershberg: Yes, but with both Communist parties from Brazil. It was fascinating.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes. He was personally involved.

James Hershberg: Yes. And, by the way, regarding that, I have to thank especially my friend Sergei Radchenko, who has his new book on the history of the Cold War just published this week, but he helped translate some of those documents that were extremely helpful[1].

Gianfranco Caterina: Great. I would check it for sure. But the second thing was the level of division and competition of Brazil's far left. This is well known, but it become a crucial source of political instability for Goulart. And the third thing: the intensification of the Sino-Soviet split from, especially, June-July 1963 onwards, with clear repercussions in the Brazilian political domestic debate. So, I think the last two aspects need to be integrated to deepen our understanding of the crisis that led to the coup in 1964 in Brazil.

James Hershberg: Well, that is a very interesting question and I would love to get your comments. I am very glad you read that article, because I actually, I've found even more evidence. The most amazing evidence is the PC do B, the pro-Beijing wing, I think it was March 1963, the same time that Luis Carlos Prestes and Julião go to Cuba.

A Delegation of PC do B visits Albania and through a colleague I have gotten from the archives in Tirana, the transcript of their discussions with Enver Hoxha and it is fascinating... They give that

[1] (Radchenko, 2024). Both the book launch and this interview occurred in May 2024.

perspective that is shared only by the Chinese and the Albanians, the very far left[2]. But integrating it into the crisis that leads to the coup is a real test, because you want – and of course you also need to add Brizola into the story, too. And actually, Brizola is the Cuban ambassador's favourite leftist in Brazil. I interviewed the guy who... is amazing. Do you know Raúl Roa Kouri? The son of the Cuban Foreign Minister was the Cuban Ambassador in Brazil in 1963-64, and a couple a few years ago he was still alive, and I was able to interview him.

But I also had many documents in which he is cited, and his favourite Brazilian leftist was Brizola. And you know he even saw him in March 1964, as the one hope to resist the coup that the Cubans already expected that was coming. So, one could also argue that the divisions on the left, it is not clear if that lessened pressure on Goulart, or whether Goulart felt the pressure from the left collectively, or whether he had personal motives to swerve left, to move left in March – famously there is March thirteenth speech.

Gianfranco Caterina: My first impression is that the Sino-Soviet split and its repercussions in Brazil were underestimated by the literature regarding the causes of the 1964 coup. Because it made way more difficult for Goulart to manage the left to support him. It was a very specific conjuncture in the second half of 1963 and Goulart had already big problems. Besides this one.

James Hershberg: Of course.

Gianfranco Caterina: [...] economic problems, military, of course, increasingly meddling politics.

James Hershberg: Of course.

Gianfranco Caterina: We can see in Brazilian historiography regarding the 1964 coup, I would say, I am not sure to say that so bluntly, but a kind of a turning point in the second semester of 1963 of political radicalization, internal crisis, and finally the coup.

James Hershberg: Although what is very interesting is after Fidel Castro goes to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1963 – probably under the influence of Khrushchev – (although we only have indirect sources, we still have not gotten from the Soviet archives the *zapis besedi*[3] of the most important conversations), clearly Khrushchev is urging Castro to moderate is policy regarding Brazil and other

[2] Enver Hoxha was the First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania (PPSH, founded as the Communist Party of Albania in 1941) from 1941 to his death in 1985. After following the Stalinist line from 1947 to 1953, Hoxha broke with Moscow in 1961 and aligned his party with the People's Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong. After Mao died in 1976, Hoxha distanced his party from the PRC and asserted the right of nations to pursue socialism by different paths. The PPSH was the sole legal party in Albania from 1945 to 1991.

[3] Russian for Memorandum of Conversation.

key countries that Cuba still has relations with in Latin America, and the U.S. concern about Cuban support for insurrection and subversion in Brazil, I think, actually decreases in the second half of 1963.

They are still pressuring Goulart not to cooperate with Cuba, for example, they fear that he is going to allow flights directly from Brazil to Cuba, and even stopovers for Cubana Airlines and the U.S. and the CIA even work against that. And I even have a whole section of a chapter about that. But Julião and the campesinos... that movement seems to decline a little bit in the second half of 1963. So it could be that there is somewhat less attention paid to it.

And, of course, the other interesting thing is, when you get to the end of 63, after Kennedy's assassination, is to what extent Lyndon Johnson starts to back away from the Alliance for Progress and becomes less concerned about dictatorships replacing democracy, and of course, famously this is reflected when he reappoints Thomas Mann as the lead policy-maker in the State Department just a couple of weeks after the assassination.

And in March 1964, just a couple of weeks before the coup, Thomas Mann is reported to have told a group of Latin American Ambassadors that as long as they are anti-communist, we are not going to be so concerned about dictatorships and that is interpreted as stepping away from the Alliance for Progress and, even in some literature, as an almost a green light to the Brazilian military to go forward.

Obviously, they are also to a still unknown extent in contact with Vernon Walters and others from the U.S. Embassy in Brazil. They don't seem to have instigated the coup so far as we know, but it was certainly clear to the military that the Americans would welcome the coup, whether it was Lincoln Gordon or Vernon Walters, or others, cause the Americans had gotten so upset with Goulart that they viewed the coup as bringing stability. And, of course, a return of massive U.S. economic aid for Brazil. So clearly there is at least an indirect influence – and of course there is Operation Brother Sam.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes.

James Hershberg: That really seems to reflect U.S. attitudes by the end of 1963. But at least the Cuban angle seems to be less important. Is that your sense also?

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes, but I think the plotters in Brazil were more organized in the second half of 1963 than they were a year before.

James Hershberg: Clearly!

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes. So, the conspiration, internally, was more mature. I would say so. But here are more general questions. What do you think are still the main challenges for research on the Cold War in Latin America?

James Hershberg: Well, aside from, I think really finding the correct balance between U.S. domination and Latin American agency, in specific cases – both different countries, but also different time periods and different specific situations –, is extremely important. I think obviously – and this reflects my hat from the Cold War Project – really integrating where it is relevant. The East's relationship to Latin America is still important, in certain cases, and obviously you've spent your career doing that. In terms of Soviet-Brazilian, but, more broadly, the East European archives have barely been tapped. I've been urging this for 20 years that we need to have a conference to use the best materials from Eastern Europe archives on Latin America, including on the eighties and the Contras, because in East Germany, in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, and in Hungary... there is wonderful materials, and probably some things that are either missing or still off limits in Moscow can be discovered in Eastern Europe and simply to clarify as much as possible.

Now, each case has its own mysteries, of course. But, that still sort of looms over everything, just like the United States looms over everything. I mean, in some ways, you could ask even more systemic existential questions about whether you, to what extent the Cold War really changed, what would have been a natural continuation of U.S. economic, political relations with Latin America from before World War 2 and even as modified by the good neighbour policy.

Because, of course, the U.S. had intervened in various situations and U.S. industry, U.S. corporations had been crucial. And so, you can find more continuity if you, if that's how you choose to analyse it or you can find aspects of change because of heightened concerns over leftism and Communism that already existed, Marxism and Leninism, for economic reasons – but exacerbated by Cold War considerations. So, that that's a more systemic issue.

That is very difficult to tackle. Now, I am not an economist or an economic historian, but obviously, using Latin sources and getting a better sense about how, to what extent, how U.S. economic domination has affected the evolution and progress of Latin American economic systems. Because U.S. officials would endlessly say: "Oh, we are developing Latin America for the good of those people". Obviously, *dependencia* theory would focus on: "hey, it is just for American profit". We could not care less what happened to the people in Latin America and there are all sorts of interpretations focusing on U.S. exploitation of those countries. But, a real effort to understand that, especially, what maybe have been post-Cold War efforts to diversify Latin American economic relations not to be so dominated by the United States, also the role of Western Europe... We just had a conference a couple of weeks ago at George Washington University, the Graduate Student Conference. One of the most interesting papers was about West European relations, mostly the British, the French, and the Belgians with the Cuban Revolution, and that was fascinating. You know, to what extent it was simply following the United States, and to what extent there were independent initiatives.

And I've gotten into that a little bit by using the British archives, but not to that extent. There are also several interesting papers about Colombia and Mexico. And, again, I mean, there are many different examples from different cases. The Colombian case has its own dynamic, and, of course, Peru

and *Sendero Luminoso*... Another good question that my working paper[4] looked at Frondizi arguing to Kennedy that the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires was conspiring with the military to overthrow him, and Kennedy was not only denying that, but Kennedy and Russ[5] were saying, we cannot control the CIA in Washington, how do you expect us to control the CIA in Buenos Aires? So, it is still unclear. You know, to what extent.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes, but Frondizi's reply was also very good, that the problem in Washington is that they don't... It is not a threat to the political instability of your government [Kennedy's]. Here [in Buenos Aires] is different.

James Hershberg: No, that was great. Yes, that was from that conversation at Palm Springs.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes.

James Hershberg: Yes, in Florida, December 24th[6]. Now that that ended up being... You see, I got completely distracted. I went to Buenos Aires just to find documents about Argentina, and Brazil, and Cuba. I had no idea I would get distracted.

Gianfranco Caterina: Fascinating material. But one aspect that I think it is interesting, you touched on the issue of continuity from the American policy toward Latin America from the nineteenth century and continuities and differences regarding Cold War.

James Hershberg: And the early twentieth, of course.

Gianfranco Caterina: Yes [...] one current aspect in the Brazilian political debate of continuity is anticommunism.

James Hershberg: Sure, absolutely from the late nineteenth century.

Gianfranco Caterina: It is really interesting because the original meaning of the term had been completely lost, but not the emotions – negative, of course, in this case – that evokes in part of the population. So, this has been easily instrumentalized for political purposes by the Far Right here in Brazil. And, I would say in Argentina... you take some recent statements of Javier Milei go on the same way. Do you think this permanence as something apparently latent surprises you? Because if we think that anticommunism in Latin America precedes the Cold War.

[4] (Hershberg, 2024).
[5] Dean Rusk, U.S. Secretary of State during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations (1961-1969).
[6] (Hershberg, 2024, p. 50).

James Hershberg: Not really, because, obviously, it is connected with those...On the one hand, you just believe that Communism is inefficient and does not work and is ineffective, and that the market economy is worked better. There are also those who believe that it tends to reduce human rights and political rights and civil rights.

And it is often led to dictatorship and things like that. But, of course, there are those who are mostly concerned with making profits and for economic purposes and are worried about it threatening their own privileged positions in society. I think these considerations are not mutually incompatible. I mean there are different motives, and every case is different in every time period is different. And also, each time period it connects to different issues in terms of the world. Each country deserves serious analysis as does the region as a whole. But there are clearly aspects of continuity and there are clearly some aspects of change. Both need to be considered. It's not all one or all the other.

Gianfranco Caterina: Sure. I think in the last few years, I would say mainly in the last 10 to 15 years, there were more publications with the framework, or the subjects related to feminist, black, and gender studies connected to Cold War. So, this, at least from my point of view, enriched the Cold War field with contributions that illuminate groups, characters, and established new bridges with cultural issues in an innovative way – especially in education, arts, and LGBT movement, just to name a few. Do you think these studies are part of a kind of cultural turn in Cold War studies?

James Hershberg: I think it is more broadly related to. I would not call it a turn, because that implies a direction from which there is no turning back. And I think it is an evolution towards obviously more inclusiveness, broader perspectives in analysing society and analysing policy and analysing the world that is largely a gradual byproduct of the 1960s that I mentioned. You know, that is when you really saw the rise of many of these movements: whether feminism, LGBT, civil rights, environmental rights, Hispanic rights.

And, as those students largely grew up, many of them became academics, many of them wrote, many of them contributed, many of them got into politics. And what it is led to is broader analysis. But that does not mean you don't need to see how leaders acted, even if they are a bunch of middle-aged white men elitists. In other words, there is been clearly less focus on traditional old fashion history – and also to some extent, military history – and there is been an addition of Carceral Studies, about jails and feminist studies, all of which is great. But, it does not mean that the interstate analysis is irrelevant because people decide to start wars or not start wars, to drop atomic bombs or not drop atomic bombs; that matters in the world! And also, to either exacerbate or control global climate change...and sometimes these come back to government and states probably understudied his corporate history. Because corporations have become so gigantic and so important. More powerful than many countries. That is one thing that I've actually noticed in Science Fiction. There is some great science fiction. I've been a science fiction fan since I was a kid. You know, there is some great

science Fiction novels that postulate a world in the future dominated by corporations not Governments. So, as Mao said: "Let a hundred flowers bloom", but actually designing the garden, you know, there are many different ways to do that. So, I am all for looking at history through different perspectives.

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