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Democracy and U.S. Policy in Latin America during the Truman Years. By Steven Schwartzberg. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003. Pp. xvi, 311. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$55.00 cloth.

This book investigates the roots and effectiveness of the stated desire of U.S. policymakers and Latin American leaders to encourage democracy during the years between World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, a period that saw Latin American democrats replace dictators in rapid succession. Schwartzberg boldly holds that U.S. policymakers who worked on Latin American affairs during these years displayed “civility,” or a genuine sense of civic responsibility. They sincerely encouraged both “democratic solidarity and respect for the national sovereignty of other peoples” (p. xii). In short, he foregrounds the optimism and successes of U.S.-led democratization.

Main protagonists include U.S. diplomats who worked on Latin America but also Latin Americans such as Peru’s Raúl Haya de la Torre, Venezuela’s Rómulo Betancourt, and Costa Rica’s José Figueres. The best chapters of the book describe how these moderate leaders often overcame youthful communist flirtations with anti-imperialism to then admit that a measure of foreign investment and Yankee intervention in their countries might possibly bring development and democracy. On the U.S. side were “Cold War liberals,” who challenged the Good Neighbor pledge of non-intervention—but in favor of democracy—as well as “Cold War conservatives,” who placed the sovereignty of nation-states above democracy and so more easily accepted dictators (but not communists) as counterparts. The author shares the “faith” of the liberals (p. xi). The hero of these liberals—and of the book—somewhat unexpectedly is Spruille Braden. Most historians have not yet forgiven Braden for publishing his “Blue Book,” an accusation of Nazi collaboration, weeks before the election of Argentina’s Juan Perón in 1946. Schwartzberg, however, excuses the open intervention as pro-democratic and furthermore credits Braden with laying the foundations of an aggressive democratizing push throughout Latin America.

Democracy and U.S. Policy brings to life a unique group of diplomats who, Schwartzberg effectively demonstrates, believed that the time was right for cooperation between hemispheric governments on the basis of the ideology that had just won World War II. Furthermore, the scope of the book is impressive, presenting case studies of most large Latin American countries. Unfortunately, Schwartzberg’s highly selective evidence and arguments leave much out. He uses almost exclusively State Department correspondence, supplemented only by a few memoirs and public writings from Latin Americans. Depending on their words—often in long block quotes—is misleading, because they *of course* believed broadly in democracy and said so repeatedly. The author fails to measure lofty *words* against the real *policy* neglect of Latin America by Truman himself, his secretaries of state, and the Pentagon; the anti-imperialist or anti-democratic activism of groups of peasants, unions, and the military; and the economic practices of U.S. corporations. The book’s narrow story of what one diplomat said to another also allows little to no space for cultural meanings or alternative readings of diplomatic texts. Finally,

structural economic factors—unequal terms of trade, poverty, inequality—that helped bring down democrats despite their best intentions are largely absent.

Schwartzberg is thus left to explain the demise of the democratic approach by the late 1940s merely as a result of changes in personnel at the Department of State, missed opportunities, and “pessimism”—not as a result of the more obvious rise of anti-communist paranoia and persistent class antagonisms. George Kennan thus gets a quick mention as a “conservative” and not as the author of a policy review in 1950 that saw Latin America as culturally doomed to mediocrity and that recommended “harsh governmental measures of repression” to forestall a supposed “communist attack.” The book will be of use mainly to those interested in a Truman counterpart to Stephen Rabe’s more well-rounded books on Eisenhower and Kennedy policies on Latin America. Readers should be wary of the triumphal tone of the book, one that seeks to rewrite U.S. Cold War policy as an “idealist” struggle for democracy unfortunately distracted only by “mistakes” (pp. 222, xii).

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ALAN MCPHERSON

The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War. By Jean Franco. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. Pp. viii, 341. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$55.00 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

This most eloquent and meticulously researched work by Jean Franco charts the war on values in Latin America during the Cold War and reveals how this clash anticipated cultural and political transformations of globalization. The political and cultural maps of the “lettered city”—a term coined by critic Angel Rama and which Franco uses here to refer to the influential role of the Latin American intellectual during the Cold War—were deeply intertwined. Franco begins her book with the “Competing Universals” that set the stage for a cultural clash between those who advocated artistic freedom (and U.S. cultural interventions often presented a defense of freedom against censorship) and those who defended a Soviet-style “pragmatic realism” based on class struggle. As the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged in a covert battle to influence cultural values, literature reflected these competing political agendas, presenting alternative realities that challenged limits, posited utopias and plotted their demise.

Franco’s first chapter exposes the cultural politics of the “Good Neighbor Policy” coordinated by Nelson Rockefeller and the Office of Hemispheric Affairs, which sponsored the production and distribution of cultural materials, from newsreels to journalistic essays, to promote the Allied cause. Franco also traces the covert CIA sponsorship of culture, as in the case of the journal *Cuadernos por la libertad de la cultura*, which provided Latin American authors with an international reading public, at times censoring the very figures it had recruited to the cause of freedom. Following the Cuban revolution, an anti-imperialist mode set the terms for cultural production. Chapter 2 studies those Latin American intellectuals who were