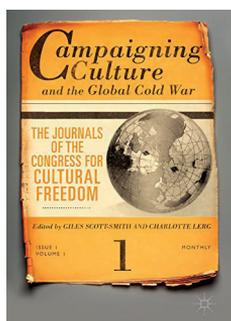




CAMPAIGNING CULTURE AND THE GLOBAL COLD WAR: THE JOURNALS OF THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte Lerg
(A Book Review)



Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) was published in 1967 and immediately became a runaway bestseller throughout Spanish America. The novel's success was a breakthrough moment and shone a spotlight on the rising movement known as the Boom in Spanish American literature, in which García Márquez and his contemporaries—Julio Cortázar, Carlos

Fuentes, and Mario Vargas Llosa—took center stage in what Pascale Casanova has deemed the “world republic of letters” (4). The Boom coincided with, and its success was fostered by, heightened international attention to Spanish America due to the Cuban revolution, support for which provided ideological coherence to the movement through the late 1960s.

The burgeoning publicity infrastructure that emerged in tandem with the Boom worked overtime in the months leading up to the release of *Cien años de soledad*. Excerpts from two chapters, as well as a profile of the author, were published in the Paris-based journal *Mundo Nuevo*, between August of 1966 and March of 1967, captivating a broad readership that contributed to the novel's record-breaking sales. This was standard fare for *Mundo Nuevo*, which, between 1966 and 1968, played a vital role in consecrating

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contemporary Spanish American literature throughout the region, Europe, and the US. From the very start, though, the journal was plagued by controversy, as rumors circulated that it was subsidized by the US government. Several writers, including Cortázar, refused to publish in the journal, which they viewed as being an instrument of US cultural imperialism.

In 1966 and 1967, exposés in the *New York Times* and *Ramparts* revealed that the CIA had covertly funded the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), which was the primary source of funding for *Mundo Nuevo*. The CCF was founded in 1950, a time when, as Michael Hochgeschwender has affirmed, “well written magazines and highbrow liberal propaganda were as important as battle cruisers, missiles, or marines” (“A Battle of Ideas” 322). Headquartered in Paris, the Congress sought to foster anti-communist consensus by establishing an international intellectual-cultural community that was brought together through a series of high-profile conferences and cultural events, as well as chapters and journals that were founded around the world (though often grounded in Western liberal values). Many of the latter, such as *Encounter*, the organization’s highly-successful flagship journal, which was edited in London by Stephen Spender, Irving Kristol, and, later, Melvin Lasky, attracted opinion molders and intellectuals from across the globe. Other initiatives, though, such as *Mundo Nuevo*, met with opposition that was heightened by liberation and decolonization movements and/or widespread anti-Americanism. The revelations of CIA funding for *Mundo Nuevo* only confirmed what many had already suspected, but they nevertheless tainted the journal. In May of 1967, García Márquez wrote to the editor, Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal, to formally sever ties with the journal. The Colombian asserted that he had published in the journal despite the open secret of its funding because he believed that authors influenced the journals in which they published, rather than vice versa, and because he enjoyed the irony of having his work circulate in the US thanks to government funding while he himself was *persona non grata* due to his support for the revolution. The CCF’s denial of knowledge of CIA funding,

however, rang false to him, and he refused to collaborate further with the journal as long as it remained affiliated with the Congress.¹

I open with this anecdote as it offers a little-known, but nevertheless paradigmatic, example of the tug-of-war dynamics whereby the CCF attracted—and sometimes ensnared—prominent writers from across the political spectrum through its network of journals, and of how its efforts to promote liberal values on a global scale often ran up against local politics in the sites where the journals were produced and circulated. These dynamics—and the many negotiations of agents, agency (and agencies), and ideological motivations that they entailed—are at the heart of Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte Lerg's impressive volume, *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom*. While the CCF has generated much scholarly interest over the years, most research has focused on the organization as a whole or on individual Congress chapters or journals. *Campaigning Culture* is the first book to bring together analyses of the histories and legacies of the Congress's many journals, and it marks a significant contribution to the history of the organization and the networks that it created.

It is difficult to do justice to the multiple histories brought together by the volume, so instead I offer here an overview that highlights its many strengths. *Campaigning Culture* boasts an A-list set of authors, many of whom have published definitive works on various CCF journals, the Congress as a whole, and/or the cultural Cold War.² It comprises an introduction, fifteen chapters, and a preface written by Matthew Spender, the son of Stephen Spender, the British poet and co-editor of *Encounter* whose career was deeply shaken by the funding revelations. Chapters offer new archival research combined with engagement with canonical and recent scholarship on the Congress and its activities. They also provide keen insights into the dynamics surrounding the journals' histories, including the top-down motivations of CCF headquarters for each

1. Letter, García Márquez to Rodríguez Monegal, 24th May 1967, Rodríguez Monegal Papers, Box 7, Folder 12, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

2. E.g., Scott-Smith and Lerg, of course, as well as Hochgeschwender, Olga Glondys, and María Eugenia Mudrovcic.

journal and the tensions occasioned by journals' efforts to negotiate their editorial independence—which, given the suspicions about their funding sources, was often crucial to maintaining the trust of the intellectuals whom they sought to reach. Scott-Smith and Lerg's assertion that the history of each journal encapsulates "a constant negotiation between the (Western) transnational interests of the CCF, its ideal of a global intellectual community, and the national contexts that set the terms for their immediate cultural reception" neatly summarizes the book's central concern (18). Thus, the editors identify a key goal for the volume as "better understand[ing] the CCF as a 'glocal' phenomenon" (6). Time and again, the authors demonstrate that despite CIA support for the Congress, "several layers of autonomy existed between CIA orchestration and cultural production," granting individual journals significant leeway to chart their own course (15).

Scott-Smith and Lerg have primarily organized the discussion of the Congress's journals by region of publication: Europe (*Der Monat*, *Preuves*, *Encounter*, *Tempo Presente*, *Forum*, and *Survey*); Latin America (*Cuadernos* and *Mundo Nuevo*); Africa and the Middle East (*Hiwār*, *Black Orpheus*, and *Transition*); and Asia and Australia (*Jiyū*, *Quest*, and *Quadrant*). There is also a section on the less-studied publications of the Congress's Committee on Science and Freedom (*Science and Freedom* and *Minerva*). In addition to covering the political dynamics inflecting the journals' trajectories, chapters examine how they were shaped by their editors (quite a few of whom had lived under totalitarian regimes and/or left the Communist Party, heightening their commitment to the CCF mission), as well as their circulation, funding patterns, and audience demographics. Chapters further discuss the effects (or, in some cases, the lack thereof) of the revelations of CIA funding on the journals' local circulation, reception, and credibility, as well as how they fared as the Congress was reorganized into the International Association for Cultural Freedom in 1967, with the Ford Foundation replacing the CIA as the organization's principal source of funding.

The glocal dimension shaping each journal—namely, editors' navigation of both local politics, including efforts to avoid the appearance of being vehicles for US propaganda, and direc-

tives from CCF headquarters—is foregrounded in each chapter. As the *Mundo Nuevo* episode demonstrates, in a climate where anti-American and anti-imperial sentiment ran high, some journals were shunned as vehicles for US propaganda well before CIA funding was confirmed. (Indeed, several editors were quite critical of US culture and politics in their journals in general.) In a number of cases, the disconnect between CCF’s blindered view of its mission and the local contexts in which its journals operated contributed to the demise of the latter. For example, as Olga Glondys details, in the case of *Cuadernos* (1953–1965), *Mundo Nuevo*’s predecessor in Spanish America, the CCF missed the mark entirely. Although it was aimed at a Spanish American readership, the journal was dominated by exiles who had left Spain following the Civil War. As a result, the journal’s contents were oriented towards Spain and Europe, rather than engaging with cultural issues and events in Spanish America. Moreover, its strident anti-communist rhetoric and pro-US attitude meant, in effect, that the journal was completely out of touch with the problems facing the region, which included multiple US-supported right-wing dictatorships, and was also largely ineffective at dealing with the massive political shift brought about by the Cuban revolution. In other cases, significant differences between the Congress’s driving principles and local circumstances in which communism and socialism were not viewed as the sole or principal threats led to strained relationships between editors and CCF headquarters.³ In such cases, following the CCF’s anti-communist messaging too closely would have doomed a journal’s reception, and editors ranged from strategic to defiant in their (dis)avowal of the Congress’s charge. Chapters by Glondys, María Eugenia Mudrovcic, and Ann Sherif, in turn, speak to the fault lines at play when the Congress’s efforts to court intellectuals from the Global South collided with its Eurocentric prejudices, which often viewed the cultural

3. In Italy, for example, as Chiara Morbi and Paola Carlucci detail, Ignazio Silone, editor of *Tempo Presente*, also addressed issues such as right-wing extremism and clericalism, and also had to work around popular support for the Communist Party, given its anti-fascism as well as role in the Resistance. In Japan, in turn, as Ann Sherif discusses, the Communist and Socialist parties were “part of the mainstream political system” (270).

production of non-Western nations as inferior and, thus, not up to the standards expected in its journals.

Scott-Smith and Lerg's introduction to *Campaigning Culture* is outstanding and sets the stage well for the stories told in individual chapters. In addition to foregrounding the glocal dynamics shaping the journals, the chapters offer valuable methodological lessons as well. For example, Jason Harding's assertion that "archives should be employed to illuminate public confrontations and controversies but can't be used simply to contradict the published record when the contents of *Encounter* [or, I would add, of CCF journals in general] tell a far more intricate and interesting story than corruption by power" offers a reminder that the exposure of hidden ties can be one of many parts of a journal's—or other entity's—history, rather than the sole determining factor in its work and legacy (112). With its deep archival base and nuanced thick description, this volume is an invaluable resource for the study of the CCF and its journals in particular, and an important contribution to global Cold War studies writ large.

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