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**THE COLD WAR OR THE *PAX AMERICANA***

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**RETHINKING THE COLD WAR**

The destruction of Berlin's wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the U.S.R.R. in 1991, combined with the opening of large quantities of Soviet and USA archives and publications of other materials, have provided a new, creative, vantage point from which to assess and to rethink the Cold War in general, and its impact on particular regions of the world.

Not only do we have a historical ending, and verdict, on that process with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and all that was associated with it, but we also have a mass of new documentary, interview, and memoir material from which to rethink the forty-year conflict.

As putting in the words of the historian John Lewis Gaddis<sup>1</sup>: ***“WE NOW KNOW”***: **ABOUT THE COLD WAR IN A WAY THAT WAS NOT POSSIBLE BEFORE**. However, there are many things that we still don't know about the Cold War. That's why it is very important to rethink the struggle in historical perspective.

From 1947 started a new kind of struggle between the liberal-democratic West and the Marxist-Socialist East usually known as the Cold War. It was a new kind of ideological conflict. As somebody defined it, the Cold War was a “battle for men's minds”<sup>2</sup>. Following this battle, in the cultural arena, it was created a “consortium” drawing on an extensive, highly influential network of intelligence personnel, political strategists, the corporate establishment, and the old school ties of the Ivy League universities. The task of the “consortium” was double: First, to inoculate the world against the contagion of Communism; and, then, to ease the passage of American foreign policy interests abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaddis, J. L., *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Saunders, Frances Stonor, *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, New York: The New Press, p. 2.

The result was a remarkably tight network of people<sup>3</sup> who worked alongside the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to promote an idea: that the world needed a *pax Americana*, a new age of enlightenment, and it would be called The American Century (*Ibidem*, p. 2).

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Let's start saying something about the name **COLD WAR**. As we know, first is the word to name reality and then the word becomes reality, the word becomes flesh. This particular kind of war, **that demands to stay ready to fight without fighting**, or to fight by different means, was labeled the "Cold War" in April 1947 by Bernard Baruch:

*"It was a situation that soon came to be known as the 'cold war', a phrase I introduced in a speech before the South Carolina legislature in April 1947 (...) I was indebted to Herbert Swope for this graphic expression, which caught the public imagination and became a part of the language".<sup>4</sup>*

When the Second World War ended it was a power vacuum that the Soviets moved in to fill it. The United States reacted immediately: "it became clear that they were waging war against us. It was a new kind of war, to be sure, in which the guns were silent; but our survival was at stake nonetheless"<sup>5</sup>. This war was unlike any other United States had ever fought. Some features can be presented:

- 1- It lasted a lot longer than any previous war, almost 50 years.
- 2- There is no consensus about the date of its starting point. It could be on August 6, 1945 when US dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan and introduced nuclear terror to the world. Or it could also be when the Second World War was over. Also it could have started in 1947 when President Harry Truman proclaimed "the containment doctrine" or policy or strategy: A kind of liberation of communism through no room and role for diplomacy until communism was defeated. Containment was a kind of struggle, for decades of construction would say its defenders. Or in 1948 when the Soviets overthrew the elected government in Czechoslovakia?
- 3- Another starting point could be the 1950's when the cultural features of the Cold War were given their most heightened expression.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE COLD WAR HISTORY

First at all, the most part of the current bibliography (books or articles) on the Cold War, either general historic references or specific readings, are in the mood to **RETHINK** or to **REINTERPRET** or to **RECONSTRUCT** the Cold War history and vision. What I would suggest to do is **TO DECONSTRUCT THE COLD WAR**, which is **TO DISPLACE ANY**

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<sup>3</sup> This highly influential network was described by Henry Kissinger as "an aristocracy dedicated to the service of this nation on behalf of principles beyond partisanship", quoted by Saunders, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Baruch, Bernard M., *The Public Years*, vol. 2, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960, p. 388.

<sup>5</sup> Baruch, Idem.

FIXED SENSE. I would rather be thinking about its meaning and implications for our present and future. As ever, understanding the past it will be easier to have an accurate notion of our present and future. Shall we be able to get ride of conventional Cold War explanations, and to open new ways to think about it? Let's start insisting in some points: Was there just one Cold War? Has it ended at all? There follows, then, that to deconstruct the Cold War historians and analysts in general should retain their capacity to be surprised.

My second point is related with the common opinion that the Cold War has ended. The so-called end of the Cold War emerges as a subject of great interest and concern in less formal settings. I am not sure that it is over. Before we conclude that the Cold War has ended, it might be well to decide or to discuss which Cold War is under discussion. That's why it is better to work with a problem that asks questions rather than gives solutions. I preferred to stand on the side of questions rather than on the side of answers. This is what we understand as deconstructing a subject: raising questions, looking at different sides of the problem, trying to make complex approaches to it, to break all the binary oppositions or relations. But the most important is to go beyond to the established truth. As Eric Hobsbawm points out:

*“Readers should not be misled by the confident tone of the literature (including my own observations) into a confusing opinions with established truths”.*<sup>6</sup>

The actors, or the agents, of the Cold War have been simplified. To telescope the past half-century into a only U.S.-SOVIET confrontation might be convenient, but it is to schematize and to simplify history. While North Americans and Russians did not kill each other in large number on battlefields, twenty million people did die in wars between the end of World War II and the Communist empire's collapse. This is between 1945 and 1989. All of these people died in the realms of democratic and constitutional values.

The Cold War was many things to many people. It was a division of the world into two hostile camps. It was a polarization of Europe in general, and of Germany in particular, into antagonistic spheres of influence. It was an ideological contest, some said between Capitalism and Communism, other said between democracy and authoritarianism. It was a competition for influence over the so-called “Third World”. It was a game of wits played out by massive intelligence organizations behind the scenes<sup>7</sup>. It was a struggle, but also a contest that shaped culture, the social and the natural sciences, and the writing of history. In this sense, we cannot talk in singular of only one Cold War, w e have to talk in plural. There were different Cold Wars, of various intensities. Not a single conflict but a number of confrontations related to the U.S.-SOVIET struggle.

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<sup>6</sup> Cit. in Gaddis, op. cit., p. 281. See also, Hobsbawm, E., *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World, 1914-1991*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996 (1994), pp. 225-255.

<sup>7</sup> Gaddis, J. L., “The Cold War, the Long Peace, and the Future”, in M. Hogan, (ed.), *The End of the Cold War. Its meaning and Implications*, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1992, p. 21.

### *A Typology of the Cold War*<sup>8</sup>

Four different but related Cold Wars can be identified. All have deep historical roots; that is, all have their origins well before 1945, but reached a maturity in the half-century after 1945. All 4 remain alive, to a greater or lesser extent, despite the end-of-Cold-War talk:

- 1. The first Cold War involves the ongoing struggle, dating back at least to World War I and the *Paris Peace Conference*, between the U.S. and the European countries to determine the kind of Europe that should evolve, and to decide how great a role U.S. will have in that determination. The success of the Marshall Plan, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and of the U.S. multinational corporations helped to mute the historic differences between the old and the new worlds.

Those new worlds were three. The world started to be defined in terms of three blocs. And when this happened, several problems stand out: the revived nationalism (often based on ethnical differences), and the exclusion from the blocs of a majority of the world's people.

- 2. This leads to a second part of the historic Cold War: The ongoing struggle between the world's commercial centers and the outlying countries that provide markets and raw materials. Thomas J. McCormick's *America's Half-Century* defines US Cold War policy as in large part:

*"A half-century attempt to stabilize and organize the 'periphery'".*

- 3. The third integral part of the post-1945 Cold War has been fought within the United States. I see the problem like this: turning and individualistic, open, commercial, and domestic-oriented society into a consensual, secret, militaristic, international force.

- 4. Even if these three historic struggles continue, the fourth part of the Cold War, the long conflict between the United States and the former Soviet Union, seems to have changed fundamentally. As the Republics of the former Soviet Union move away from Communist economics practices and towards new relationships with Japan and Europe, their policies will perhaps bear little resemblance to Stalin's ideological and national security issues, but could have considerable resemblance to the Tsar's Russia.

### *What Was the Cold War 'About'?*

In general this confrontation in modern history is defined in two ways: 1- As an ideological conflict, 2- As a military and geopolitical struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States, and between the Soviet Union and the West. One issue of importance, specially to historians, has to do with the origins and sources of the Soviet-North American confrontation. Here there are different views:

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<sup>8</sup> LaFEBER, W., "An End to Which Cold War?", in M. Hogan, (ed), *Ibidem*, pp. 13-19.

1- Some authors see the conflict rooted in effort by both countries to fill the power vacuums left by the Second World War. Initiatives as the Marshall Plan and NATO saved Western Europe from Stalinism in the years after 1947.

2- Authors also trace aspects of the struggle back to an earlier pattern of anti-Communism and interventionism in the U.S.A. foreign policy.

3- Others take for granted the Truman Doctrine in concluding that the Cold War in Europe was really a battle between Liberalism and Communism. This debate gave the Cold War its moral intensity, and was finally resolved with the defeat of authoritarianism and the triumph of liberalism<sup>9</sup>.

- If the Cold War was rooted in the debate of liberalism and the ideology of anti-Communism, has the debate between those positions ended? What is the debate about in the so-called Global Age?

- One leading question could be: Who won the Cold War and how? Some writers are convinced that Germany has emerged from the Cold War as a big winner, destined to become the key European leader as U.S.A. and Soviet influence in the Continent declines. In addition, other authors agree that Communism as an economic system and as a political ideology was a big loser, as was the Soviet Union. But, it does not follow for me that Soviet's defeat is USA's victory.

There are various reasons to believe this that have to be with deficiencies of the "official" Cold War history: It gave one side disproportionate attention or focus on the United States, its allies, or its clients. In so doing, Cold War official history manipulated facts. It was seen as a contest of good versus evil. Although, everybody recognizes that Marxism-Leninism during the Cold War fostered authoritarian romanticism, official history neglected the fact that two superpowers dominated the post-1945 world; that each often acted in response to what the other had done; and that third parties responded to each of them. Therefore, Soviet's defeat is a much complex event, and brought complex consequences for the world, than a simple USA's victory.

The watch words of post-Second World War anticommunist liberalism were "intellectual freedom" and "open society"<sup>10</sup>. The most interesting point is indeed its success but also the recount of how these ideas were mobilized, funded, and promoted by an elaborate covert operation orchestrated by the CIA in the name of freedom from the state. But the real name was neither freedom nor civic virtue, but empire and control.

That brings us to discuss at least two things:

- Rethinking anticommunist liberalism discourse as associated with the institutions of the US national security apparatus.
- Rethinking the relationships between intellectuals and political power.

As I already mentioned, Saunders' main argument is that Western liberal writers, artists and performers were used by the Central Intelligence Agency in promoting post-war

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<sup>9</sup> Halliday, F., *Neither Geostrategy nor "Internalism"*, *CONTENTION*, IV (1), Fall, 1994, pp. 49-66.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac, J., "Rethinking the Cultural Cold War", *DISSENT*, Summer 2002, p. 29.

anticommunist liberalism. In this sense, they were in fact serving as foot soldiers of US foreign policy, organized and covertly supported by the CIA. This argument is derived in focusing on the *Congress for Cultural Freedom*, a cosmopolitan network that organized many of the most important conferences and publications in the postwar period, whose CIA cover was blown only in 1967, in a series of explosive revelations.

Some facts from this secret program of cultural propaganda in Western Europe, also extended to Latin America and Asia, are:

- 1- It was managed, in great secrecy, by USA espionage arm, CIA
- 2- The Congress for Cultural Freedom, centerpiece of this covert campaign, run by CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 till 1967.
- 3- The Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in 35 countries, employed hundreds of personnel, published over 20 prestigious magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances.

## COLD WAR FILMS AND LITERATURE

In the 1954 film *Strategic Air Command*, Dutch (Jimmy Stewart), a star pitcher for the St Louis Cardinals, tells his wife, Sally (Doris Day), that he has decided to forsake his lucrative baseball career and stay in the Air Force. Sally, not understanding, protests this decision on the ground that there is no war going on. Dutch corrects her:

*“But there is a kind of war. We have got to stay ready  
to fight without fighting. That’s even tougher.  
That’s why I made this decision”*

Sally blurts out: *“You made it. We didn’t”*. It is a very interesting metaphor to represent the new war the United States was engaged in. It was put on the screen the elements of a new kind of war: A war that is not a real battle, but a war which required constant vigilance and readiness to fight on a moment’s notice<sup>11</sup>.

In literature, when the fictional dictator *Big Brother* proclaimed the propaganda slogan *“War Is Peace”* in Georges Orwell’s novel *1984*, first published in 1948, he turned out to be a better prophet than anyone. For we can now see that the most dangerous and bitter rivalry between Great Powers in modern history, did in time its literary representation but also its exclusions<sup>12</sup>. Popular genres such as crime fiction and science fiction were placed in a particularly marginal position within the Cold War climate of the 1950’s.

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<sup>11</sup> Kuznick, Peter S. and J. Gilbert (eds.), *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Gaddis, “The Cold War, the Long...,” op. cit., p. 21.

Many in the West felt that this war was being waged, not just against the Soviets and communism, but against mass culture as a whole. Indeed, mass culture was widely perceived as a powerful threat to the very survival of the values of the Western high cultural tradition.

There was a mounting horror of popular culture on both the Left and the Right in USA intellectual circles of the 1950's. In opposition to this trend, it has been noticed the growing importance of science fiction at the same period, which is still regarded as the "Golden Age" of the genre<sup>13</sup>.

The 1950's, era of the Cold War, inspired science fiction films and a kind of literature that informed USA attitudes during this period and allowed opportunistic political and ideological manipulations: Promoting the penetration of capitalist Fordist-Taylorist organization. Films and literature during the 1950's were largely a phenomenon of Cold War propaganda, in the way they could be opposed to the less impressive and sophisticated socialist realist art of the Soviet Union.

## **THE COLD WAR AND LATIN AMERICA**

It can be argued that the Continent was also a battlefield of another kind as both the United States and the Soviet Union carried on covert activities to influence the hearts and minds of Latin Americans. Thus abstract universalism and freedom were values disseminated by CIA-funded journals against the universal teleology of revolution, behind which lurked the Soviet national project.

But, let's say that to understand the Cold War in Latin America we have to come back to the Second World War period. Those years were characterized by a class collaboration in Latin America. Communist parties were close to the democratic parties and alliances. There was an overwhelming dilution of political and ideological differences, as well as the abandonment of any vestige of nationalism that implied criticism of, or antagonism against, the United States. The main feature was: collaboration among all progressive forces of capitalism in every Country in order to increase production and raise the standard of living of the working people.

During this period, Communist parties either changed their names, tried to form more broadly based fronts and national unions, or found remarkably strange bedfellows among the local oligarchies (The Peruvian Communist Party and its Manuel Pardo's *Frente Democrático*, the collaboration of Venezuela's Communist Party with Medinas's government and the Liberal Party in Colombia)<sup>14</sup>.

But in 1947, the USA-Soviet alliance disintegrated. By this time the Cold War broke out, and almost all of Latin America's Communist parties were seriously weakened, divided,

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<sup>13</sup> Booker, M. Keith, *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War. American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*, Greenwood Press.

<sup>14</sup> Castaneda, J., *Utopia Unarmed. The Latin Left after the Cold War*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

or divorced from their traditional or potential constituencies. In fact, the events surrounding the end of World War II facilitated the efforts of the newly emerged regimes to curtail the open political activities of the Communist Party. In 1947 and 1948, the parties of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and several other countries were declared illegal. The consequence was that during most of the 1950's, the parties reacted to these events with a policy that defended the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War, and through class antagonism and radical confrontation, all the while maintaining the same theoretical scaffolding erected twenty years before<sup>15</sup>.

The Communist parties' central, long-term objective remained a national-democratic revolution, agrarian reform, and an alliance with the middle classes and the national bourgeoisie. But after the Cold War started the principal enemy was once again imperialism, reduced to its barest expression: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES<sup>16</sup>.

Some of the most important populist parties in Latin America were either born or resurrected under the influence of the Cold War and the fight against Communism and the USSR in Latin America, or subsequently as a response to the Cuban Revolution. That was the case to *Accion Democrática* in Venezuela, Juan Bosh's *Partido de la Revolucion Democratica* from the Dominican Republic, and so on.

However, what is most interesting to Latin America politics and society is the effects of the Cold War's conclusion on the left. There is the generalized perception of defeat. This sense of defeat is derived from the left's perceived or real connection with existing socialism. For the left, the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe represents the end of a effective, nearly century-old utopia. Which means in the words of Jose Arico:

*“The transfer of the paradigm from old thinking to new situations is necessary because the idea of revolution has been shaken from top to bottom by the collapse of the East”<sup>17</sup>.*

Because nation-building in Latin America is incomplete, and the cause of social change inseparable from redeeming the national for the people, the Left in Latin America has no choice but to remain nationalistic. This is a very important position in the so-called GLOBAL AGE that implies to be directed towards the United States.

But the parameters and definition of the nation under construction have to change, the way in which that nationalism must also evolve has yet to be determined. Before proposing a new nationalism for the left according to the GLOBAL AGE economic and political forces, it is worth examining how the traditional trappings of the USA

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<sup>15</sup> Franco, J., *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Castaneda, J., *Utopia Unarmed...*, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Castaneda, J., *Utopia Unarmed...*, Ibidem, p. 241.

intervention, which underpinned much of the region's nationalism and many of the conflict of the past fifty years, are replaced by other newer forms.

Finally, I want to emphasize in the consequence of the immediate aftermath of the Cold War's conclusion. How could it be a substitute for anti-Sovietism in the United States' policy toward Latin America? After the evil Soviet-Communist empire, which new evils would emerge to the USA: drug production, growing migration, among others? From this perspective, one needs to revise the "geopolitically determined" chronology of postwar international affairs that charts the history of the era in terms of the origins, intensification, and termination of the Cold War. If nonstate actors are factored into the equation, the steady process of globalization, rather than the rise and fall of bipolar superpower confrontation, emerges as the key phenomenon of recent history. If what is at the heart of our historical inquiry is the human condition, then it makes sense to go beyond the nation or the state as the sole framework of analysis and deal with human affairs, human aspirations, human values, and human tragedies.