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In the aftermath of World War II, U.S. labor leaders evinced increasing interest in spreading the doctrine of pure-and-simple unionism to Latin America. They joined an ideologically diverse field of labor activists, politicians, and business leaders in a battle over the best way to organize a political economy, and, indeed, society at large. They also came to the task with experience born through the war effort. During the war a colorful cast of American Federation of Labor (AFL) leaders, including David Dubinsky, Serafino Romualdi, Irving Brown, and Jay Lovestone had worked for or in cooperation with the U.S. government to support capitalist trade union movements throughout Europe.¹ As the United States sought to spread its model of liberal corporate capitalism around the world after World War II, AFL leaders enthusiastically joined the struggle.

The crusading efforts of U.S. labor leaders abroad have generated a distinct scholarly literature.² Thomas Field ably enters into that larger conversation with his article, "Transnationalism Meets Empire: The AFL-CIO, Development, and the Private Origins of Kennedy's Latin American Labor Program." It "uncovers the private origins of the massive overseas labor program launched by the Kennedy administration in 1962. In the process, it grapples with the intersection between private agency and official structure, a crossroads where the transnational flows of labor activism met the imperial practice of state power" (307). Field explains how private U.S. labor leaders, working in cooperation with public officials such as Arthur Goldberg, and to a lesser extent with private business leaders, designed and ran key elements of the John F. Kennedy administration's international labor program in Latin America.

Field first sketches the origins of the U.S. government's partnership with organized labor in foreign affairs. Key labor leaders worked in or cooperated with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. Serafino Romualdi, for example, worked with Nelson Rockefeller in Latin America and with the OSS in Europe during the course of the war, before opening the AFL's Latin American desk shortly after its conclusion. AFL labor leaders, including George Meany, Romualdi,

¹ Serafino Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967), constitutes a particularly intriguing memoir.

² See especially Geert Van Goethem and Robert Anthony Waters, Jr., eds., *American Labor's Global Ambassadors: The International History of the AFL-CIO during the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spy Master* (New York: Random House, 1999); Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1969); Gregg Andrews, *Shoulder to Shoulder?: The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1924* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Jon Kofas, *The Struggle for Legitimacy: Latin American Labor and the United States, 1930-1960* (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 1992); Magaly Rodríguez García, *Liberal Workers of the World United?: The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America, 1949-1969* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2010); Edmund F. Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Dubinsky, Brown, and Lovestone, shared an intense anti-communism. Seeking to provide an alternative to communist-oriented international labor movements, and to promote the type of trilateral cooperative arrangements born out of the New Deal between business, labor, and the state, they worked to create a vehicle for spreading the gospel of free trade unionism throughout the hemisphere. The *Organización Regional Inter-Americana de Trabajadores* (Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers, ORIT) provided an institutional coordinating mechanism for like-minded trade unions. However, labor leaders continued to search for an effective instrument with which to transmit the values of “AFL-style corporatism” (314) throughout the region, and received less support from the Eisenhower administration than they thought the task warranted. By the late 1950s, Communication Workers of America (CWA) President Joseph Beirne began developing the concept for a labor institute. A convert to ideas of modernization gaining support throughout the broader policy community, Beirne believed that educating regional labor leaders potentially provided the most effective means of advancing the cause of U.S.-style liberal internationalism.

That vision came to fruition in partnership with the Kennedy administration through the establishment of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). Essentially, AIFLD comprised a school to train promising Latin American labor leaders in the advantages of AFL-style free trade unionism. While AIFLD was initially run by sociologist John McCollum, Romualdi ultimately added the job to his portfolio. The institute provided scholarships that brought prospective regional labor leaders to the United States for instruction. AFL-CIO officials, led by Romualdi, developed the curriculum and organized the operation. Moreover, Labor Secretary Goldberg positioned himself at the fulcrum of public-private collaboration. In this case, Goldberg’s bureaucratic political skills were astute; he took for himself a foreign policy portfolio relating to labor activities overseas while the AFL-CIO designed and carried out the program – a quintessentially Hooverian powerplay undertaken by the New Deal liberal.³

The AFL-CIO coordinated with the federal government and private businesses to generate financial support for AIFLD. Ultimately, private support was more limited than Romualdi and his supporters would have liked; despite business leaders Peter Grace and Juan Trippe’s enthusiastic support, few others offered significant aid since they believed that the project to be a waste of money. The Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations possessed different outlooks entirely. In its first year of operation, the U.S. government provided more than half of AIFLD’s funding; by 1965, USAID contributed an astounding 92 percent of AIFLD’s budget (329). The state was fully invested in the AFL-CIO’s project. It had, in effect bankrolled and subcontracted labor diplomacy in Latin America to AIFLD. In Field’s framing, that private transnational organization – working in cooperation with, and enjoying financial support from the imperial state – formulated and executed a paternalistic Latin American labor policy.

Throughout the article, Field engages the well-known connections between U.S. labor and the OSS, and then the CIA. Much of the literature, especially earlier studies, found that the fact of CIA collusion with organized labor demonstrated that labor served simply as an instrument of state policy. This view of state power was famously advanced by former CIA agent Philip Agee.⁴ Alternatively, it is possible to conclude that the CIA was a more marginal, supporting actor because U.S. labor leaders took the lead in formulating initiatives; they did not need a state intelligence service to tell them to be anti-Communist. Such was the conclusion of a subsequent and generally critical U.S. Senate committee investigation into the collaboration. Finding neither of these conclusions adequate, Field holds that “[t]he truth is that the AFL-CIO’s overseas operations were neither as freewheeling as the U.S. Senate report claimed, nor as tightly controlled as Agee believed. They originated from a genuine intersection of transnational labor activism and the imperial state. By combining these two

³ As Commerce Secretary, Herbert Hoover similarly expanded the portfolio of his cabinet department into international economic activities. See Ellis Hawley, “Herbert Hoover, the Commerce Secretariat, and the Vision of an ‘Associative State,’ 1921-1928,” *Journal of American History* 61:1 (June 1974): 116-140; Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Empire: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918-1928* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977). On Arthur Goldberg, see David L. Stebenne, *Arthur J. Goldberg: New Deal Liberal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴ Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975).

analytical approaches, this article demonstrates the importance of viewing nonstate agency in a constant dialectical relationship with state power” (332).

Finally, it is important to understand the scope of Field’s analysis in this article. An international and transnational historian, Field has conducted extensive archival research in Bolivia and is equally comfortable with historians of U.S. foreign relations and historians of Latin America.⁵ This article, however, is fundamentally about the construction of power in the United States, and organized labor’s part in making and executing the country’s Latin American policy. Field does not evaluate the efficacy of the AIFLD approach from the standpoint of the objectives of U.S. elites, though he does suggest that much more work is necessary on the effects of U.S. labor on the ground in Latin America. For its part, the AFL-CIO’s leadership judged their efforts worth repeating; AIFLD became a template to be applied to Africa and Asia by the end of the 1960s (330).

Significantly, Fields situates his article in conversation with two historiographies – those of transnational history and U.S. imperial history. Though based in the United States, U.S. labor leaders were certainly transnational actors – that is, in Field’s definition, “cross-border non-state actors” (306). They also worked within the larger context of the U.S. state. Field defines that state as imperial – a common framing in the historiography of U.S.-Latin American relations – but does not offer a precise definition of the “imperial state” beyond referencing Paul Kramer’s scholarship.⁶ I would like to have seen Field develop the idea of “imperial notions of Third World Development” (327).

Most notably, “Transnationalism Meets Empire” deals explicitly with the public-private construction of power between tripartite groups – the state, business, and organized labor. As Field explains, “this article uncovers the private origins of the massive overseas labor program launched by the Kennedy administration in 1962. In the process, it grapples with the intersection between private agency and official structure, a crossroads where the transnational flows of labor activism met the imperial practice of state power” (307). Given that analytic scope, I am surprised that Field did not also frame his article as making an intervention into corporatist historiography. The corporatist framework provides an invaluable approach for understanding the construction of power mediated by these distinct functional interest groups. It is concerned with patterns of public-private cooperation, and recognizes the interplay between functional elites in the public and private sectors as instrumental in developing and implementing policy. It also facilitates investigations into the autonomous interests of various private transnational actors, including businesses and labor unions. Historians have fruitfully applied the corporatist framework to a variety of time periods, and a variety of issues, in the history of U.S. foreign relations. Field’s analysis of public-private cooperation in the construction and execution of policy appears ready-made for the approach. The corporatist synthesis also has the capacity to bridge the divide between scholars pushing the bounds of transnational analysis and those trumpeting the continued importance of the state – analytic ground on which Field develops his analysis.⁷

⁵ Thomas C. Field, Jr., *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Field, Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pettinà, eds., *Latin America and the Global Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

⁶ Paul Kramer, “Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World,” *American Historical Review* 116:5 (December 2011): 1348-1391.

⁷ For an overview, see Hogan, “Corporatism,” in Frank Costigliola and Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 42-57; Thomas J. McCormick, “Drift or Mastry?: A Corporatist Synthesis for American Diplomatic History,” *Reviews in American History* 10:4 (December 1982): 318-330. A sampling of key works include, Hogan, *Informal Entente*; Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Paul W. Drake, *Money Doctor in the Andes: The Kemmerer Missions, 1923-1933* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989); Melvyn Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America’s Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominions: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*:

Historians have dedicated less attention to the nexus of public-private cooperation in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives in recent years, but the interplay is primed for a resurgence of interest. Explaining both the construction and implementation of U.S. foreign policy requires a close reading of the public-private construction of power, and the processes—formal and informal—that connect the two. It is time to broaden our analysis into a transnational web of sometimes overlapping state and private actors.

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Ultimately, Field tells an important story of cooperation between labor, the state, and private businesses in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America. It emphasizes the importance of exporting a particular variety of capitalism to U.S. elites during the Kennedy era. Field's writing never fails to inform, and his keen eye provides a welcome contribution to the story of the construction of power, transnational labor activism, and the imperial state. This article deserves a broad reading.

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America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); David S. Painter, *Oil and the American Century: The Political Economy of U.S. Foreign Oil Policy, 1941-1954* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Glenn J. Dorn, *Peronistas and New Dealers: U.S.-Argentine Rivalry and the Western Hemisphere, 1946-1950* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005); Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Saud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).