

Hallvard Notaker, Giles Scott-Smith, David J. Snyder, eds.. *Reasserting America in the 1970s: U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad*. Key Studies in Diplomacy Series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. 256 pp. \$34.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-78499-331-3.

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In 1990, Peter N. Carroll titled his comprehensive history of the 1970s *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s*. While Carroll's study reemphasized that the 1970s was not merely a calm, tranquil decade following the tumultuous 1960s, it helped challenge popular conceptions of the decade. Several noteworthy books would follow, including Edward Berkowitz's *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (2005) and Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer's *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (2008). In the field of diplomatic history, numerous scholars of the period have previously focused on grand strategy—whether it be Raymond Garthoff's classic study *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (1994) or Jussi Hanhimäki's biography of Henry Kissinger, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (2004). Yet, as *Reasserting America in the 1970s: U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad* confirms, there is still much to be gained from studying American public diplomatic efforts in the 1970s.

Most of the essays within this volume begin during the height of the civil rights movement and against the backdrop of the Vietnam War in

the mid-to-late 1960s. While many of them explore the Richard Nixon administration's and the United States Information Agency's (USIA) response to the turbulence of the 1960s, others more closely examine public diplomacy in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Watergate, and the Church Committee Investigations. What makes the volume even more intriguing is that part 1 of the collection emphasizes the United States' attempts to refine the nation's reputation, while part 2 focuses on the world's response to US public diplomatic endeavors.

In the first essay of part 1, "Devil at the Crossroads," Nicholas J. Cull traces the development of the USIA from its creation during the Dwight Eisenhower administration to its termination in 1999. While several reorganizational attempts failed to separate public diplomacy from the State Department—most notably, the reform recommendations produced by the "Stanton Panel" led by Frank Stanton—USIA's inflexibility and tie to the Cold War ultimately led to its demise. As Cull writes, "U.S. public diplomacy has been trying to recover ever since. It is high time to reconsider Stanton's arguments for a radical rethinking of culture and exchange and once again consider a new beginning for U.S. public diplomacy to fit the

needs of an increasingly independent world” (p. 37).

In addition to two excellent essays, “The Sister City Network in the 1970s” by Brian C. Etheridge and “The Exposure of CIA Sponsorship of Radio Free Europe” by Kenneth Osgood in part 1, Laura A. Belmonte (“USIA Responds to the Women’s Movement, 1960-75”) and Michael K. Krenn (“The Low Key Mulatto Coverage”) analyze the USIA’s portrayal of American women and African Americans. Belmonte documents USIA’s remarkable shift—and the behind-the-scenes struggles and debates over how to present women and women’s history—from portraying women as homemakers and consumers in the 1950s and 1960s to celebrating women’s professional accomplishments in 1975. Krenn’s conclusions are less sanguine, as the USIA attempted to conceal racial tensions by highlighting economic individualism and the “black capitalism” policies advocated by the Nixon administration. While such scholars as Dean Kotlowski in *Nixon’s Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy* (2001) have written somewhat favorably on Nixon’s civil rights policies, Krenn sees the emphasis on “black capitalism” negatively, writing that “the essential goal of ‘whitening’ the ‘black problem’ remained” (p. 105).

American arts diplomacy and enthusiasm for the space program as public diplomacy suffered in the 1970s as well. In “Paintbrush Politics,” Claire Bower shows how artists in the early 1960s eagerly accepted governmental sponsorship and funding for using their works as instruments of cultural diplomacy, but after many artists began to participate in the anti-war movement and protest American foreign policy, funding and artists’ interest in United States’ cultural diplomacy collapsed. Likewise, as Teasel Muir-Harmony shows in “Selling Space Capsules, Moon Rocks, and America,” the United States’ diplomatic efforts at accentuating the space program and even developing a cooperative space program with the

Soviets disintegrated in the face of inflation and the breakdown of détente.

Allesandro Brogi commences part 2 of the volume with an essay on Eurocommunism, “America’s Public Diplomacy in France and Italy during the Years of Eurocommunism,” and covers the French Communist Party’s (PCF) and French International Communist Party’s (PCI) response to US public diplomacy. Brogi soft-pedals the effectiveness of American guided diplomacy and recounts a striking incident when members of Charles De Gaulle’s presidential staff proposed to Henry Kissinger a covertly funded US propaganda campaign intended to discredit the PCF and PCI (Kissinger turned down the offer). Ultimately, Brogi suggests, “it was, however, economic guidance and strategic reassurance that the Europeans sought from Washington, while America’s images and intentions were still widely questioned, perhaps more than before” (p. 156).

Part 2 continues as John C. Stoner explores US public diplomacy with South Africa and sheds further light on the USIA’s paltry but subtle attempts at challenging apartheid (“Selling America between Sharpsville and Soweto”). In “Selling the American West on the Frontier of the Cold War,” Benjamin P. Greene focuses on American endeavors to solidify German-American relations and, in the late 1960s, to provide counter-narratives to the Vietnam anti-war movement at the Berlin Volkfest. Part 2 is rounded out with exceptional chapters from Barbara Keys on human rights (“Something to Boast About”), M. Todd Bennett on the 1976 American bicentennial and the normalization of US-Swedish relations (“Time to Heal the Wounds”), and John M. Rosenberg’s account of American diplomatic efforts to project an image of military strength after the Vietnam War and the oil crisis following the October War (“Present Danger, Defense Spending, and the Perception of American Power Abroad, 1973-1980”). In the “Unquiet American,” Paul M. McGarr astutely analyzes the international response to the Church

Committee's revelations and the inability of policymakers to separate the image of American foreign policy from the perfidious reputation of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Hallvard Notaker, Giles Scott-Smith, and David J. Snyder have brought together a superb collection of essays authored by first-rate historians. In particular, *Reasserting America in the 1970s* succeeds at showing how US public diplomats marketed the United States to a skeptical world in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and Watergate, and attempted to manage discourse through public and private cooperation, and how diplomats and foreign audiences interpreted the messages. The volume not only is an indispensable addition to the study of diplomatic history but is also timely, as it fits in nicely with the recent historiographical thrust that recognizes the 1970s as a pivotal decade in American history.

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