

AFTERWORD

Patterns and Puzzles

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The organizers of the 1966 Tricontinental Conference exuded certainty. They were certain of their purpose. “It is obvious that the militant solidarity of the peoples of the three continents is a necessity which cannot be postponed,” asserted a statement of objectives written in advance of the meeting. The organizers were certain, too, of their methods. The peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America must join with the socialist bloc as well as “progressive” forces in Europe and the United States to oppose both colonialism and neocolonialism – categories they carefully teased apart – by whatever means were necessary, including “armed struggle,” asserted the statement. And the organizers were certain that their endeavor marked something new in the annals of anti-colonial activism. “The celebration of this Conference in Havana is an event of world-wide importance,” declared the statement, which promised that cooperation among the world’s downtrodden and exploited peoples would deal no less than “a severe blow to the backbone of imperialism.”¹

In some respects, the conference, like the movement it announced, corresponded to the rhetoric, however overheated the latter may have been. As R. Joseph Parrott establishes in the Introduction to this volume, the new phase of activism announced at Havana possessed several characteristics that distinguished Tricontinentalism from other strands of the anti-imperial project dating back to the early twentieth century and made the new movement a distinct departure in the history of Third World

¹ “Antecedents and Objectives of the Movement of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America,” in *First Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Havana: General Secretariat of the OSPAAAL, 1966), 17, 22, 26.

organizing. Perhaps most conspicuously, leaders uniting under the Tricontinental banner embraced violence more explicitly than earlier architects of the Third World movement. Numerous chapters highlight the belief that Western rapaciousness could be defeated only through direct confrontation and the tendency to celebrate armed resistance, most notably North Vietnam's struggle against US intervention in Southeast Asia. The era of the heroic liberation fighter was at hand.

Related to this enthusiasm for direct action was a notably expansive view of the challenges that must be overcome on the road to global justice. Whereas earlier generations of Third World leaders had concentrated on the evils of formal "flag" colonialism, the Havana conference fixed attention on the pernicious ways in which the United States and Europe continued to wield economic and cultural supremacy even after colonial territories had won their independence. Cuban primacy in the Tricontinental movement, highlighted in several of the preceding chapters, made this adjustment practically inevitable since most of Latin America had, after all, gained its independence decades before; Cuba's prominence made sense only if US behavior in the Western Hemisphere could be linked to the territorial domination that still prevailed in many parts of the East. But the emphasis on neocolonialism also appealed to revolutionary leaders in Asia and Africa by explaining problems that lingered after imperial ties were severed and providing a rationale for global cooperation. Furthermore, the concept of neocolonialism helped assure ideological homogeneity by disqualifying nations that had gained their independence but hewed closely to the West, a condition that ipso facto reflected stunted progress on the road to postcolonial consciousness.

The architects of Tricontinentalism also conformed to the rhetoric of the Havana conference by downplaying non-alignment, a major theme of earlier strands of Third World organizing, and casting their lot firmly with the communist bloc. Pragmatic considerations contributed to this shift. Cooperation with communist nations, particularly the Soviet Union and China but also smaller powers such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia, enabled small nations to close the yawning gap between their material capabilities and those of Western nations hostile to revolution. But, as several chapters show, the embrace of Marxism also flowed from ideological convictions that now, rather than geography or historical experience with colonialism, provided the key criteria of membership. Above all, proponents of Tricontinentalism saw capitalist exploitation as the principal cause of the Third World's woes, including the economic backwardness, racial inequality, cultural marginalization, and political

fragmentation that had long inhibited effective resistance against the West. To be sure, various chapters reveal the profound ways in which the Sino-Soviet split disrupted and limited, if not actually destroyed, the Tricontinental project. But consensus prevailed among the proponents of Tricontinentalism on the basic notion that the Third World revolution would be built on the foundations laid by communist revolutionaries in earlier times.

This emphasis on ideology was intertwined with another hallmark of Tricontinentalism championed at the Havana conference and well-illustrated in this book. The movement went further than any earlier variant of Third Worldism in embracing nonstate movements and parties alongside governments of independent states. As Map 0.2 makes clear, nonstate groups ranging from South Vietnam's National Liberation Front to Amílcar Cabral's African Party for the Independence of Guiné and Cabo Verde to Puerto Rican nationalists had seats at the table in Havana. This diversity reflected the fact that common purposes and tactical preferences, rather than geography or historical experience of colonialism, provided the glue that held the movement together. It reflected, too, the movement's fascination with aiding fledgling revolutionary groups – often romanticized as beleaguered Davids facing off against Western Goliaths – along the path to power in fully sovereign nations. By 1966, enough Third World nations had gained their independence and accumulated sufficient power to exert political influence, if not material support, beyond their borders and to form networks of mutual assistance. But the wide variety of participating entities also resulted from the subtle ways in which race figured into Tricontinentalism. As Parrott argues in the Introduction (and as numerous chapters bear out), adherents of Tricontinentalism sought to generate solidarity on the basis of a shared non-white identity and the hostility they ascribed to the Anglo-American world. Yet this non-white identity was, in Parrott's words, "a fluid, often symbolic element within Tricontinentalism." It was, that is, a loose and expansive concept that encompassed a vast array of the world's populations and served more as a proxy for the larger political agenda than as any sort of fixed category.

If the essays in this volume underscore the principles and practices that lent coherence to Tricontinentalism, they also, however, point out any number of ambiguities that hover around the phenomenon. Of course, it is no surprise that such vagaries can be discerned. A worldwide movement organized around a complex array of ideals and tactics was bound to give rise to inconsistencies and contradictions that enable latter-day historians

to draw differing conclusions. Indeed, one of the principal strengths of Tricontinentalism, like any plausible movement with global ambitions, was surely its adaptability to sharply different geographical, historical, and political circumstances. Digging into these areas of ambiguity thus promises to reveal some of the reasons why Tricontinentalism resonated so powerfully across diverse spaces. What might appear to be weaknesses often were strengths. But exposing these uncertainties, along with the differences of interpretation that have arisen from them, also promises both to highlight the nascent debates swirling around the history of the Third World movement in the 1960s and 1970s and to lay out at least the broad contours of the research agenda that awaits future scholars concerned with the matters addressed in this collection. The essays point in particular to three broad questions that drive interpretive uncertainty: What were the origins of Tricontinentalism? How should we understand the trajectory of the movement that gave rise to, and followed from, the Havana conference? And how should we evaluate Tricontinentalism's overall successes and failures?

With respect to the origins of the Tricontinental Conference, the organizers' statement of objectives could hardly have been more definitive: the meeting represented a heroic effort by enlightened political forces to deliver decisive blows at a moment when the imperialist system was "in crisis," succumbing to its own "internal contradictions."² A few of the essays in this volume highlight the confidence with which Tricontinentalism reflected this sense of historic opportunity and coherence of purpose. Perhaps most strikingly, Michelle D. Paranzino's chapter reveals Che Guevara's confidence that Latin America, if not a wider swath of the world, was poised to defeat "Yankee imperialism" through the right political tactics and proper application of force. Parrott describes Amílcar Cabral as a more nuanced thinker but also leaves little doubt that the PAIGC leader viewed the Tricontinental movement as a vehicle for achieving his own objectives as well as anti-colonialism on a global scale. Rafael Hernández and Jennifer Ruth Hosek similarly see coherence and foresight at the heart of Tricontinentalism, even suggesting that it gave rise to a "grand strategy" to advance Third World interests. For the most part, though, the essays in this collection show that the Tricontinental Conference emerged from a sense of setback, even crisis, within the communist and developing worlds, not within the capitalist West. In Jeremy Friedman's words, early 1966 even represented the moment of

² *Ibid.*, 18.

“peak fracture” in post-1945 efforts to build an effective Third World movement.

In making this point, the essays are on target in ways that none of them explicitly acknowledges. Although the West may plausibly have entered a moment of “crisis” by 1968 due to the Vietnam War and burgeoning social unrest, only hints of this deterioration were visible in the period leading up to the Havana conference. On the contrary, 1965 stood out as perhaps the zenith of US power in the post-1945 era. Western economies, above all that of the United States, soared to unprecedented heights, while liberals scored major successes in passing transformative domestic reforms that enhanced American prestige abroad. In the military realm, moreover, the United States possessed staggering nuclear capabilities, a planet-encircling archipelago of bases, and massive air and naval forces that enabled Washington to project power virtually anywhere. All in all, according to a later study, US military power in 1965 was more than nine times greater than that of the Soviet Union. For its part, Moscow possessed little capacity to use force beyond Soviet border areas and acquired a credible nuclear arsenal capable of surviving a US first strike only in 1966.³

More closely connected to the purposes of this book, various developments in the Third World during 1964 and 1965 suggested that Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, far from uniting to promote global revolution, were in fact tipping toward the West. As several chapters suggest, coups in Brazil (April 1964), Algeria (June 1965), and Indonesia (October 1965) destroyed or diminished governments that had recently held leadership roles in Third World forums and vigorously challenged Western hegemony. The 1966 coup that overthrew Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana only confirmed what Jeffrey James Byrne calls, with notable understatement, the “worrying trend” against Third World radicalism. Facing a particularly gloomy situation in Latin America, several authors agree, Castro’s government – already reeling from a sense of abandonment by Moscow during the Cuban Missile Crisis – felt increasingly isolated within the Western Hemisphere. As Eric Gettig puts it, Cuba faced its “most severe diplomatic and economic isolation” since the revolution of 1959 as a consequence of its suspension from the Organization of American States and the imposition of an OAS-wide economic embargo. To the considerable extent that the Cuban

³ Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 4–5, 7.

government led the drive for the Tricontinental Conference, then, it did so out of weakness and a sense that legitimization of its revolutionary pretensions would have to be found in the Eastern Hemisphere, particularly through cooperation with African liberation movements on battlefields thousands of miles from the island.

To the extent that African nations responded to Cuban initiative and lined up behind the Tricontinental project, they also appear to have acted largely from a position of weakness, if not outright desperation. In his analysis of the African National Congress, for example, Ryan Irwin notes that Cuban activism offered a way out of the “morass” of setbacks afflicting the ANC in the years before the Tricontinental Conference. At Havana, Irwin argues, ANC officials latched onto Cuban theories about “neocolonialism” as a way to explain their problems and embraced the Tricontinental’s acceptance of violence as a way to revitalize their fortunes. Byrne’s analysis of Algeria suggests, too, that Tricontinentalism sprang more from weakness than confidence about the future. Although the Algerian-Cuban relationship formed the axis around which the whole movement coalesced, contends Byrne, leaders of the two countries barely knew anything about each other. Their ritualistic invocations of solidarity, he writes, were useful mostly as a way of stirring a glimmer of hope at a time when both faced dire challenges. Of the chapters examining Tricontinentalism in specific national settings, only Pierre Asselin’s analysis of Vietnam fails to note the ways in which transnational solidarity appealed as a way to offset profound weaknesses. Asselin’s essay is, however, an exception that proves the rule since North Vietnam had a steady source of supply and political support from the communist superpowers. Third World solidarity was, in this anomalous case, more a bonus than a necessity.

Authors who focus on the roles of the communist powers offer a similarly critical assessment of the origins of Tricontinentalism, emphasizing the ways in which the Sino-Soviet rivalry drove the radicalization of the Third World movement in the mid-1960s. To be sure, Friedman acknowledges the central role of the Cuban government, which sought to overcome its isolation through leadership of a worldwide revolutionary effort. But he argues that both the Chinese and Soviet regimes drove the Tricontinental agenda by contributing in important ways to the confrontational approach announced at Havana. For the Chinese government, radicalism promised to bolster Beijing’s claim to leadership of the Third World movement following the collapse of the Bandung II conference scheduled for June 1965. In the best case for Chinese leaders, writes

Friedman, the conference would denounce Soviet revisionism and embrace Mao as the undisputed leader of militant anti-colonialism on a global scale.

The Soviet goal, meanwhile, was to downplay the overall significance of the conference and to assure that it did not veer in excessively militant directions that would play into Chinese hands. For the latter reason, Moscow initially hoped that the conference would take place in Brazil, where the left-leaning government aligned with Soviet preferences until its overthrow in an April 1964 military coup. But Friedman also highlights Soviet efforts to blunt Chinese advantages with Third World radicals by accentuating their own dedication to revolution. There could never be peace between colonial aggressors and their victims, declared the chief Soviet representative, a comment that prefigured Leonid Brezhnev's declaration two months later officially reconciling peaceful coexistence in superpower relations with Soviet support for revolution in the Third World.

None of these explanations for the impetus behind the Tricontinental Conference – genuine ideological commitment, desperation to overcome weakness and isolation, and competing efforts to impose leadership – are mutually exclusive. Indeed, all three appear to hold significant explanatory power. The challenge posed by this volume is to strike the right balance and to appreciate the complex interplay of factors in analysis of local settings, where narrow motives and opportunism are often easy to see, and in the history of the Tricontinental movement as a whole. Privileging ideological dedication to social justice and economic development, after all, tends to cast these histories in a relatively sympathetic light. Stressing the ways in which self-interest drove individual actors – whether Fidel Castro, the African National Congress, East Germany, or the Soviet Union – to embrace a common agenda might lead to a more mixed overall assessment. Meanwhile, attaching central importance to the roles of the communist giants in shaping the agenda at Havana might contribute to a gloomy story of exploitation by the two dictatorships whose brutality in the second half of the twentieth century immeasurably dwarfed that of the United States.

With respect to the second area of uncertainty – What was the trajectory of the Tricontinental movement? – the essays offer more starkly contradictory answers. All of them, it is true, reinforce the notion that Tricontinentalism was just one strand in a complex web of ideas and movements that comprised Third World activism in the decades following World War II. The collection makes clear that teasing

apart those strands is no small challenge. Yet each chapter, with varying degrees of explicitness, offers at least a broad sense of the chronology that Tricontinentalism followed. Anne Garland Mahler's essay stands apart in extending that chronology far backward in time, arguing that the Tricontinental had its roots in the interwar League Against Imperialism and especially its branch for the Western Hemisphere, the All-American Anti-Imperialist League. In taking this approach, Mahler deftly shows that notions of solidarity between the Western Hemisphere and the colonial territories of the Eastern hardly originated in the 1960s. The rest of the essays do not directly dispute this possibility but leave the distinct impression that the core ideas of Tricontinentalism coalesced in the aftermath of the Cuban and Algerian revolutions. It was in those years that Cuban isolation, Algeria's powerful example, the quickening pace of decolonization, perceptions that the moderate brand of Third World organizing pioneered at Bandung had produced meager returns, and the dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split all combined to generate calls for precisely the blend of objectives proclaimed in January 1966 at Havana.

The sharpest disagreements center on the question of what ensued thereafter. Several essays suggest that Tricontinentalism, enshrined in the OSPAAAL, followed a rise-and-fall pattern, with the Havana conference opening an era that prevailed for a time before giving way to something different. But how should we date this rise and fall, and what is the "something different" that replaced Tricontinentalism? Paul Thomas Chamberlin answers both these questions in elegant fashion. The era of "cosmopolitan revolution" announced at Havana persisted from the mid-1960s to the second half of the 1970s, when a new era of "ethno-sectarian" revolution gradually eclipsed it. If African revolutionaries, Vietnamese guerrillas, and Palestinian Liberation Organization fighters – secular forces fighting for national independence – were the face of the earlier period, writes Chamberlin, religiously motivated groups ranging from Hezbollah to the Afghan Mujahideen to Ayatollah Khomeini's student radicals embodied the latter. According to this scheme, which Parrott largely embraces in the Introduction as the basic framework for the collection, Tricontinentalism drew on earlier strands of radicalism associated with the Chinese-led Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) but represented a discernible phase of militancy between the Bandung era dominated by Afro-Asian non-alignment and a new period characterized by identarian radicalism and religious fundamentalism.

Several essays suggest that the start of what might be called the Tricontinental era was hardly clear-cut. Chamberlin notes that the anti-colonial movement in the Third World had always been a relatively “slapdash” affair, and in any case, key elements of the program proclaimed at Havana were already circulating among Third World nations well before the conference of January 1966. Only Byrne goes so far, however, as to challenge the idea that the Tricontinental Conference somehow heralded the start of a new era in the development of the Third World movement. In his view, in fact, the conference marked the “conclusion of the romantic era of decolonization” that Cuban-Algerian cooperation epitomized from the late 1950s until 1965. By 1966, Byrne suggests, Algeria, once Fidel Castro’s main partner in Africa, was shedding its more radical tendencies as it bought into an “international system” rooted in conceptions of sovereignty and territorial integrity that meshed poorly with the Tricontinental’s dedication to overthrow and upheaval. By the end of the 1960s, Byrne continues, Algeria – presumably representative of other influential Third World nations – had diverged from Cuba and refocused on achieving its revolutionary goals through political and economic avenues. “The global battle against imperialism,” Byrne memorably asserts, “was pursued chiefly by negotiators armed with briefcases and professional degrees, arguing over the global terms of trade and seeking to cast regimes like that in Pretoria as pariahs violating received morality.”

Authors who allow that the Havana conference gave rise to a clearly discernible Tricontinental movement differ markedly in their contentions about timing. Some argue that the Tricontinental moment lost its luster relatively quickly. Friedman contends, for instance, that the collapse of Egyptian influence as a consequence of the Six Day War, combined with Cuban-Soviet rapprochement around the same time, undermined the notion of a truly independent Tricontinental alliance and made revolutionary states and movements more reliant on Soviet power. Gettig posits that Che Guevara’s death in October 1967 symbolized the collapse of the movement only twenty months after it had been launched at Havana. Other authors, however, join Chamberlin in suggesting a much longer life for Tricontinentalism. Indeed, Eric Covey argues that the “apex” of Tricontinentalism came as late as 1976 or even 1977, years when Cuban troops first helped the communist MPLA gain power in Angola and then defended the communist Derg in Ethiopia from Somali invasion. Thereafter, adds Covey, the Cuban government exploited its prestige among Third World governments to win the

chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement starting in 1979, a position the Castro regime sought to use – unsuccessfully, as it turned out – to move the loosely organized Third World bloc in more radical directions.

Who's right? Much depends, of course, on how one conceives the defining characteristics of Tricontinentalism. If Tricontinentalism, at its core, entailed partnerships among key nations that had long wielded power in Third World forums, it might be reasonable to suggest that the initiative suffered an early demise. Algeria, Egypt, and Ghana, to name just three of the governments that participated in the Havana conference, abandoned much of their revolutionary ardor for an array of reasons in the years around the Tricontinental Conference. The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 and the Six Day War of 1967 contributed to this drift by highlighting fractiousness within the Third World that could not always be plausibly blamed on the West. If one views Tricontinentalism more as an expression of Cuban foreign policy, designed to offset the Castro regime's weaknesses through the cultivation of allies and opportunities for intervention elsewhere in the world, it might be reasonable to see a much longer heyday and even a peak, as Covey suggests, as late as 1976 or 1977. And if, like Parrott, Irwin, and Mahler, one sees Tricontinentalism more as an ideal that offered inspiration and sustenance to radical organizations, no matter how small or weak, it might arguably have endured still longer. Another possibility is that Tricontinentalism – a deliberately loose endeavor, as several essays observe – was more than one of these things. Or it might have changed over time, giving rise to one heyday around the time of the Havana meeting and another later heyday linked more directly to successful African revolutions or perhaps the North Vietnamese capture of Saigon in 1975.

Part of the challenge of settling on one of these possibilities lies in the difficulty of assigning Tricontinentalism an appropriate weight compared to other Third World ideals that circulated alongside it in the 1960s and 1970s. The establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964 no doubt focused attention on matters of economics and trade, but Byrne's suggestion that men with briefcases thereafter displaced the men brandishing machine guns may not hold up outside the case of Algeria and perhaps a few other established Third World nations whose once-radical governments increasingly found security in an orderly international system. The story of Tricontinentalism's rise and fall might also depend on the role assigned to more conservative Third World nations in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) or the far looser network of relationships among Iran, South

Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Anwar Sadat's Egypt, and other counterrevolutionary governments. More research is necessary to expose the ways in which these linkages, which are even less thoroughly examined than the history of Tricontinentalism, eclipsed radical forms of organizing by the early 1970s and amounted to an equally formidable, if not dominant, strand of transnational activism in the Third World.⁴ Better understood is the rise of what Chamberlin calls ethno-religious or ethno-sectarian forms of Third World activism in the late 1970s, though the displacement of the Tricontinental movement's secular militancy is more asserted than demonstrated in this collection. What accounts for this trend, and what forms did it take outside the Middle East and Southwest Asia, where it is easiest to see in cases like Lebanon, Iran, and Afghanistan? How did political forces committed to the older secular radicalism react to the emerging phenomenon? Historians have their work cut out for them in delving into such questions and fleshing out Chamberlin's tantalizing periodization.

Closely related to the question of the Tricontinental movement's trajectory is disagreement about its overall success. How, in short, did the movement fare in realizing the grand vision enshrined in the statement of its purposes and principles crafted ahead of the Havana meeting? Historians who see a relatively quick demise naturally tend toward skeptical views, while those who see a longer life offer more positive assessments. But the correlation is not exact, and, in any case, success can be measured by standards other than longevity. Byrne offers perhaps the most critical assessment, highlighting not only the movement's short duration (if it had any duration at all) but also reasons why, in his view, the movement produced paltry results. Above all, Byrne contends that the pro-communist orientation of Tricontinentalism drove a "wedge" in the broad solidarity envisioned by at least Algerian leaders. Whereas Map 0.2 suggests a remarkably broad array of participation in the Havana conference, Byrne notes that the 612 delegates came mostly from communist parties or leftist groups, including political parties, unions, and liberation movements. All in all, writes Byrne, the meeting was a "distinctly

⁴ Pathbreaking works exploring the rise of this counterrevolutionary network include Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries of the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Carl Forsberg, "A Diplomatic Counterrevolution: The Transformation of the U.S.-Middle East Alliance System in the 1970s" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2019); and Wen-Qing Ngoei, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States, and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

ideological event” that Western delegates were correct to dismiss as a communist gathering. The event alienated “old guard Third Worldists” and proved a “more narrow-minded and less ambitious event” than the “Bandung II” meeting would likely have been if it had gone forward as planned in 1965.

Friedman similarly blames “militant sectarianism” for Tricontinentalism’s short duration and limited appeal. But he goes in a different analytical direction by stressing the difficulties of maintaining a distinctly Third World voice in a world dominated by major powers determined to assert their influence. Friedman shows that China’s eagerness to exploit racial differences to question Soviet participation in Third World forums (and to marginalize Yugoslavia) damaged prospects for solidarity around the time of the Tricontinental Conference. But Friedman also delves into the Tricontinental itself, contending that the conference, though conceived as a forum for crafting a truly Third World vision, devolved into an exercise in Sino-Soviet jockeying. More specifically, Friedman interprets the conference as a clash among three different visions of what should be achieved there – the Cuban desire for affirmation of the militant program that the Castro government espoused, the Chinese desire for a condemnation of Soviet “revisionism,” and the Soviet desire to affirm its own leadership in the Third World and avoid any significant Chinese victories. Perhaps Friedman’s harshest condemnation of the conference is his judgment that the proceedings resulted in a “draw” that amounted to a victory for Moscow since it had the lowest expectations. This accomplishment put the Soviets in a strong position to “bury” the results of the conference, double down on its commitment to peaceful coexistence, and expand its influence over liberation movements strapped for material support. While the Soviet Union grew more assertive in Africa, adds Friedman, Moscow’s aversion to revolutionary activism in the Western Hemisphere, combined with eventual Soviet-Cuban rapprochement, made OSPAAAL increasingly irrelevant in Latin America.

Gettig endorses Friedman’s view that the Tricontinental Conference exacerbated differences between Moscow and Havana, which worked at “cross-purposes” in Latin America for a time thereafter. But Gettig adds yet another explanation for Tricontinental’s limitations: US hostility. Efforts to undermine radical impulses of the Third World movement had been a constant feature of American foreign policy for many years by 1966. Washington particularly worked to encourage friendly Third World governments such as Iran and Pakistan to blunt the anti-Americanism that

often ran powerfully through Third World forums. So there was, as Gettig notes, nothing particularly new about US efforts to sow divisions at the Havana meeting. The most striking part of Gettig's analysis is his judgment that Washington's counterrevolutionary efforts "certainly deserve some modest share of the credit or blame for the solidarity movement's failure to support and achieve armed revolution in the Americas, Africa, or Asia." Even though Washington's behavior cast it in precisely the nefarious role decried by the radicals, the Tricontinental Conference was, on the whole, suggests Gettig, a propaganda victory for the United States.

For other authors, however, the Tricontinental and the movement that it generated achieved notable successes. These authors suggest, with varying degrees of explicitness, that the movement succeeded in inspiring precisely the sort of revolutionary commitment espoused in the conference's statement of purpose. At least implicitly, these chapters rebut critiques about the narrow ideological scope of Tricontinentalism by suggesting that such narrowness was precisely the point; the movement should be judged, that is, more by the ideological unity and political connections that it forged among committed adherents than by its geographical breadth or fractious tendencies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most favorable assessments of Tricontinentalism come in chapters focused on Africa, where armed revolutions gained ground after the Havana conference and Cuba's professions of solidarity carried tangible implications for the continent's liberation movements. Irwin argues in no uncertain terms that the Tricontinental movement provided crucial support for the ANC at a time of doubt and uncertainty. Shifting the focus to Guinea-Bissau, Parrott notes Cabral's caution about accepting large-scale Cuban support but leaves no doubt he drew inspiration, legitimacy, and even a modicum of material aid from his association with the larger Tricontinental movement. Covey, too, highlights the impact of Cuban interventions in Africa, especially in Angola, and the broad persuasiveness of Cuban ideas, including those related to mercenaries. Taken together, these essays leave little doubt about the ways in which Cuban intervention, along with the larger tenets of Tricontinentalism, shaped Africa during the 1960s and 1970s.

Asselin's essay goes furthest in suggesting truly global impacts of Tricontinentalism. For one thing, North Vietnam's stand against the military might of the United States provided a model of revolutionary commitment and defiance that figured prominently in the rhetoric of Tricontinentalism. Che Guevara's appeal for "two, three, many Vietnams" stood out as a rhetorical high point of the conference and

provided a slogan that has hung around the movement ever since. Charles de Gaulle demonstrated awareness of the war's capacity to stir action when in September 1966 he spoke out sharply against US policy in a speech aimed at currying favor in the Third World. But Asselin also hints at something more significant – that Tricontinentalism provided opportunities for the Hanoi government to gain support around the world for its military and political cause. Although Asselin does not explore North Vietnam's agency in connection with the Tricontinental Conference, he argues that Hanoi generally "weaponized" diplomacy and secured important political support by projecting the same blend of Marxism and Third Worldism that sat at the heart of Tricontinentalism. To demonstrate North Vietnam's status as a postcolonial nation in sync with radical strands of the larger Third World movement, leaders in Hanoi pressed for the end of colonial rule in Africa and granted quick recognition to newly independent nations.

With the crucial exception of Cuban interventionism in Africa, then, the strongest claims about Tricontinentalism's impact often lead into the intangible realms of rhetoric, inspiration, and persuasion. Mahler hits this point most strongly, asserting that OSPAAAL should be understood first and foremost as "an engine of radical cultural production that – for over four decades and in multiple languages – reflected, shaped, and distributed a shared worldview among a transnational community." All the way to its closure in 2019, adds Mahler, OSPAAAL continued to produce the "ephemera" – books, pamphlets, posters, and so forth – for which it was best known. The effect, she resoundingly concludes, was no less than "a major impact on the aesthetics, and ideologies of the contemporary Left." The power of Mahler's contention is perhaps nowhere as clear as in Gettig's chapter, one of the more critical assessments of the Tricontinental movement to appear in this collection. While contending that Cuban activism under the banner of Tricontinentalism ultimately made a concrete, enduring impact only in Southern Africa, Gettig concedes that the movement "gave voice to a transnational discourse of revolution that would continue to inspire revolutionaries around the world over the ensuing decades." The latter, he acknowledges, is no small thing.

The problem with such claims, of course, lies in the challenge of evaluating the impact of cultural production or the discourse it generates. How can we measure reception of propaganda or pin down the power of rhetoric? Several essays point out the clichéd quality of grandiose statements of Third World solidarity, which flew off the presses in the 1960s and 1970s and circulated alongside propaganda generated by other

political agendas. Yet Mahler and other authors who extol the enduring power of the Tricontinental's appeals for Third World solidarity undoubtedly speak to something real – rhetoric that, precisely because it emanated from relatively weak players on the international stage, plausibly carried weight far out of proportion to what one might expect from mere words and symbols. The ultimate moral valence of those words and symbols is perhaps a subject as much for philosophers as historians. The Tricontinental, after all, celebrated not only solidarity and social justice but also confrontational, often violent means of promoting change – violence that spawned bloodshed and terrorism while often promoting the agendas of communist superpowers that presided over staggering repression and bloodletting in the twentieth century. How to balance progress toward the liberation of colonized societies against the accompanying repression is a question that can never be answered definitively.

Questions that this book has delineated about the origins, trajectory, and effectiveness of the Tricontinental movement do, however, lend themselves to historical research that may enable us to engage in debate at a higher level of understanding. The preceding chapters, along with the body of earlier scholarship discussed in Parrott's Introduction, make bold steps forward in appreciating a fascinating and often-overlooked dimension of the global history of the twentieth century but also lay down a research agenda that invites new work. Pursuing this agenda promises to recover the agency of non-Western actors too often ignored in historical accounts because of the difficulties of accessing the necessary sources, the tendency of Western historians to examine more familiar ground, or both. Integrating Third World histories into the larger history of the Cold War era remains a vital task in fleshing out the global history of the twentieth century. (The Tricontinental is not even mentioned in two of the most prominent books to appear in recent years about the Cold War in the Third World.⁵) Even more important, addressing questions raised in this book promises to help expose the roots of a contemporary world order that continues to be profoundly shaped by power imbalances, economic exploitation, and social injustice. In the successes and failures, choices and missed opportunities, of earlier efforts to address these problems lie implications for the present and future.

⁵ Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), and Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).