



William Faulkner served as a successful cultural emissary for the State Department during the Cold War, despite occasional alcoholic overindulgence, and helped introduce international writers to Americans.

The U.S. government's enlistment of highbrow cultural figures in its "propaganda wars against Communism," Cohn writes, was inspired by a belief that promoting greater understanding and respect between cultures would "ultimately benefit national security." The years of the Cold War were heady times for American artists and intellectuals, when they were considered not only relevant but vital to U.S. foreign policy.

The public diplomacy of these figures took a sometimes unpredictable course. Faulkner's travels in Latin America spurred interest in the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and

Mario Vargas Llosa in the United States. Thus, the effort to bestow the blessings of American literature on Latin America wound up enriching American letters by introducing more people to writing from south of the border.

ARTS & LETTERS

Imperial Edifice

THE SOURCE: "McEmbassy" by Kurt M. Campbell, in *The American Interest*, May–June 2008.

THE ROMAN MOTIFS OF WASHINGTON'S earliest public buildings convey the exalted aspirations of

the fledgling American nation. And the futuristic architecture of Brasília illustrates Brazil's goals of half a century ago. Now the new Chinese Embassy rising on a hill in Northwest Washington reflects the architectural aesthetic of a giant new rival on the world stage, writes Kurt M. Campbell, CEO of the Center for a New American Security. At 250,000 square feet, it will be the largest embassy ever built in the United States.

Since the restoration of relations with the United States three decades ago, the Chinese have been holed up in a fortress-like former hotel on one of the capital's busiest thoroughfares. The old embassy, with its drawn curtains and shuttered windows, seems emblematic of the xenophobia of the Cultural Revolution, and completely out of step with the "mercantilism" of modern China. The vast new steel-and-cement embassy, while discreetly shielded from passing commuter traffic, bids to establish the nation as a more prominent player. As China has opened up to the world, its embassy staff has begun to work the town, talking to reporters, entertaining members of Congress, making friends, influencing people—and keeping trade flowing despite contaminated dog food and lead paint on toys.

The new embassy building, designed by three Chinese Americans, including I. M. Pei, is being built by a consortium of four non-American corporations that cut their construction teeth on Shanghai's dramatic new skyline. Despite its illustrious architects, its sheer

vastness turns it into a bland, “veritable McEmbassy,” Campbell says. Chinese guards patrol the gates of the construction site, and virtually every worker and contractor has come from outside the United States. The Chinese explain the secrecy and security monitoring by saying that when they received an airplane built for senior leaders by Boeing some years ago, they found many “unexpected surprises” in the form of listening devices. “In today’s environment of barely disguised strategic competition,” both sides appear to

EXCERPT

Verses Versus Marriage

It may be too sweeping to say that modern poetry is unhappy poetry, but it is certainly true that modern poems about marriage are almost always about unhappy marriages. . . . Such unanimous poetic testimony against the possibility of happy marriage . . . is more than a sign that poets are unusually difficult to be married to. It is a statement of the modern artist’s belief that truthfulness to experience, especially the worst phases of experience, is more important than the promise of pleasure; that it is better to be authentic than to be happy.

—ADAM KIRSCH, poet and critic,
in *The New Criterion* (April 2008)

be constantly probing for inside information on what the other is up to, according to Campbell.

America’s biggest embassy is not its mission in Beijing but the one under construction in Baghdad. When the new Chinese embassy opens, it will be a reminder that while the 20th century belonged to America, China intends to seize the 21st. Its “McEmbassy” is a piece of a larger public-relations strategy, Campbell concludes. Its message is that while the Americans were away “fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, China arrived.”

OTHER NATIONS

Spain’s Memory Wars

THE SOURCE: “Pinochet’s Revenge: Spain Revisits Its Civil War” by Omar G. Encarnación, in *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2007–08, and “The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain” by Carolyn P. Boyd, in *The Annals*, May 2008.

CALL IT PINOCHET’S REVENGE. When Spain asked Scotland Yard to go to a private London hospital in 1998 and arrest Chile’s former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, on charges of murdering Spanish émigrés, the shock waves hit Spain even harder than his home country. Spain seemed morally hypocritical for attempting to prosecute a foreign

autocrat while adopting a policy of “collective amnesia” toward its own bloody civil war and nearly 40-year aftermath. When Spain went after Pinochet, who later died of natural causes at age 91 without ever standing trial, it could no longer ignore its own dictator, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, writes Omar G. Encarnación, a political scientist at Bard College. The worldwide reaction to the Pinochet arrest destroyed Spain’s unwritten “Pact of Forgetting” that had made the politically connected deaths of 580,000 Spaniards during Franco’s reign (1936–75)

almost unmentionable.

Other countries, including Germany and Argentina, conducted trials to punish crimes of former despots and their henchmen. But in 1977, Spain legislated amnesty. Within a decade of Pinochet’s arrest, however, a dramatic shift in public attitudes led to the 2007 passage of a “Law of Historical Memory” to commemorate the vanquished and rebuke the myth that the victors—Franco’s fascist forces—were right.

International human rights organizations argue that the 2007 law continues to let the guilty off the hook. It metes out no punishment even for wholesale murder and torture. But the measure’s supporters in Spain note that it is the first declaration that the Franco regime was “illegitimate” and requires visible sym-