

Good Neighbors all?

AMERICANS, LATIN AMERICANS AND A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE
“GOOD NEIGHBOR” IN PANAMA AND GUATEMALA 1933-45

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Background

Most studies of the Good Neighbor Policy: Macro-level concerned with policy, politics, and Implementation

My Study: More interested in cultural effects, Interpersonal relationships, Whether Americans and Latin Americans really saw each other as “good neighbors”

Large Scale background is useful however

Good Neighbor Policy as state action: Security and/or Economics

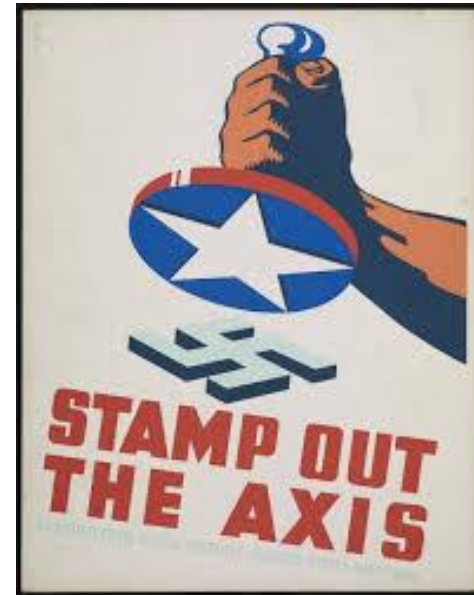
Depression played Decisive and Far-reaching role

David Green Quadrangle: ““The Latin American Countries would be a key element in this formula (of the united states’ recovery from the depression) because of their role as suppliers of raw materials, as markets for United States’ heavy industry, and as profitable arenas for United States capital investments.”

Background Cont.

Security: Stabilization, Response to “Axis Menace”

Treasury Dept. monetary expert Harry Dexter White: Unless the US embarked on a “program of assistance to Latin-American countries on a scale appropriate to the problem with which we are faced.. Latin America will gradually succumb to the organized and ideological campaign now being waged by aggressor nations.”



Background: Cultural Connotations of “The Good Neighbor”

Great Depression= Holistic shift in American thought, perceptions of Latin America part of this

Culture and Economics, Frederick B. Pike: “For arguably the first time in the hemisphere’s history the United States and Latin America had become immersed in a common culture: the culture of economic adversity.”

More Applicable to Americans?

Big Business’ Popularity tanked

Rhetoric of Previous interventions no longer applicable

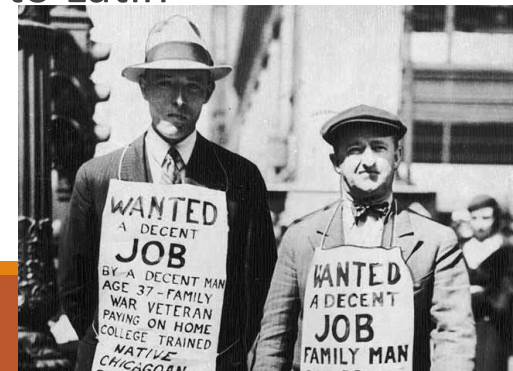
Development of American ideas of the Good Neighbor

Religious, David Zietsma: “the good neighbor policy emerged as a response to the anxiety fostered by the Great Depression concerning America’s mythic identity as God’ Chosen Nation.”

Increasing acceptance of Catholics, protestant cohesiveness compromised

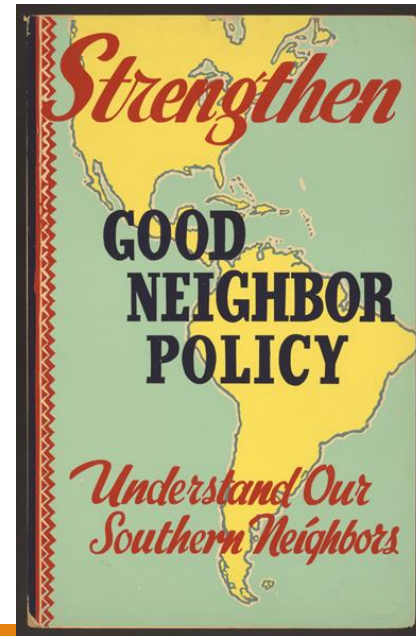
Race, Pike again: “When it came to the socioeconomic, and perhaps even moral and religious indices, many a Caucasian American began to think the unthinkable: we American Caucasians are not so distinctive in our whiteness, in our national identity; we all share in the plight of the underprivileged; we are all of us as the black and the brown; we are all of us as the Latin American.”

Increasing acceptance for the “natural” in 20s and 30s, especially effected stereotypes of the “Indian”, Afro-Americans, Women and the Poor all which were applied consistently to Latin America



Thesis

I will argue alongside my primary evidence taken from the American Heritage Center that the ideas of good neighborliness (Associated with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy 1933-45) were more commonly accepted and seen by Americans, largely in association with the newly expanding tourist boom, than Latin Americans who in my studies of Panama and Guatemala at least still wrestled with conceptions of Americans as meddlers, oppressors, and a removed and protected class.



US Ideas of Good Neighborliness

Utilized the Crede Calhoun, Evelyn Rigby Moore Collection at the American Heritage Center

Crede Calhoun: New York times, operated in the canal zone, in charge of reporters and Stories throughout Latin America

Represents in many cases the change in US perception of the natural, especially in his stories on travel

Also represents key interaction of Americans with neighbors, Tourism

Story: “Quetzaltenango, Guatemala”

Natural descriptions, “Indian”, meant to encourage Inform on tourism



US cont.

Story: “A Seller of Songs”

Old Maya Woman who sells songs for a living, sweet neighborly interaction through lens of tourism

Evelyn Moore: Also Journalist in Panama, Writes travel and tourist interest stories as well

Well respected in community and well informed, worked diligently with people in and around the canal zone

“Relations with Latin America since 1920”

Perceptions of the Good Neighbor in it’s own moment, recognized it as policy of security and economics

In other works is consistent advocate for better personal Latin American and American relationships



The Good Neighbor to Latin Americans

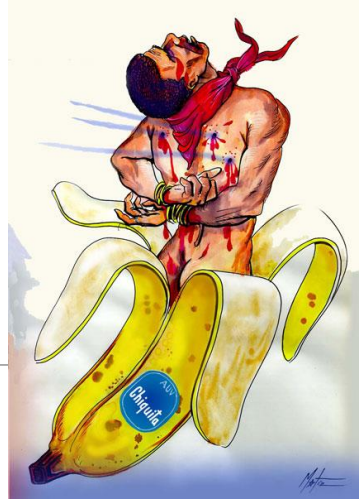
Hard to specifically speak from Latin American sources as these sources are limited

Good Neighborliness Challenged in Guatemala by a couple of factors: US support of ruthless dictator Jorge Ubico, persisting ideas among the elite of US as “meddlers”, The United Fruit Company

Ubico: Violence against opponents, widespread regulation against free speech, Similar to dictators experienced as a result of US intervention

Rodolfo resignation, JE MacGuire letter, and removal of US soldiers from protest: Indication that among elite even there is still concern of US meddling

United Fruit: Violent putdowns of worker organization, clear segregation in conditions for US overseers and Latin American and Caribbean workers, brutal labor with high turnover rate



“The Good Neighbor” In Panama

Panama: separated communities are a challenge to “neighborliness”

Moore notes this as late as 1945 as a significant issue

Racial differences: indicates less than complete shift in American conceptions of Latin Americans

‘Gold’ and ‘Silver’

“El Canal de Roosevelt no es el Canal de Bolivar”

WWII used to strengthen rhetoric of the Good Neighbor but even in this moment Panamanians workers strike

Large portions of “Zonians” make no effort to learn Spanish, general separation as well



Conclusions

Cases of good neighborliness were certainly encountered in my research, and from the American perspective, especially through the lens of Tourism, good neighborliness existed to be seen in multiple interactions. However, Panamanians and Guatemalans, who interacted largely with Americans in a different space, whether dealing with the United Fruit Company and Ubico in Guatemala or the segregated, unequal, and separated world of the Canal zone seem less likely to embrace Americans as unilaterally good neighbors.

Complex nature of human interaction, American representation overseas

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