This lecture examines how the politics and activism of scholars in the field of foreign languages and literatures were intertwined with official Cold War policies and priorities. It explores how William Riley Parker, Executive Secretary of the Modern Language Association from 1947 until 1956 (when he joined the English faculty at IUB), transformed the MLA from a stodgy scholarly organization into a formidable public advocate of foreign language education in order to further official goals of fostering international understanding. This lecture will, additionally, showcase Parker's and the MLA's instrumental roles in the development and implementation of the National Defense Education Act (1958).