

marred by persistent use of jargon that is difficult for the nonspecialist to understand. For this reason, it is likely not suitable for undergraduates in history departments, though it is probably useful for interdisciplinary “history and literature” and American studies programs. Regardless, scholars interested in post-war U.S. culture will find the book stimulating and productive.

Daniel Bessner
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

doi:10.1093/jahist/jay258

The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files. By Marc Becker. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. xii, 322 pp. Cloth, \$94.95. Paper, \$26.95.)

The title of this book is slightly inexact. The book is less about the broader topic of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in Latin America during World War II than about Ecuador alone; and it is less about the FBI in Ecuador than what those files reveal about left-wing organizing in Ecuador. However, this focus is what makes the book so valuable. As the author rightly points out, given the sweep of FBI information gathering, FBI files often can be a valuable source of information on groups that might not have maintained records. This is the case for the political and social Left in Ecuador, about which Marc Becker goes into great detail.

He views FBI surveillance activity in Ecuador through the lens of American imperialism. While FBI director J. Edgar Hoover naturally maintained that the official rationale for FBI activity was to stem Nazi influence in Latin America, the reality was, unsurprisingly, that FBI agents focused mostly on communist and labor organizing activity. German interest in Latin America was halfhearted, and FBI surveillance reports of leftist organizing provided useful information to U.S. policy makers, even if it sometimes duplicated that collected by the State Department. Policy makers in Washington naturally used such information to help maintain American imperial dominance in Latin America despite the facade of Franklin

D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. All true, but Hoover seems fitted more outside of this mold. While the author alludes to Hoover’s narrow and bureaucratic power interests, and more so his anticommunist obsessions, more could have been made of his interests vis-à-vis U.S. imperialism. Hoover’s provincial and self-interests play interestingly against U.S. imperialist efforts but, again, this book is more about the Ecuadoran Left from information in FBI files than about the FBI itself.

The book’s sourcing is excellent, utilizing FBI reports found in State Department records in the National Archives. It also makes excellent use of an often-ignored source: FBI agent oral history interviews at the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI. This source personalizes the history by naming agents who engaged in surveillance of the Ecuadorian Left. There is the potential for even more information to be mined here. Another little-known but excellent source of information is FBI agent personnel files. Those might reveal an even greater amount about this fascinating story. While the sources are strong, their rooting in FBI historiography is less so, relying on older books about the FBI and political surveillance. This probably accounts for the lack of focus on Hoover’s bureaucratic priorities and a couple of overstatements such as the assertion that Hoover subverted Harry S. Truman’s interests in international surveillance and that there was an FBI charter—there was not (p. 51). Otherwise, this book stands as an excellent example of how historians can mine FBI files for information beyond the bureau.

Douglas M. Charles
Penn State Greater Allegheny
McKeesport, Pennsylvania

doi:10.1093/jahist/jay259

Discrediting the Red Scare: The Cold War Trials of James Kutcher, “The Legless Veteran.” By Robert Justin Goldstein. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. xvi, 222 pp. Cloth, \$39.95. Paper, \$19.95.)

With *Discrediting the Red Scare* Robert Justin Goldstein gives readers a carefully researched, thoughtful, and detailed account of one man’s