

Despite the obvious achievement that Long's analysis represents, he is a cautious scholar and his concluding chapter stays well within the scope of the original intention. His review of the case studies shows that Latin American countries were not only able to influence the situation within their region but also influenced US behaviour. They demonstrate that weaker states do indeed exert far more influence in international relations than the difference in material power would seem to predict. He then extends this analysis to point out how weaker states can develop opportunities to extend their power, build additional resources through collective action with other states, and especially take advantage of unique resources, such as the geostrategic positions of Panama's canal and Mexico's shared border with the United States, to further influence outcomes.

His final arguments point out the gains the internationalist approach provides over some fairly well-known establishment and revisionist interpretations of these case studies. His claim that the results show 'richer, more complex understandings of US–Latin American relations, in which there are many significant actors instead of one' (p. 235), is amply supported. However, his caution and perhaps modesty lead to the neglect of another fascinating and, at least to this reviewer, still more significant set of conclusions about these cases. In each instance, the favourable outcomes for the Latin American protagonists led to what might be considered collateral benefits to other neighbouring states: Brazilian advocacy of Pan-Americanism opened the door for the Alliance for Progress; Panama's control of the canal resulted in an expanded and more efficient waterway and increased regional cooperation in maritime security; the success of NAFTA encouraged the development of a number of regional trade agreements and increased competitiveness in Latin American economies; and Plan Colombia served as the harbinger of increased regional cooperation and US financial support for countries of Central America and the Caribbean. No one would be more pleased than Bob Pastor with results showing that getting the United States to cooperate with Latin American initiatives has the potential for advancing inter-Americanism.

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**Marc Becker, *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. xii + 332, \$94.95, \$26.95, pb and E-book; £79.00, £21.99, pb and E-book.**

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The history of US intervention in Latin America features a long list of protagonists: meddlesome ambassadors, invading marines, brash business moguls and clandestine operatives of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In a novel contribution to the sweeping historiography on American imperialism, Marc Becker introduces

readers to another set of characters worth knowing: J. Edgar Hoover's agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Making the most of a fortuitous discovery of documents in the US National Archives and Records Administration collection, Becker deploys his find for a dual purpose; he chronicles the previously unknown FBI surveillance in 1940s Ecuador while using the files as an archive illuminating a key period in the history of Ecuador's Left.

Launched in 1940, the Special Intelligence Service (SIS) was the arm of the FBI charged with monitoring 'subversive activities' in the Western hemisphere. Already active in police training, SIS formalised the intelligence collection that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover had overseen since the mid-1930s. While SIS's primary targets were supposed to be Nazis and other fascists, Hoover's virulent anti-communism permeated the agency's mission from the start. By 1943, over 500 agents were deployed across Latin America, with 21 in Ecuador.

As Becker underscores, many FBI agents were woefully unprepared for their jobs; they arrived with almost no knowledge of Ecuador and little to no language training. Posing as international business executives (thanks to covers provided by multinationals such as General Motors and Pan American Airways) or as legal attachés to the US embassy, the agents cast about for relevant information in ways that produced varied results. FBI reports frequently relied on local newspaper accounts, replicating the gaps and errors therein. Not surprisingly, local informants – notables, police officials, telegraph operators, employees and cooperators inside targeted groups – became key sources for intelligence gathering. Yet the search for fascists quickly proved to be a futile exercise in Ecuador. With no significant Axis-related activity to track, FBI agents trained their sights on other designated enemies: leftist parties and labour unions.

So, what did the FBI see when it looked at Ecuador's Left? To begin, Becker fully acknowledges the limitations of this type of archival material. He rightly notes the evident 'race, class and gender blind spots of those who collected information'. The standard reporting procedures ignored much of the grassroots Left. Women, indigenous people, peasants and working-class activists were of marginal interest as the FBI's gaze settled on a more relatable and accessible cast of characters at the top of the Left's respective organisations: male professionals and intellectuals. As if to underscore how FBI agents 'saw' Ecuador, each chapter heading is adorned with a classic caricature of these now-legendary figures taken from Daniel León Borja's *Hombres de Mayo* (1945).

Within the confines of this elite-centric reporting, Becker uncovers a trove of information about the thinking and conduct of Ecuador's pre-Cold War Left. The FBI dispatches mostly tell a story that belied Hoover's fear of the 'red menace'. Vying for leadership of the fragmented Left, the Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (PSE) and the Partido Comunista del Ecuador (PCE) disagreed on strategy and tactics. FBI surveillance failed to uncover wild radical threats or Russian penetration inside parties and unions. Trotskyism was negligible. Led by Guayaquil's indefatigable businessman-turned-labour leader Pedro Saad, the PCE emerged as sober voice of moderation. Starting with the Popular Front strategy of supporting anti-fascist efforts and continuing through the 1940s, the PCE eschewed force in favour of electoral politics and labour organising. Especially interesting is Becker's discussion of Saad's engagement with Browderism: the ideological retreat from class warfare and anti-capitalist doctrines promoted by American communist Earl Browder.

As Becker shows in his analysis of the 1944 uprising known as La Gloriosa, the moderation of Ecuador's Left, rather than its radicalness, proved to be its own undoing. Coming to power as part of a broad-based military and civilian coalition that ended the dictatorial presidency of Carlos Arroyo del Río, communists and socialists scored gains in helping to write a progressive constitution and organising the first national leftist labour confederation. But the opportunistic decision to collaborate with the populist conservative president, José María Velasco Ibarra, quickly backfired. True to form, Velasco staged his own *autogolpe* in 1946, turning against left-wing allies and undoing their reforms. The apogee of the Left's influence in national politics ended in defeat. Elite domination of the political system continued for decades.

Readers looking for gripping revelations to add to the list of American misdeeds in Latin America may feel a bit disappointed by the FBI's rather mundane work in Ecuador. Winding their way from Quito through Washington with approving nods from Hoover, the FBI reports informed American policymaking in a general way and conformed to the prejudices of the time; for the most part, they were concerned with how communists, socialists and labour agitators might challenge American economic interests. Yet, the concerns did not provoke direct interventions of the style seen elsewhere in the region. Becker discovers no evidence of 'dirty tricks' or covert actions against Left leaders or organisations in the period covered in the book. That would come later and be chronicled famously by whistle-blower Philip Agee in his 1975 best-seller, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*. Instead, what Becker delivers is a nuanced and empirically rich account of what was happening as the FBI watched from the sidelines: the internal conflicts inside an embryonic Left and the episodic repression applied by domestic elites to thwart its expansion. To be sure, American interests were being served but home-grown anti-communism and reactionary backlashes precluded the need for more intrusive measures. Weaving these fresh archival sources together with his own encyclopaedic knowledge of the country, Becker makes a strong case that hegemony rather than conspiracy theory is the best lens for understanding Ecuador's vexed history of popular mobilisation and conservative containment.

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**Samuel Handlin, *State Crisis in Fragile Democracies: Polarization and Political Regimes in South America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. xiii + 321, £75.00, hb.**

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Political science is an odd discipline. For much of its history, the field discounted its own capacity to explain social outcomes, focusing on culture, social class and