

was embedded in ideology—a Marxist-Leninist view that Asian countries needed to first undergo a national liberation from western imperialism. Hence, Stalin's ideology led him to underestimate the possibility of a Chinese communist victory after World War II. For Stalin, there was a difference between a Communist Party in power (Soviet Union) and a Communist Party struggling for power. As a result of his ideological beliefs, Khrushchev, a firm believer in the demise of the capitalist system and the ultimate triumph of communism, was willing to partner with a Communist China in his early years. When the rift occurred, it had to be justified in ideological terms. Nevertheless, for students of the Soviet Union and modern China, this is the book to read on post-World War II Sino-Soviet relations.

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## LATIN AMERICA

Becker, Marc. *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017.

Marc Becker, a professor of Latin American studies at Missouri's Truman State University, is a widely published scholar of Latin America's indigenous movements, particularly in Ecuador. In *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files*, Becker concludes that both local elite and foreign investors exploited the country's indigenous people for their own political and economic advantage. In so doing, they contributed to the rise of Ecuador's Communist Party as a natural response to their exploitation.

Becker's well-written work is based upon a wide range of primary sources, including the State Department's decimal files on Ecuadoran politics and communism located in the US National Archives and published US documents and those available on the internet. Becker augments these sources with a plethora of secondary sources that leads him to conclude that policymakers in Washington, DC used US intelligence efforts in Ecuador to sustain US imperial

interests in that country. For Becker, the FBI became an integral part of this larger scheme, an assertion he repeats throughout the monograph.

In the mid-1930s the US concern with Axis influence in the western hemisphere, particularly that of Germany, became an important issue in diplomatic and military circles. On June 24, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt added the FBI to the military intelligence officials who were assigned to the FBI's Special Intelligence Service (SIS). Its agents were dispatched to all Central and South American countries. Forty-two SIS agents, including the legal attaché assigned to the US embassy in Quito, were stationed in Ecuador for various time periods throughout World War II. Not all SIS agents, who were sent as private citizens, were known at the embassy and oftentimes they sent their reports directly to the FBI headquarters in Washington, where Hoover's staff synthesized all reports that became part of his memorandums sent to the State Department. At the State Department, regional specialists analyzed the reports of the FBI, the embassy, the Army's Military Intelligence Division, and Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in order to understand Ecuador's internal dynamics and to contribute to the making of overall US policy toward Latin America in general and Ecuador in particular.

The FBI's original mission was to examine the extent of Axis, primarily German, activity in Ecuador. When the outbreak of World War II in 1939 caused Germany to lose its economic interests in Ecuador, US intelligence officers became mildly concerned about the resident German population there. This assessment, according to Becker, contributed to Hoover's 1943 decision to instruct his field agents to focus on the potential communist threat in Ecuador. Hoover, who had come to the FBI in 1917, already had a strong anticommunist attitude when he was appointed its director in 1924. According to Becker, Hoover's paranoia about communism contributed to FBI field agents submitting reports that conformed to Hoover's opinions; if they did not, they faced backlash from the director.

Ecuador's Communist Party (PCE), which was founded in 1931, was originally a splinter group of the Socialist Party. The PCE had two centers: Quito and Guayaquil. University students and other local idealists dominated the Quito group. In Guayaquil, workers were the most numerous. They made practical demands, including for better wages, working, and living conditions. By 1943, the ONI and the State Department had concluded that the PCE was disorganized, that its total membership was approximately 500, that it had no central ideology or action plan, that it was markedly short of funds, and that it did not

have any connection to Moscow. In effect, the PCE did not threaten the established sociopolitical order. In contrast, the FBI painted a different picture. For example, a 1942 in-house analysis concluded that communism already had strong roots in Ecuador. Field reports in late 1943 indicated that PCE strength among rural workers and the urban middle class was much greater than previously judged. Fearing government reprisals if they acted in public, both groups remained under the radar until 1944, when a coup d'état resulted in a new national constitution that benefited the underprivileged and the underrepresented. Becker credits local communists for inserting those benefits into the constitution.

Becker argues that from the end of World War II in 1945 until 1947, when the Central Intelligence Agency assumed the FBI's surveillance role, the latter's reports regarding Ecuador's political dynamics paralleled those from the US embassy in Quito but provided more context. Becker concludes that had Washington decision makers taken the FBI reports more seriously, better policy decisions would have been made.

Readers should understand that Hoover's communist paranoia and the desire of FBI field agents to please Hoover contributed to the State Department giving minimum attention to Hoover's memorandums. Readers should also be aware of President Harry Truman's characterization of the FBI as a dictatorial agency and that Hoover refused to turn over its foreign surveillance files to the CIA in 1947. Becker's assertion that the FBI played a role in sustaining US economic interests in Ecuador is not supported by the evidence. These observations aside, the subtitle of Becker's work, *The Ecuador Files*, indicates the need to understand communism in other Latin American countries and its place in the reasons why the US policy toward Latin America resulted in the 1947 Rio Treaty to guard external, not internal, threats to the hemisphere.

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Bitar, Sergio. *Prisoner of Pinochet: My Year in a Chilean Concentration Camp*. Trans. Erin Goodman. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017.

This powerful account provides an intimate view of the fate of Sergio Bitar and other high-ranking members of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government