

The CIA in Ecuador. By MARC BECKER. American Encounters/Global Interactions. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. Map. Figures. Table. Notes. Bibliography. xi, 304 pp. Paper, \$27.95.

This work by Marc Becker, a welcome follow-up to his *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* (2017), covers the early stages of the Cold War, from 1947 to 1960. Its main objective is “to use information that the CIA and other United States agencies gathered in the postwar period to document progressive movements for social change in a context where few other sources exist” (pp. 3–4). This is therefore an in-depth study of Ecuadorian leftist political movements, especially the Communist Party of Ecuador (PCE), rather than an exposé of Cold War CIA covert operations.

Becker justifies his almost exclusive reliance on CIA documents by pointing to the paucity of other sources. Organizations such as the PCE did not maintain records for many reasons. Foremost was the fear that hostile governments would use internal documents to justify harassment, arrest, and imprisonment. Additionally, leftist materials such as posters, pamphlets, and manifestos were transitory, produced for specific events. Finally, police and military raids on offices and homes often resulted in the destruction of files and propaganda ephemera. To his credit, Becker doggedly pursues all other available sources, including military attaché reports, consular and diplomatic documents, and a multitude of secondary accounts. Unfortunately, additional files in Ecuador, Cuba, the United States, or the former Soviet Union are not available.

Becker, an engaging writer, adroitly captures the reader’s attention throughout the book. He opens with an account of a February 12, 1949, broadcast on Radio Quito, an adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, the 1938 Orson Welles production of a fictional Martian invasion mistaken by many listeners as real. The reaction in Quito was of greater consequence than in the United States, resulting in a riot that left 15 dead and the radio station in flames. This otherwise obscure event was reported in detail by CIA agents, who claimed that it had been orchestrated by the PCE. Becker uses this to illustrate the CIA’s intense scrutiny of the PCE and other leftist movements. Although CIA agents often got it wrong—the 1949 tragedy, for instance, was a spontaneous reaction to radio theater not planned by the PCE or any other political group—their detailed intelligence gathering and voluminous, often redundant reporting yielded factual insight into the Ecuadorian Left.

In a carefully crafted chapter, Becker presents the postwar political scene in Ecuador. The traditional political parties generically described as conservative, liberal, and socialist were being replaced by new movements and coalitions such as the National Democratic Civic Movement (MCDN), the Social Christian Movement (MSC), the Ecuadorian Nationalist Revolutionary Action (ARNE), and the Concentration of Popular Forces (CFP). The Velasquista movement proved the most enduring, its mercurial leader, José María Velasco Ibarra, elected president in 1952, 1960, and 1968. Adding to the political complexity were labor movements and special interest groups vying for influence. Despite this chaotic scene, Ecuador entered a 12-year period of political stability known as the “democratic parentheses.”

In subsequent chapters Becker delves into the organization of CIA activities as well as the personnel assigned to conduct them in Ecuador, followed by an in-depth analysis of the Ecuadorian Left's problems, opportunities, and personalities that heavily emphasizes the PCE, including detailed accounts of the 1949, 1952, and 1957 PCE congresses. The PCE enjoyed relative freedom of action in the democratic parentheses' first years, not viewed as a threat by the Galo Plaza Lasso government due to its small size (probably never more than a few thousand) and its adherence to nonviolent democratic processes. CIA operatives, on the other hand, exaggerated the party's strength and participation in labor demonstrations. Becker also describes the PCE's internal dissensions, which limited its effectiveness. The conflict between Pedro Saad and Ricardo Paredes at the 1952 congress was indicative of these fissures. Saad emerged as the PCE's leader for the remainder of the decade, but splinter groups soon diminished the party's solidarity.

The conclusion deals with 1959, the democratic parentheses' last year, and the Cuban Revolution's influence on events in Ecuador. The 11th Inter-American Conference was to be held in Quito in 1960. The government initiated an ambitious building program that included two new airports, a special building for the delegates to meet in, and the five-star Hotel Quito Intercontinental. Despite these efforts, the conference was canceled. One reason was the ongoing Peru-Ecuador border dispute, which resulted in Peru's decision not to participate. However, Becker concludes that it was the grassroots demonstrations of Ecuadorian leftist organizations that resulted in the conference's cancellation. There were numerous violent protests throughout the country, which President Camilo Ponce Enríquez's government blamed on the PCE and the CFP. For its part, the PCE denied having fomented violence and called for peaceful and democratic unity against the government.

This is an insightful, well-written, and meticulously documented study of a neglected period in Ecuador's political history. It changes the view that the democratic parentheses was a period of political tranquility. The student of Ecuadorian political history will find it essential for future investigations. The irony of this work is that, despite Becker's obvious disdain for the CIA and the policies of the Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower administrations, he views CIA intelligence gathering in Ecuador as a lesser evil compared to covert operations but as nevertheless ill conceived. This view detracts from the book's potential use as a study of the relationship between Ecuador and the United States.

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Música Típica: Cumbia and the Rise of Musical Nationalism in Panama.

By SEAN BELLAVITI. Currents in Latin American and Iberian Music. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xv, 302 pp. Paper, \$35.00.

In this book, Sean Bellaviti explores a musical genre that is still largely unknown outside Panamanian borders: *música típica*. By analyzing the historical development and current