The FBI in Latin America: the Ecuador files. By Marc Becker. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2017. 336pp. Index. £79.00. ISBN 978 0 82236 959 2. Available as e-book.

Students of inter-American relations during the 1940s have long been aware of the FBI's counter-intelligence role in Latin America, which was carried out for the most part under the auspices of the Special Intelligence Service programme. Indeed, journalist Drew Pearson pointed to the presence of US agents in the region as early as December 1947, shortly after the FBI withdrew its 'legal attachés' from US embassies to make way for the recently founded CIA. Subsequent scholars—notably Max Paul Friedman in *Nazis and good neighbors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)—have concentrated almost exclusively on the FBI's contribution to exposing Axis activities in the hemisphere. They have often been highly critical of the FBI's overall performance, with successes being attributed mostly to Axis agents' ineptitude. Marc Becker's book is the first to be dedicated to the whole of the FBI's tenure in Latin America, with a primary focus on Ecuador, a country about which he has already written extensively. Becker is also the first author to both comprehensively mine and critically analyse the FBI's surveillance reports in the US national archives, on which his study mainly depends.

Becker's central concern is not with the purported Axis threat in Ecuador—which he considers to have been negligible—but with the activities of the political left, in particular the Communist Party of Ecuador (PCE). In the absence of party archives and other surviving records, and thanks to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's obsession with communism, he views the FBI's surveillance reports as an important and credible point of access to the party's activities. This was a time of great political promise for the left, following the overthrow of the repressive government of Carlos Arroyo del Río in the revolution of 28–29 May 1944 (*La Gloriosa*), and before the counter-revolution took place in 1946 in the shadow of the looming Cold War, mirroring a political pattern found across the region.

Chapter one, in a nod to the book's title, deftly considers the rationale for the FBI's presence in Latin America as a whole, its *modus operandi* and the activities of some of its agents—acerbically noting their manifold shortcomings. In this chapter, Becker fleshes out what is already known from previous studies and applies them to a broader canvas. The rest of the book seeks to tease out the history of the PCE, and the Ecuadorian left more generally. This includes the party's early trajectory; the abortive attempt to construct a labour federation in 1943; its part in *La Gloriosa* and the subsequent writing of a progressive constitution; the establishment of a labour federation affiliated with Vicente Lombardo Toledano's radical Confederation of Latin American Workers; and the constraints on PCE activity posed by the shift to the right in 1946.

Becker argues that the FBI's surveillance reports of this period reveal 'the presence of a healthy and lively debate over a range of issues of ideology and strategy that have long beguiled the left' (p. 191). Ironically, as a result of this multiplicity of viewpoints, he is forced to concur with the FBI assessment from 1947 that the PCE had become one of the weakest and most ineffective communist parties in the western hemisphere (p. 238). In short, the actual threat posed by the party to US interests—as with the original fascist threat—did not justify the major investment of resources expended on it.

Since the book is part of a series on 'radical perspectives', it is perhaps not surprising that scholarly detachment should cede some ground to personal political preference. This is reflected first and foremost in the author's adoption of the language employed by his left-wing protagonists; phrases such as 'imperial grasp on Latin America' (p. 8), 'overarching

purpose of extending … imperial control' (pp. 55–6), and 'imperial penetration of foreign capital into Ecuador' (p. 99) litter the text. Second, Becker seems anxious to prove that the pursuit of economic interests lay at the root of US policies, claiming that the FBI in the latter part of its mandate 'was more concerned with labor leaders who might be positioned to challenge US economic interests than ideological communists who forwarded radical critiques of society' (p. 15). While justly reiterating Friedman's point that the US took advantage of the war to displace rival German economic interests, Becker fails to provide tangible proof that the FBI moved beyond the realm of surveillance in respect of Ecuadorian labour. Third, one senses a certain tinge of disappointment in the author's admission—expressed on at least four occasions—to the lack of any evidence that the FBI ever intervened in the process it was observing, as its CIA successor was notoriously wont to do. Finally, because of the orientation of his primary source of information—and, again, the author's political preference—the study is tilted too one-sidedly towards the PCE. The views of the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (PSE) and the Ecuadorian Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard (the 'military socialists'), let alone the parties of the centre and the right, play second and third fiddle, respectively, to those of the fractured communists. By Becker's own admission, the PSE—whose newspaper, *La Tierra*, he often cites—played a more consequential role in the nation's politics. Thus Becker investigates Ecuadorian politics in the 1940s through a much too narrow, partisan lens.

These reservations aside, the book considerably advances our knowledge of FBI activities in Latin America, a subject crying out for more systematic research. It also provides a window into the struggles of the perennially splintered Ecuadorian left as well as welcome new details on the Ecuadorian political scene in the 1940s, itself a largely understudied period in the history of a relatively neglected country.

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Rethinking global democracy in Brazil. By Markus Fraundorfer. London: Rowman & Littlefield. 2018. 250pp. Index. £80.00. ISBN 978 1 78660 453 8. Available as e-book.

Markus Fraundorfer sets himself the ambitious task of explaining how we might move towards a more democratic system of global governance. The extent to which the reader feels he is successful will be coloured by their own analytical proclivities in the field of International Relations and, to a certain extent, by their ideological leanings. Those well to the left, as well as proponents of the type of cosmopolitan theories of global governance set out by David Held, will likely greatly enjoy the book. Others more steeped in realist traditions and with a slightly cynical world-view will be left unconvinced by the theoretical modelling in the book. Of course, bridging this divide is in itself a Herculean task, and not necessarily the core focus of the text.

At its heart, Fraundorfer's book is an attempt to map out how global governance might be made more democratic by drawing on four examples found in contemporary Brazilian domestic policy and international engagement. The book's core argument is that the more global governance institutions and forums follow 'people-power' norms, the more intrinsically democratic they will be and the less exploitative the international system will become. The three principles underpinning this argument are the promotion of human rights and transnational solidarity, mechanisms of participation and mechanisms of accountability. Underlying this approach is a fundamental belief that most international institutions only represent a narrow band of interests; most often those that have captured national governments for their own purposes through the mechanisms of neo-liberal economic expansion.