

in the postrevolutionary period during an era of both political persecution and political opening.

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ECUADORIAN LEFT IN THE 1950S

The CIA in Ecuador. By Marc Becker. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. Pp. 336.
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This is not a book about the CIA in Ecuador, nor does it pretend to be. Rather than revisiting another episode of CIA intervention in Latin America, Mark Becker uses information gathered by the CIA to supplement a slender archival trail and tell the story of the Ecuadorian left. The result is an extraordinarily detailed study of the Communist Party of Ecuador (PCE), embedded in a nuanced political history of Ecuador during its “democratic parenthesis” in the 1950s.

The interregnum between the post-World War II “democratic spring” and the rise of the “new left” after the Cuban Revolution is often characterized as a “lost decade” of political activism in Latin America. In Ecuador, just as political conditions seemed to favor a leftward shift, the Communist Party was pushed to the margins of national politics, in part by conservative politicians who, pressured by the United States and its new national security apparatus, actively worked to limit the PCE’s influence. The CIA kept a watchful eye, vacillating between dismissing and exaggerating the Communists’ strength, but stopped short of overt intervention. At the same time, populist politicians proved to be more effective at mobilizing working-class support than formal leftist political parties, occupying the new political space created by the postwar democratic opening. Because it competed for the same constituencies, Becker argues, populism represented “an equal if not greater threat to the political left than either domestic conservative opponents or external agents” (110). The combined effect of these external pressures was to drive the PCE toward moderation rather than revolution.

Contrary to CIA claims, the PCE toed a moderate line throughout the 1950s, defined by its rejection of extraconstitutional uprisings in favor of parliamentary reform and its commitment to bourgeois development over class struggle. This moderation was not arrived at unanimously or without significant debate. Using party congresses and national elections (events that generated copious paperwork), Becker skillfully reconstructs the internal conflicts that drove the PCE during a period of surprising dynamism. At the center of the party’s internal debates was a question of leadership—a conflict between the party’s founder, Ricardo Paredes, and Pedro Saad, who was elected secretary-general in 1952. The transition of power at the top represented the PCE’s

broad transition away from highland Quito and its focus on rural indigenous people, toward lowland Guayaquil and its urban working class, and away from traditional Marxist class struggle toward multi-class collaboration. The transition toward moderation blurred ideological lines, as well as the lines between the personal and the political. Even though internal tensions may have inhibited the PCE's influence in formal politics, Becker argues that the party's shift toward grassroots organizing in the second half of the decade paved the way for the emergence of the new left of the 1960s.

The author's sympathy for the PCE does not prescribe his analysis, nor do his conclusions feel overdetermined. Becker's meticulous attention to detail—a product of his commitment to including the evidence—establishes his credibility. He handles sensitive material with appropriate care, leaving no meat on the archival bones provided by US intelligence, and making clear when he is reading against the grain of the (obviously unreliable) source material. The results are totally convincing. However, although Becker gives secondary attention to ways in which indigenous identity politics figured into the PCE's program, explicit reference to the Afro-descendant population is almost completely missing here—a surprising omission given the party's ongoing demographic transformation.

Those expecting a book about secret agents, covert operations, and subverted democracy may feel misled by the title, but this is an excellent case study of the 1950s in Latin America, a period too long dismissed as prologue to the 1960s. As the Cold War intensified, Ecuador may not have been the eye of the storm, but the story of the Ecuadorian left tells us a great deal about the left in Latin America as a whole.

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SISTER CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND EL SALVADOR

Long Journey to Justice: El Salvador, the United States, and Struggles Against Empire. By Molly Todd. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021. Pp. 272. \$79.95 cloth. doi:10.1017/tam.2022.23

Molly Todd explores the long-standing sister-cities relationship that brought together progressive activists in the United States and rural activists in El Salvador. The civil war in El Salvador, originating in the early 1970s and intensifying in the 1980s, displaced a significant portion of the country's population, mostly in rural areas. In the mid 1980s, a repopulation movement emerged, with the goal of the displaced returning to their abandoned communities. With encouragement and assistance from the country's