

increasingly disadvantageous treatment. There is also confusion about the starting of Mexico's oil exports – not in the 1880s, as stated here (p. 25), but the 1910s) – and about the contents of Article 123 (pp. 56, 58). And although some interesting issues are portrayed in this work, I feel it could have provided a deeper analysis of the company's performance and of its role in the regional economy.

Finally, the book confirms an intriguing aspect about Mexico's railroad history. As happened with other railroad companies in Mexico, the SPM made a significant contribution to the country (by means of integrating the western coast into the rest of the territory, offering fast and cheap transportation, and providing an exit – to the internal as well as the external markets – for the flourishing regional production of fruits and vegetables) but was far less successful from an entrepreneurial point of view.

*El Colegio de México*

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Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (eds.), *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. ix + 439, £64.00, £14.99 pb.

*In from the Cold* represents a collective effort to recast Cold War studies of Latin America, shifting the focus from the struggle between two superpowers to local power dynamics and changing the emphasis from the actions of states to the strivings of the popular classes. Most of the authors also employ perspectives based on gender, culture or identity that are rarely incorporated in traditional studies of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. In short, the authors and editors have laid out an ambitious agenda for themselves, and if these approaches do not always succeed they are at the very least thought-provoking.

Thomas Blanton's essay, which examines the wealth of evidence on some of the grimmer aspects of the Cold War in Latin America, is one of the more conventional pieces in terms of approach, but it lays a vitally important foundation for reconstructing some of the lost narratives from the dark decades of repression that befell many countries in the region. Blanton demonstrates that with the material being uncovered by truth commissions and historical justice efforts it is now possible to shed important new light on issues such as human rights abuses and the mechanisms of national security states, and hopefully to achieve greater understanding of those who perished in the relentless attacks on civil society. While Piero Gleijeses' study of Cuban activities in Africa can also be described as traditional in its approach and sources, Gleijeses, as he has so often done, provides a richly documented study, drawing on a vast array of primary documents and interviews to offer fresh insight into his subject and in the process turn the established wisdom on its head. His essay (based on his book *Conflicting Missions*) demonstrates that in dispatching troops to Angola in 1975, Fidel Castro acted quite independently of the Soviet Union.

Most of the other essays in the volume employ newer approaches and seek to demonstrate the agency of local actors in the context of the larger Cold War struggle. Seth Fein's study examines the United States Information Agency's surreptitious takeover of a Mexican newsreel in order to expose Mexican moviegoers to pro-US and anti-Cuban messages. The project foundered largely because the US propaganda

agenda clashed with the interests and tastes of the Mexican public. In his study of a Chrysler plant in Mexico, Steven Bachelor traces how the US corporation worked hand in glove with the Mexican government to crush a labour movement inspired by the American dream. The one drawback in this excellent essay is that it does not explain that the US corporate attack on a US-inspired labour movement probably derived from an increasingly competitive world auto market that compelled US carmakers to establish low-cost overseas production platforms. Victoria Langland explores the involvement of young women in university protest movements and urban guerrilla activities that prompted the Brazilian military and media to depict these young leftists as symbols of moral decline and the corruption of traditional values. Those depictions in turn provided rationalisations for the torture of the women by the government's security forces. In her essay on a Maya village, Carlotta McAllister probes the ways that the modernisation projects of the US and Guatemalan elites, designed to enshrine free-market values and practices, in fact encouraged residents to challenge their society's racist and repressive policies.

These essays offer thought-provoking explanations of how local actors pursued their own agendas as they struggled against their nations' authoritarian regimes in the midst of the international contest between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, most of these essays leave the distinct impression that the repression of popular forces during the 1950s and 60s would have occurred regardless of whether or not the Cold War had ever taken place. The strongest effect that this volume may have is to raise questions about whether the Cold War is the most useful approach to understanding national or international developments in Latin America during the mid-twentieth century. First, the ideology of anti-communism was primarily a new label applied to a long-standing US imperial initiative that promoted free markets and dominant US political and military influence. In fact US policymakers began applying the term Bolshevik to groups such as Mexican revolutionaries long before the Soviet Union or communism had meaningful influence in the region. Allying with local elites in their projects of authoritarian modernisation dates back at least to the positivist regimes of the early twentieth century. The drive to counter Soviet influence was rooted in the nineteenth-century effort to cordon off the western hemisphere from major foreign powers including the British, French and Germans. Much of what happened during the Cold War era in the Americas was quite simply an extension of a US hegemonic project that had converged at numerous points with the political and economic agendas of local elites. In short, the Cold War was more an excuse for repression than its root cause.

It is also reasonable to ask how influential such a one-sided struggle as the Latin American Cold War could have been on events in the region. Outside of Cuba, and to a lesser degree Nicaragua, the Soviet Union offered minimal support to potential allies in the Americas – a far cry from what transpired in Europe and Asia. Indicative of how much the Cold War in Latin America came down to Cuba and its influence is the fact that three of the volume's nine core essays deal either with Cuba directly or with the larger effects of the Bay of Pigs. Rather than prompting further re-interpretation of the Cold War in Latin America, these articles may well encourage scholars to reconsider the importance of larger analytical frameworks such as imperialism, globalisation and dependency. Each of these approaches suffers from its own limitations, but all of them offer a broader interpretive perspective and better explain the continuities in inter-American relations than does the Cold War paradigm. Or this volume may encourage entirely new attempts to explain how the

intersection of the national and the international, the global and the local, shaped Latin America during the twentieth century. For that reason alone, this set of essays is worth the read.

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Todd Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), pp. xiii + 196, \$49.95; £27.95, pb.

In this concise volume, Todd Greentree, a former US foreign service officer who served in Central America during the civil conflicts of the 1980s, explores the lessons that those conflicts hold for understanding the dynamics of 'small wars' and US intervention. In less than 200 pages, Greentree does a remarkable job of covering the basic dynamics of the 1979 Nicaraguan revolution, the stalemated civil war in El Salvador, and the Contra insurgency in Nicaragua. His sophisticated analysis provides a much-needed antidote to the facile analogies drawn by some commentators and politicians, most notably former vice-president Dick Cheney, between Central America's wars and the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Greentree's intent is to examine Central America 'as a case study of the dynamics, dilemmas, problems, and patterns of intervention and irregular war' (p. 8). His main conclusion is not a new one, but it bears repeating since policymakers cannot seem to internalise it: insurgencies, insurrections and revolutions are fundamentally political phenomena. They have military dimensions, but they cannot be won by either side on the battlefield alone. Regimes face serious uprisings because of their political failures; they mishandle crises through incompetence and lose legitimacy, thus clearing the way for insurgents to challenge their right to govern. Insurgents are successful when they effectively subordinate their military strategy to the primacy of the political, establishing themselves in the eyes of the public as a more legitimate political authority than the rulers they seek to overthrow.

Turning to the example of Nicaragua, Greentree catalogues the failings of the dictator Anastasio Somoza: his greed, his brutality, his unwillingness to allow the slightest political opening even for upper-class opponents. Greentree commends the Sandinistas' insurrectionary strategy, which aimed first and foremost at mobilising a broad political coalition against Somoza and positioning themselves as the only alternative to the discredited regime. They put politics in command. Once in power, however, the Sandinistas were not much more politically competent than Somoza, in Greentree's view. They alienated large swaths of the rural peasantry with their collective agrarian policies and large segments of the urban population through their anti-democratic and anti-Catholic style. However, the Contras had no political programme and 'no coherent political identity at all' (p. 121). Thus they could never successfully exploit the opportunity that Sandinista political failures offered them.

Greentree's assessment of President Carter's policy during the Nicaraguan insurrection is scathing: 'an object lesson in political incompetence', he calls it (p. 65). Had Carter acted sooner and more decisively to force Somoza to face the writing on the wall, before polarisation had installed the Sandinistas as the leaders of the anti-Somoza movement, the insurrection might have been avoided. While I have made a