

had transformative effects on the politics and policies of their respective countries. Hetland also distinguishes Bolivia from Venezuela given the former's practices of demobilization during its 'passive revolutionary regime' (p. 6). Yet, Chávez also resorted to strategic demobilization of those less proximate to the *chavistas*, and he employed statist, clientelist (and decisively not participatory) politics from above.

These analytical tensions underline the difficulty of thinking through the contemporary nature of democracy in Bolivia and Venezuela. Hetland is acutely aware of this conundrum and the book's conclusion discusses Venezuela's current democratic deficit, as well as its descent into economic and societal collapse. I agree with Hetland's conclusion that Venezuela's collapse does not necessarily negate the book's core argument, nor the real efforts that went into building more inclusive democracies at the local level. However, a similar discussion of Bolivia's democracy would have been welcome. Looking at the past three administrations, the executive branch's deep intrusions into the opposition's political freedoms are undeniable. These appear to be, once again, uncomfortable commonalities between Bolivia and Venezuela. In the conclusion, Hetland also astutely interrogates the inability of the political left to wrestle with its lingering problem of statism. Unfortunately, neither the Bolivian nor the Venezuelan examples shed light on how to maximize popular inclusion without trade-offs on other dimensions of democracy. However, this is precisely the kind of messiness that makes the book an alluring read.

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**Transnational communism across the Americas.** Edited by **Marc Becker, Margaret M. Power, Tony Wood and Jacob A. Zumoff.** Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press. 2023. 288pp. £99.00. ISBN 978 0 25204 522 6. Available as e-book.

There has been a revival of scholarly interest in the Latin American left, spurred by the opening of the Communist International (Comintern) archives in the 1990s and the more recent Pink Tide of left-leaning governments in the region. Most are edited books that focus on either the Comintern period (1919–43) or on the Cold War, but they rarely focus on both. They have also brought to light previously unsuspected, or only dimly discerned, linkages between a wide range of actors, thereby painting a much more complex picture than that engraved in the traditional literature. The scope of *Transnational communism across the Americas* is somewhat more limited than its ambitious title suggests: the bulk of the case-studies favour the circum-Caribbean; the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) features mainly in relation to Comintern policy in the region and towards Caribbean immigrants in the United States; and Canada receives only two fleeting references. While the book embraces both periods, six out of the ten chapters cover the Comintern years and three out of four of the remaining ones concentrate on the early Cold War period. Kevin Young's chapter on El Salvador is something of an outlier in that it is devoted to the later years of the Cold War, and it is more about how the transnational reach of ideas—rather than the existence of direct personal connections—moulded the thought and praxis of one particular revolutionary group.

Several chapters address the Comintern's relationships—mediated through local communist parties—with non-communist groups that were affected as that body changed its ideological direction. These changes were a result of the adoption of a class-based approach during the Third Period, inaugurated in 1928, and the subsequent turn to a Popular Front strategy in 1935. Lazar Jelifets and Víctor Jelifets account for the Comintern's failure to aid Augusto Sandino's anti-imperialist struggle in Nicaragua in the late 1920s. Jacob A. Zumoff explores the reluctance of local communists in the 1930s in Panama and Costa Rica to win the support of—quintessentially transnational—Afro-Caribbean workers. Frances Peace Sullivan's chapter uncovers the dilemmas that the Cuban Communist Party faced when it changed its stance on the 'Negro Question' in the 1930s. Margaret M. Power sheds light on the *ménage à trois* between the CPUSA, the Puerto Rican Communist Party and the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in the 1930s and 1940s. As Power explains, this relationship shifted from class solidarity to a parting of the ways over the question of the US colony's independence during the war years, despite continuing close personal ties.

A further set of chapters takes a wider transnational approach. Tony Wood broadens our understanding of the Latin American presence at the Comintern in Moscow. According to Wood, without such transnational encounters, 'it is doubtful whether [the] distinctive approach to race and indigeneity would have taken the form it did' (p. 87). Adriana Petra elucidates the Latin American role in the communist-inspired World Peace Movement, and the central part that Argentine writer María Rosa Oliver played in this context. In his chapter, Marc Becker provides copious detail on the transnational connections of Latin American student and youth groups, gleaned from US surveillance reports. This is a counter-intuitive source that Becker has previously used to good effect in his work on the Ecuadorian left. He points out the irony of US officials documenting a struggle that may otherwise have been lost to history (pp. 209–10); however, it still needs a dedicated historian like Becker to rescue this history from archival oblivion. Finally, two chapters deal more narrowly with specific countries. Jacob Blanc charts the long—and uncertain—march of the exiled Luís Carlos Prestes between 1927 and 1935, from liberal insurrectionist to his long-held position as general-secretary of the Brazilian Communist Party. Patricia Harms, in her sterling contribution, makes a compelling case for the 'incontrovertible contributions of Guatemalan communist women' of the *Alianza femenina guatemalteca* [Guatemalan feminist alliance] during the country's 1944–54 revolutionary decade (p. 171). 'Transnational connections', she asserts, 'were pivotal to the Alianza's theoretical and political development' (p. 184).

The quality of the contributions in this edited volume is uniformly high. The respective contributors clearly lay out the issues at stake in the debates on local communist strategy that emerge from their diligent archival research. The book represents a historiographic building block for further work in the field. Further research, notwithstanding Kevin A. Young's pioneering contribution, might fruitfully carry the analysis forward into the 1960s and beyond.

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