

Immerman, Richard. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Why is Latin America in a state of turmoil today? It seems paradoxical that a region fortunately endowed with such a wide variety of geographical riches should be among the most economically deprived areas on the face of the earth. Yet, while the disparity between extreme poverty and great natural wealth appears only incongruous at a glance, the dire plight confronting an overwhelming majority of Latin Americans is a human equation whose aggregate factors threaten to produce further unrest and instability. Naturally, it is difficult to understand the contemporary Latin American scene without first obtaining an appreciation of its profoundly tortured past and the forces that have given rise to the present troubling state of affairs.

With *The CIA in Guatemala*, author Richard Immerman has produced a study which not only sheds light on a particularly critical chapter of Latin America's relationship with the United States but also provides an incisive inquiry into a general pattern of events which continue to plague the region as a whole. The book is concerned with the situations and repercussions surrounding the land reform policy of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman from the time he was elected, in November 1950, to his overthrow by CIA-trained and -directed agents almost three and a half years later.

Arbenz' 'progressive' plan to break up and re-distribute the nation's large agricultural estates among the predominantly rural peasant class had actually been underway since the violent upheaval of 1944 that had successfully toppled the dictatorial clique of Jorge Ubico Castaneda in what Immerman describes as "another French Revolution under contemporary conditions."¹ Arbenz accelerated the process in his determination to redress an injustice that allowed less than 2.5 percent of Guatemala's population to own 85 percent of the best arable land. One of the first moves towards realizing his political dream involved the seizure of the vast properties of the American-owned United Fruit Company. The plantation business enterprise had a long record of tax evasion, labour exploitation and "kickbacks" designed to corrupt national and local officials and was unquestionably the most hated symbol of what Arbenz and his followers denounced as a powerful foreign influence of "Yankee imperialism." The condemnation of UFC by the government of Guatemala was not unreasonable, Immerman observes. Unfortunately, the reaction of the United States to such condemnation was to label the Guatemalans "programmed communist agitators or fanatical guerrilla warriors." Further, though the "nationalists' criticism ... [was] overused" and even "dismissed as polemical propaganda,"

...to Guatemalans the meaning was clear, the evidence tangible To poor Guatemalans, "Yankee imperialism" meant the workers' three- to five-family buildings juxtaposed with splendid single-family houses, theatres, swimming pools, and golf courses "next door" — the exclusive preserve of the managerial

command. It meant the Guatemalans' inescapable opportunity to look through the wire fences every time they walked to the outhouse located behind each of the barracks. It meant knowing that, should they somehow acquire a white-collar job, they could be assured a much lower salary than their North American counterpart with a dozen years' less experience.

"Yankee imperialism" to the Guatemalans also meant United Fruit's long-held reputation for bribing politicians, pressuring governments, and intimidating all opponents in order to gain political and economic concessions.²

The reaction of the United States to Arbenz's expropriation of UFC's holdings were perhaps predictable. The American government demanded prompt compensation for the confiscated property and, when Guatemala refused to agree, then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles hurled a diplomatic salvo, obtaining a general, anti-communist resolution from the Organization of American States clearly aimed at Guatemala. When it became obvious to senior foreign policy officials inside the Eisenhower Administration that Arbenz would not abrogate his promise to punish UFC, Secretary of State J.F. Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles authorized procedures for American military advisors to train and equip an anti-Arbenz force gathering in neighbouring Honduras. In June 1954 this force marched into Guatemala, overthrew Arbenz, and immediately restored United Fruit's property. Both the Department of State and the CIA later publicly disclaimed any connection with the *coup* that ousted Guatemala's constitutionally elected government. Washington's denial was certainly not unexpected since any admission of complicity would have proved that the United States had broken its OAS pledge not to intervene in the internal affairs of another nation.

A number of disturbing conclusions emerge from Immerman's first-rate study of the situation. Although the White House and State Department had full knowledge of UFC's total indifference to the social and economic welfare of Guatemala's people, "they just could not comprehend their implications or their seriousness."³ While a few American government leaders still clung to the fervent belief that what was good for United Fruit was equally beneficial for Guatemala's population, most interpreted Arbenz's decisions as little more than sharp, reflex reactions to directives from the Kremlin's decision desk. U.S. policy makers neither comprehended the real issues at stake nor the context in which those issues had appeared. As "products of the cold war ethos," these policy makers "believed it axiomatic that no government would take such a radical measure against a United States business' unless the government was "dominated by Communists." Believing that a Communist was "anyone who opposed United States interests...", the Americans "did not ultimately intervene in Guatemala to protect United Fruit." Rather, intervention was designed "to halt what it believed to be the spread of the international Communist conspiracy."⁴

For some of the members of the Eisenhower cabinet there was more at stake than ideological concerns. Among those who agreed to Arbenz's overthrow were the Secretary of State, the CIA Director, the Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, the Secretary of Commerce and the President's first special assistant for national security affairs; all were either on UFC's board of directors or maintained intimate financial links with the company. Perhaps it was all a gigantic coincidence, or perhaps ideology coincided with self-interest. Though Immerman is adamant in his conviction that the 1954 *coup* must be seen through the prism of American policy makers who "viewed what they perceived to be the spread of Communism throughout Guatemala," he nevertheless readily admits that "United Fruit's connections within the Eisenhower White House cannot be ignored."

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Footnotes

1. Richard Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 81 and 82.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 100 and 124.

Donelan, Rita (ed.). *The Maintenance of Order in Society*. The Canadian Police College, Symposium, August 1980. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1982.

The eight articles presented in this book are edited and rewritten revisions of a collection of papers presented at the Canadian Police College symposium, August 1980, in Ottawa. In keeping with the purpose of the symposium, which was "to look at the broad issues of order, control, and law enforcement," the articles offer rather different but complementary views. They are not meant to be "how to do it" papers but are written "to broaden the view of the reader regarding the general issues relating to social control in our society." It is suggested that by understanding the problems and challenges of contemporary society the reader will be able "to deal adequately with difficult long-term issues and problems."

Three major themes emerge from this book of proceedings. First, the activities and discretion of individual police cannot be understood fully, independent of the society and organization in which they occur. Second, the questions of who is responsible for the maintenance of order in society and how control and accountability can be maintained with