

= Guatemalan Revolution =

The Guatemalan Revolution ( Spanish : Revolución de Guatemala ) was the period in Guatemalan history between the popular uprising that overthrew dictator Jorge Ubico in 1944 and the United States @-@ orchestrated coup d'état in 1954 that unseated President Jacobo Árbenz . It is also known as the Ten Years of Spring , highlighting the only years of representative democracy in Guatemala from 1930 until the end of the civil war in 1996 , and included a program of agrarian reform that was enormously influential across Latin America .

From the late 19th century until 1944 Guatemala was governed by a series of authoritarian rulers who sought to strengthen the economy by supporting the export of coffee . Between 1898 and 1920 , Manuel Estrada Cabrera granted significant concessions to the United Fruit Company , an American corporation that traded in tropical fruit , and dispossessed many indigenous people of their communal lands . Under Jorge Ubico , who ruled as a dictator between 1931 and 1944 , this process was intensified , with the institution of harsh labor regulations and a police state .

In June 1944 , a popular pro @-@ democracy movement led by university students and labor organizations forced Ubico to resign . He appointed a three @-@ person military junta to take his place , led by Federico Ponce Vaides . This junta continued Ubico 's oppressive policies , until it was toppled in a military coup led by Jacobo Árbenz in October 1944 , an event also known as the " October Revolution " . The coup leaders formed a junta which swiftly called for open elections . These elections were won in a landslide by Juan José Arévalo , a progressive professor of philosophy who had become the face of the popular movement . He implemented a moderate program of social reform , including a widely successful literacy campaign and a largely free election process , although illiterate women were not given the vote and communist parties were banned .

Following the end of Arévalo 's presidency in 1951 , Jacobo Árbenz was elected to the presidency in a landslide . The progressive military leader of 1944 continued Arévalo 's reforms , and began an ambitious land @-@ reform program , known as Decree 900 . Under it , the uncultivated portions of large land @-@ holdings were expropriated in return for compensation , and redistributed to poverty @-@ stricken agricultural laborers . Approximately 500 @,@ 000 people benefited from the decree . The majority of them were indigenous people , whose forebears had been dispossessed after the Spanish invasion . Árbenz ' policies ran afoul of the United Fruit Company , which lost some of its uncultivated land . The company lobbied the US government for Árbenz ' overthrow , and the State Department responded by engineering a coup under the pretext that Árbenz was a communist . Carlos Castillo Armas took power at the head of a military junta , provoking the Guatemalan Civil War . The war lasted from 1960 to 1996 , and saw the US @-@ backed military commit genocide against the indigenous Maya peoples , and widespread human rights violations against civilians .

= = Background = =

= = = Early 20th Century = = =

Prior to the Spanish invasion in 1524 , the population of Guatemala was almost exclusively Maya . The Spanish conquest created a system of wealthy European landowners overseeing a labor force composed of slaves and bonded laborers . However , the community lands of the indigenous population remained in their control until the late 19th century . At this point , rising global demand for coffee made its export a significant source of income for the government . As a result , the state supported the coffee growers by passing legislation that took land away from the Indian population , as well as relaxing labor laws so that bonded labor could be used on the plantations .

The US @-@ based United Fruit Company ( UFC ) was one of many foreign companies that acquired large tracts of both state land and indigenous land . Manuel Estrada Cabrera , who was president of Guatemala from 1898 to 1920 , permitted limited unionization in rural Guatemala , but also made further concessions to the UFC . In 1922 , the Communist Party of Guatemala was created , and became a significant influence among urban laborers ; however , it had little reach

among the rural and Indian populations . In 1929 , the Great Depression led to the collapse of the economy and a rise in unemployment , leading to unrest among workers and laborers . Fearing the possibility of a revolution , the landed elite lent their support to Jorge Ubico y Castañeda , who had built a reputation for ruthlessness and efficiency as a provincial governor . Ubico won the election that followed in 1931 , in which he was the only candidate .

= = = Dictatorship of Jorge Ubico = = =

Ubico had made statements supporting the labor movement when campaigning for the presidency , but after his election his policy quickly became authoritarian . He abolished the system of debt peonage , and replaced it with a vagrancy law , which required all men of working age who did not own land to perform a minimum of 100 days of hard labor . In addition , the state made use of unpaid Indian labor to work on public infrastructure like roads and railroads . Ubico also froze wages at very low levels , and passed a law allowing land @-@ owners complete immunity from prosecution for any action they took to defend their property , an action described by historians as legalizing murder . He greatly strengthened the police force , turning it into one of the most efficient and ruthless in Latin America . The police were given greater authority to shoot and imprison people suspected of breaking the labor laws . The result of these laws was to create tremendous resentment against him among agricultural laborers . Ubico was highly contemptuous of the country's indigenous people , once stating that they resembled donkeys .

Ubico had great admiration for the fascist leaders of Europe , such as Francisco Franco and Benito Mussolini . However , he saw the United States as an ally against the supposed communist threat of Mexico . He made a concerted effort to gain American support ; when the US declared war on Germany and Japan in 1941 , Ubico followed suit , and acting on American instructions arrested all people of German descent in Guatemala . He permitted the US to establish an air base in Guatemala , with the stated aim of protecting the Panama Canal . Like his predecessors , he made large concessions to the United Fruit Company , granting it 200 @,@ 000 hectares ( 490 @,@ 000 acres ) hectares of public land in exchange for a promise to build a port . He later released the company from this obligation as well , citing the economic crisis . Since its entry into Guatemala , the UFC had expanded its land @-@ holdings by displacing the peasantry and converting their farmland into banana plantations . This process accelerated under Ubico , whose government doing nothing to stop it .

= = October revolution = =

= = June 1944 general strike = = =

The onset of World War II increased economic unrest in Guatemala . Ubico responded by cracking down more fiercely on any form of protest or dissent . In 1944 , popular revolt broke out in neighboring El Salvador , which briefly toppled dictator Maximiliano Hernández Martínez . However , he quickly returned to power , leading to a flood of exiled El Salvadorian revolutionaries moving to Guatemala . This coincided with a series of protests at the university in Guatemala City . Ubico responded by suspending the constitution on 22 June 1944 . The protesters , who by this point included many middle @-@ class members in addition to students and workers , called for a general strike , and presented an ultimatum to Ubico the next day , demanding the reinstatement of the constitution . They also presented him a petition signed by 311 of the most prominent Guatemalan citizens . Ubico sent the police to disrupt the protests by firing on them , and declared martial law . Clashes between protesters and the military continued for a week , during which the revolt gained momentum . At the end of June , Ubico submitted his resignation to the National Assembly , leading to huge celebrations in the streets .

The resignation of Ubico did not restore democracy . Ubico appointed three generals , Federico Ponce Vaides , Eduardo Villagrán Ariza , and Buenaventura Pineda , to a junta which would lead

the provisional government . A few days later , Ponce Vaides persuaded the congress to appoint him interim president . Ponce pledged to hold free elections soon , while at the same time suppressing the protests . Press freedom was suspended , arbitrary detentions continued , and memorial services for slain revolutionaries were prohibited . However , the protests had grown to the point where the government could not stamp them out , and rural areas also began organizing against the dictatorship . The government began using the police to intimidate the indigenous population to keep the junta in power through the forthcoming election . This resulted in growing support for an armed revolution among some sections of the populace . By now , the army was disillusioned with the junta , and progressives within it had begun to plot a coup .

= = = Interim presidency of Ponce Vaides = = =

On 1 October 1944 , Alejandro Cordova , the editor of El Imparcial , the main opposition newspaper , was assassinated . This led to the military coup plotters reaching out to the leaders of the protests , in an attempt to turn the coup into a popular uprising . Ponce Vaides announced elections , but the pro @-@ democracy forces denounced them as a fraud , citing his attempts to rig them . Ponce Vaides sought to stabilize his regime by playing on inter @-@ racial tension within the Guatemalan population . The most vocal support for the revolution had come from the Ladinos , or people of mixed racial descent . Ponce Vaides sought to exploit their fear of the Indians by paying thousands of indigenous peasants to march in Guatemala City in his support , and promising them land if they supported the Liberal party that Ubico had begun as a front for the dictatorship .

By mid @-@ October , several different plans to overthrow the junta had been set in motion by various factions of the pro @-@ democracy movement , including teachers , students , and progressive factions of the army . On 19 October , the government learned of one of these conspiracies . That same day , a small group of army officers launched a coup , led by Francisco Javier Arana and Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán . They were joined the next day by other factions of the army and the civilian population . Initially , the battle went against the revolutionaries , but after an appeal for support their ranks were swelled by unionists and students , and they eventually subdued the police and army factions loyal to Ponce Vaides . On October 20 , the next day , Ponce Vaides surrendered unconditionally .

Ponce Vaides was allowed to leave the country safely , as was Ubico himself . The military junta was replaced by another three @-@ person junta consisting of Árbenz , Arana , and an upper @-@ class youth named Jorge Toriello , who had played a significant role in the protests . Although Arana had come to the military conspiracy relatively late , his defection had brought the powerful Guardia de Honor ( Honor Guard ) over to the revolutionaries , and for this crucial role he was rewarded with a place on the junta . The junta promised free and open elections to the presidency and the congress , as well as for a constituent assembly .

The resignation of Ponce Vaides and the creation of the junta has been considered by scholars to be the beginning of the Guatemalan Revolution . However , the revolutionary junta did not immediately threaten the interests of the landed elite . Two days after Ponce Vaides ' resignation , a violent protest erupted at Patzicía , a small Indian hamlet . The junta responded with swift brutality , silencing the protest . The dead civilians included women and children .

= = = Election of Arévalo = = =

Juan José Arévalo Bermejo was born into a middle @-@ class family in 1904 . He became a primary school teacher for a brief while , and then earned a scholarship to a university in Argentina , where he earned a doctorate in the philosophy of education . He returned to Guatemala in 1934 , and sought a position in the Ministry of Education . However , he was denied the position he wished for , and felt uncomfortable under the dictatorship of Ubico . He left the country and held a faculty position in Argentina until 1944 , when he returned to Guatemala . In July 1944 the Renovación Nacional , the teachers ' party , had been formed , and Arévalo was named its candidate . In an unexpected surge of support , his candidacy was endorsed by many of the leading organizations

among the protesters , including the student federation . His lack of connection to the dictatorship and his academic background both worked in his favor among the students and teachers . At the same time , the fact that he had chosen to go into exile in conservative Argentina rather than revolutionary Mexico reassured landowners worried about socialist or communist reform .

The subsequent elections took place in December 1944 , and were broadly considered free and fair , although only literate men were given the vote . Unlike in similar historical situations , none of the junta members stood for election . Arévalo 's closest challenger was Adrián Recinos , whose campaign included a number of individuals identified with the Ubico regime . The ballots were tallied on 19 December 1944 , and Arévalo won in a landslide , receiving more than four times as many ballots as the other candidates combined .

= = Presidency of Arévalo = =

Arévalo took office on 15 March 1945 , inheriting a country with numerous social and economic issues . Despite Ubico 's policy of using unpaid labor to build public roads , internal transport was severely inadequate . 70 % of the population was illiterate , and malnutrition and poor health were widespread . The wealthiest 2 % of landowners owned nearly three quarters of agricultural land , and as a result less than 1 % was cultivated . The indigenous peasants either had no land , or had far too little to sustain themselves . Three quarters of the labor force were in agriculture , and industry was essentially nonexistent .

= = = Ideology = = =

Arévalo identified his ideology as " spiritual socialism . " He held the belief that the only way to alleviate the backwardness of most Guatemalans was through a paternalistic government . He was strongly opposed to classical Marxism , and believed in a capitalist society that was regulated to ensure that its benefits went to the entire population . Arévalo 's ideology was reflected in the new constitution that the Guatemalan assembly ratified soon after his inauguration , which was one of the most progressive in Latin America . It mandated suffrage for all but illiterate women , a decentralization of power , and provisions for a multiparty system . Communist parties were , however , forbidden . The constitution and Arévalo 's socialist ideology became the basis for much of the reform enacted under Arévalo and ( later ) Jacobo Árbenz . Although the US government would later portray the ideology of the revolution as radical communist , it did not in fact represent a major shift leftward , and was staunchly anti @-@ communist . Arévalo 's economic vision for the country was centered around private enterprise .

= = = Labor movement = = =

The revolution in 1944 left many of the biggest opponents of organized labor unaffected , such as the landed elite and the United Fruit Company . The revolution , and election of Arévalo , nonetheless marked a significant shift in the fortunes of labor unions . The protests of 1944 strengthened the labor movement to the point where Ponce Vaides stopped enforcing the repressive vagrancy law , which was abolished in the 1945 constitution . On 1 May 1945 , Arévalo made a speech celebrating organized labor , to a tremendously positive reception . The freedom of press guaranteed in the new constitution also drew much attention to the brutal working conditions in Guatemala City . From the beginning , the new unions that were formed fell into two camps , those that were communist and those that were not . The repressive policies of the Ubico government had driven both factions underground , but they re @-@ emerged after the revolution .

The communist movement was also strengthened by the release of those of its leaders who had been imprisoned by Ubico . Among them were Miguel Mármol , Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez , and Graciela García , the latter unusual for being a woman in a movement that women were discouraged from participating in . The communists began to organize in the capital , and established a school for workers , known as the Escuela Claridad , or the Clarity School , which

taught reading , writing , and also helped organize unions . Six months after the school was established , President Arévalo closed the school down , and deported all the leaders of the movement who were not Guatemalan . However , the communist movement survived , mostly by its dominance of the teacher 's union .

Arévalo 's response toward the non @-@ communist unions was mixed . In 1945 , he criminalized all rural labor unions in workplaces with fewer than 500 workers , which included most plantations . One of the few unions big enough to survive this law was of the banana workers employed by the UFC . In 1946 this union organized a strike , which provoked Arévalo into outlawing all strikes until a new labor code was passed . This led to efforts on the part of employers to stall the labor code , as well as to exploit workers as far as possible before it was passed . The unions were also damaged when the US government persuaded the American Federation of Labor to found the Organización Regional Internacional del Trabajo ( ORIT ) , a union that took a virulently anti @-@ communist stance .

Despite the powerful opposition , by 1947 the labor unions had managed to organize enough support to force the congress to pass a new labor code . This law was revolutionary in many ways ; it forbade discrimination in salary levels on the basis of " age , race , sex , nationality , religious beliefs , or political affiliation . " It created a set of health and safety standards in the workplace , and standardized an eight @-@ hour working day and a 45 @-@ hour working week , although the congress succumbed to pressure from the plantation lobby and exempted plantations from this provision . The code also required plantation owners to construct primary schools for the children of their workers , and expressed a general commitment to " dignifying " the position of workers . Although many of these provisions were never enforced , the creation of administrative mechanisms for this law in 1948 allowed several of its provisions to be systematically enforced . The law as a whole had a huge positive impact on worker rights in the country , including raising the average wages by a factor of three or more .

= = = Foreign relations = = =

The Arévalo government attempted to support democratic ideals abroad as well . One of Arévalo 's first actions was to break diplomatic relations with the government of Spain under dictator Francisco Franco . At two inter @-@ American conferences in the year after his election , Arévalo recommended that the republics in Latin America not recognize and support authoritarian regimes . This initiative was defeated by the dictatorships supported by the United States , such as the Somoza regime in Nicaragua . In response , Arévalo broke off diplomatic ties with the Nicaraguan government and with the government of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic . Frustrated by the lack of results from working with the other Latin American governments , Arévalo began to support the Caribbean Legion , which sought to replace dictatorships with democracies across Latin America , by force if necessary . This led to the administration being labelled as communist by the dictatorial governments in the region .

The Arévalo government also floated the idea of a Central American Federation , as being the only way that a democratic government could survive in the region . He approached several leaders of democratic Central American countries , but was rejected by all except Castañeda Castro , the president of El Salvador . The two leaders began talks to build a union , and set up several commissions to look into the issue . In late 1945 they announced the formation of the union , but the formalization of the process got delayed by internal troubles in both countries , and in 1948 the Castro government was toppled in a military coup led by Óscar Osorio .

= = = 1949 coup attempt = = =

As the highest @-@ ranking military officer in the October Revolution , Francisco Arana had led the three @-@ man junta that formed the interim government after the coup . He was opposed to handing over power to a civilian government , first seeking to postpone the 1944 election , and then to annul it . In return for allowing Arévalo to become president , Arana was granted the newly

created position of " chief of the armed forces , " ranked above the minister of defense . The position had a six @-@ year term , and controlled all military appointments . In December 1945 , Arévalo was involved in a motoring accident which left him seriously injured . Fearing a military coup , the leaders of the Revolutionary Action Party ( PAR ) made a pact with Arana , in which the party agreed to support his candidacy in the 1950 elections in return for a promise to refrain from a coup .

Arana 's support began to be solicited by the landed elite , who felt threatened by Arévalo 's reforms . Arana , who was not initially inclined to get involved with politics , began to make occasional statements against the government . In the 1948 parliamentary election , he backed a number of opposition candidates , all of whom were defeated . By 1949 the National Renovation Party and the PAR were both openly hostile to Arana , while a small fragment of the Popular Liberation Front split off to support him . The leftist parties decided to back Árbenz instead , as they believed that only a military officer could defeat Arana .

On 16 July 1949 , Arana delivered an ultimatum to Arévalo , demanding the expulsion of all of Árbenz ' supporters from the cabinet and the military ; he threatened a coup if his demands were not met . Arévalo informed Árbenz and other progressive leaders of the ultimatum , who all agreed that Arana should be exiled . Two days later , Arévalo and Arana had another meeting ; on the way back , Arana 's convoy was intercepted by a small force led by Árbenz . A shootout ensued , killing three men , including Arana . Arana 's supporters in the military rose up in revolt , but they were leaderless , and by the next day the rebels asked for negotiations . The coup attempt left approximately 150 dead and 200 wounded . Many of Arana 's supporters , including Carlos Castillo Armas , were exiled . The details of the incident were not made public .

= = Presidency of Árbenz = =

= = = Election = = =

Árbenz 's role as defense minister had already made him a strong candidate for the presidency , and his firm support of the government during the 1949 uprising further increased his prestige . In 1950 , the economically moderate Partido de Integridad Nacional ( PIN ) announced that Árbenz would be its presidential candidate in the upcoming election . This announcement was quickly followed by endorsements from most parties on the left , including the influential PAR , as well as from labor unions . Árbenz had only a couple of significant challengers in the election , in a field of ten candidates . One of these was Jorge García Granados , who was supported by some members of the upper @-@ middle class who felt the revolution had gone too far . Another was Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes , who had been a general under Ubico , and who had the support of the hardline opponents of the revolution . During his campaign , Árbenz promised to continue and expand the reforms begun under Arévalo . The election was held on 15 November 1950 , and Árbenz won more than 60 % of the vote , in elections that were free and fair with the exception of the disenfranchisement of illiterate female voters . Árbenz was inaugurated as president on 15 March 1951 .

= = = Árbenz ' personal background = = =

Árbenz was born in 1913 into a middle @-@ class family of Swiss heritage . In 1935 he had graduated from the Escuela Politécnica , Guatemala 's national military academy , with excellent grades , and had subsequently become an officer in the Guatemalan army under Ubico . As an officer , Árbenz himself had been required to escort chain @-@ gangs of prisoners . This process had radicalized him , and he had begun to form links to the labor movement . In 1938 he had met and married María Vilanova , who was also interested in social reform , and who became a significant influence on him and a national figure in her own right . Another strong influence on him was José Manuel Fortuny , a well @-@ known Guatemalan communist , who was one of his main advisers during his government . In 1944 , disgusted with Ubico 's authoritarian regime , he and his

fellow officers had begun plotting against the government . When Ubico resigned in 1944 , Árbenz had witnessed Ponce Vaides intimidate the congress into naming him president . Highly offended by this , Árbenz had plotted against Ponce Vaides , and was one of the military leaders of the coup that toppled him , in addition to having been one of the few officers in the revolution who had formed and maintained connections to the popular civilian movement .

= = = Agrarian reform = = =

The biggest component of Árbenz 's project of modernization was his agrarian reform bill . Árbenz drafted the bill himself with the help of advisers that included some leaders of the communist party as well as non @-@ communist economists . He also sought advice from numerous economists from across Latin America . The bill was passed by the National Assembly on 17 June 1952 , and the program went into effect immediately . The focus of the program was on transferring uncultivated land from large landowners to their poverty stricken laborers , who would then be able to begin a viable farm of their own . Árbenz was also motivated to pass the bill because he needed to generate capital for his public infrastructure projects within the country . At the behest of the United States , the World Bank had refused to grant Guatemala a loan in 1951 , which made the shortage of capital more acute .

The official title of the agrarian reform bill was Decree 900 . It expropriated all uncultivated land from landholdings that were larger than 673 acres ( 272 ha ) . If the estates were between 672 acres ( 272 ha ) and 224 acres ( 91 ha ) in size , uncultivated land was expropriated only if less than two @-@ thirds of it was in use . The owners were compensated with government bonds , the value of which was equal to that of the land expropriated . The value of the land itself was the value that the owners had declared in their tax returns in 1952 . The redistribution was organized by local committees that included representatives from the landowners , the laborers , and the government . Of the nearly 350 @,@ 000 private land @-@ holdings , only 1710 were affected by expropriation . The law itself was cast in a moderate capitalist framework ; however , it was implemented with great speed , which resulted in occasional arbitrary land seizures . There was also some violence , directed at land @-@ owners , as well as at peasants that had minor landholdings of their own .

By June 1954 , 1 @.@ 4 million acres of land had been expropriated and distributed . Approximately 500 @,@ 000 individuals , or one @-@ sixth of the population , had received land by this point . The decree also included provision of financial credit to the people who received the land . The National Agrarian Bank ( Banco Nacional Agrario , or BNA ) was created on 7 July 1953 , and by June 1951 it had disbursed more than \$ 9 million in small loans . 53 @,@ 829 applicants received an average of 225 US dollars , which was twice as much as the Guatemalan per capita income . The BNA developed a reputation for being a highly efficient government bureaucracy , and the United States government , Árbenz 's biggest detractor , did not have anything negative to say about it . The loans had a high repayment rate , and of the \$ 3 @,@ 371 @,@ 185 handed out between March and November 1953 , \$ 3 @,@ 049 @,@ 092 had been repaid by June 1954 . The law also included provisions for nationalization of roads that passed through redistributed land , which greatly increased the connectivity of rural communities .

Contrary to the predictions made by the detractors of the government , the law resulted in a slight increase in Guatemalan agricultural productivity , and to an increase in cultivated area . Purchases of farm machinery also increased . Overall , the law resulted in a significant improvement in living standards for many thousands of peasant families , the majority of whom were indigenous people . Historian Piero Gleijeses stated that the injustices corrected by the law were far greater than the injustice of the relatively few arbitrary land seizures . Historian Greg Grandin stated that the law was flawed in many respects ; among other things , it was too cautious and deferential to the planters , and it created communal divisions among peasants . Nonetheless , it represented a fundamental power shift in favor of those that had been marginalized before then .

= = United Fruit Company = =

### == History ==

The United Fruit Company had been formed in 1899 by the merger of two large American corporations . The new company had major holdings of land and railroads across Central America , which it used to support its business of exporting bananas . In 1900 it was already the world 's largest exporter of bananas . By 1930 it had an operating capital of 215 million US dollars , and had been the largest landowner and employer in Guatemala for several years . Under Manuel Estrada Cabrera and other Guatemalan presidents , the company obtained a series of concessions in the country that allowed it to massively expand its business . These concessions frequently came at the cost of tax revenue for the Guatemalan government . The company supported Jorge Ubico in the leadership struggle that occurred from 1930 to 1932 , and upon assuming power , Ubico expressed willingness to create a new contract with it . This new contract was immensely favorable to the company . It included a 99 @-@ year lease to massive tracts of land , exemptions from virtually all taxes , and a guarantee that no other company would receive any competing contract . Under Ubico , the company paid virtually no taxes , which hurt the Guatemalan government 's ability to deal with the effects of the Great Depression . Ubico asked the company to pay its workers only 50 cents a day , to prevent other workers from demanding higher wages . The company also virtually owned Puerto Barrios , Guatemala 's only port to the Atlantic ocean , allowing the company to make profits from the flow of goods through the port . By 1950 , the company 's annual profits were 65 million US dollars , twice the revenue of the Guatemalan government .

### == Impact of the revolution ==

Due to its long association with Ubico 's government , the United Fruit Company ( UFC ) was seen as an impediment to progress by Guatemalan revolutionaries after 1944 . This image was worsened by the company 's discriminatory policies towards its colored workers . Thanks to its position as the country 's largest landowner and employer , the reforms of Arévalo 's government affected the UFC more than other companies . Among other things , the labor code passed by the government allowed its workers to strike when their demands for higher wages and job security were not met . The company saw itself as being specifically targeted by the reforms , and refused to negotiate with the numerous sets of strikers , despite frequently being in violation of the new laws . The company 's labor troubles were compounded in 1952 when Jacobo Árbenz passed Decree 900 , the agrarian reform law . Of the 550 @,@ 000 acres ( 220 @,@ 000 ha ) that the company owned , 15 % were being cultivated ; the rest of the land , which was idle , came under the scope of the agrarian reform law .

### == Lobbying efforts ==

The United Fruit Company responded with intensive lobbying of members of the United States government , leading many US congressmen and senators to criticize the Guatemalan government for not protecting the interests of the company . The Guatemalan government responded by saying that the company was the main obstacle to progress in the country . American historians observed that " To the Guatemalans it appeared that their country was being mercilessly exploited by foreign interests which took huge profits without making any contributions to the nation 's welfare . " In 1953 , 200 @,@ 000 acres ( 81 @,@ 000 ha ) of uncultivated land was expropriated by the government , which offered the company compensation at the rate of 2 @.@ 99 US dollars to the acre , twice what the company had paid when it bought the property . More expropriation occurred soon after , bringing the total to over 400 @,@ 000 acres ( 160 @,@ 000 ha ) ; the government offered compensation to the company at the rate at which the UFC had valued its own property for tax purposes . This resulted in further lobbying in Washington , particularly through Secretary of State John Foster Dulles , who had close ties to the company . The company had begun a public relations campaign to discredit the Guatemalan government ; it hired public relations expert Edward Bernays ,



who ran a concerted effort to portray the company as the victim of the Guatemalan government for several years . The company stepped up its efforts after Dwight Eisenhower had been elected in 1952 . These included commissioning a research study on Guatemala from a firm known to be hawkish , which produced a 235 @-@ page report that was highly critical of the Guatemalan government . Historians have stated that the report was full of " exaggerations , scurrilous descriptions and bizarre historical theories . " The report nonetheless had a significant impact on the Congressmen that it was sent to . Overall , the company spent over a half @-@ million dollars to influence both lawmakers and members of the public in the US that the Guatemalan government needed to be overthrown .

= = CIA instigated coup d'état = =

= = = Political motivations = = =

In addition to the lobbying of the United Fruit Company , several other factors also led the United States to launch the coup that toppled Árbenz in 1954 . During the years of the Guatemalan Revolution , military coups occurred in several other Central American countries that brought firmly anti @-@ communist governments to power . Army officer Major Oscar Osorio won staged elections in El Salvador in 1950 , Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista took power in 1952 . Honduras , where the land @-@ holdings of the United Fruit Company were the most extensive , had been ruled by an anti @-@ communist government sympathetic to the United States since 1932 . These developments created tension between the other governments and Árbenz , which was exacerbated by Arévalo 's support for the Caribbean Legion . This support also worried the United States and the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency . According to US historian Richard Immerman , during the beginning of the Cold War , the US and the CIA tended to assume that everybody who opposed it was a communist . Thus , despite Arévalo 's ban of the communist party , important figures in the US government were already predisposed to believe that the revolutionary government had been infiltrated by communists , and was a danger to the US . During the years of the revolution , several reports and memoranda were circulated amongst US government agencies that furthered this belief .

= = = Operation PBFORTUNE = = =

Although the administration of Harry Truman had become convinced that the Guatemalan government had been penetrated by communists , it relied on purely diplomatic and economic means to try and reduce the communist influence , at least until the end of its term . The United States had refused to sell arms to the Guatemalan government after 1944 ; in 1951 it began to block weapons purchases by Guatemala from other countries . In 1952 Truman became sufficiently convinced of the threat posed by Árbenz to start planning a covert overthrow , titled Operation PBFORTUNE . The plan had originally been suggested by the US supported dictator of Nicaragua , Anastasio Somoza García , who said that if he were given weapons , he could overthrow the Guatemalan government . Truman gave the CIA permission to go ahead with the plan , without informing the state department . The CIA placed a shipment of weapons on a vessel owned by the United Fruit Company , and the operation was paid for by Rafael Trujillo and Marcos Pérez Jiménez , the right @-@ wing anti @-@ communist dictators of the Dominican Republic and Venezuela , respectively . The operation was to be led by Carlos Castillo Armas . However , the US state department discovered the conspiracy , and secretary of state Dean Acheson persuaded Truman to abort the plan .

= = = Operation PBSUCCESS = = =

In November 1952 , Dwight Eisenhower was elected president of the US . Eisenhower 's campaign

had included a pledge for a more active anti @-@ communist policy . Several figures in his administration , including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother and CIA director Allen Dulles had close ties to the United Fruit Company . Both of these factors made Eisenhower predisposed to supporting the overthrow of Árbenz .

The CIA operation to overthrow Jacobo Árbenz , code @-@ named Operation PBSUCCESS , was authorized by Eisenhower in August 1953 . The operation was granted a budget of 2 @.@ 7 million dollars for " psychological warfare and political action . " The total budget has been estimated at between 5 and 7 million dollars , and the planning employed over 100 CIA agents . The CIA planning included drawing up lists of people within Árbenz ' government to be assassinated if the coup were to be carried out . Manuals of assassination techniques were compiled , and lists were also made of people whom the junta would dispose of . After considering several candidates to lead the coup , including Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes , the CIA settled on Carlos Castillo Armas . The US state department also embarked on a campaign to ensure that other countries would not sympathize with the Guatemalan government , by linking it to communism and the Soviet Union . By 1954 Árbenz had become desperate for weapons , and decided to acquire them secretly from Czechoslovakia , which would have been the first time that a Soviet bloc country shipped weapons to the Americas . The shipment of these weapons acted as the final spur for the CIA to launch its coup .

= = = Invasion = = =

On 18 June 1954 , Castillo Armas led a convoy of trucks carrying 480 men across the border from Honduras into Guatemala . The weapons had come from the CIA , which had also trained the men in camps in Nicaragua and Honduras . Since his army was badly outnumbered by the Guatemalan army , the CIA plan required Castillo Armas to camp within the Guatemalan border , while it mounted a psychological campaign to convince the Guatemalan people and government that Armas ' victory was a fait accompli . This campaign included using Catholic priests to give anti @-@ communist sermons , strafing several towns using CIA aircraft , and placing a naval blockade around the country . It also involved dropping leaflets by airplane through the country , and carrying out a radio broadcast entitled " The Voice of Liberation " which announced that Guatemalan exiles led by Castillo Armas were shortly about to liberate the country .

The military force led by Castillo Armas attempted to make forays towards the towns of Zacapa and Puerto Barrios ; however , these were beaten back by the Guatemalan army . The propaganda broadcast by the CIA had far more effect ; it succeeded in leading a Guatemalan pilot to defect , which led to Árbenz grounding the entire air force , fearing its defection . The CIA also used its planes , flown by American pilots , to bomb Guatemalan towns for psychological effect . When the old planes used by the invasion force were found to be inadequate , the CIA persuaded Eisenhower to authorize the use of two additional planes . Guatemala made an appeal to the United Nations , but the US vetoed an investigation into the incident by the Security Council , stating that it was an internal matter in Guatemala . On 25 June , a CIA plane bombed Guatemala City , destroying the government 's main oil reserves . Frightened by this , Árbenz ordered the army to distribute weapons to local peasants and workers . The army refused to do this , instead demanding that Árbenz either resign or come to terms with Castillo Armas .

Knowing that he could not fight on without the support of the army , Jacobo Árbenz resigned on 27 June 1954 , handing over power to Colonel Carlos Enrique Diaz . US ambassador John Peurifoy then mediated negotiations held in El Salvador between the army leadership and Castillo Armas which led to Armas being included in the ruling military junta on 7 July 1954 , and was named provisional president a few days later . The US recognized the new government on 13 July . Elections were held in early October , from which all political parties were barred from participating , and Castillo Armas was the only candidate , winning the election with 99 % of the vote . Among the outcomes of the meeting in El Salvador was a planned new constitution , which would rollback most of the progressive reform brought by the revolution .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Following the coup , hundreds of peasant leaders were rounded up and executed . Historian Greg Grandin has stated that " There is general consensus today among academics and Guatemalan intellectuals that 1954 signaled the beginning of what would become the most repressive state in the hemisphere ? a state responsible for the torture and murder of two hundred thousand of its citizens . " Following the coup and the establishment of the military dictatorship , a series of leftist insurgencies began in the countryside , frequently with a large degree of popular support , which triggered the Guatemalan Civil War that lasted until 1996 . The largest of these movements was led by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor , which at its largest point had 270 @,@ 000 members . 200 @,@ 000 civilians were killed in the war , and numerous human rights violations committed , including massacres of civilian populations , rape , aerial bombardment , and forced disappearances . Historians estimate that 93 % of these violations were committed by the United States @-@ backed military , which included a genocidal scorched @-@ earth campaign against the indigenous Maya population in the 1980s .