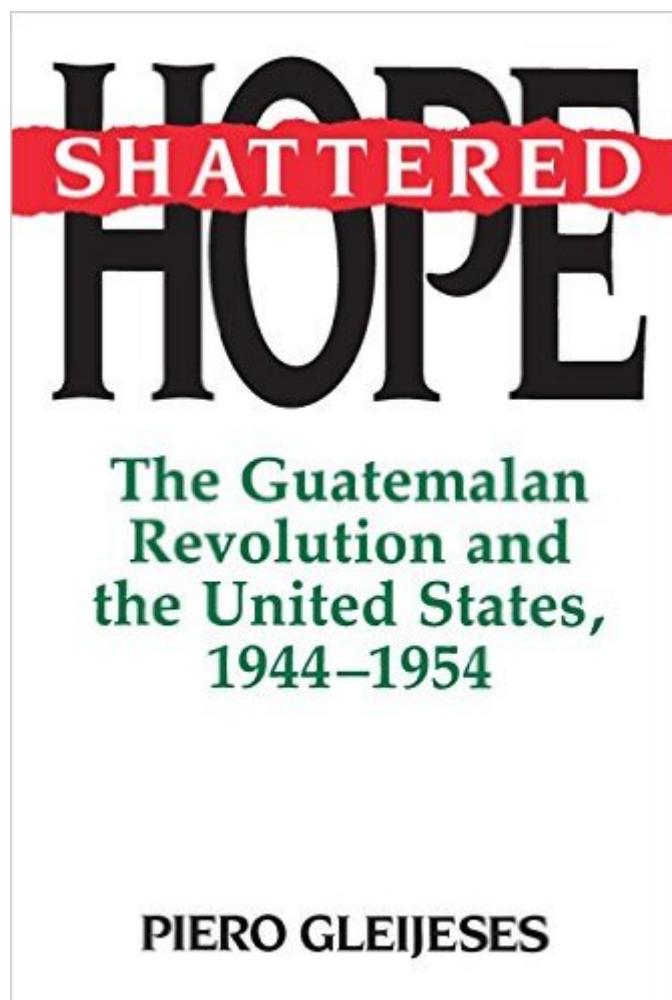


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Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution And The United States, 1944–1954



Synopsis

The most thorough account yet available of a revolution that saw the first true agrarian reform in Central America, this book is also a penetrating analysis of the tragic destruction of that revolution. In no other Central American country was U.S. intervention so decisive and so ruinous, charges Piero Gleijeses. Yet he shows that the intervention can be blamed on no single "convenient villain." "Extensively researched and written with conviction and passion, this study analyzes the history and downfall of what seems in retrospect to have been Guatemala's best government, the short-lived regime of Jacobo Arbenz, overthrown in 1954, by a CIA-orchestrated coup."--Foreign Affairs "Piero Gleijeses offers a historical road map that may serve as a guide for future generations. . . . [Readers] will come away with an understanding of the foundation of a great historical tragedy."--Saul Landau, The Progressive "[Gleijeses's] academic rigor does not prevent him from creating an accessible, lucid, almost journalistic account of an episode whose tragic consequences still reverberate."--Paul Kantz, Commonweal

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating and extremely well-documented history of the period of reformist administrations which ended in the 1954 overthrow of the Guatemalan government engineered by the CIA. It includes great accounts of the views and roles played by the United Fruit Company, the US government, and the Guatemalan army. Based on the declassified archives of the US government and interviews with virtually everyone involved on both the US and Guatemalan sides,

the book gives great insight into how the US came to its decision and how it executed the overthrow of the government. It's easy to extrapolate to interesting parallels to subsequent episodes where the US decided to overthrow regimes based on simplistic understandings of foreign governments, during US' obsession with issues that were extremely important to US opinion (in this case communist influence) but not as relevant as other issues to other countries (e.g., land reform). Gleijeses offers interesting insights into how the CIA did a poor and then good job of understanding the Guatemalan government, and then how the US (CIA) poorly organized and then had no control over the actual overthrow, leading US leaders into overconfidence and the Bay of Pigs disaster. It is impressive to see the raw power of the US ambassador to choose and control Guatemala's army, juntas, and presidents. I recommend you first read Chapter 11, The International Conspiracy against Guatemala Chapter 14, The Fall of Arbenz Chapter 15, Conclusion Then, if you are interested in more detail, read other chapters. Independently, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 have good descriptions of the Ubico tyranny, the presidency of ArÃ©valo, and the death of Francisco Arana.

"Shattered Hope" attempts to resolve the debate about why the US ultimately decided to overthrow the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. In the early 1980s, two books came out addressing this same issue--"Bitter Fruit" and "The CIA in Guatemala". The former argued that the primary motivation was economic, specifically in response to UFCO's call for US intervention with Communism being secondary, while the latter argues that it was primarily about Communism with UFCO being almost irrelevant by the time of the overthrow. Gleijeses, in "Shattered Hope", makes a good argument, though it requires some deep reading to tease it out. By supporting his argument with the quote, "They would have overthrown us even if we didn't have bananas," it appears that Gleijeses is arguing that it was about Communism. A closer read, however, will reveal a different argument--Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers were acting consistently in a long heritage of US intervention in the Caribbean basin, a heritage that preceded the cold war and to some extent lasted beyond. Arbenz posed the ultimate threat--he was democratic, extremely popular in all of Latin America, and was consistently refusing to heed the requests of the US government. IN other words, he was setting a dangerous example that could have inspired democratic revolutions in all of Central America. He was therefore intolerable. If you read "Shattered Hope" you should consider reading "Bitter Fruit" and "The CIA in Guatemala" as well. One weakness of "Shattered Hope" is the quickness with which Gleijeses disregards economic interests and the close connections between UFCO and key US foreign policy figures within the Eisenhower administration.

In "Shattered Hope" author Piero Gleijeses exposes the ruthlessness and tyranny of US imperial policy in Guatemala."Shattered Hope" relates how, in 1944, a revolution there overthrew a vicious, US-backed tyrant, leading to the establishment of Jacobo Arbenz's democratic government modeled after Roosevelt's New Deal. From 1944 to 1954, successful independent economic development which forsook US interests and attended to the needs of Guatemala's poor was initiated."Shattered Hope" illustrates how Arbenz's reform-based policies caused hysteria in the US as Eisenhower and Dulles warned that the policies of Guatemala, based on independent nationalism, were a threat to the security of the US and its imperialist Monroe Doctrine. The situation in Guatemala was adverse to US interests because of the "Communist" influence based on militant advocacy of social reforms and nationalistic policies. As is noted in "Shattered Hope" the fact that Dulles had financial interests in the United Fruit Company was essential to the formation of US policy towards Guatemala. The nationalist policies of the Arbenz government, including the persecution of foreign economic interests, especially the United Fruit Company, had gained the support or acquiescence of almost all Guatemalans. The Arbenz government was proceeding to mobilize the hitherto politically inert peasantry while undermining the power of large landholders."Shattered Hope" illustrates how this was just too much for Dulles and the US which, from 1952 to 1954 orchestrated a coup, desposing Arbenz and subjecting Guatemala to 40 years of terror, murder and poverty. One of the more objective and lucid accounts of Guatemala's tragic post-war history, "Shattered Hope" provides readers with a intelligible account of CIA-manufactured destabilization which has been transposed upon myriad nations around the world by the US.

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