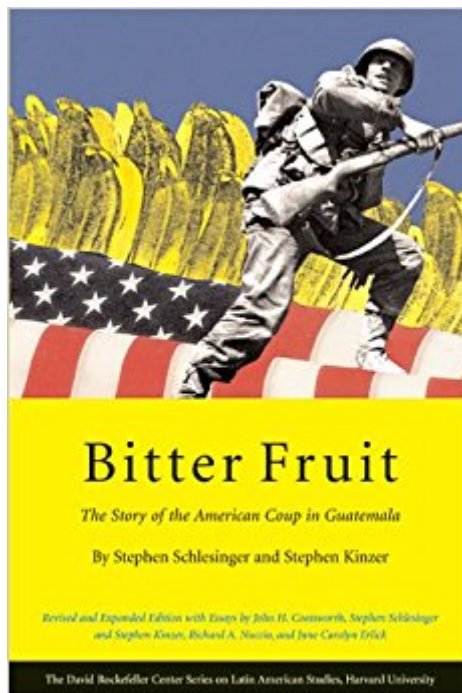


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Bitter Fruit: The Story Of The American Coup In Guatemala, Revised And Expanded (Series On Latin American Studies)



Synopsis

Bitter Fruit is a comprehensive and insightful account of the CIA operation to overthrow the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala in 1954. First published in 1982, this book has become a classic, a textbook case of the relationship between the United States and the Third World. The authors make extensive use of U.S. government documents and interviews with former CIA and other officials. It is a warning of what happens when the United States abuses its power.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Schlesinger's and Kinzer's classic study examines one of the more disgraceful chapters in the history of American foreign policy: the CIA-sponsored overthrow in 1954 of the democratically elected government of Guatemala. The long-term repercussions of this unprovoked excursion are still felt today; many Latin American countries still do not trust United States intentions because of our actions in both Guatemala and, two decades later, Chile. "Bitter Fruit" explodes some cherished myths that apologists for the coup have proffered over the years. First, it's clear that Roosevelt rather than Stalin provided the inspiration to the presidencies of Juan Jose Arevalo (1945-1951) and Jacobo Arbenz Guzman (1951-1954). Both Arevalo and Arbenz were motivated by the policies and practices of the New Deal; their support for labor and their actions towards American businesses

must be viewed in this light and were never any worse than the laws passed during the Depression in the United States. Regardless of whatever tolerance Guatemalan Communists may have enjoyed, or influence they may have had--and it's clear that they didn't have much--the Eisenhower administration was motivated as much by scorn of the Roosevelt and Truman years as by anti-Communism. (Tellingly, those who cite Che Guevera's presence in Guatemala often fail to note that his arrival, at the age of 25 in early 1954, postdated the planning of American intervention and predated by many years Guevera's notoriety.) Second, the succession of American puppets who succeeded Arbenz were certainly not supported by the people of Guatemala: the ragtag opposition "army" never exceeded 400 troops in number, and none of the dictators during the next four decades could have survived a freely held election.

Well, OK, Watergate actually triggered the erosion of my faith in the US government. But I was barely a teenager as that story broke. I was in my early 20's when I read *Bitter Fruit*, prior to meeting Stephen Schlesinger at a university function. This is the story of how the United States Government plotted against and overthrew the first democratically elected government in Guatemala. It clearly demonstrates how our government became an instrument, not of Democracy, but of oppression for the benefit of the wealthy. The right-wing coup, planned and supported by the CIA, led to other covert operations, many of which succeeded in enriching American corporations at the expense of Democracy. Jacobo Arbenz, elected to the presidency of Guatemala was faced with a crisis of poverty. Most of the nation's land belonged to a very few rich, and to United Fruit Company. Much of that land lay fallow. Arbenz instituted a land reform package which called for turning over fallow land to the country's impoverished campesinos. Land would be purchased by the government from the owners at the value THE OWNERS had declared for property tax purposes. Sounds fair enough, right? Honest landowners would receive fair recompense for unused land. Dishonest landowners would get their just desserts. Nevertheless, United Fruit Company, using its pull with John Foster & Allen Dulles, Secretary of State & CIA Director, respectively, managed to have their own revolution created and funded by the US Government, wrapped in a shroud of anti-communism. The dictator they instated continued the tradition of repression that Guatemala had known for decades before. The only real winners of in this story were the stockholders of United Fruit.

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