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Helen Simon Travis

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WHAT HAPPENED IN GUATEMALA

By Helen Simon Travis and A. B. Magil



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Poster by the Mexican artist, Alberto Beltran

About the Authors

HELEN SIMON TRAVIS visited Guatemala in 1953, where she interviewed outstanding government, trade union, peasant, and cultural leaders. Her stirring report on developments in that country is based on eye-witness observation.

A. B. MAGIL visited Guatemala in 1951 and again in 1954. He is the author of numerous books and pamphlets, and is widely known as a writer, lecturer, and educator. He is presently associate editor of *Masses & Mainstream*.

The drawing on the cover of this pamphlet is from a poster by the distinguished Mexican artist, Alberto Beltran. The quetzal bird is the national symbol of Guatemala.

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WHAT HAPPENED IN GUATEMALA

By Helen S. Travis and A. B. Magil

In June 1954, the iron curtain of fascist dictatorship was pulled down over the solitary outpost of democracy in Central America—Guatemala. Less than ten years after the Guatemalan people established their democratic republic, it was overthrown by force and violence.

It was not Guatemalans who overthrew the constitutional government of that country. It was the \$600,000,000 trust, the United Fruit Company, and the United States government that organized, financed and armed the invasion of the Guatemalan Benedict Arnold, Lieut.-Col. Carlos Castillo Armas. And it was the United Fruit dictatorship in the neighboring republic of Honduras from which the invasion was launched.

Today terror stalks Guatemala. Between 5,000 and 8,000 trade unionists, peasants, intellectuals, members of democratic political parties are in jails and concentration camps. The free trade union and peasants' movements, the democratic parties and all other people's organizations have been outlawed. Civil liberties have been extinguished and Guatemala's constitution, the most democratic in Latin America, has been abolished.

Guatemala's New Deal—land reform, the right of labor to organize, bargain collectively and strike, and other social reforms—has been destroyed.

The invasion of Guatemala came as the climax of some thirty-odd conspiracies in a period of ten years against the democratic government of that country. It was no secret that these conspiracies had their inspiration and received their financing in Washington and Boston, headquarters of United Fruit.

It was Sunday, March 29, 1953. Two hundred men donned their new uniforms, grabbed their new rifles, grenades, machine-guns. Swiftly

they descended on the town of Salamá, a provincial capital not far from Guatemala City. They seized the mayor, others, representing the democratic authority of the state. They cut telephone and telegraph lines. Then they awaited news of other successful uprisings throughout this isolated democratic Central American republic. But the news never came.

I* had spent a quiet, sunshiny Sunday in the country. I only learned about Salamá the next day, and then it was all over.

The 200 held on for 12 hours, but no masses flocked to their anti-democratic banners. In Escuintla a reactionary group had been caught in the midst of its plotting, and had spent Saturday night in jail. In other provinces, projected uprisings failed to materialize.

The Guatemalan Army had easily regained control of Salamá. The organized workers and peasants were standing by, prepared to battle to protect their democratic government. But no large-scale battle was needed. The plotters were arrested or put to flight.

What made them try to overthrow the government again, after failure of some thirty previous attempts since the dictatorship fell in 1944 and the democratic regimes of Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz were instituted?

Trial of the rebels revealed the answer: They were confidently expecting *intervention from outside Guatemala*.

Two of them were high on the payroll of the United Fruit Co., the United States concern which for years had practically owned Guatemala. On the witness stand, some admitted that \$64,000 received from the company had been used to buy arms. Several confessed that 30 machineguns had been the gift of Salvadorean Ambassador, Col. José Alberto Funes, and that they were expecting additional military support from the nearby reactionary dictatorships of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

The Wolf Pack

Ten months later, on January 29, 1954, the Guatemalan government published documentary proof of a well organized conspiracy to invade Guatemala by land, sea and air. The documents, written by the principal Guatemalan plotters themselves, showed that the leader of the

* Wherever the first person singular is used, it refers to Helen Simon Travis.

conspiracy was the man who later actually headed the invasion, Colonel Castillo Armas. The documents implicated the government of Nicaragua and its President, General Anastasio Somoza, notorious Washington puppet, as well as officials and "friends" in other Latin American countries, plus "*the government of the North*"—that is, of the United States.

The documents showed that the military plans had been worked out in great detail, with the chief operations base in Nicaragua. Following the exposure of the plot, the operations base was shifted to Honduras, from which the invasion was later launched.

The statement of the Guatemalan government on the conspiracy also declared:

"The person in charge of preparing the criminals and saboteurs and of training the communications technicians is Col. Carl Studer, an officer who was retired from the North American army so that he could place himself at the disposal of the United Fruit Company."

The State Department publicly scoffed at these disclosures—and intensified the preparations for the invasion. In fact, almost from the moment it took office the Eisenhower administration stepped up the cold war against Guatemala launched by the Truman regime.

No administration spokesman repudiated the call for intervention against Guatemala made by Spruille Braden, millionaire former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Braden, now chief of public relations for the United Fruit Company, in a speech on March 12, 1953, attacked Guatemala as "a beachhead for international communism" and declared that the suppression of this so-called communism "even by force" from the outside "would not constitute an intervention in the internal affairs" of Guatemala.

Far from repudiating the Braden-United Fruit war whoop, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and John Moors Cabot, then Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, made new aggressive threats against Guatemala in the name of combatting "international Communism."

The State Department followed up the Dulles and Cabot threats by sending one of its chief diplomatic strongarm men, John E. Peurifoy, as new ambassador to Guatemala. Peurifoy made quite a record in monarchist-fascist Greece where he ordered government leaders around like office boys and intervened so brazenly in elections that even some right-wingers protested.

The next step was at the Tenth Inter-American Conference of American governments at Caracas, Venezuela, in March 1954, where Washington hoped to organize collective aggression against Guatemala. But the opposition of the Latin American peoples and most of their governments forced the State Department strategists to retreat. However, they succeeded in browbeating a majority of Latin American delegations into adopting a resolution against "the intervention of international Communism." The negative vote of Guatemala, which accused the U. S. government of seeking "the internationalization of McCarthyism," and the abstention of Mexico and Argentina meant that the governments of countries with nearly one-third the population of Latin America refused to support a document that threatened the sovereignty not only of Guatemala but other Latin American republics as well.

The Wall Street-Washington mob soon showed they were out for blood. In May the Eisenhower-Dulles administration concocted a provocation about an arms shipment to the Guatemalan government, allegedly from an East European country. It was then revealed what had been kept from the American people and the world public: that our government had imposed a unilateral arms embargo on Guatemala. Not only had our government prevented Guatemala from buying arms here, but it had pressured other governments of "the free world" to do likewise. Yet Washington raised an outcry when Guatemala exercised its sovereign right to purchase arms where it could.

In the midst of this synthetic hullabaloo the Cadillac Cabinet signed military pacts with Nicaragua and Honduras and started airlifting arms to those stooge dictatorships. No doubt Castillo Armas got his share. Thus, while trying to keep Guatemala defenseless, Washington was arming her fascist enemies.

On June 15 at a press conference Secretary Dulles called for a "house-cleaning" in Guatemala. This was the tipoff to the Castillo Armas gang waiting in Honduras. Three days later the invasion began.

It touched off angry protests throughout Latin America. Solidarity movements with Guatemala, organized previously, rose to new heights as millions saw in Wall Street's brutal aggression an attack on their own national sovereignty. In Honduras itself students, described in the press as anti-Communist, denounced Yankee imperialism and fought with the police. In Chile and Uruguay the Chambers of Deputies voted

to condemn the invasion. In Argentina—whose government is actively anti-Communist—the Congress passed a resolution of solidarity with Guatemala. In Cuba and Chile students began to organize volunteers to fight in defense of Guatemala.

And the protests were not limited to Latin America. In New York nearly 1,000 persons demonstrated outside the United Nations, branding the attack on Guatemala as a threat to peace and appealing to the UN to enforce the cease-fire resolution it had adopted. Meetings were held in other parts of the country and protest letters began appearing in newspapers. In Europe and Asia public opinion was outraged and even conservative anti-Communist elements joined in the protests.

Meanwhile in Guatemala P-47 fighters were mercilessly bombing defenseless towns and villages, killing men, women and children. But these were the only “victories” won by Castillo Armas. His rabble “liberation army,” lacking numbers and popular support, got nowhere. “It appeared obvious,” wrote Milton Bracker, New York *Times* correspondent with the invading forces, “that the Regular Army could kick these irregulars back across the Honduran or Salvadoran border any time it wished. Yet the Regulars never moved. . . .” (*Times*, Aug. 8, 1954.)

And nine days after the invasion began President Arbenz was ousted by the traitorous army high command and resistance collapsed. After this, with Ambassador Peurifoy directing the performance and the Papal Nuncio as stage manager, the comic opera fuhrer, Castillo Armas, was installed in the Presidential palace.

Why the collapse?

Summer Soldiers

Had the Guatemalan government been truly “Communist-dominated,” as Washington and the Big Money press and radio charged, the story would undoubtedly have been different. No country in which Communists have wielded decisive political influence has failed to wage the most stubborn struggle against foreign aggression and internal treason.

Guatemala’s tragedy lay in the fact that its working class had not yet developed to the point where it could be the leader of its fight for freedom. The government, the army and the largest political parties were controlled by capitalists and middle-class people. Among them

were a few fifth columnists and many summer soldiers. The latter withered in the first frosty breath of the United Fruit invasion.

The military leaders and certain government officials not only prevented the army from fighting but refused to arm the people and used martial law to prevent workers, peasants and other patriots from fighting.

The summer soldiers thought they could save their own skins by throwing President Arbenz and the Communists to the Wall Street wolves. But those who immediately after Arbenz's resignation outlawed the Communists were themselves outlawed by Peurifoy's gangsters and fled for refuge to the same Latin American embassies in which some of the Communist leaders found asylum.

Thus, as in prewar Germany, Italy and other countries, the ending of the rights of the Guatemalan Communists marked the beginning of the end of the rights of all Guatemalans.

What has tiny Guatemala (area: 42,364 square miles, about the size of Ohio; population: 2,787,000 in 1950) done to warrant such treatment by our government?

The overthrown regime was a capitalist government. The first President of the democratic republic, Dr. Juan José Arévalo (1945-1951), won 85 percent of the votes in the first free election in Guatemala's history. His successor, Lieut.-Col. Jacobo Arbenz, received in 1950 nearly twice as many votes as his nine opponents combined. In two successive Presidential elections the people of Guatemala demonstrated unmistakably that this was the kind of government they wanted.

In Presidential and Congressional elections the Guatemalan people also demonstrated that what the anti-democratic opposition stood for was what they did not want. As a result, the opposition had been reduced to five members in a Congress of 56.

None of the measures adopted by the government was Communist or socialist. The Arbenz administration sponsored a program of limited capitalist reforms that aimed to destroy the semi-feudal conditions under which the majority of the people lived and to reduce foreign—that is, U.S.—big business control of the country's economy.

The New York *Times* correspondent, Sydney Gruson, hardly a friend of Guatemala, admitted (*Times*, February 23, 1953):

“... there is a tendency to lose sight of the fact that if there had not been a single Communist in Guatemala, the revolutionaries who over-

threw dictator Jorge Ubico still would have insisted on the present program, including a new labor code, social security and agrarian reform, that is generally condemned as Communist-inspired."

The Communists of Guatemala, known as the Workers Party, were a new and relatively small organization, with four members in Congress. The party had considerable influence in the trade unions and other people's organizations. This influence was not the result of any harebrained "international conspiracy." It had been legitimately won through democratic give and take in the market-place of ideas and through the devotion the Communists had shown to the interests of the people. The Communists patriotically supported the government's program, though it did not express all that they stood for.

Samuel Guy Inman, conservative expert on Latin American affairs, who is strongly anti-Communist, has put it this way:

"... in comparison with the program of Labor in Great Britain and the New Deal in the United States, Guatemala reforms were a mild shade of pink. But the little country in Central America has so long been the happy hunting ground for economic exploiters that they took advantage of the fear of Communism to challenge any change from the old economic slavery." (*A New Day in Guatemala*, p. 47.)

In other words, "communism" was and is the stop-thief cry of those who want to prevent the abolition of "the old economic slavery."

The Old Slavery

This semi-feudal system of bondage dates back to the Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century. The *conquistadores* were granted huge tracts of land, and with the land went the feudal *encomienda* system which gave them the power of life and death over the Indian inhabitants. It was a system of serfdom and forced labor.

When you ride into the country, you can still see the stone gate posts—the bars now removed forever—behind which Indian peons were virtually imprisoned, forced to work for the Spanish masters, separated from chattel slavery by the thin line of being allotted plots of poor land to work for themselves in what little free time they were allowed.

Liberation from Spain in 1821 did not bring liberation to the peons. When church and state were separated, and church lands distributed to the army in 1871, a new semi-feudal landowner class arose and the peons' lot remained the same.

The Indians' right to come and go was formally declared early in this century by Guatemala's dictator, Manuel Estrada Cabrera, who ruled from 1898 to 1920. His motive: to release some wage labor required by the U.S. imperialists who had begun to carve out their empire in Guatemala.

But a formal declaration did not free the peons from the bonds of centuries-old "indebtedness." Guatemala's last dictator, General Jorge Ubico, dissolved this indebtedness—because the demands for wage labor were not being met. Thereafter the Indians were forced to carry a labor record and to demonstrate that they had worked 280 days per year, under threat of imprisonment. This assured the United Fruit Company and other enterprises a constant supply of cheap labor. The big landowners, Guatemalan and foreign, still had their peons, for the tiny cash wages entered into the new labor records were easily balanced against new debts for machetes and clothing and even for the fee demanded by the labor contractor who procured their services for the landlords.

Thus the lot of the Indians—who comprise 60 percent of Guatemala's population—became, if anything, even more miserable.

United Fruit Company came into the picture by way of the I.R.C.A.—International Railways of Central America, in which it is the major stockholder. In 1904 Dictator Estrada Cabrera gave I.R.C.A. a generous concession: to complete the railroad from the east coast port of Puerto Barrios to Guatemala City, already largely constructed by Guatemalan capital and labor. In return I.R.C.A. was given the whole railroad, its equipment, installations and telegraph lines, plus the port itself, plus 50,000 acres of land and other lands around the port and the railway! After 99 years the government was to have the privilege of buying all this back.

In 1908 United Fruit as such acquired another 50,000 acres, and in 1927 obtained a new 25-year concession to extend its plantations, railroads and telephone lines, build a new port on the Caribbean coast and navigate the Motagua river. For this the company agreed to pay the Guatemalan government a mere \$14,000 a year and one cent for each banana stem exported. How greatly this concession—still in force—favors the U.S. trust can be seen from the fact that while coffee exports (Guatemalan-owned) were only worth five times as much as banana exports (United Fruit) in 1939, export duties on coffee were 13 times as great.

U.F.C. propagandists boast that the company is a great boon to Guatemalan workers because the workers on its banana and abaca plantations are paid higher wages than elsewhere. It's true that from the start it offered the princely sum of 50 cents a day, when workers on other plantations were getting 10 cents. But visit one of its factory-farms in the pest-infested jungle lowlands, and you know why higher wages had to be offered to secure any labor for this dangerous work. There is danger from snakes and malarial mosquitoes, and from the heavy banana stems which must be caught on a man's shoulder when the tall plant is toppled. Thanks to trade union organization, wages and conditions improved.

The dictators' gift to I.R.C.A. and U.F.C. chained the whole country to wealthy financial interests in Boston and New York. As a result, virtually the whole railroad system, all the ports and the shipping are in the hands of United Fruit. Add to this the ownership of the major electric power company, a subsidiary of the Morgan-controlled American and Foreign Power Company (Electric Bond and Share).

Naturally, these big foreign corporations are interested in profits—all that the traffic will bear—and not in the people's welfare. Economically Guatemala is a colony of Wall Street.

Revolution

By 1944 the Ubico dictatorship had aroused the antagonism of nearly all sections of the population. The world war against fascism inspired the people of Guatemala, and President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy limited State Department intervention in support of reaction. Ubico's personal greed and his favoritism alienated even some fellow-landowners; and younger army officers and the poorly-paid soldiers were in conflict with the incompetent top brass.

Fed up with brutal jailings, beatings, killings, spurred by agonizing poverty, students, professionals, small businessmen, workers struck and demonstrated, demanded Ubico's resignation. On July 1, 1944, Ubico was forced to resign. With the help of the U.S. Embassy, his admirers dredged up a retired general, Federico Ponce, and installed him in the dictator's place. But the city masses were in motion. On Oct. 20, 1944, civilians and the democratic section of the army joined hands in an armed insurrection which overthrew the dictatorship.

Thus Guatemala embarked on a bourgeois revolution which trans-

ferred state power from the semi-feudal landowners, wealthy, reactionary planters and business associates of U.S. corporations to urban middle-class elements and the small rising class of industrialists. The revolution created a capitalist democratic republic and started Guatemala on the road to freedom from imperialist control. A constituent assembly early in 1945 wrote a constitution that guaranteed civil and political rights and labor's right to organize (under Ubico trade unionism was illegal). Soon political parties and trade unions were flourishing. Under the leadership of President Juan José Arévalo, a scholar and teacher, the number of schools was tripled; hospitals were built; a labor code was enacted and a social security system established.

But still the great majority of Guatemalans—the Indian peasantry and landless rural workers—continued to live in a state of semi-feudal—in some cases pre-feudal—backwardness, poverty and economic oppression. They were not involved in the revolutionary struggles and changes.

A comprehensive agrarian census revealed the basic reasons for the nation's less-than-subsistence economy. Five percent of the landowners occupied 80 percent of the land; 22 farms of over 2,200 acres each occupied 13.6 percent of the tillable land, while 181,501 farms of less than four acres each occupied 3.3 percent. Of 341,188 farm families covered in the survey, only 158,782 owned their land in full, and two-thirds of these worked less than nine acres, many less than two. Fewer than 10 percent of the smaller farmers owned even iron-tipped plows. Production methods were thousands of years behind the times.

Land!

The trade union movement, necessarily small in an economically retarded country, was the first to draw attention to the basic shortcoming of the revolution. "The workers," wrote Victor Manuel Gutierrez, general secretary of the General Confederation of Labor of Guatemala (CGTG), in the December 1, 1952 issue of *World Trade Union Movement*, magazine of the World Federation of Trade Unions, "were the first to understand the importance of agrarian reform, which will not only end the appalling poverty of the mass of peasants, but will also establish the foundations of the country's eco-

conomic recovery. Under working class pressure, the fight for agrarian reform rapidly assumed a national character."

From the inception of the Guatemalan democratic republic the organized workers played a major political role. Time after time they upheld the interests not merely of their class but of the entire nation. It was the trade unions that repeatedly sprang to the defense of the republic and brought the masses out into the streets against various reactionary coups. Similarly on the question of land reform—which was also a national and not merely a class interest—labor took the lead. The CGTG also formed a working alliance with the National Peasants Confederation (CNC).

The birth in 1949 of the Communist Party—renamed three years later the Guatemalan Workers Party (PGT)—was a decisive factor in developing the political initiative of the working class and gave a new impulse to the movement for agrarian reform. The democratic capitalist parties also took up the issue.

The Political Parties

The democratic pro-government parties were four in number: Revolutionary Action Party (PAR), with 24 deputies; Party of the Guatemalan Revolution (PRG)—16; National Renovation Party (RN)—7; and Guatemalan Workers Party (PGT)—4.

The first three were middle-class and capitalist in leadership and had similar programs.

The Workers Party is the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Guatemalan working class. Its ultimate aim is the establishment of socialism when the majority of the people wish it; its immediate program under the democratic republic was designed to uproot feudalism, free the country from foreign imperialist domination, stimulate industrialization, and raise the people's living standards. The Party published a daily, *Tribuna Popular*.

The four parties formed a loose coalition for electoral purposes and day to day political work. This was largely a coalition at the top. In the latter part of 1953 the Workers Party began to advocate the creation of a United Front of the Masses (Frente Unico de Masas) to develop on a broad basis the struggle for agrarian reform and against imperialist aggression. This proposal was warmly supported by leaders and members of the other democratic parties, trade union-

ists, peasants, business men, intellectuals, etc. But at the time of the invasion this rank and file united front had not advanced very far.

The Communists were a dynamic force in the country's political life. They were deeply rooted in the Guatemalan scene, in the labor and peasant movements. The party's general secretary, José Manuel Fortuny, is one of the founding fathers of the Guatemalan republic, a signer of its democratic constitution. Communist "domination" and "infiltration" of government, political parties, trade unions, etc., was a myth and a fraud. What *was* true was that Communist workers and peasants sparked struggles for better wages, land reform, defense of national independence, educational and cultural progress and other activities to make Guatemala a better place to live in.

In June 1952 the Guatemalan Congress passed the land reform law. This provided that uncultivated land and land not cultivated directly by or for the owners on farms of more than 223 acres was to be expropriated. Farms up to 670 acres were exempt if two-thirds cultivated.

Payment for the land was in long-term government bonds, bearing 3 percent interest, with the maximum maturity period 25 years. Payment was at the declared tax value, that is, the value which the owners themselves set when paying taxes.

Under this law foreign landowners were treated no differently from Guatemalans.*

The reason so much United Fruit land was expropriated was that it was the country's largest landowner and deliberately withheld most of its land from production because it was profitable to do so.

All lands planted to commercial crops, like coffee, abaca, bananas, cotton, were exempt from expropriation, thus forestalling any danger of reduction of the total product.

Expropriated land was being divided among sharecroppers, agricultural workers, small peasants. A National Agrarian Bank had been established to help the peasants buy seed and equipment. An important provision of the law required the peasants to request the land and to organize its division themselves. Thus the rural Indian was becoming a first-class citizen.

The recipients paid for their land over a 25-year period with a small portion of their annual crop—3 percent if the farm had been re-

* President Arbenz had 1,700 acres of his land and Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello had 1,200 acres expropriated.

ceived for life-time use; 5 percent if received for all time. This provision guaranteed that all the land would be worked, and that the plots would not be sold to any aspiring rural capitalists.

In a short time land reform produced results. In his report to Congress March 1, 1954, President Arbenz pointed out that "there are some peasants who have had net incomes of more than \$1,000 during the first year of the agrarian reform"—this in a country in which the per capita income in 1952 was \$186. The President told of peasant families that were buying radios, shoes, new clothes, even perfumes.

And thanks to the reform, the land was being tilled more efficiently and previously idle land was being cultivated. As a result, Guatemala expanded its agricultural output and became an exporter of products it previously imported. This happened in regard to corn, rice and cotton.

All this meant that trade and industry too were beginning to feel the beneficial effects of the land reform.

Peasants Approve

I attended two gala "*entregas*" (dividing out) of land in the District of Chimaltenango. The barefoot peasants were expectant, eager, as they waited to receive the parcels of land for which they and their ancestors had long hungered. On one farm they had share-cropped small, almost barren plots, and paid the landlord 50 percent of their produce for the privilege. On the other they had paid for their scrubby land by working long months without pay on the landlord's rich coffee plantation to the south.

When the entrega ceremonies ended the peasants burst forth with spontaneous *Vivas* for the land reform, for President Arbenz, for Guatemala. Some said they would have to be paid, and paid adequately, if their ex-landlord hoped to get his coffee harvested.

The agricultural workers' union had been spreading rapidly on the factory-type farms. The land reform was a great impulse to this because a worker who knew he had the alternative open of getting land of his own was no longer afraid to confront the boss.

I visited one typical farm where some 250 workers had organized only four months earlier and were celebrating their first great victory—a wage boost from 35 cents to 80 cents a day. The secretary of the union voiced confidence that this would not be the end because

"men can refuse to work for even 80 cents when land is to be had for the asking."

This rural workers' settlement had belonged to the boss lock, stock and barrel before the land reform, and one of the owner's most powerful weapons was the threat of eviction. One section of the new law made such villages independent communities. The new mayor, solemn with his staff of office, greeted the visitors with toasts of rum which he and the other officials refused to share because they were so conscious of their duties.

In Guatemala you could see the old side by side with the new—you could see bent-backed peasants in colorful garb hauling huge loads of pottery or produce to and from the markets on the only beasts of burden they have: themselves. You could witness the superstitious ceremonies at Chichicastenango, where barefoot peasants burn incense to the gods of rain and sun and fertility on the very steps of the Christian church. You could see ignorance, filth, hunger, disease.

But you could see changes every day, and that was why this oasis of democracy in the Caribbean brought hope and inspiration to millions of oppressed throughout Latin America.

The same barefoot, illiterate peasants had formed hundreds of local land reform committees to divide the land equitably. In the Chimaltenango District I visited, where a scant 50 belonged to the Peasants Federation a few months earlier, 2,000 had become active. Peasants were no longer available as a "mass base" for anti-government revolts, as the Salamá fiasco showed.

Guatemala City market women, who had been fierce opponents of the government, almost all of them actively "anti-Communist," now were joining hands with the labor movement. I attended an exciting meeting in the old, muddy, narrow-passage "Mercado Quemado," where market women threatened with eviction had called for the help of the CGTG. They got the help and won a promise of no eviction until a suitable new market had been built. They also won a promise of a nursery to care for the many tots playing miserably among the flies and rubbish. And they too were shouting gladly: "*Viva Arbenz!*" "*Viva la CGTG!*"

Farm women, starting with those on factory-type farms where the labor movement was growing, were finally beginning to find out that they were citizens, that they could make demands for themselves.

At first organizers of the Women's Alliance, a progressive group close to the labor movement, got the meek answer: "We just want to help our husbands." But soon farm wives were holding their own meetings, raising their own demands for water, sanitation, medical care, schooling.

Naturally a government with an annual budget of \$72,000,000 couldn't solve all problems at once. Two-thirds of the school-age youngsters were not yet in schools, although 15 percent of the budget was devoted to education—in contrast to 11 percent for defense! More than half the Indian population still could not speak Spanish; they spoke some twenty tongues.

The national economy still depended largely on two crops—coffee and bananas, with the latter predominantly foreign-owned. But the production of other crops was growing. Hand in hand with the land reform went distribution of improved seed, government experimental farms and the encouragement of modern farming methods.

Liberation

At this stage, with roads, ports, transportation monopolized by the United Fruit Co. and interests it controls, all Guatemala's economy had been tied to the United States, which dominates both imports and exports. IRCA charges about 10 times as much to move a carload of nationally-owned coffee as to move a carload of United Fruit bananas.

The government launched a five-year program of economic liberation, which was the reason for the shrieks of "Communist menace." This program included four principal projects: 1. agrarian reform; 2. a highway to the Atlantic, which would be the most important part of a network of 744 miles of paved highways; 3. the port of Santo Tomas on the Atlantic, which would free the country from sole dependence on United Fruit ports; 4. a national hydroelectric plant in the mountainous Jurun area near the capital city, which would generate power for industry at reduced prices and end the monopoly of the U.S.-owned Empresa Electrica.

The Guatemalan government sought peaceful, friendly relations with all countries on a basis of mutual respect and equality. In a statement to the United Nations on April 1, 1953, denouncing the interventionist conspiracies against it, the government declared:

"The government of Guatemala is not a satellite of the Soviet Union,

the United States of America or any other country. Guatemala has diplomatic relations with a great many countries, including the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. does not intervene, either directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of Guatemala, just as Guatemala does not intervene or attempt to intervene in or disturb the peace of any other country, since its international conduct is strictly in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the international agreements it has signed and its repeated desire that states should in all circumstances secure the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. The Guatemalan government maintains a firm and unwavering policy of peace because it believes that only thus will it be able fully to satisfy the aspirations of the Guatemalan people."

In common with all other Latin American republics except Colombia, Guatemala refused to send troops to Korea to support U.S. aggression. One month after he took office President Arbenz declared that "Guatemala cannot divert a single man or the nation's limited budget from the broad program of production" his government was undertaking. He added: "The peaceful co-existence of nations is absolutely essential for Guatemala."

In the United Nations the position of the Guatemalan delegation on various issues had become increasingly independent, though at times it still was influenced by Washington pressure.

§ § § Diplomacy

High U.S. government officials and "public-spirited" corporation executives who worked for the violent overthrow of the Guatemalan government have in many cases a personal stake in the profits being sweated out of the Guatemalan people by U.S. companies. Take the man who during the first year of the Eisenhower administration led the government assault on Guatemala—John Moors Cabot. He is the brother of Thomas Dudley Cabot, a director of the First National Bank of Boston, a billion-dollar institution which is the United Fruit Company bank and has an interlocking directorate with it.

Thomas D. Cabot also holds a top government post: director of International Security Affairs for the State Department.

Robert Cutler, administrative assistant to President Eisenhower, was, until his appointment to that post, president and a director of the Old

Colony Trust Company, a Boston bank which merged with the First National Bank of Boston.

Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks was until recently a director of the First National Bank of Boston.

There are similar interesting tieups between United Fruit and the influential non-governmental National Planning Association. In December 1953 this organization published a study entitled "Communism Versus Progress in Guatemala," by Theodore Geiger, prepared for the N.P.A. Committee on International Policy. This study savagely attacked the Guatemalan government and its program and declared:

"At the present time the Communists are so deeply entrenched that it may no longer be possible to eliminate them by peaceful means."

Chairman of the N.P.A. Committee on International Policy is Frank Altschul, chairman of the board of the General American Investors Company. On the board of General American is Robert Lehman of the Wall Street banking firm of Lehman Brothers. Robert Lehman also happens to be a director of the United Fruit Company.

Sullivan & Cromwell are attorneys for General American. This is the Wall Street firm with which Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, Allen W. Dulles, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, were associated for many years.

Chairman of N.P.A. is H. Christian Sonne, chairman of the board of another Wall Street investment firm, Amsinck, Sonne & Co. Sonne is also a director of a U.S. corporation operating in Guatemala, Sociedad Agricola Gordon Smith & Company.

Treasurer of N.P.A. is Harry A. Bullis, chairman of General Mills, Inc., part of the Morgan-First National Bank empire. The N.P.A. board of trustees also includes William C. Ford, director of the Ford Motor Company; Courtney C. Brown, assistant to the chairman of Rockefeller's Standard Oil of New Jersey, and Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America.

Guatemala was selected as a target of the interventionists not only because of the wealth there invested (United Fruit's Guatemalan interest is about \$50,000,000), or the potential wealth in oil, hardwoods and mines. It was selected because it was the high point of resistance in the western hemisphere to the domination of the Wall Street

trusts and their drive toward war and fascism. And Guatemala was part of a world-wide trend.

The Guatemalan idea is catching. The vast majority of the peoples of Latin America need the kind of land reform that was being carried out in that country. Bolivia, following a democratic revolution in April 1952, nationalized the foreign-owned tin mines and in August 1953 enacted a land reform law. In other countries, too, liberation movements are rising.

The architects of the American (that is, North American) Century decided that Guatemala had to be made an object lesson.

They went about it with a brutality, cynicism and arrogance that shocked the world. Commented Max Lerner, who himself wrote one of the worst journalistic assaults on the democratic Arbenz government: ". . . no one doubts that American corporate money was behind the Castillo Armas invasion." (*New York Post*, June 21, 1954.) Ray Tucker, in his syndicated column, compared Washington's policy toward Guatemala to what Theodore Roosevelt did in 1903 when he concocted a "revolution" by which Panama was separated from Colombia and the U.S. seized a chunk of the territory for building the Panama Canal. (*Brooklyn Eagle*, June 27, 1954.)

Most scandalous of all was the role of U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy. Our Big Money press boasted openly how he had compelled the ousting of President Arbenz and demanded "a clean sweep"; how he had then forced out the military junta that succeeded Arbenz and finally glued together the present fascist-militarist dictatorship headed by Castillo Armas.

After it was all over Leo Katcher stated in a Mexico City dispatch: "Mexicans and representatives of other foreign governments do not hesitate to say that the real ruler of Guatemala at this moment is Peurifoy." (*New York Post*, July 6, 1954.)

And behind the U.S. Ambassador (Norman Armour has replaced Peurifoy) stand the United Fruit Company and other Wall Street corporate interests.

What has been the record of this United Fruit dictatorship so far?

Let David Benedict, associate director of the CIO International Affairs Department, speak. He went to Guatemala, together with a representative of the AFL, in an effort to work with the new regime in establishing a "purified" trade union movement. He returned disillusioned. In the *CIO News* of August 16, 1954, he wrote:

"We heard the President's (Castillo Armas') repeated assurance that there would be no attempt to hinder the development of free trade unionism and no attempt to destroy the land reform gains of the peasants."

Ambassador Peurifoy, added Benedict, "has also been quite vocal about no 'turning back the clock' of social progress.

"Yet non-Communist workers known for, or suspected of, strong trade union feelings have been and are being fired by the score."

According to Benedict, "The United Fruit-controlled IRCA (International Railways of Central America), which runs the railways of Guatemala, has taken the lead in the reactionary wave of drawing up blacklists of union men to be fired. . . .

"The government has decreed the abolition of all leadership committees of the old Communist-dominated union federation (CGTG), including those of the few unions which had escaped Communist control."

Benedict reported "it is estimated that between 5,000 and 8,000 people have been thrown into jail."

And according to the Confederation of Latin American Workers (CTAL), 45 leaders of a United Fruit Company strike, won shortly before the invasion, were shot, and local leaders of other democratic organizations have been executed.

Concerning the land reform Benedict wrote in the *CIO News*:

"The new land law not only stops the process of giving unused land to poor peasants, but now makes it possible for the rich landowners to reopen their cases and get their lands back."

Reported the *New York Times* (July 28, 1954): "Among those who will undoubtedly recover some, if not all, of their land is the United Fruit Company."

And on August 22 the junta issued a decree reclaiming 800,000 acres of land, which formerly belonged to the government but had been distributed by the Arbenz regime to landless peasants and agricultural workers. This constituted more than half of the total land distributed under the agrarian reform.

The Fight Continues

Terror and hunger rule Guatemala. The democracy which flourished for ten years lies crushed and bleeding. But the spirit of Guatemala's bleeding democracy is not dead.

It lives in the hearts of peasants, who have tasted the fruits of their liberation and found them sweet.

It lives in the hearts of workers who had glimpsed a greater well-being, a greater freedom through trade union organization and decent labor laws.

It lives in the hearts of patriots who have envisioned the possibilities of advance unencumbered by a foreign yoke.

It lives in the steep hills and mountains, in the tangled jungles of Guatemala, where workers and peasants have sworn to carry on the fight.

And it lives across the length and breadth of Spanish-speaking America, where poverty-stricken peons and workers laboring for next-to-nothing for the greater profit of coupon clippers in New York or Boston or Chicago, remember the hope which Guatemala represented.

Though a Hitler-like dictator resides in the marbled halls of Guatemala's Presidential palace, the power behind him—the Eisenhower-Dulles-United Fruit foreign policy—has nevertheless lost. It has lost because millions see the hated Big Stick policy for what it is.

"Shares have risen on the New York Stock Exchange," wrote the Danish newspaper *Aftenposten* after the Guatemalan government had been overthrown, "but U.S.A. stock has fallen in the eyes of all the countries of the world."

This is especially true in Latin America where "imperialismo yanqui" (Yankee imperialism) is reaping a whirlwind of hatred.

The worldwide protests against the invasion of Guatemala prove that by this crime Eisenhower and Dulles have dishonored and betrayed our country. By arousing the anger of new millions they have increased our country's isolation and undermined its real security.

A new wind blows across Latin America—as it is blowing across the whole colonial and semi-colonial world, from China to Kenya, from Viet-Nam to the Sudan, from India to Morocco. This liberating wind brings hope to hundreds of millions of downtrodden and oppressed. Their increasing struggles against foreign exploitation and control—directed chiefly against the big corporations and government of the United States—creates a powerful ally for peace-loving Americans, who face the same war-minded enemy; a powerful ally for American workers whose livelihood is constantly threatened by runaway shops, by the competition of vast colonial low-wage areas.

The liberties of our own people are today assaulted by those who have destroyed the liberties of the Guatemalan people. Under the guise of outlawing Communism, they are trying to outlaw—here as there—freedom and peace. Are the American people going to sit by and permit the same corporations and the same Cadillac Cabinet that are forging new shackles for labor, cutting prices for the farmer, flagrantly violating Negro rights, dragging our country into depression and preparing a new hydrogen-bomb war, to McCarthyize our land and the world?

Speak up for Guatemala—and for yourself.

Write President Eisenhower and demand an end to intervention in the internal affairs of Guatemala and other Latin American countries.

Write to Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, Guatemala City, Guatemala, and to the United Nations protesting the terror, urging full restoration of civil liberties and labor rights.

In the words of Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the CIO United Auto Workers, in a speech denouncing U.S. policy in Guatemala and Indo-China:

“We have got to stop measuring our foreign policy on what’s good for American business that has money invested in South America and elsewhere in the world. Unless we change our policy, unless we begin lining up with the legitimate interest of the people in those countries, we are going to face the threat of war from here on out.”

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