

## **The Guatemalan Coup of 1954: How Did the Cold War Influence American Foreign Policy Decisions?**

**Were the actions taken by the United States in Guatemala in 1954 motivated primarily by a fear of communism (containment) or to protect American business interests (bananas)?**

**Author:** Courtney Fleming, Parkville High School, Baltimore County Public Schools

**Grade Level:** High

**Duration of the History Lab:** Two 80-minute block periods

### **Overview:**

As the Cold War heated up in the 1950s, the United States made decisions on foreign policy with the goal of containing communism. To maintain its hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, the U.S. intervened in Guatemala in 1954 and removed its elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, on the premise that he was soft on communism. In 1997, the CIA released files pertaining to the Guatemalan coup that reignited questions about the motivations for U.S. actions in Guatemala. Was the United States concerned with the containment of communism, or was it acting on behalf of the business interests of the United Fruit Company? In this History Lab, students will examine documents, films, photographs, and other primary source materials to analyze U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

## **History Standards**

### **National History Standards**

#### **Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)**

Standard 2: How the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics

Standard 2B: The student understands United States foreign policy in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

- Evaluate changing foreign policy toward Latin America [Identify issues and problems in the past]

### **Historical Thinking Standards**

**Standard 5:** Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision Making

- **Identify issues and problems in the past** and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation
- **Evaluate alternative courses of action**, keeping in mind the information available at the time, in terms of ethical considerations, the interests of those affected by the decision, and the long- and short-term consequences of each
- **Evaluate the implementation of a decision** by analyzing the interest it served; estimating the position, power, and priority of each player involved; assessing the

ethical dimensions of the decision; and evaluating its costs and benefits from a variety of perspectives

## **Common Core State Standards: Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 6-12**

### **Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 11-12**

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas
- Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain

#### **Craft and Structure**

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10)
- Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole
- Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem
- Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information
- Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources

#### **Text Types and Purposes**

- Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content

#### **Production and Distribution of Writing**

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

## **Maryland State Curriculum Standards for United States History**

**Expectation:** Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from 1946-1968.

**Topic:** Challenges of the Post War World (1946-1968)

**Indicator**

1. Analyze the causes, events, and policies of the Cold War between 1946-1968 (5.4.1)

**Purpose**

In this History Lab, students will examine how the Cold War impacted U.S. foreign policy in Latin America during the 1950s. Through an analysis of primary sources, they will construct and provide support for a historical interpretation on the role of the United States in the Guatemalan coup of 1954. By analyzing the actions and motivations of key individuals and organizations that participated in the coup, students will decide if the United States acted to contain communism or to protect the business interests of the United Fruit Company.

- Students will analyze American foreign policy decisions during the Cold War in order to evaluate the role of the CIA and the American government in the Guatemalan coup of 1954.
- Students will use inquiry skills to interpret primary source materials in order to determine the motivations behind the Eisenhower administration's intervention in Guatemala.

**Topic Background**

Following the Second World War, the containment of communism was a primary concern for the United States. The United States feared that communist forces would gain a foothold in post-colonial, developing nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. To avoid a direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, and to protect its image, the U.S. government, through the newly-formed Central Intelligence Agency, increasingly used covert means to respond to perceived threats. In 1954, the focus of the Cold War turned to the Western Hemisphere and the nation of Guatemala.

In the late nineteenth century bananas had become a regular part of the American diet. By 1901, the profitable, American-owned United Fruit Company (UFCO) was working extensively out of Guatemala to supply produce to the American market. With the support of dictatorial, right-wing Guatemalan leaders, the UFCO had built an empire in the country, securing vast tracts of land for commercial farming and economic privileges.

Jorge Ubico came to power in Guatemala in 1931. While credited with improving roads and public works, Ubico harshly suppressed political dissidents. The UFCO continued to flourish, though, gaining control of more than 40% of the country's land and an exemption from taxes and import duties. The company also controlled International Railways of Central America and Empress Electrica, monopolizing Guatemala's transportation and power industries; making the United States Guatemala's major trade partner.

Growing unrest among the middle class led to the overthrow of Ubico in the October Revolution of 1944, ending his thirteen-year rule. In 1944, Juan José Arévalo, a philosophy professor, was elected by a majority of the popular vote. Arévalo faced significant challenges, with a poor, illiterate population and land ownership concentrated among the nation's elite. After the passage of a new constitution, based on that of the United States, Arévalo began to implement

education and land reforms and establish workers' rights, modeling his programs on the New Deal agenda of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

President Jacobo Arbenz succeeded Arévalo in 1951. Political freedom was of particular concern to Arbenz, who allowed communists in the Guatemalan Labor Party to hold key government seats. While their numbers were small, the inclusion of Labor Party members in the Guatemalan government was troubling to the United States, despite evidence that demonstrated very little, if any, communist activity or influence in the Arbenz administration.

Arbenz legalized labor unions and passed further land reform legislation to expropriate idle land for redistribution to the poor. Small farms and those between 223 and 670 acres were not affected. Farms of any size that were fully utilized were exempt as well. Decree 900, approved in 1952, however, empowered the government to seize control of idle portions of plantations. The UFCO held about 500,000 acres of uncultivated land, in part to keep it out of the hands of competitors. The company, which had devalued the land for tax purposes, rejected the compensation then offered based on assessed and paid taxes on the land, as offered by the Guatemalan government, stating it was insufficient. When the dispute could not be settled, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, intervened, taking the matter before the Tenth Inter-American Conference on the grounds that Guatemala was in violation of the Monroe Doctrine.

A majority of Guatemalans resented the United Fruit Company, believing the corporation had prevented the country from gaining economic independence. For years, UFCO had freely operated with the support of a series of Guatemalan dictators. The success of the UFCO, claimed official Alfonso Bauer Paiz, Minister of Labor and the Economy under President Arbenz, had come at the expense of the people. In his mind, the UFCO was a corrupt enemy of Guatemala.

When challenged by Arbenz and the land reform movement, UFCO designed a propaganda campaign to link the Guatemalan president to a growing communist threat in the region. The campaign consisted of carefully-planned press junkets for influential and sympathetic American reporters from the *New York Times*, *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. During the arranged tours, the members of the press were presented with information, provided by the UFCO, which indicated that communists had infiltrated the government of Guatemala. Guillermo Toriello, Guatemala's Ambassador to the United States, formally protested the depiction of his country by these news organizations.

In this climate of elevated public fear of communism, and with mounting pressure from the UFCO, President Eisenhower decided to take action in Guatemala. Eisenhower had previously vowed to reduce the federal budget and cut Cold War spending. He believed that new tactics were needed to fight the Cold War and turned to the CIA to conduct clandestine operations that would prove less costly than large-scale military operations. This was Eisenhower's "New Look" program.

Aware that direct military engagement in Guatemala would damage the image of the U.S. and could lead to a confrontation with the Soviet Union, Eisenhower authorized the CIA in August 1953 to begin planning for the overthrow President Arbenz. Complicating the matter, CIA director, Allen Dulles, and his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, both had financial ties to the United Fruit Matter.

The CIA handpicked Castillo Armas to lead rebel forces in an invasion of Guatemala, promising to support him as provisional president after Arbenz was removed. Armas, an exiled ex-Guatemalan military officer, had long opposed Arbenz. He had a few hundred rebel forces supporting him in Honduras. Alone they were no match for the Guatemalan military, however, with the assistance of the CIA, the plotters believed they could weaken Arbenz's popularity.

On May 26, 1954, Armas' forces flew over the Palacio Nacional (National Palace), dropping anti-communist leaflets that urged Guatemalans to join the resistance. Then, on June 18th, Armas and his few hundred American-trained rebel forces, armed with American weapons, launched an invasion. They were initially unsuccessful, but rumors that American troops might join the invasion were enough to turn many officials and the military against Arbenz, who resigned a few days later.

Castillo Armas became the leader of Guatemala and quickly reversed land reform and labor union laws. He also created a National Committee of Defense Against Communism, making it a priority to crush communist activity in Guatemala. In doing so, he put an end to the relative political freedom that Guatemalans had known for ten years. Armas was assassinated three years into his presidency. Over the next thirty years, a series of military dictators ruled Guatemala using terror tactics to secure their power, with the tacit support of the United States.

In 1997, the CIA released the secret files of the covert Operation PBSUCCESS. These files have led many historians to re-visit the motivations of the American players in Guatemala. Was Eisenhower protecting the United States from a national security threat in Guatemala, or using communism as an excuse to protect powerful business interests with direct ties to his administration? Regardless of the motives, the United States' actions in Guatemala left the Guatemalan people without a democratic government and facing decades of oppression, civil war and violence.

## **Bibliography**

*Banana Republic: The United Fruit Company.* Available from [http://www.mayaparaíso.com/united\\_fruit\\_company.php](http://www.mayaparaíso.com/united_fruit_company.php). Accessed 8 August 2011.

Chapman, Peter. *Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World.* Edinburgh, Scotland: Canongate, 2007.

Cullather, Nick. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Accounts of its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-54.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Doyle, Kate and Peter Kornbluh. *CIA and Assassinations: The Guatemala 1954 Documents.* The National Security Archives. Available from <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/>. Accessed 8 August 2011.

Kinzer, Stephen, and Stephen Schlesinger. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Educational materials developed through the Baltimore County History Labs Program, a partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and the UMBC Center for History Education.

La Feber, Walter. *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. America in Crisis. New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997

La Feber, Walter. *Inevitable Revolutions – The United States in Central America*. New York, New York: W & W Norton and Company, Inc., 1993.

Phillips, David Atlee. *The Night Watch*. New York, New York: New York Athenaeum, 1977.

Zinn, Howard. Excerpt. *A People's History of the U.S.*. New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1980. Available from <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/zinn-chap16.html#guatamala>. Accessed 30 March 2013.

## Vocabulary

**Banana Republic** – Term for a small nation, especially in Central America, dependent on the cultivation of a single crop or the influx of foreign capital

**Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)** - A federal bureau of the United States, created in 1947, to coordinate and conduct espionage and intelligence activities

**Kremlin** - The historic fortified complex in Moscow that is the seat of power of the Russian government and of the former Soviet Union

**Clandestine** - Kept or done in secret, often in order to conceal an illicit or improper purpose

**Despotism** - Absolute power or authority

**Mercenary** - A professional soldier hired to serve in a foreign army.

**Expropriate** - To take property from someone, either legally for the public good, or illegally by means of theft or fraud

**Intransigent** - Refusing to change or consider changing a decision or attitude

## Conducting the History Lab

### Overarching Question:

*How did the Cold War influence American foreign policy decisions?*

To answer this question, students will need to understand how, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the extraordinary tensions of the Cold War era and anxiety about communism influenced American domestic and foreign policy decisions.

**History Lab Focus Question:** *Were the actions taken by the United States in Guatemala in 1954 motivated primarily by a fear of communism (containment) or to protect American business interests (bananas)?*

To assess the actions of the United States in the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, students will examine documents, film clips, and visual images. They will determine the motivations of the key individuals and organizations that participated in the coup, and decide if the United States acted primarily to contain communism or to protect the business interests of the United Fruit Company.

### Materials

- RS#01 The Guatemalan Coup Reading – Topic Background
- *Journey to Banana Land* – A propaganda film produced by the United Fruit Company in 1950. (Can be viewed on YouTube or downloaded at [https://archive.org/details/2094\\_Journey\\_To\\_Bananaland](https://archive.org/details/2094_Journey_To_Bananaland))
- RS#02 Making Connections Warm-Up
- RS#03 Guatemalan Coup Document Analysis Sheet
- RS#04 Source 1 - Official CIA Document, October 1952
- RS#05 Source 2 - John E. Peurifoy Telegram to Dept. of State, 18 December 1953
- RS#06 Source 3 - President Arbenz's Resignation Speech
- RS#07 Source 4 - Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Radio Address, 1954
- RS#08 Source 5 - "Arbenz Pits Reds Against U.S.?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1954
- RS#09 Source 6 - Eisenhower Memoirs, 1963
- RS#10 Source 7- Phillip C. Roettinger, "The Company, Then and Now," 1986
- RS#11 Assessment Option 1 - Interpreting *Gloriosa Victoria*
- RS#12 Assessment Option 2 – How Would the Soviets Have Portrayed the American Intervention in Guatemala?
- RS#13 Composition Scoring Tool
- RS#14 Power Point – The power point is used to guide students through the History Lab. Slides provide additional context and allow visual learners to view classroom discussion questions.
- Sticky Notes
- Continuum (for the board)

### Step 1: Initiate the Lab

Present students with the overarching question: How did the Cold War influence American foreign policy decisions?

To understand and answer this large question, tell students that they will focus on a specific foreign policy topic: The intervention of the United States in the overthrow of the president of Guatemala, Central America, in 1954.

To prepare for the History Lab, students will read background information on U.S.-Guatemalan relations during the first half of the twentieth century (RS#01). Afterwards, they will complete a chart, highlighting the motivations of key players in the 1954 Guatemalan coup. This will be assigned as homework before starting the History Lab.

### **Step 2: Frame the Lab**

- Project RS#14, Guatemalan Coup Power Point, “Making Connections” (slide 2)
- **Motivation:** Using RS#02, “Making Connections,” have students connect the two images using information from the background reading. Field student responses, while assessing how well they understood the background reading.

**Image 1:** President Arbenz is being searched at the Guatemalan airport after his resignation

**Image 2:** An image of Chiquita Banana, the symbol of the United Fruit Company

- Manage student responses to the following questions to ensure student comprehension of the background reading. Students should base their answers on information found in the text.
  - What interests did the United Fruit Company have in Guatemala?
  - What actions did President Arbenz take that concerned the United Fruit Company?
  - What role did the CIA play in Guatemala?
- Explain to students that they will be responding to the focus question: What motivated the United States Government to authorize the CIA-sponsored Guatemalan Coup of 1954 – the containment of communism or bananas (American business interests)?
- Project Power Point Slide #4, “Motivations.” To evaluate student knowledge of the background reading, have each student match the person or event to the comparable motivation. Review as a class.
- Using the Power Point Slides #2-13, review the basic background information needed to implement the rest of the History Lab.
  - (Slide #2) Ask students to identify the relationship between the three images projected
  - (Slide #5) Review the concept of “*Banana Republics*”
  - (Slides #6-7) Review timeline of events
  - (Slides #10-13) Review historical figures involved
- Discuss with students to frame the History Lab:
  - When do you feel it is appropriate for the United States to intervene in a sovereign nation’s political affairs?
  - During the Cold War, did the possibility of communist infiltration in another country excuse overthrowing an elected president?

- Is it justifiable to take action in another nation to protect American business interests?
  - Was suppressing political freedom reasonable during the Cold War to prevent communist views from spreading in the Western Hemisphere?
  - (Slide #9) – History Lab Focus Question
- Ask students to brainstorm a list of sources that could help answer the History Lab focus question:
    - First-hand accounts of CIA members that participated in the coup
    - President Arbenz’s feelings about the coup
    - President Eisenhower’s personal account of the coup
    - Guatemalan citizens’ viewpoint
    - News articles about the coup
    - American politicians’ accounts
    - United Fruit officials’ accounts of the company’s involvement in the coup
  - Show students the first 10 minutes of *Journey to Banana Land*, a propaganda film produced by the United Fruit Company in 1950. (Can be viewed on YouTube or downloaded at [https://archive.org/details/2094\\_Journey\\_To\\_Bananaland](https://archive.org/details/2094_Journey_To_Bananaland). Encourage students to think about the questions provided while reviewing the clip. Ask students to consider the following questions while watching the clip:
    - How are the Guatemalan people portrayed in the clip?
    - How is the United Fruit Company depicted?
    - Based on the knowledge gained from your background reading, why do you think the United Fruit Company engaged in this type of propaganda?

### Step 3: Model the Historical Process

- Distribute the Guatemalan Coup Document Analysis Sheet (RS#03)
- Distribute and have students read RS#04 Source 1 - Official CIA Document, October 1952, and complete the section for Source 1 on the analysis sheet.
- As a class, identify and discuss the **text**, **context**, and **subtext** for the source. Review definitions, if necessary:
  - **Text** – What information is provided by the source?
  - **Context** – The conditions under which the source was created. Why was the source produced? What was going on during the time period?
  - **Subtext** – What information can be determined by reading between the lines? Was the document meant to be read by the public? For whom was the source intended and why was it produced?
- Ask the students how the source affects their view of the focus question: Were the actions taken by the United States in Guatemala in 1954 motivated primarily by a fear of communism (containment) or to protect American business interests (bananas)?
  - Reread the text. Underline examples indicating whether the author believed communism was a threat in Guatemala.
  - Does the source offer any information to support the idea that Guatemala was a communist threat?

- Is there any evidence that the coup was planned by the United States to protect the interests of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala?
- Is this author believable? Why or why not? Is this source biased?

#### **Step 4: Facilitate the Lab**

Students will work collaboratively in assigned groups. Divide students into groups of four, based on their personalities and strengths. Distribute the remaining six sources (RS#05-#10) to each group. Each student is responsible for two sources within their group. Student "A" is responsible for the two sources labeled "A," etc.

Students will work independently on their subtext chart for the assigned sources. Give students 25 to 30 minutes to complete this assignment. The subtext chart requires that students determine if their sources supports the idea that the coup was planned by the United States because Guatemala represented a national security threat, or because business interests were at stake. Students should also analyze the subtext of the source by answering the questions:

- Who created the source and how does the authorship impact the message?
- Who was the source intended for? Does that affect its meaning?
- What is important about when the source was produced?

As a group, students will share their interpretations of the sources, while completing their chart for all seven sources.

#### **Step 5: Present Information and Interpretations**

- Place a large continuum on the front board, with "Bananas" on one end, and "Containment" on the other end.
- Have students write their name on sticky notes. If they believe the United States supported the coup in order to protect bananas, they should place their note near the "Banana" sign. If they believe the United States supported the coup in order to contain communism, they should post their note near the word "Containment."
- To prepare for a class debate and discussion, project the following questions for students to answer:
  - Which of the materials affected your historical interpretation the most? Why?
  - Which two sources contradicted each other the most? Why?
  - Which readings, images, or clips did you find complemented each other the most? Why?
  - Which evidence did you find the most difficult or inconclusive? Why?
- Have the students who placed their sticky notes on "Bananas" move to one side of the room, and those who placed their sticky notes on "Containment" move to the other side.
- Facilitate a debate with students about their historical interpretation of the History Lab's focus question.
  - Ask: What motivated the United States to sponsor the Guatemalan coup? Manage the opposing interpretations. Students should support their answers with evidence obtained from the sources.
  - Guide the debate:
    - Was President Eisenhower's memoir a reliable source? Why or why not?

- Why do you believe that CIA members who participated in PBSUCCESS had such different interpretations about the motivations behind the coup?
- According to the sources, how was the United Fruit Company partially responsible for the coup?
- Did the actions of the United States in Guatemala violate the democratic principles on which the country was founded?
- Allow students to move their sticky notes if their opinion changes during the class debate. Have students justify their new positions.

#### **Step 6: Connect to the Overarching Question**

Ask students the following questions to connect the lab to the overarching question: How did the Cold War influence American foreign policy decisions?

- How did the CIA- sponsored coup in Guatemala reflect the concerns of the Eisenhower Administration and its foreign policy in Latin America during the Cold War?
- Could the United States have pursued alternative actions in Guatemala?
- **Prediction:** How would U.S. action in Guatemala affect the relationship between the United States and Soviet Union? Explain.
- **Prediction:** Would the Cold War intensify or improve as a result of U.S. actions in Guatemala? Justify your response.

#### **Step 7: Assess Student Understanding**

##### **Option 1: RS#11 Diego Rivera Painting**

Students will use their acquired knowledge from the History Lab to answer the following questions about Diego Rivera's painting, *Gloriosa Victoria*.

##### **Option 2: RS#12 How Would the Soviets Have Portrayed the American Intervention in Guatemala?**

Students will write a three-paragraph news briefing on the American involvement in the Guatemalan coup from the perspective of a Soviet state-run newspaper in July of 1954. Students will analyze how the Soviets would have depicted the actions of the United States in Guatemala and how they may have used the events for propaganda. They will determine how these actions could have affected U.S.-Soviet relations. Remind students to cite specific information from the sources provided to support their central argument. Use RS#14 Composition Scoring Tool to assess their work.

## References

### **Official CIA Document, October 1952 - RS# 04 (Source 1)**

**Source:** <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54Guat/d27>

**Text:** This official CIA document assessed President Arbenz's political orientation and determined that he both recognized and worked with known members of the Communist Party, but they did not influence his decision-making. The document provided evidence to prove that Arbenz was not motivated by communism, but, in fact, by FDR's New Deal. While Arbenz was of little concern to the United States, the possibility of a communist coup in Guatemala deserved its consideration.

**Context:** The CIA started its investigation of Arbenz in 1950, following his election. This document was written in October of 1952, after Arbenz had passed land reform acts, expropriating idle land. He had already recognized the Guatemalan Communist Party because of his belief in political freedom.

**Subtext:** This official document was intended only for members of the CIA and high-ranking government officials. The author was likely a CIA agent working in Guatemala. The document was produced during the investigation into President Arbenz's alliances and questioned his possible affiliation to the Communist Party in Guatemala. The author clearly believed there was a communist threat in Guatemala, but did not think that Arbenz constituted a threat to the United States.

### **John E. Peurifoy Telegram to Dept. of State, 18 December 1953 - RS# 05 (Source 2)**

**Source:** American Ambassador to Guatemala, John E. Peurifoy's telegram to Department of State, Dispatch No.522, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1953, in *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, by Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 136-139.

**Text:** This document summarizes Ambassador John Peurifoy's dinner meeting with President Jacobo Arbenz. The meeting lasted six hours and was the only time the two men met in person. During the conversation, they had several disagreements. Arbenz insisted there were only a few communists in Guatemala, with no real power. Peurifoy spoke of a significant communist threat in the country. The two men also disagreed about the role of the United Fruit Company. Arbenz insisted the problem that existed between the two nations was not due to communism, but in fact, to issues with the United Fruit Company and land reform. Peurifoy insisted that American business interests had no impact on American foreign policy.

**Context:** This was written by John Peurifoy, the new American Ambassador to Guatemala, in December, before the coup. Peurifoy was a well-known anti-communist. It was said that after this telegram, Eisenhower gave final approval for Operation PBSUCCESS.

**Subtext:** Peurifoy wrote this telegram believing that only high ranking members of the State Department would read it; which certainly influenced the way he composed the telegram. It was clear in the telegram, that Peurifoy was unwilling to reason with Arbenz or listen to him justify his decisions in Guatemala. Peurifoy believed that if Arbenz was going to allow a “commie influence from so few,” he should be removed from office.

### **President Arbenz’s Resignation Speech - RS# 06 (Source 3)**

**Source:** [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000920952.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000920952.pdf)

**Text:** President Jacobo Arbenz resigned his office on Sunday, 27 June 1954. He read his resignation speech over Guatemalan radio. It is hard to know how many Guatemalans heard the speech, because the CIA had partially jammed its transmission over the airwaves. In the speech, Arbenz directly blamed the financial interests of the United States and the United Fruit Company for his downfall. He stated that there was no communist threat in Guatemala and defended his democratic principles.

**Context:** The speech was written by President Arbenz, after he realized that he could not overcome the forces attempting to overthrow his government. His last public radio address to the Guatemalan people took place on 27 June 1954, when he resigned the presidency.

**Subtext:** Knowing this was his last presidential address, Arbenz wrote a defensive speech that bitterly laid blame for the coup on the United States. Arbenz emphatically stated that communism was only an excuse for the American government which sought to protect its business interests in his country. His audience was the citizens of Guatemala and the world. After resigning, Arbenz never wrote again about the events of the coup. The speech was clearly emotional, since it was the only opportunity Arbenz had had to defend himself before being exiled.

### **Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Radio Address, 1954 - RS# 07 (Source 4)**

**Source:** Jonathan L. Fried and others, eds., *Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), 77-79.

**Text:** In this media address, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles alerted the American public to the communist forces that had attempted to seize Guatemala. He referred to Guatemala as an example of the “intrusion of Soviet despotism.” He stated that Russian-trained, communist agitators had infiltrated public and private sectors in Guatemala. Dulles informed the American people that the President Jacobo Arbenz has resigned, because it was what the Guatemalan people wanted. He made no mention of American involvement in the event, but considered it an American victory against communism in the Western Hemisphere.

**Context:** One week after Arbenz’s resignation, Dulles spoke publically to the American people to discuss the events in Guatemala. Citing a challenge to the Monroe Doctrine, Dulles explained how the Soviets had threatened the Western Hemisphere. Dulles was known as an aggressive

anti-communist supporter during the early Cold War. His law firm had represented the United Fruit Company, and his brother, Allen Dulles, the director of the CIA in the Eisenhower Administration, owned shares in the company.

**Subtext:** Dulles' speech was intended for the American public. Dulles made no mention of his personal and family connections to the United Fruit Company, but the company's well-being in Guatemala was certainly important. In the address, Dulles did not mention the role of the U.S. and CIA in the coup. He was deceptive in trying to dispel rumors that United Fruit was involved in the coup, explaining that the company only had the best of intentions in Guatemala. He exaggerated the communist presence in the country, and led the American public to believe Guatemala was a communist stronghold, because it was in his best interest politically. In addition, Dulles used the speech to reinforce the idea that communism could spread anywhere, heightening the already existing fear among the American people. With an aggressive anti-communist stance, the overthrow of the Arbenz regime bolstered the Eisenhower administration in the eyes of the American public.

#### **"Arbenz Pits Reds Against U.S.?" 1954 - RS# 08 (Source 5)**

**Source:** "Arbenz Pits Reds Against U.S.?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 January 1954, 11.

**Text:** In this newspaper article, the author, who was identified as a Latin American affairs staff writer, discussed communist infiltration in Guatemala. The article said that while some were skeptical, a threat existed because of President Arbenz's policies towards the communists in his country. This source indicated that the United States was not exaggerating the threat of communism that was developing in Guatemala. An unidentified Latin American source was quoted as saying that the threat did not lie with the Guatemalan people, but, rather, with Arbenz himself. The observer believed that Arbenz allowed the communists to operate in order to provoke the United States into taking action, thus providing ammunition and propaganda for the Soviet Union to use against the Americans.

**Context:** The article was published in January of 1954. During this period, the United Fruit Company held press junkets in Guatemala for prominent newspapers. These junkets promoted favorable coverage of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala. The information was crafted carefully to reflect well on the company, while condemning the Arbenz administration. The *Christian Science Monitor* was among the publications that regularly participated in these junkets.

**Subtext:** This article was written by an unidentified Latin American affairs staff member and was intended for the readers of the *Christian Science Monitor*. The article stated that the communist threat in Guatemala was real and that Arbenz allowed communists to operate because he was trying to bait the U.S. into action. This was significant because journalists from the *Christian Science Monitor* attended several United Fruit Company press junkets in Guatemala. These press junkets were carefully orchestrated, biased, and damaging to objective journalism within

the United States. The article was strongly influenced by the United Fruit Company and its anti-communist Guatemalan press campaign.

### **Eisenhower Memoirs, 1963 - RS# 09 (Source 6)**

**Source:** Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956: The White House Years* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963) 421-426.

**Text:** This excerpt from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's autobiography, *The White House Years: A Mandate For Change 1953-1956*, was written in 1963, nearly a decade after he had authorized Operation PBSUCCESS. In the excerpt, Eisenhower justified the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz, because of the communist threat the country had posed to the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere. However, Eisenhower did not disclose the CIA's full involvement in the coup, stating that the CIA intervened to provide air support, when the anti-communist forces of Castillo Armas were struggling. Eisenhower attributed the coup to overall distrust and disapproval of the Arbenz regime.

**Context:** *A Mandate for Change, 1953-1956: The White House Years* was Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal account of his entry into politics and his first administration as President of the United States. Eisenhower wrote the book in 1963, at the height of the Cold War, three years after his presidency had ended and nine years after the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz. At the time the autobiography was released, the American public was still unaware of exactly what role the CIA played in the coup.

**Subtext:** Dwight Eisenhower wrote his autobiography to chronicle his presidency and to defend his legacy. He wrote for the general public. By writing a memoir, Eisenhower attempted to justify his actions and decisions as president. In the excerpt, Eisenhower raised question as to the credibility and veracity of his account.

### **Philip C. Roettinger, "The Company, Then and Now," 1986 - RS# 10 (Source 7)**

**Source:** Philip C. Roettinger, "The Company Then and Now," *The Progressive*, July 1986, 50.

**Text:** Phillip Roettinger, a former CIA agent who helped train the Guatemalan rebels, revealed his disgust with the operation. In his opinion, Arbenz was not motivated by communism, but that communism had provided a convenient excuse for the United States to interfere in Guatemala on behalf of the United Fruit Company. The coup, he believed, ultimately set Guatemala on course for thirty years of oppressive military rule.

**Context:** Philip Roettinger wrote his essay thirty-two years after the coup, after three decades of reflection. Living in Central America for several years, Roettinger was in a unique position to witness the impact of the coup. His essay appeared in *The Progressive*, a magazine that promoted itself as dedicated to social justice.

**Subtext:** This account, written years after the coup, was intended for the general public. In it, Roettinger states his beliefs about the overthrow of President Arbenz. Roettinger, who had trained the rebels in Honduras, had come to believe the coup was a mistake. This was evident when Roettinger stated that the rebels he trained were “uninterested in social reforms and untouched by ideological convictions.... They just wanted to overthrow a government.” Roettinger had come to understand that the rebels weren’t concerned with communism; they were concerned with power. He blamed U.S. business interests in the United Fruit Company and discontent over Guatemalan land reforms for the overthrow of President Arbenz.

### **Other References:**

#### **Books**

- Chapman, Peter. *Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Canongate, 2007.
- Cullather, Nick. *Secret History: The CIA’s Classified Accounts of its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-54*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956: The White House Years*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963.
- Fried, Jonathan L. and others, eds., *Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History*. New York: Grove Press, 1983.
- Kinzer, Stephen, and Stephen Schlesinger. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- La Feber, Walter. *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. *America in Crisis*. New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997
- La Feber, Walter. *Inevitable Revolutions – The United States in Central America*. New York, New York: W & W Norton and Company, Inc., 1993.
- Phillips, David Atlee. *The Night Watch*. New York, New York: New York Athenaeum, 1977.
- Schlesinger, Stephen and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Films**
- Journey to Banana Land* – A propaganda film produced by the United Fruit Company in 1950. (Can be viewed on YouTube or downloaded at [https://archive.org/details/2094\\_Journey\\_To\\_Bananaland](https://archive.org/details/2094_Journey_To_Bananaland))

Educational materials developed through the Baltimore County History Labs Program, a partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and the UMBC Center for History Education.

### **Magazines**

“Arbenz Pits Reds Against U.S.?” *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 January 1954, 11.

Roettinger, Philip C. “The Company Then and Now,” *The Progressive*, July 1986, 50.