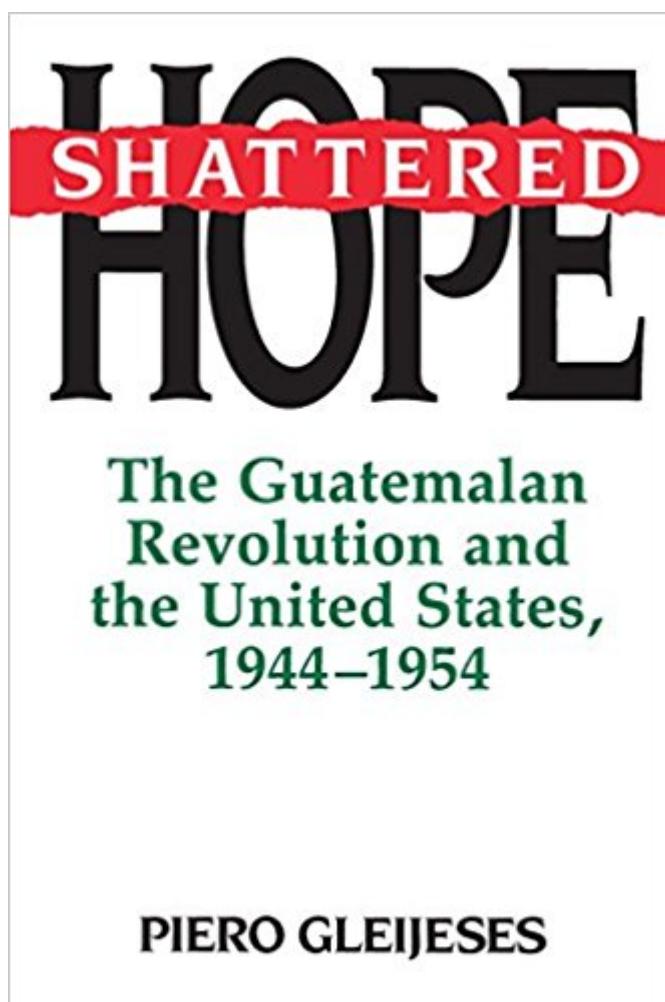


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Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution And The United States, 1944–1954



Synopsis

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

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Customer Reviews

Great book. Very interesting read. Selected it for a report for school as well as some others and really enjoyed it.

"Shattered Hope" attempts to resolve the debate about why the US ultimately decided to overthrow the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. In the early 1980s, two books came

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

This is an excellent book. The sharp analysis of a sad but beautiful period of Guatemalan History, wealth of documents and interviews supporting it, and the story telling full of suspense and passion make the book the classic of its kind.

Piero Gleijeses never disappoints me.

Book arrived promptly. Great price on one of the best authors on Cuba and Latin America post WWII.

Excellent book

Overall, Piero Gleijeses has done an excellent job in his post-mortem analysis of the murdered Guatemalan Revolution of Jacobo Arbenz. Mr. Gleijeses' other works are also of equally excellent caliber. Here comes the however: I disagree with his conclusion, that the US' primary motive in doing so was cold war anti-Communism, pure and simple, rather than an expedient excuse for defending the United Fruit Company; that the US would have overthrown Arbenz' Revolutionary Action regime

even if Guatemala "had had no bananas." I strongly disagree, and believe Schlesinger and Kinzer's take in "Bitter Fruit" is much more on the mark. Gleijeses' conclusion only begs the question, as it was unlikely a revolutionary movement would have arisen in the first place without the Fruit Company's massive holdings and equally massive bribery of the Guatamalan government and military. The presence of Communists, Marxists, Marxist-Leninists, etc., in the Arbenz government also fails as a reason, as leftists were also present in the National Revolutionary Movement regime in Bolivia following that country's revolution in '52. The discrepancy in reaction between the two smacks of schizophrenia, until one takes a closer look. The Bolivian MNR nationalized the tin mines, with their heavy US investment, but in turn agreed on compensation, to open its markets to US imports, and finally to a neo-liberal bank-friendly stabilization program in 1957. Guatemala, however, began a program of import-substitution, would not compensate UFCo on the company's terms, and - perhaps most importantly - spurned the strings attached to US aid as a form of bribery. Obviously, only avowed Marxist-Leninists could cop such an attitude to US trade, aid and investment; hence US Ambassador Puerifoy's convenient dodge on the land issue by insisting on the Red Menace within the Guatamalan government. Schlesinger and Kinzer very thoroughly detailed the links between UFCo, the State Department of John Foster Dulles, and Dulles' partnership with UFCo's Boston attorneys, Sullivan and Cromwell. The hysteria engendered from Washington spoke much more of the US military-corporate state of mind than on the real state of Guatemala under Arbenz. For this reason I must whack off a rating star on Mr. Gleijeses' otherwise excellent forensic study.

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