



OLLI Guatemala PPT 4

From the Good Neighbor to the Cold War

- The Caribbean Legion 1944-53
- The 1954 Coup
- The Civil War 1960-96

Mayan Community Mass, St. Mary Church, Champaign (From FB page)





On the FB page it notes “they are the Mayan Community meeting at St Mary’s Church since 1985”



www.comunidadmayachampaign.com

Radio Santa María Champaign

Busquenos

 **TUNE IN**
Radio Santa María Champaign

 **My Tuner**
Radio Santa María Champaign

 **Zeno Media**
Radio Santa María Champaign





Santa Eulalia, Barillas in Lent. In this video you can see the stations of the cross, the crucifixes and other statues hidden behind purple draping for Lent. www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLgl3LZ1HeM

The Caribbean Legion 1944-53

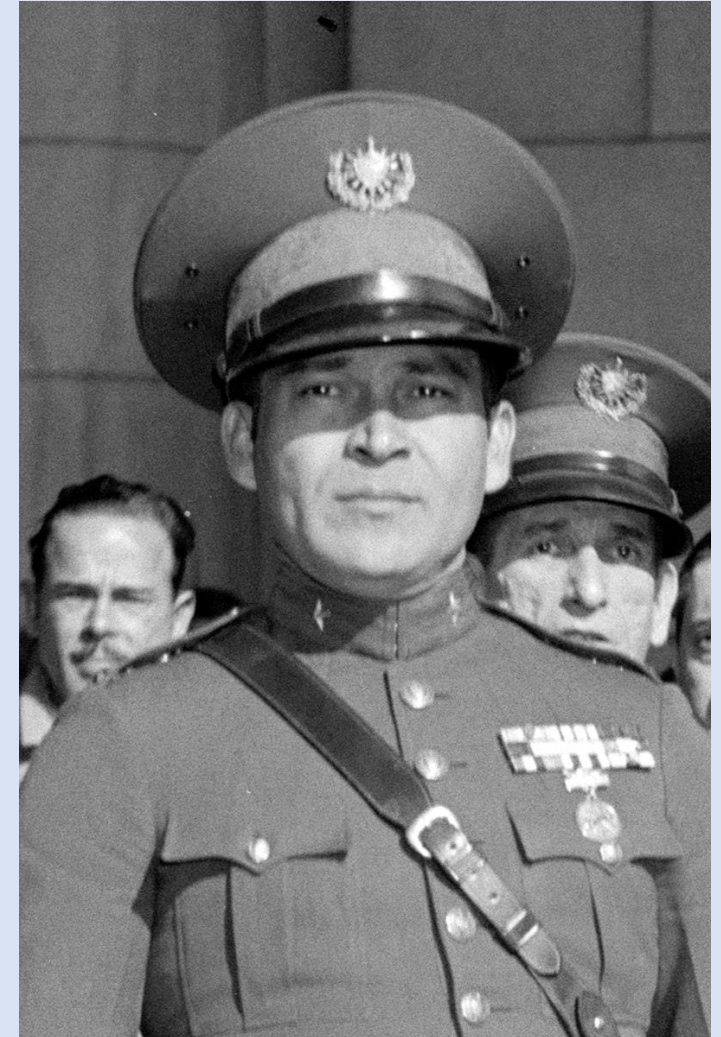
- Romantic vs Cynical Histories of this “movement”
- Romantic Story: 1940s WWII and Spanish Civil War veterans and liberal exiles gather in Mexico City, Cuba Guatemala and Venezuela to “Decolonize” the Caribbean.
- 1944 A Popular uprising against the dictatorship in Guatemala brought about an election and the liberal government of **Juan Jose Arevalo**; in Cuba Ramon Grau San Martin restores liberal Govt, and in Venezuela Betancourt in Venezuela. All pledge to bring the **1941 Atlantic Charter** values to Latin America
- A **Decolonization** Movement for Latin America? Saw themselves as overturning elite dominated dictatorships that pandered to foreign investors.



The Cynical View?: “the Legion” a sometimes unwitting tool of disgruntled new elites (industry, infrastructure) to replace older agrarian-based elites.

For example: Here we have a very young Batista hugging Ramon Grau San Martin, Cuba, 1933, after a liberal Army revolt restored San Martin to the presidency.

Batista finishes his career as a US-allied dictator (1952-59) until overthrown by Castro 1959. Was he really a young Liberal who morphed into a dictator or was he always plotting to move into power?

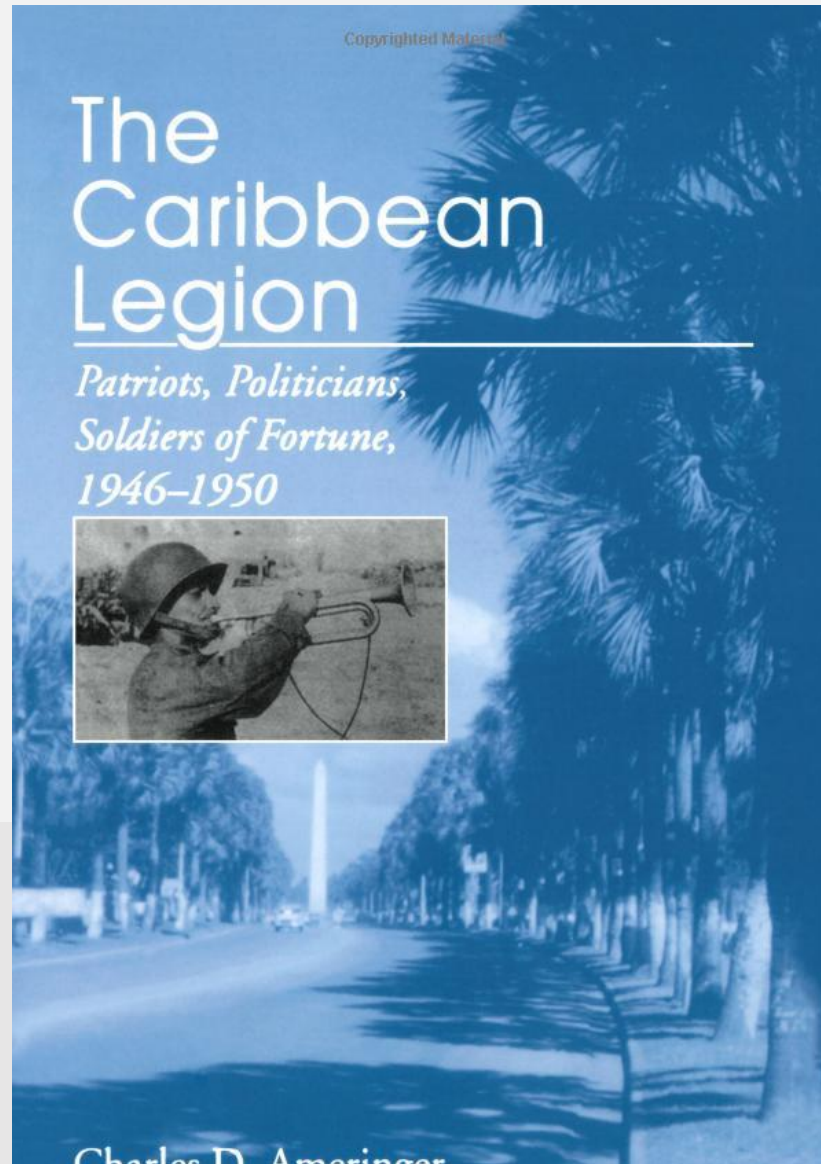
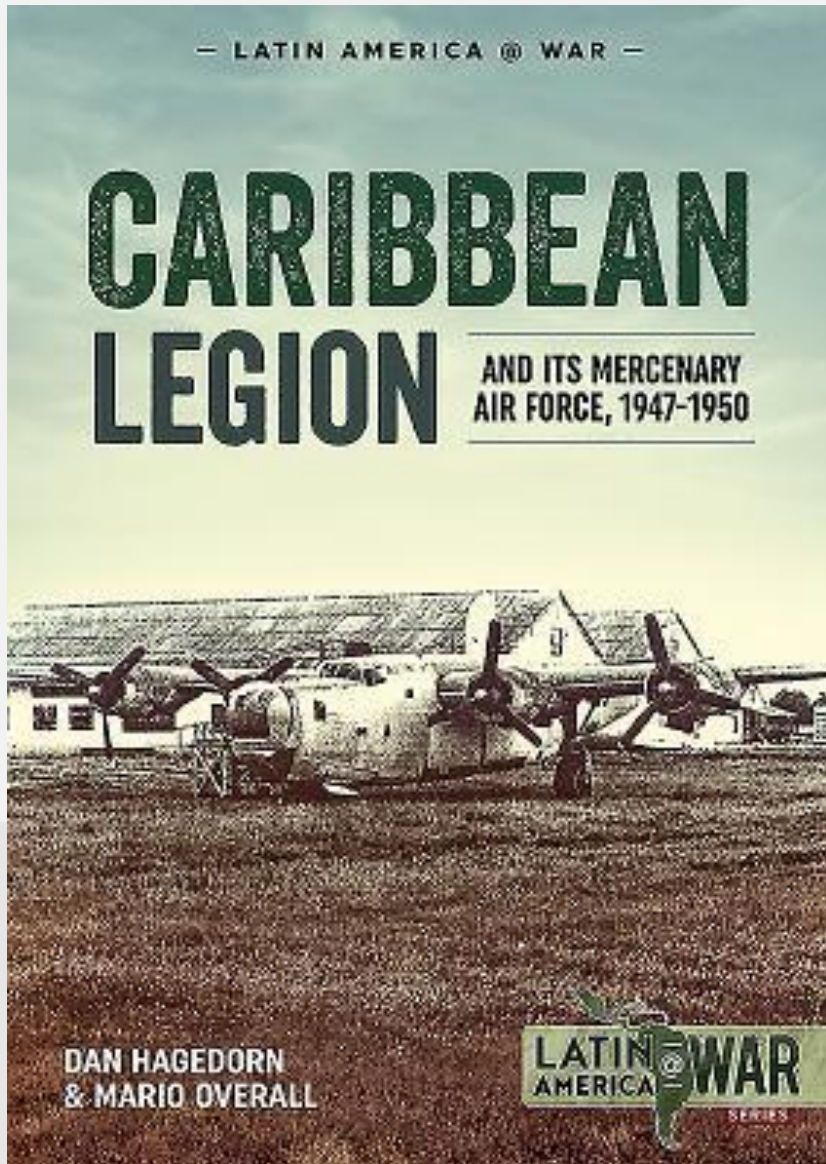


1944 Guatemala a safe haven for Liberal exiles under Arevalo. Plans to topple dictators in Dominican Republic (Trujillo), Nicaragua (Somoza). Funding, arms, air support....and volunteers gather in Guatemala.

- 1947, 1949 failed invasions of Dominican Republic to topple Trujillo alarm Trujillo and Somoza.
- 1948 the “Legion” successfully supports an uprising in Costa Rica to restore elected President to power.
- 1952 Cuba’s Batista returns to power as an ally of conservatives.
- 1953 Batista, Trujillo and Somoza (Nicaragua) unite to eliminate the threat from Guatemala. Cold War rhetoric in fashion.

The Caribbean Legion vs the Old Guard 1946-53





Not as much scholarship on this movement as there should be – especially considering parallels with more recent wars (multinational volunteer fighter force, use of information warfare techniques)

1944-54 Guatemalan “Social Revolution”

1944 protests against President Ubico led to the election of Juan Jose Arevalo.

- New Labor Laws
- Minimum Wage and Social Safety Net
- Literacy campaigns
- A new highway to challenge the United Fruit’s monopoly over the rails and ports.
- Support for regional democracy movements

The CIA disdainfully referred to the reforms as "an intensely nationalistic program of progress colored by the touchy, anti-foreign inferiority complex of the 'Banana Republic.'”

1948 Poster, Guatemala



United Fruit initiative + Public Relations techniques + Cold War Paranoia in Washington DC= 1954 Coup

1951: President Jacobo Arbenz accelerates Land reform of large estates. (Less than 1% of landholders affected, but these control 50% of national land).

Arbenz offers to pay \$1.2 m for UF land, (declared tax value); US embassy counters with \$16 m. figure...but just a delaying tactic as they were already pursuing a strategy to get rid of Arbenz.

UFC and CIA make contact with Guatemalan exiles opposed to the reforms – including General Castillo Armas (next to the driver) and his friends. Offer to support a coup.



Edward Bernays, the “father of Public Relations,” designed the propaganda campaign to label Arbenz a Communist in the United States

Bernays had made his reputation in the 1920s using insights from the new field of psychiatry to design corporate advertising – like the Lucky Strike campaign to make expand the female market by marketing cigarettes as aids to dieting and “torches of freedom”

Bernays had previously helped UF market Bananas in the US, and improve its public image by creating press junkets to tour company “model communities” etc.

In 1953 Bernays helped label Arbenz a dangerous Communist in the US, helping the Dulles brothers (Board members of United Fruit and Director of the CIA and Secretary of State) present a case to Eisenhower for using the same techniques the British had used in 1953 Iran to foment the collapse of an elected government.

Bernays designed radio programs, “information Bureau” memos and press tours that built the idea that the attack on UF was the first stage of a hemispheric Communist movement.



So what happened in 1954?

- The CIA groomed Castillo Armas and a very motley collection of Guatemalan exiles to give the façade of a Guatemala – led revolt to “liberate the country from Communists”
- The radio station and small numbers of “Liberators” were based in Nicaragua, but gave the impression that they numbered in the tens of thousands throughout Guatemala and were marching on the capital.
- The Presidential Guard abandoned Arbenz in fear of the impending attack, Castillo Arbenz seized power and reversed the reforms.
- The result? An incredibly inexpensive regime change (in the US vision) in 1954. The hidden price? Hijacking of US policy by a private corporation, damaged US reputation in Latin America, a legacy of Military repression for the next four decades....

The CIA's operation to overthrow the Government of Guatemala in 1954 marked an early zenith in the Agency's long record of covert action. Following closely on successful operations that installed the Shah as ruler of Iran [] the Guatemala operation, known as PBSUCCESS, was both more ambitious and more thoroughly successful than either precedent. Rather than helping a prominent contender gain power with a few inducements, PBSUCCESS used an intensive paramilitary and psychological campaign to replace a popular, elected government with a political nonentity. In method, scale, and conception it had no antecedent, and its triumph confirmed the belief of many in the Eisenhower administration that covert operations offered a safe, inexpensive substitute for armed force in resisting Communist inroads in the Third World. This and other "lessons" of PBSUCCESS lulled Agency and administration officials into a complacency that proved fatal at the Bay of Pigs seven years later.

Even the CIA admitted (later) it was a bad idea. Internal CIA history of the 1954 coup: 1994 <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/docs/doc05.pdf>

FOIAs not really perfect: 74 names for elimination – all deleted in the FOIA document received by the National Security Archive project at GW

TO: Chief, []
FROM: []
SUBJECT: Guatemalan Communist Personnel to be disposed of during Military Operations of Calligeris.

1. Included herein is the list of Guatemalan Communist Personnel to be disposed of during military operations to be carried out by Calligeris.

a. Category I - persons to be disposed of through Executive action (attachment # 1)

b. Category II - persons to be disposed of through imprisonment or exile (attachment # 2)

2. This list is a revision, revised by Calligeris, of an original list prepared by Headquarters in February 1952.

WHEN APPROVED
INITIALED, BY
030115

Comunistas: Categoria. fi *260*
REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1.	31
2.	32
3.	33
4.	34
5.	35
6.	36
7.	37
8.	38
9.	39
10.	40
11.	41
12.	42
13.	43
14.	44
15.	45
16.	46
17.	47
18.	48
19.	49
20.	50
21.	51
22.	52
23.	53
24.	54
25.	55
26.	56
27.	57
28.	58
29.	
30.	



“Gloriosa Victoria,” (Diego Rivera, 1954) tells the story of the 1954 coup. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas greets secretary of state John Foster Dulles, who holds a bomb with the face of Eisenhower, to his left is U.S. ambassador John Peurifoy with military officers and CIA director Allen W. Dulles whispering in his brother’s ear. (Pushkin Museum, Moscow)

Reading on the Guatemalan Coup 1954

Gleijeses, Piero (1992). [*Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954.*](#)

Gleijeses, Piero (February 1989). "Juan Jose Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion". *Journal of Latin American Studies*. **21** (1): 133–145.

Stephen Schlesinger, Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. 1982. Excellent history.

Walter Lefebvre, *Inevitable Revolutions*, has a chapter on the Coup. In general it is the best big picture of US policy in Central America from 1800s to 1980s.

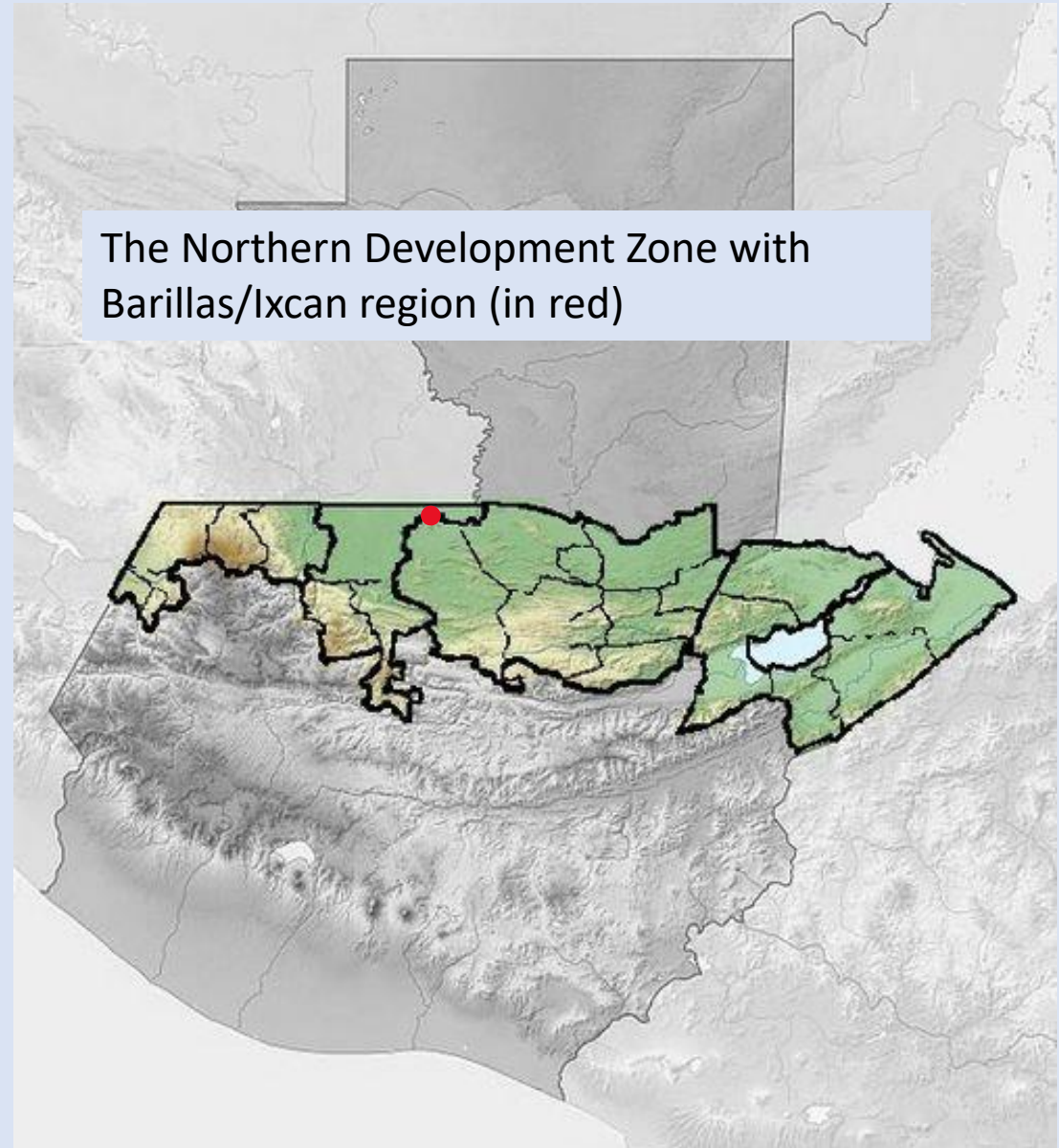
Mario Vargas Llosa has a recent Novel – *Harsh Times* on the Coup.

Heading into the War years after 1954

Coffee and Banana cultivation had affected the people from Barillas, as the new labor regulations the producers supported forced many to work part time in the lowlands. The 1954 Coup also affected them by eliminating a government that had prioritized social and economic improvements. But it was the economic development plans of the 1960s that brought war to Barillas.

The government declared a development zone across the north (see map) and in the 1960s advocated for internal migration to the region. They also expanded roads. However, the region became known as the “Zone of the Generals” (eventually an estimated 60% of land was owned by senior govt officials) as well-connected individuals began to buy land near new and proposed highways.

At first, economic investment centered on wood and agriculture production, but in the 1970s oil, lead and nickel deposits led to concession auctions and increased conflict over land use and ownership.



Edging into War: the Story of Father William Woods in Barillas.

American Maryknoll Priest William Wood was assigned to Barillas after ordination in 1958.

Concerned with the land shortage, in 1966 Woods and Maryknoll raised funds to buy lands for agricultural colonies (and small planes to support them) in nearby Ixcan. At the time Ixcan was part of Barillas, Huehuetenango, now redistricted to Quiche.

By 1975 Ixcan had 5 cooperatives, 2000 settlers, schools, clinics, agronomists, etc

But also in the mid 1970s came an expansion of mineral and oil concessions. In addition, there were guerillas crossing into the region from safe havens in Mexico.

Ixcan was now in the way for the government affiliated investors. The military began to investigate the Ixcan cooperatives as “subversives”.

1975 Woods traveled to the local military headquarters to investigate the disappearance of 10 colonists. He bought radios for the cooperatives to stay in contact with each other.

Things began to get tense. The government cancelled his pilot license, accusing him of smuggling guns and radio equipment to the guerillas.

“On April 13, 1976, the U.S. Ambassador Francis E. Meloy Jr. invited Woods for dinner, where he warned the priest that the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Military Commander of Quiche wanted him eliminated.” (Foss)

On November 20, 1976 Woods and three passengers were killed when their plane crashed in the mountains.

Neither the US embassy, nor Maryknoll nor parishioners were satisfied with the crash investigation. The government recorded the cause as “bad weather” but other pilots said the conditions were perfect. The military moved the plane from the crash site before investigators arrived.



William Woods' body was first buried in Barillas, but returned to Ixcán after the war. The residents of the cooperatives had been driven from the area, but also returned in the 2000s.

Youtube video with a song (in Q'anjob'al, celebrating Woods life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoaNNgEQLxs>

Youtube video posting of Mass celebrating return of Wood's body to Ixcán:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEpoAW3Eg2c>

Foss, Sarah. 2021. "Rumors of Insurgency and Assassination in the Ixcán, Guatemala," *Journal of Social History* 55 (1): 105–26



Figure 2. Inside the church in Mayalán, residents light candles and say prayers in front of Father Woods' altar, where his body rests. November 20, 2016, photograph by author.

Of course, Woods was not the only casualty of the war years (200,000 killed, including many priests) but the experience in Ixcán (both of Woods and the settlers who were disappeared or forced to flee during the war) confronting the Guatemalan state, military and powerful economic interests in Barillas certainly showcases the arrival of the era of violence.

Next Week: The War, the Refugee Crisis and the Aftermath