

El Presidente de Guatemala
Ydigoras Fuentes

A key figure in the Litho Carbon venture was the president of Guatemala--Ydigoras Fuentes. The following are excerpts from the historiography of that period and describe his place in that history.

Tom Stoner was in Guatemala at the time and witnessed the exile, which was orchestrated by the U.S. C.I.A,

It seems probable that the Ydigoras Fuentes exile is what resulted in the inability of Litho Carbon to achieve an embargo on imported carbon paper which was the major factor in the company's failure.

Ydígoras Fuentes, Miguel (1895–1982)

Guatemalan politician, president 1958–63. He promoted reform but encountered conservative opposition, while falling coffee prices resulted in social disorder to which Ydígoras responded by imposing martial law. He involved Guatemala as a satellite supporter of the USA in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. This stirred up left-wing opposition to the government, culminating in an attempted coup in February 1962 by leftist guerrillas, supported by student protesters. In March 1963 defence minister Enrique Peralta Azurdia ousted and replaced Ydígoras, forcing him into exile.

Guatemalan politics changed with the election of reform candidate Juan José Arévalo Bermejo in 1945. Arévalo's popularity marked one of the first mass-based movements in Guatemalan politics. In 1951, Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán was elected. Following Arévalo's approach to land reform, Árbenz expropriated holdings of the United Fruit Co., a US firm. The United States alleged communist influence within the Árbenz government, and began mobilizing opposition against him. In the summer of 1954, Col. Carlos Castillo Armas and an army of Guatemalan exiles, backed by the CIA, invaded Guatemala from Honduras and toppled Árbenz. Castillo took over, restored expropriated properties, and ruled by decree until he was assassinated by a presidential palace guard in July 1957.

After a period of confusion, Gen. Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes became president in January 1958. His administration was essentially a military dictatorship, even though he claimed to follow democratic principles. He was particularly hard on his domestic critics, denouncing them as communists. He was equally bombastic on the international stage, denouncing the United States, quarreling with Mexico over fishing rights, and challenging the UK over Belize. He was also contemptuous of Fidel Castro, and allowed Guatemala to be a training area for the exiles in the abortive US invasion of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961.

It is well-known that, at the behest of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the C.I.A. overthrew Jacobo Arbenz Guzman's reform government of Guatemala on the pretext that he was "pro-Communist." Less known, Rabe notes, is that it was Harry S. Truman who first ordered the C.I.A. to provide Guatemalan exiles with weapons and funds against Arbenz (p. 96), and that Kennedy also encouraged a military coup in 1963 against the U.S.'s own favorite, *right-wing* president, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes. (Two years earlier, Ydigoras had lent the C.I.A. a base to secretly train Cuban exiles.) Somehow Ydigoras, whose term of office was ending, got it into his head to allow a free election to select his successor. He even granted former president Juan José Arévalo, Arbenz's reformist predecessor, the right to return from exile and run for the presidency. "Ydigoras's defense of constitutionalism," Rabe notes, "alarmed the Kennedy Administration" (p. 74). Encouraged by U.S. officials, the military overthrew Ydigoras on March 31, 1963. Kennedy responded by upping the U.S.'s already unprecedented amount of military assistance and increasing U.S. training and equipping of Guatemala's police officers in "riot control" and "interrogation