

any more than a very general sense defined in Moscow.²⁹ Even if they had been, we have already seen that the party did not control the government.

There is little evidence, moreover, of any sustained direct relationship between the Soviet Union and Guatemala during this period. The countries established diplomatic relations in 1945, but did not exchange representatives. The only documented exchanges between Arbenz and the Soviet Union and other East European countries were:

1. a conversation between Arbenz and a Czech commercial attaché in March 1953;
2. the presentation of credentials by a Czech diplomat to Arbenz in January 1954; and
3. a discussion between Arbenz and a Soviet commercial attaché in October 1953 in Mexico City.

In addition, US policy-makers pointed to two further pieces of evidence in support of their claim that Guatemala was the cutting edge of a Soviet bid to penetrate the western hemisphere. The first was a Guatemalan purchase of approximately two thousand tons of Czech light arms shipped from Szczecin, Poland, in 1954. But this action should be considered in context. From 1948 onward the United States had refused Guatemalan orders for arms. The Arevalo Administration responded to this by negotiating an arms deal with Denmark which, according to Arevalo, was vetoed by the United States. The latter also collaborated with Great Britain in the early 1950s in preventing third-party sales to Guatemala. Arbenz apparently managed none the less to negotiate a deal in Switzerland but the shipment was impounded in New York.

These efforts were made over a period in which Arbenz faced an increasing danger of revolt from within, and (as later happened) invasion by Guatemalan exiles based in Honduras who were armed, financed, and to some degree trained by the CIA. His purchase of Czech arms in 1954 appears to have been a last resort in desperate circumstances, and an action which he went to considerable lengths to avoid.

²⁹ Indeed much of the behaviour of the GLP, and in particular its co-operation with "bourgeois reformists" was conspicuously at variance with the prevailing Soviet line on communist participation in national liberation movements in 1950-53.