



The Time of Freedom: Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution (Pitt Latin American Series)

Cindy Forster

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"The time of freedom" was the name that plantation workers—campesinos—gave to Guatemala's national revolution of 1944–1954. Cindy Forster reveals the critical role played by the poor in organizing and sustaining this period of reform.

Through court records, labor and agrarian ministry archives, and oral histories, Forster demonstrates how labor conflict on the plantations prepared the ground for national reforms that are usually credited to urban politicians. She focuses on two plantation zones that generated exceptional momentum: the coffee belt in the highlands around San Marcos and the United Fruit Company's banana groves near Tiquisate. Although these regions were unlike in size and complexity, language and race, popular culture and work patterns, both erupted with demands for workers' rights and economic justice shortly after the fall of Castañeda in 1944.

A welcome balance to the standard "top-down" histories of the revolution, Forster's sophisticated analysis demonstrates how campesinos changed the course of the urban revolution. By establishing the context of grassroots mobilization, she substantially alters the conventional view of the entire revolution, and particularly the reforms enacted under President Albenz.

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