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The United States, Guatemala and the communist threat

Brett Johanson
San Jose State University

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The United States, Guatemala and the communist threat

Johanson, Brett Kenneth, M.A.

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THE UNITED STATES, GUATEMALA AND
THE COMMUNIST THREAT

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Brett Johanson

May, 1993

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY

Dr. Peter Buzanski

Dr. Robert Kuramoto

Dr. George Vásquez

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

THE UNITED STATES, GUATEMALA AND THE COMMUNIST THREAT

by Brett Johanson

This thesis deals with the perceived communist threat in Guatemala between 1944 and 1954. It details the movement known as the October Revolution and its traits which led United States policymakers to identify a growing communist presence in Guatemala. The breakdown of diplomatic relations between Guatemala and the United States, and their eventual disintegration after the expropriation of United Fruit Company land in 1953, are traced with an emphasis on differentiating between economic imperialism and concerns for hemispheric security. Finally, the role of United Fruit Company and the Department of State in preparing the climate which allowed the removal of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz through a CIA coup is discussed.

The findings of this thesis were that fears of a monolithic communist movement controlled from Moscow were sincere and that policymakers in the United States were reacting to this fear and were not simply moving to protect financial interests.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The overthrow of duly elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in 1954 through a CIA organized coup ended a decade of nationalistic and progressive reform in Guatemala. Many commentators have since labeled this action as having been undertaken for the sole purpose of protecting the financial interests of the United States based United Fruit Company.¹ While the influence which United Fruit had in this affair was undoubtedly great, reduction of the impetus to a single cause has led many to overlook the significance of the belief in the threat of a monolithic communist movement controlled from Moscow. This has led to analyses in a vacuum. Communism was the overriding factor in foreign affairs during the cold war era, and it was a fear of it which led to the downfall of Arbenz, despite the fact that he was not a communist. The steady disintegration of affairs between Guatemala and the United States was easily traceable as was the fact that the cause of these problems was the belief that the nationalistic programs which Arévalo and Arbenz undertook were communist inspired.

Arbenz's progressive and nationalistic agenda was one factor which led to his fall from grace with the United States, as economic and political independence were prerequisites of this program. However, the most

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¹ I refer to Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), José M. Aybar de Soto, Dependency and Intervention: The Case of Guatemala in 1954 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978) and Jenny Pearce, Under the Eagle (Boston: South End Press, 1982).

important considerations were his supposed pampering of the communist movement within Guatemala and his hesitancy in supporting the United States in Latin America. Charges of leftist sympathies against the Guatemalan government began immediately after the success of the October Revolution, as this was seen as the initial inroad for a growing Guatemalan communist movement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BREAKDOWN OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The October Revolution was named after the democratic revolution of October 1944 which overthrew the repressive thirteen-year dictatorship of General Jorge Ubico and opened the doors for social and economic reforms during the presidencies of Juan José Arévalo and his successor, Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. The "decade of revolution" was initiated with the democratic election of Arévalo, a university professor who had spent several years exiled in Argentina before taking office in 1945. Upon assuming the presidency he began to outline a program of social and economic reform. As it turned out, Arévalo would be the first Guatemalan president to be elected, serve his full term, and step down voluntarily.²

Guatemala at the time of Arévalo's election was a country locked into an antiquated feudalistic social and economic system. The country was essentially run according to the interests of United Fruit and the local elite while the overwhelming majority of the population was exploited by these same groups. The wages of the peasantry ranged from five to twenty centavos a day and Indians, who comprised the majority of the population, were required by vagrancy laws to work up to 150 days a year on coffee plantations

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²Caesar D. Seresers, "The Guatemalan Legacy: Radical Challengers and Military Politics," in Report on Guatemala: Findings on the Study Group on United States-Guatemalan Relations, by the Johns Hopkins University Study Group (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 18.

for five centavos a day, as well as three weeks on public roads without pay.³ Malnutrition and illiteracy were rampant in Indian communities and the Indian's life expectancy was considerably shorter than their Ladino, or Guatemalan of European descent, counterpart.⁴ To make matters worse, very few Indians owned any substantial amount of land.

The groundwork for reform was laid during the presidency of Arévalo, 1945-1951, through the enactment of a series of political, economic and social reforms.⁵ Though he was given a mandate for far-reaching reforms by his substantial election victory, he could not initiate a massive reform program due to the existing power of the traditional governing class and the multinational corporation, mainly United Fruit. Instead, he was content to take one small step at a time. Among the objectives of "Spiritual Socialism," as Arévalo called his body of beliefs, were agrarian reform, protection of labor, an improved educational system and consolidation of political democracy.⁶ Arévalo was intent to reform the underdeveloped economy of Guatemala, make the country more self-sufficient and to construct a government program which accounted for the needs of all Guatemalans--Indians and non-Indians.

While many of the more radical reformers in Guatemala claimed that he did not do enough, Arévalo did accomplish a number of important reforms while in office. Among these were the building of new schools, the

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³Guatemala in Rebellion, ed. Jonathan L. Fried, Marvin E. Gettleman, Deborah T. Levenson and Nancy Peckenharn (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1983), 48.

⁴Ibid.

⁵José Aybar de Soto, Dependency and Intervention: The Case of Guatemala in 1954 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 118.

⁶Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), 37.

establishment of a social security system and the implementation of a labor code which gave both urban and rural workers the right to organize and strike, as well as various forms of protection to workers. Furthermore, an Institute for the Development of Production and an Indian Institute were established for the purpose of increasing productivity and integrating the Indian into society. Finally, in the field of health reform, health and sanitation programs were developed, and the Social Security Institute developed a twenty-year plan to build sixty-seven hospitals throughout the country.⁷ Freedom of the press and speech were also guaranteed, although more in theory than in practice as the vestiges of authoritarian rule remained during Arévalo's presidency due to the theoretical nature of the revolution during its earliest stages. The Literacy Law of 1945 increased the number of male citizens required to vote and the early success of the revolution was consolidated for a bolder assault upon the antiquated social structure.⁸

Arévalo denied from the outset that he had any communistic leanings and he proposed that the break from the traditional economic and social patterns be accomplished through the use of democratic elections, a process he believed was vital to the success of the revolution. In fact, Arévalo said:

Communism is contrary to human nature, for it is contrary to the psychology of man. . . . The destruction of social minorities, like other basic theories of Communism, is impossible of realization as long as man is man. Here we see the superiority of the doctrine of democracy, which does not seek to destroy anything that man has accomplished but humbly seeks to 'straighten the crooked paths.'⁹

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⁷Guatemala in Rebellion, Jonathan L. Fried, et al., 50-1.

⁸Fredrick B. Pike, "Guatemala, The United States, and Communism in the Americas," Review of Politics 17 (April 1955): 234.

⁹Daniel James, Red Design for the Americas (New York: The John Day Company, 1954), 46.

Equally important for the attainment of his utopian goals was "man's psychological integration and moral liberation, which would make the individual more capable of increased economic and spiritual achievements. . . ." ¹⁰ An important variation on the democratic theme was Arévalo's belief that liberation, freedom and democracy were not individual attainments, but societal. A democratic government needed to promote group interests and the accomplishment of the aspirations of the community instead of individual advancement. ¹¹ The ephemeral quality of his beliefs had profound effects on his relations with the United States as they left much room for interpretation, and unfortunately misinterpretation.

Few people in the United States regarded Arévalo as a communist when he assumed power and, in fact, when the United States embassy in Argentina was asked about any possible communist affiliations Arévalo might have had, John F. Griffiths of the embassy responded:

As far as (sic) are concerned the suspicions that might be had about Arévalo . . . it is my considered opinion that anyone even reasonably well informed about his teachings, writings and general activities would be inclined to pass over such suspicions as being so utterly without foundation as to call for no response. ¹²

Because of the inherent ambiguities of "Spiritual Socialism" relations between the United States and the Arévalo administration were initially amicable. This was attributed to the fact that the term "democracy" was employed by Arévalo and the United States, which was eager to encourage

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¹⁰ José M. Aybar de Soto, Dependency and Intervention, 115.

¹¹ Richard H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1982), 47.

¹² Richard H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," Political Science Quarterly 95 (Winter 1980-81): 635.

possible allies in the Western Hemisphere, was not absolutely certain of the nature of the political movement in Guatemala. At this juncture it appeared as though the government of Guatemala would receive little resistance from the United States because, though Arévalo had preached quite a bit, he had yet to take any truly radical measures and he appeared to be willing to defer to the United States regarding communism. This deference was illustrated by the closing of a recently founded Marxist school, the Escuela Claridad, in 1945 on the grounds that Article 32 of the Guatemalan Constitution prohibited political organization of a foreign or international character. This action was followed in 1946 by the expulsion of several avowed communist leaders.

However, Arévalo soon realized that in order to break the stranglehold of the elite and foreign interests he would need all the support he could gather. It was for this reason that Arévalo became more tolerant of communists. One author has blamed the administration's flirtation with communism on the intransigence of Guatemala's economic leaders "who desired only the privileges and immunities of leadership without any of the consequent obligations demanded by social justice. . . ." ¹³ Arévalo realized that if he was going to see his reforms through he had to turn to the group from which he knew he could gain support. Since the communists sympathized with his tax, education and labor reforms they were the only option he had. Arévalo had not suddenly turned communist, but instead, he believed that he could use them without being used himself. ¹⁴ This led to a

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¹³Frederick B. Pike, "Guatemala, The United States, and Communism in the Americas," 235.

¹⁴Ibid, 234.

much wider degree of tolerance for the communists which resulted in the United States openly questioning the sympathies of Guatemala.¹⁵

The torch of the revolution was passed in March 1951 when Jacobo Arbenz was elected as Arévalo's successor. Arbenz was faced with many severe problems which dictated land reform. Among these were the facts that, as illustrated by the 1950 census, seventy-six percent of the registered land owners held ten percent of the land while two and two-tenths percent of the registered land owners owned seventy percent of the country's land.¹⁶ In addition, while seventy-five percent of Guatemala's population was engaged in agricultural labors and agriculture accounted for fifty-seven percent of the gross national product, the underutilization of the land and the concentration on two export crops, bananas and coffee, forced Guatemala to import food.¹⁷

In 1953 the Arbenz government began proceedings to expropriate 234,000 acres of United Fruit land.¹⁸ Essentially, the lands subject to expropriation were the idle lands of the large latifundias, or estates, which in the case of United Fruit was a substantial amount of land due to its claim that vast amount of idle land were needed to protect against fruit diseases or storm damage. United Fruit agreed to allow the expropriation on the condition that it was paid \$16 million for the land in question, a figure its directors believed accurately reflected the true value of the holdings in question. The Guatemalan government would not sway from its offer of a

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¹⁵Richard H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 57-59.

¹⁶New York Times, 28 March 1952, 5:5.

¹⁷Fredrick B. Pike, "Guatemala, The United States, and Communism in the Americas," 236.

¹⁸United States Department of State, "Expropriation of United Fruit Company Property by Government of Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 29 (14 September 1953): 357.

twenty-five-year bond with an issue value of \$525,000, a figure based on United Fruit's declared taxable property value.¹⁹ However, the property value which United Fruit had been declaring had always been substantially undervalued as a means to avoid paying the full amount of taxation due Guatemala. The previous Guatemalan administrations had allowed this, as well as other concessions, in order for the administrators to remain in the good graces of United Fruit, a traditionally profitable relationship. After years of coercion and manipulation, United Fruit was finally being treated as just another company.

The holdings of United Fruit in Guatemala were substantial at this time and fear of losing them was a cause of grave concern. United Fruit controlled directly or indirectly some forty thousand jobs and had investments in the country valued at \$60 million.²⁰ Because of these holdings, which included the International Railways of Central America, the administration of the country's only Atlantic port, a monopolization of the banana exports, and the country's telephone and telegraph facilities, the company was able to function as a state within a state with a considerable degree of power.²¹ United Fruit initially chose Guatemala as the site for its earliest developments because a good portion of the country contained prime banana land, but more importantly because Guatemala had the weakest government in Central America. As one United Fruit executive said, the

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¹⁹Thomas P. McCann, An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc, 1976), 49.

²⁰Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 12.

²¹*Ibid.* 12.

country offered an "ideal investment climate," and the company was able to achieve astounding profits through coercion and government corruption.²²

The expropriation of land caused distress to the United States government for a variety of reasons. Clearly, the United States found the seizure to have severe implications for international business. In a State Department Bulletin of September 14, 1953 fears were voiced concerning unilateral decisions by governments which abrogated agreements with foreign nationals, and that with such a precedent, "every international obligation could be thus wiped off the books."²³ Expropriation also had serious implications on the idea of collective security and hemispheric solidarity. Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, John M. Cabot, expressed the vital need for hemispheric solidarity, and stated that it was because of this that the Americas had been spared from the material destruction of the Second World War.²⁴ He further illustrated this desire through his discussion of accusations, supported by the Guatemalan newspapers, that the United States was conducting bacteriological warfare in Korea. He was extremely critical of the Guatemalan government for allowing such hemispheric dissention, "just after our airmen have returned to tell us of the tortures to which they were subjected to extract fabricated confessions."²⁵

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²²Thomas P. McCann, An American Company, 45.

²³United States Department of State, "Expropriation of United Fruit Company Property by the Government of Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 29 (14 September 1953): 357.

²⁴John Moors Cabot, "Inter-American Cooperation and Hemispheric Solidarity," Department of State Bulletin 29 (26 October 1953): 555.

²⁵*Ibid.*

It is interesting to note, however, that there was a current of thought within the United States that viewed the expropriation as an unfortunate, but justified, result of a new awakening in Guatemala which sprung from decades of repression. A New York Times article by Herbert L. Mathews captured this sentiment and refuted the notion that this was communist related. He wrote in reference to the Mexican expropriation of oil land and of Guatemala's seizure of United Fruit's holdings that, "it was nationalism, not communism, that was the primary force behind the attacks. The Communists enthusiastically supported and exacerbated these campaigns, but it would only distort the meaning of what happened to hold the Reds responsible."²⁶

The cry of communism, while made by some arch-conservatives from the beginning of the Arévalo administration, became deafening within the Eisenhower administration once the United Fruit land was expropriated. While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles acknowledged that many of these reforms were needed, he also stated that, ". . . the Communists seized on it, not as an opportunity for real reforms, but as a chance to gain political power."²⁷ Upon examination of the communist influence in the administrations of Arévalo and Arbenz one finds that it definitely existed to some extent and that while many believed neither Arévalo or Arbenz were communist themselves, they turned a deaf ear to its presence.

The center of the communist movement in Guatemala revolved around Manuel Fortúnez, who after the 1945 elections was Congressional

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²⁶New York Times, 28 March 1952: 5:3.

²⁷John Foster Dulles, "International Communism in Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 31 (12 July 1954): 43.

Secretary, and Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez. Fortune was described as a "Russia Firster" for his following of internationalist lines, while Gutiérrez was an ardent nationalist who saw communism as a means of remedying Guatemala's social and economic problems.²⁸ These men united and formed the Guatemalan Communist Party, Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo, which officially became a member of the national political scene as allowed by the 1945 constitution during the Arévalo administration and was from then on a bastion of communist influence.²⁹ There was no doubt that the communist movement controlled Guatemalan labor.

While the communist existence and evolution in Guatemala was easily traceable, the extent of its consolidation of influence in areas aside from labor was not. Both Fortune and Gutiérrez became frustrated with the slow progress of the movement which never had a total party membership in excess of four thousand in a country of three million people.³⁰ What was arguably most important was the fact that, while they may have dominated the Guatemalan labor movement, they did not control the Guatemalan military which was the most powerful entity in the country. It was also argued that there was little chance the communist party could have possibly controlled the country when they lacked having even one of its members on the president's cabinet.³¹

At the time of the invasion in 1954 the communist party in Guatemala was the smallest of the four parties forming the government coalition, but at

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²⁸John D. Martz, Central America: The Crisis and the Challenge (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 34-35.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 59.

³¹Ibid, 59.

least seven or eight avowed communists held government posts of importance.³² Most importantly regarding claims of communist dominance on Guatemala, neither Arévalo or Arbenz ever implemented or advocated any communist measures, and were in fact dedicated in carrying out democratic reforms.³³ While many of these reforms, such as tax, education and social, were strongly supported by the communists, it could most accurately be said the administration came up with these reforms independently and that the communists had areas of similar interest, leading to an overlapping of sorts.

In the final analysis it was not important whether or not Arbenz was a communist or not. He saw himself as a progressive and nationalistic individual who was determined to improve the plight of Guatemala through independent economic development. However, the United States determined that the degree of independence Arbenz wanted for his country and his tolerance of the communist presence in Guatemala were unacceptable within the current world political climate and therefore he could not be endured, whether truly communist or not.³⁴ It could be said there was an appearance of truth regarding the level of communist influence in Guatemala which was more damaging than the truth itself. Regardless, the United States believed Arbenz was falling under the control of the communists and this assessment determined the nature of relations between the United States and Guatemala.

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³²John Gillian and K. H. Silvert, "Ambiguities in Guatemala," Foreign Affairs 34 (April 1956), 471.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 230-231.

Diplomatic correspondence between the United States and Guatemala provided a clear indication of the souring of relations between the two nations. Upon examination of recently declassified government documents one was able to see clearly that a consistent strategy of economic and political isolation was undertaken soon after the October Revolution and that the motivation behind this plan was ultimately a fear of the monolithic world-wide communist movement.

The first step the United States took in dealing with the potential communist problem in Guatemala was to refuse to sell it military hardware. The United States had been the traditional source for Guatemala's military supplies, but under section 408(e) of the Military Defense Assistance Act, approved in 1949, the United States was able to refuse further such armament sales.³⁵ The United States believed this was necessary, not because Guatemala represented a clear and present threat to national security, but because United States policy makers were not sure which way Guatemala would go and it did not seem wise to arm a potential enemy. Because of this uncertainty, the strategy during 1952 and the first part of 1953 sought to avoid publicly addressing the political considerations of Guatemala and the United States in the hope that relations with Guatemala could be improved and that Guatemala would fall in line behind the United States in the war against communism. Instead, the refusal to sell was based on technical grounds which included export licensing problems and the fact that during the Korean

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³⁵Department of State, "NSC Guatemala," IV August 19, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1076. Hereafter cited as FRUS.

War some items, such as F-51 fighter planes, were being used in combat and were therefore not available for sale to other governments, or more precisely, not to Guatemala.³⁶ Another crucial means employed to kill potential deals was the Rio Security Pact of 1947 which promoted collective security in the Western Hemisphere. This pact was not in effect between the United States and Guatemala due to latter's refusal to sign it. While the United States believed that this indicated communist inclinations, in reality, Guatemala's resistance stemmed from technicalities included in the pact which related to its territorial dispute with neighboring Belize.³⁷

Although the fact that Guatemala did not sign the Rio Pact was used as technical grounds for refusing to sell its government arms, this was more than a simple convenient ploy to further United States desires. The potential ramifications of Guatemala not joining in the plan for hemispheric protection and solidarity was viewed as a very real threat to the safety of the United States. Without question the most important factors which determined United States foreign policy toward Guatemala, initially under Truman and then under Eisenhower, were the ideas of a monolithic communist movement controlled and directed from Moscow and the concept of collective security which was defined in this case as hemispheric solidarity.³⁸ It was because of these notions the United States believed it had to make a strong commitment to keep communism out of the Western

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³⁶Department of State, Edward W. Clark (Office of Middle American Affairs) to William Krieg (First Secretary of the Embassy in Guatemala), FRUS IV (September 5, 1952): 1037.

³⁷Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 94.

³⁸Stephen G. Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 29-30.

Hemisphere. A New York Times editorial captured the prevailing sentiment when it stated that the United States must make it clear that it would not tolerate any form of communism in the Western Hemisphere.³⁹ This theme was repeated consistently throughout the following years as the crux of the problems between the United States and Guatemala and was ultimately the key to the situation.

The most influential person regarding Latin American policy during the Eisenhower administration was the President's brother, Milton Eisenhower.⁴⁰ Milton Eisenhower traveled extensively through the region while serving as the president's personal representative to Latin America. Through his eight years in this capacity he came to believe Latin America was on the verge of far-reaching changes which, without the input of the United States, could be for the worse.⁴¹ The Eisenhower administration, he recommended, needed to take a much more aggressive role in determining the direction of Latin American politics.⁴² This was representative of a growing sense of urgency in the United States, based upon the belief that Moscow would not falter in its efforts to establish a communist stronghold in Latin America and that if the United States stood passively by, the battle would surely be lost.

With arguments which harkened back to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, administration officials such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles argued that the United States was entitled to maintain the peaceful integrity of the

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³⁹New York Times, 5 March 1954: 29:2.

⁴⁰Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), 257.

⁴¹H.W. Brands, Jr., Cold Warriors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 27.

⁴²*Ibid.*

Western Hemisphere from the intrusions of Soviet despotism.⁴³ There was general agreement during this time that the Soviets were attempting to establish a bulwark in the Western Hemisphere as part of their grand expansionist designs.⁴⁴ In a speech delivered to the nation on June 30, 1954 Secretary Dulles said that the Kremlin intended to "destroy the inter-American system" and test the ability of the United States to maintain the cohesion which it had achieved in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁵ This theme was echoed by United States Representative to the Council of the Organization of American States, John C. Drier, when he said that communist incursions in the Western Hemisphere represented a "critical hour in which a strong and positive note of inter-American solidarity must be sounded."⁴⁶ Drier outlined the progression of the current Soviet threat to the Western Hemisphere as having started in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and after failed efforts in Iran and Greece, it moved into Asia and finally, was now at the doorstep of the United States.⁴⁷ Judging by United States involvement in Korea and its growing complicity in Vietnam against perceived communist intrusion, one was able to see that there was a growing belief that the United States needed to take strong measures against the mounting communist movement.

It was widely believed that Soviet advances in any Latin American country would lead to the downfall of other Latin American countries, a

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⁴³John Foster Dulles, "International Communism in Guatemala," 43.

⁴⁴Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., "The Guatemalan Complaint before the Security Council." Department of State Bulletin 31(5 July 1954): 28.

⁴⁵John Foster Dulles, "International Communism in Guatemala," 43.

⁴⁶John C. Drier, "The Guatemalan Problem Before the OAS." Department of State Bulletin 31 (12 July 1954): 46.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

concept better known as the domino theory. Although the domino theory has lost much of its support over time, it had many adherents during the early part of the cold war. While the Truman administration believed that "communism in the Americas is a potential danger, but . . . with a few possible exceptions, it is not seriously dangerous at the present time," the Eisenhower administration believed that the threat of communism in Latin America was the gravest threat faced yet by the United States.⁴⁸ This statement clarified the degree to which the United States believed Latin America was vital to its interests. More importantly, it highlighted a fundamental philosophical difference between the two presidents and clearly indicated that the role of the United States in Latin America was going to change.

United States policymakers during the Eisenhower administration took a hard-line anti-communist stance in Latin America. The Rio Pact of 1947 had laid the groundwork for collective hemispheric action against communism in Latin America, and Eisenhower made it clear from the beginning of his tenure that hemispheric solidarity was the primary objective of Inter-American relations.⁴⁹ His administration viewed the world as bipolar in nature with the United States and the Soviet Union at each pole. It was because of this view that no deviations from staunchly pro-United States positions were tolerated. Essentially, the United States recognized no middle ground between the evil forces of the Soviet Union and the democratically oriented United States. An illustration of the thinking of many

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⁴⁸Stephen G. Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, 15.

⁴⁹Ibid, 26.

administration officials was seen in 1950 when United States Ambassador to Guatemala, Richard C. Patterson Jr., explained in a speech how one could uncover communists.

Many times it is impossible to prove legally that a certain individual is a communist; but for cases of this sort I recommend a practical method of detection--the 'duck test.' The duck test works this way: suppose you see a bird walking around in a farm yard. This bird wears no label that says 'duck.' But the bird certainly looks like a duck. Also, he goes to the pond and you notice he swims like a duck. Then he opens his beak and quacks like a duck. Well, by this time you probably reached the conclusion that the bird is a duck, whether he's wearing a label or not.⁵⁰

This type of thinking caused many problems in the Western Hemisphere and led the United States to take questionable positions regarding Latin American heads of state. For instance, John Foster Dulles believed that Bolivia, which was suffering from severe economic distress in the early 1950s, and Argentina, with Peron's mix of fascism and Marxism, were potential trouble spots because of the positions they advocated, such as Peron's idea of a "third position" between the Soviet Union and the United States.⁵¹ More alarming was the administration's willingness to support right-wing dictatorships, such as the Somozas in Nicaragua, which trampled on human rights. However, these men followed the United States' line and therefore were beneficial to the goal of hemispheric solidarity. Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, John M. Cabot, best summarized the contradictory stance the United States had taken when he said:

The true test of our hemispheric solidarity, upon which our security so importantly depends, is our willingness to sink our

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⁵⁰Robert H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," 637.

⁵¹H. W. Brands, Cold Warriors, 34.

differences and to cooperate with regimes pursuing a different course from ours to achieve common goals. If we have our reservations regarding some of the present Bolivian Government's measures, we believe it is sincere in desiring social progress and is opposing communist imperialism.⁵²

This statement clearly reflected the priorities of the United States regarding hemispheric solidarity and heads of state. A regime with a questionable record on human rights was preferred to one with a clear social agenda that might have communist inclinations.

Many people in the Eisenhower administration believed that Latin Americans were not aware, or would not subscribe to the idea, of the international communist movement. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles believed that he had to convince Latin Americans that communism was an "international conspiracy" and not an indigenous movement.⁵³ Further complicating the position of the United States was the recognition that Latin America needed social change and economic development, but that, as Assistant Secretary John Moors Cabot said, there must be social progress made without revolution in order to halt the spread of communism.⁵⁴ Essentially, the United States was forced to think first and foremost about its own national security considerations. Development and progress of Latin American nations, while desirable, would only be tolerated if they had no negative repercussions on United States security.

The result of such beliefs was Eisenhower's official policy on Latin America as outlined by NSC 144/1 in March 1953. As well as reflecting the

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⁵²John Moors Cabot, "Inter-American Cooperation," 555.

⁵³John Foster Dulles, "Communist Influence in Guatemala" Department of State Bulletin 30 (June 7, 1954): 873.

⁵⁴Stephen G. Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, 31.

administration's frustration with Latin Americans for not recognizing the pernicious threat of communism and facilitating nationalistic movements with anti-United States prejudices, NSC 144/1 noted that the United States wanted Latin America to be supportive of the United States at the United Nations, cooperate with efforts to eliminate communist subversion, produce raw materials, standardize all military operations along United States lines and assist in hemispheric defense.⁵⁵ According to NSC 144/1, this relationship was to be maintained through greater utilization of the Organization of American States (OAS), consultation between nations regarding actions taken by the United States which could affect any Latin American nation, and further economic support of nations willing to cooperate with the United States.⁵⁶ Basically, the Eisenhower administration wanted Latin American nations to support the United States without question in its war against communism. In this epic confrontation with the communist movement, nothing short of complete deference to the leadership of the United States would be permitted.

With these facts established, and with a general understanding of the thinking of the Eisenhower administration, which was representative of the American people in general, it was fairly easy to understand why the United States wasted little time in applying pressure against the leftist political movement in Guatemala. In keeping with the hope that the Arbenz administration could be brought back into the camp of the United States, United States policy toward the Arbenz administration was initially one

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⁵⁵Department of State, IV FRUS (March 18, 1953): 6-10.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

which sought to highlight the dependency of Guatemala on the United States which received eighty-five percent of its exports and was the source of sixty percent of its imports.⁵⁷ It was believed this strategy would convince Arbenz that the future of his country's economic development rested in the hands of the United States. This strategy was very consistent with the logic of the Eisenhower administration. Patience was not a virtue, as evidenced by Eisenhower's blasting of the Democrats during the 1952 presidential campaign for being soft on communism and for their failure to come to the aid of countries threatened by a communist takeover.⁵⁸ Instead, the situation had to be forced and an aggressive posture was needed against the communists. This method was clearly illustrated by the way the United States dealt with Guatemala's attempts to purchase heavy equipment needed to complete the Guatemalan section of the Pan American Highway.

A memorandum by Edward W. Clark of the Office of Middle American Affairs dated February 5, 1952 details the collusion among members of various administration offices in stymieing the purchase of heavy road building equipment by a Guatemalan special agent.⁵⁹ In this memo Clark wrote that all those present at the planning session were aware that the policy toward Guatemala

. . . was to refrain from extending priority assistance for materials and equipment in short supply; also to cut back on quotas and allocations as much as possible without, however, exposing ourselves to charges that we were violating any of our Inter-

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⁵⁷Department of State, "NSC Guatemala," IV FRUS (August 19, 1953): 1083.

⁵⁸Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 100.

⁵⁹Department of State, Personal Memorandum by Edward W. Clark, IV FRUS (February 5, 1952): 1028.

American commitments.⁶⁰

Clark went on to write that, "If the Guatemalans suspect or conclude among themselves that we are not being fully cooperative, we will have succeeded entirely in our purpose."⁶¹ Clearly, the administration did not only want to make matters difficult for the Arbenz administration, but it also wanted it to know that the United States was the cause of their troubles, and that his tolerance of communists within his country was the reason why the United States was unwilling to assist in the country's development. United States Ambassador to Guatemala, Rudolf E. Schoenfeld, continued to recommend this strategy as he noted in a meeting in October 1952 that the Guatemalans had come to the realization through their problems obtaining road building equipment that policy adjustments would have been needed to affect United States cooperation and that such adjustments appeared to be forthcoming.⁶² This was a clear indication that the United States policy was still focusing on getting the Arbenz administration back in line.

This focus was further evidenced by the fact that as late as October 1952 the United States was against any military plan against Guatemala, even those conducted by other Central American nations. According to a memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Mann, sent to the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, on October 3, 1952 the United States was categorically against any such military plan.⁶³ Deputy Assistant Secretary Mann received information that President

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⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid, 1029.

⁶²Department of State, Personal Memorandum by Edward W. Clark, IV FRUS (October 14, 1952): 1047.

⁶³Department of State, Thomas C. Mann (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs) to John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State), IV FRUS (October 3, 1952): 1043.

Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua and Generalísimo Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic had already designed a plan against Guatemala under the mistaken impression the United States would have given its blessing for such a mission. Mann was further informed that only a leader was needed and the plan could have been carried out in 1952 if the United States would have given the go ahead and support in the way of arms. There were two likely possible explanations for this refusal. On one hand, it seemed logical that the United States did not yet want to see Arbenz overthrown, for if it had it would have likely supported the Somoza-Trujillo plan as it would not have implicated the United States. On the other hand, a failed coup attempt by Latin American neighbors would have strengthened the position of the Arbenz government. A decisive component of this equation was a government estimate which concluded that the potential Central American invaders did not have the ability to defeat the Guatemalan army.⁶⁴ A national intelligence estimate written in 1952 supported this position on the grounds that a full communist takeover was not yet possible because the Guatemalan army was anti-communist and would have probably moved to prevent any such takeover if the communists had gained a larger degree of power within the Arbenz administration.⁶⁵ At this juncture, the United States still hoped Arbenz would come back to its side.

A further reason the United States was willing to remain idle at this point was because there was a labor dispute between Guatemala and United Fruit which had not yet been resolved. Administration officials in the United

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⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Department of State, "Present Political Situation in Guatemala and Possible Developments During 1952," IV FRUS (March 11, 1952): 1031-1037.

States believed that future developments regarding communism in Guatemala hinged on the outcome of this issue. If United Fruit had come out on top it was believed that this would have been a blow to the communist movement. However, it was also acknowledged that if United Fruit should lose this battle the result would have been presented in Guatemala as a "national triumph" over colonialism.⁶⁶ The United States was willing at this juncture to wait and see if the communists were able to make significant inroads before they committed themselves to action. This was consistent with the desire to encourage peaceful solidarity in the hemisphere, but this show of patience would not last long.

Diplomatic exchanges during the later part of 1952 indicated that the Arbenz administration informed the United States that it was not making a stronger move against communist influences in the country because the government did not want to revert to a dictatorship or drive the communist movement underground, where it would be more difficult to combat.⁶⁷ In an effort to further placate the United States, Guatemalan Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello promised United States Ambassador Rudolph E. Schoenfeld during a December 1, 1952 meeting that he would clamp down on pro-communist propaganda in the government newspaper and radio station.⁶⁸ Essentially, Guatemala was beginning to suffer the effects of poor relations with the United States and was trying frantically to convince United States diplomats that the degree of communist influence in Guatemala was

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⁶⁶Ibid, 1036.

⁶⁷Department of State, Personal Memorandum by Milton K. Wells (Advisor to the United States Delegation to the United Nations), IV FRUS (December 1, 1952): 1052-1054.

⁶⁸Ibid, 1053.

mis-represented. Arbenz must bear some of the responsibility for the souring of relations as he attempted to hold a very ambiguous position in a world climate that could not tolerate it. His predicament, while understandable considering his desire for reform, only led the United States to doubt him further.

Further examination of government documents written at this time indicated that the fear of communism which the United States administration claimed to be the basis for the poor treatment of Guatemala was sincere. A national intelligence estimate dated May 19, 1953 stated that the political avenues remaining open to Arbenz were being steadily reduced and it was probable that the Guatemalan government would become neutralized as an ally of the United States through indirect control by the communists. More importantly, it was noted that the regime had been systematically hostile to the United States and had taken opportunity to demonstrate its independence of United States leadership, and that "detriment to Hemisphere solidarity would not deter Guatemala from any course of action suggested by its own interests."⁶⁹ The potential ramifications of a nation in the Western Hemisphere which acted without consideration of hemispheric solidarity and safety were viewed as momentous. The Eisenhower administration had already made clear its desires for Latin America and this type of action ran contrary to the position it believed was needed to insure hemispheric peace and security.

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⁶⁹Department of State, "Probable Developments in Guatemala," IV FRUS (May 19, 1953): 1063.

Unfortunately for Arbenz, he did not serve his cause well regarding the United States. It is difficult to deny that the communists were at very least being pandered to when Arbenz attended a communist organized May Day celebration during which communist leaders gave "rabid" speeches which threatened any opposing views with violence. It was even more difficult to deny this charge when Arbenz spoke at this gathering and contradictorily denied being subject to communist influence while embracing communist labor leader Victor Manuel Gutiérrez.⁷⁰ Though most have agreed since that Arbenz was not a communist himself, it was understandable that the diplomats in Washington viewed his stance as extremely contradictory.

On February 26, 1953 President Arbenz signed an order which called for the expropriation of approximately 234,000 acres of United Fruit land under the Agrarian Reform Law of June 17, 1952.⁷¹ This act essentially ensured that Arbenz would not remain in power. However, the significance of this action, and more importantly the United States response to it, has been subject to much controversy. Many have since labeled the response of the United States as simple economic imperialism camouflaged under the guise of a sincere cold war fear of communism. However, while it was clear that United Fruit did play an important role in encouraging the overthrow of Arbenz, the reason it took place was, in fact, because this land seizure was viewed as having the potential to strengthen the Arbenz administration, and therefore the communists, to such an extent that removing the leftist leader and

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⁷⁰Department of State, Raymond G. Leddy (Officer in Charge of Central America and Panama Affairs) to John M. Cabot (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs), IV FRUS (May 21, 1953): 1071.

⁷¹Richard H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 81.

purging the communist influences would have been nearly impossible. Further evidence of this position was found in the fact that Eisenhower, who took office in early 1953 just prior to the expropriation, never believed that expropriation itself was proper justification for intervention, or that it was conclusive evidence of communism. In his memoirs he wrote, "Expropriation in itself does not, of course prove Communism; expropriation of oil and agricultural properties years before in Mexico had not been fostered by Communists."⁷² In the minds of the policy makers, it was not the expropriation of land which was most important, but instead the effect this expropriation would have had on the communist movement.

The Guatemalan government claimed from the moment of expropriation that its intention was not to drive United Fruit out of the country and, as noted earlier, the socio-economic circumstances of Guatemala certainly dictated land reform, but from the standpoint of the United States land reform could only have had severe consequences for the battle against communism. A national intelligence estimate dated May 19, 1953 stated that redistribution of United Fruit's land would be used to "mobilize the hitherto inert peasantry in support of the administration." It also restated that the communists would have indirect control of the administration very soon.⁷³ Finally, it was believed that the communists, who at this point were believed to have significant influence in Congress, the National Election Board, the National Agrarian Department, the Institute of Social Security, the Labor

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⁷²Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1963), 421.

⁷³Department of State, "Probable Developments in Guatemala," IV FRUS (May 19, 1953): 1063.

Courts, the Ministry of Education, and with the Presidential Secretariat of Propaganda, would continue to assist subversion in Latin America.⁷⁴ This changed everything. No longer was the Arbenz administration totally dependent upon the United States. Land redistribution would have allowed Arbenz much more latitude in his decision making with considerably less control by the United States. Having demonstrated his leftist tendencies, it was feared that communism would have been firmly planted in Latin America.

As if the policymakers in the United States did not have reason enough to believe there was a sincere threat of communism in Guatemala there was a great deal of propaganda coming out of the Soviet Union which added to fears of a world-wide communist movement. For instance, in December 1953, Moscow's communist-line paper, Pravda declared its full support of the Arbenz led Guatemalan government in its "struggle for independence" against "American imperialism."⁷⁵ The statement went on to declare that Guatemala was not alone in this struggle and that it was supported by the growing numbers of "warriors for democracy and peace." Several months later Pravda declared the United States the "loser in Latin America" in a war of ideas.⁷⁶ These statements combined with the Guatemalan Congress holding memorial services for Stalin after his death appeared to be absolute evidence that the Arbenz government had overwhelming sympathy for the world-wide communist movement.⁷⁷

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⁷⁴Ibid, 1063-1066.

⁷⁵New York Times, 27 December 1953: 23:1.

⁷⁶New York Times, 22 May 1954: 4:3.

⁷⁷Department of State, Raymond G. Leddy to John M. Cabot, IV FRUS (May 21, 1953): 1072.

Again, at very least it demonstrated Guatemala's attempt to hold an untenable middle position.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDING A CASE AGAINST GUATEMALA

Sometime during 1953 the United States came to the conclusion that Arbenz would never tote its political line and that he had to be removed from power. However, a paper drafted by the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs on August 19, 1953 recommended that the strategy employed should be one which attempted to conserve the underlying good will built up in Guatemala by United States policies of non-intervention, respect for juridical equality and "abnegation of a position of privilege."⁷⁸ Therefore, the paper went on to suggest that the United States "should reject any action which by having the appearance of unilateral intervention in Guatemala would cause the Guatemalan people to turn against the United States and decline to offer their cooperation in time of emergency."⁷⁹ Most importantly concerning the priorities of the United States, the paper clearly stated that it needed to be made clear to the Guatemalan government that the only important obstacle to cordial relations with the United States was the large degree of communist influence in the country.⁸⁰ These statements clearly indicated that the main emphasis of any action undertaken against Arbenz was centered around communism. The United States wanted to insure cordial relations with Guatemala so that support from that nation would have been forthcoming in

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⁷⁸Department of State, "NSC Guatemala," IV FRUS (August 19, 1953): 1075.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid, 1075-1076.

a time which required hemispheric solidarity. Furthermore, the United States wanted to be assured that communist influences would not be allowed in Guatemala.

The evolving situation in Guatemala became important not only for what a communist Guatemala could mean for security in the Western Hemisphere, but also for the belief that this was merely the first step being taken by the monolithic communist movement in the Western Hemisphere. As Richard Hirsch of the Operations Coordinating Board wrote on October 29, 1953:

Guatemala represents in miniature all of the social cleavages, tensions, and dilemmas of modern Western society under attack by the communist virus. Conditions will worsen considerably before we can improve them, and we should regard Guatemala as a prototype area for testing means and methods of combatting communism.⁸¹

Further evidence of this belief was illustrated in a memo from Assistant Secretary of State Henry Holland in which he wrote:

Guatemala is one of several points of current conflict between Soviet communism and free nations throughout the world. Situation constitutes test as to whether international communist organization can achieve establishment of communist controlled state in hemisphere.⁸²

The tension and fear were building. The outcome of the battle between Arbenz and United Fruit in Guatemala was viewed as a portent of things to come. The United States believed it had to react strongly. The situation had surpassed the issue of Arbenz and Guatemala as it was no longer important

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⁸¹Department of State, Personal Memorandum by Richard Hirsch (Operations Coordinating Board), IV FRUS (October 29, 1953): 1087.

⁸²Department of State, Robert D. Murphy (Acting Secretary of State) to Certain Diplomatic Offices in the American Republics, IV FRUS (May 29, 1954): 1150.

whether Arbenz was a communist or not. As United States Ambassador to Guatemala, John E. Peurifoy, appointed October 5, 1953, cabled to Secretary of State Dulles on December 17, 1953 after meeting with Arbenz, "I came away definitely convinced that if the President is not a Communist he will certainly do until one comes along, and that normal approaches will not work in Guatemala."⁸³

From this point until the invasion began a case was built against the Guatemalan government which was meant to justify the upcoming action. While there were several levels to the effort to destabilize and topple the Arbenz government, the official and public portion of the effort consisted of creating a climate of hysteria against the communist presence in the Western Hemisphere and convincing the public at large that Arbenz was a communist. Representatives of the United States government went to great lengths to stress that the official position against the Arbenz government was unrelated to the plight of United Fruit in Guatemala. This was necessary since the United States wanted to retain its position as the anticolonial leader of the free world, and outright support of United Fruit on purely the basis of land expropriation would have endangered this position.⁸⁴ The public had to be convinced that the leftist tendencies of Arbenz would undoubtedly lead to a communist stronghold in Latin America and that the only way to avoid this was the fall of Arbenz from power. United Fruit was to play an important role in this process.

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⁸³Department of State, John E. Peurifoy (Ambassador in Guatemala) to the Department of State, IV FRUS (December 17, 1953): 1093.

⁸⁴Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 229.

United Fruit knew that expropriation alone was not justification enough for government involvement in a coup against Arbenz. It was for this reason that it played upon the threat of communism and made its presence in Guatemala seem more influential than it was.⁸⁵ Through a combination of high level influence and a massive publicity campaign United Fruit set out to erode any remaining doubt as to the nature of the leftist government in Guatemala and created the thinking which accepted the events which were to transpire.

The amount of influence United Fruit had with highly placed people in the United States government is not subject to debate. A look at the names on its payroll and the notables who were "friends of the company" clearly illustrated how deep this influence ran. An illustration of this was seen by the fact that The Congressional Record was full of many highly favorable stories of United Fruit which Representative John McCormack and other members of the House and Senate placed there on behalf of the company.⁸⁶ Another notable figure on the United Fruit payroll was Spruille Braden, who was a former ambassador to Chile and once Under Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. Braden came to United Fruit in the 1950s after he completed his government service, and though he attended the inauguration of Arévalo, at which time he spoke very highly of him, he later lashed out at the Eisenhower administration for failing to suppress the communist influences in Guatemala. While this attack caused a stir within the Eisenhower administration, no one reported the fact that Braden was on the

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⁸⁵Thomas P. McCann, An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc, 1976), 47.

⁸⁶Ibid, 55.

United Fruit payroll.⁸⁷ Braden's sympathies were made clear in his memoirs when he wrote of his career:

Many of my activities following my departure from government service in 1947 were the product of my devotion to the free enterprise system and my inalterable hostility to any and all intents or endeavors to subvert it. Chief among these, to be sure, is the Communist conspiracy.⁸⁸

This was a very telling statement, for not only were these men supporters of United Fruit, but more importantly they were supporters of capitalism and anything that was against capitalism was by definition communism. This type of thinking gave great insight as to how these men felt about the expropriation of United Fruit land and why they worked so hard to prevent its occurrence. This was more than a case of simple corruption or individual greed. Instead, the high level United Fruit supporters believed that by using their influence to assist United Fruit, they were therefore contributing to the battle against communism. United Fruit was not important in and of itself, but rather for the system which it represented.

Other known supporters of United Fruit included Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin and former Massachusetts Governor, and later Secretary of State under Eisenhower, Christian Herter. It was also noted that John Foster Dulles was previously employed by the law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell which represented United Fruit and that John J. McCloy, previous high commissioner of West Germany and once president of the World Bank, and General Robert Cutler, who was head of the National Security Council

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⁸⁷Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1982), 97.

⁸⁸Spruille Braden, Diplomats and Demagogues (New York: Arlington House, 1971), 400.

during part of the Eisenhower administration, had ties to United Fruit.⁸⁹ Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, whose family owned stock in United Fruit, attacked Guatemala as early as 1949 for the negative effects which the country's Labor Code would have upon United Fruit, and later repeated these attacks in 1954 when he was United States Ambassador to the United Nations.⁹⁰

There is little doubt that many, if not all, of these men had genuine financial interests in Guatemala, but one needed to ask if these interests were the sole reason for wanting Arbenz out of power. Clearly, United Fruit used this influence for its own needs and it undoubtedly helped shape feelings on the issue, but protection of business interests was only a factor, not the factor. In fact, many within the Eisenhower administration were pushing for a renegotiation of business conditions in Guatemala which would have made the presence of United States business there "mutually advantageous." A National Security Council paper suggested that the three principal firms in Guatemala modify existing contracts and make them acceptable to the general population in Guatemala.⁹¹ While this was clearly meant to improve public relations between the two countries and relations with the labor movement, it was also a recognition that conditions had to change. This did not mean that there was not a conflict of interest involved, but it seemed to indicate that blindly ambitious economic imperialism was not as influential as many people believed.

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⁸⁹Thomas P. McCann, An American Company, 56.

⁹⁰Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 84.

⁹¹Department of State, "NSC Guatemala," IV FRUS (August 19, 1953): 1077.

In spite of all of its high level governmental influence, United Fruit was not content to let the future of its holdings in Guatemala rest solely in the hands of others. As soon as it became clear that Arbenz intended to expropriate United Fruit land, the company's Publicity and Advertising Department began a concerted effort to isolate Arbenz and make him inseparable from the communist threat. In order to accomplish this, and clean up the public image United Fruit had gained which had led to its being known as the "octopus," the company hired Edward L. Bernays, the "father of public relations." Bernays set out to achieve these goals by using the United States media. He selected several of the most influential newspapers and magazines around the United States and inundated them with "facts" about Guatemala supplied by the company's newly established Middle America Information Bureau.⁹² Adding to the mis-information campaign were guided press tours the company put on, at its expense, during which newsmen could see for themselves what was happening.⁹³ As Thomas McCann, who helped organize these trips, wrote, "Our efforts would contribute eventually to the overthrow of the Guatemalan Government."⁹⁴ The ultimate goal of United Fruit was to create an appearance of truth about the communist situation in Guatemala which would enhance the reality of the situation and be more damaging to public opinion of Guatemala in the United States.

What the newsmen attending these "fact finding" tours did not know was that everything they saw was carefully orchestrated by United Fruit and

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⁹²Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 82.

⁹³Thomas P. McCann, An American Company, 47.

⁹⁴*Ibid*, 45.

Bernays. McCann wrote these tours were a "serious attempt to compromise objectivity."⁹⁵ Bernays managed to plant a story with the New York Times about a school for the training of communist agents in Prague where Latin Americans were being trained in subversion. Other publications which printed Bernays propaganda were The Christian Science Monitor, The New Leader, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report.⁹⁶ Clearly, public perception in the United States was at very least greatly exposed to the communist presence in Guatemala, if not effectively managed by United Fruit.

Further damaging information about Guatemala was "revealed" in a book the company had published called the Report on Guatemala. The book claimed the government of Guatemala was completely under Russian control and that anyone who spoke out against it was labeled a subversive. McCann wrote about this book that it "was such a total distortion it couldn't be copyrighted because no one was willing to admit any share of responsibility for its authorship or publication."⁹⁷ McCann further stated that the company had it widely distributed and every member of Congress who would accept it had one, a group he said was large due to McCarthyism, and that it was sent to every "major opinion-molder" in the United States.⁹⁸ United Fruit even went to the expense of printing newspapers in the Latin American countries in which it operated. From these newspapers developed a weekly "Latin American Report" which targeted journalists and businessmen and was

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⁹⁵Ibid, 47.

⁹⁶Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 88.

⁹⁷Thomas P. McCann, An American Company, 49.

⁹⁸Ibid, 50.

authored by William Guadet who reportedly had connections with both United Fruit and the Central Intelligence Agency.⁹⁹

The effects of this publicity campaign by United Fruit were staggering. Years after the downfall of Arbenz, New York Times reporter Herbert L. Mathews assessed the situation by saying that the uncritical acceptance of questionable stories by the media led to the formation of opinion in the United States which allowed for acceptance of the events which occurred in Guatemala.¹⁰⁰ The exact extent to which United Fruit propaganda influenced decision makers in the United States could only be speculated, but it was certainly a major factor. What was important about it as far as this analysis was concerned was that it concentrated on pushing the communist threat. If economic considerations were reason enough to intervene in Guatemala, why did United Fruit not simply base its case on the "robbery" of its land? Obviously, it was a fear of communism, whether truly justified or not, which guided opinions. United Fruit was well aware that public opinion would not have allowed intervention on the grounds of financial interests, but it was just as aware of the sincere fear which the average American felt toward the threat of world-wide communism. United Fruit simply made the threat seem much bigger than it was.

The State Department launched a massive campaign of its own through the United States Information Agency to shape public opinion.¹⁰¹

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⁹⁹Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 82.

¹⁰⁰Thomas P. McCann, An American Company, 47.

¹⁰¹Department of State, "Report on Actions Taken by the United States Information Agency in the Guatemala Situation," IV FRUS (July 27, 1954): 1212-1217.

News stories were planted throughout the hemisphere in an effort to create awareness of the real threat to peace and security posed by the communist penetration in the Guatemalan government. At this point the Agency stopped short of making accusations directly against the Arbenz regime as communist dominated, but it did prepare and place unattributed articles which labeled certain Guatemalan officials as communists and certain actions as communist inspired.¹⁰²

In a further attempt to solidify public opinion as to the nature of Arbenz's political position the Tenth Inter-American Conference at Caracas, Venezuela in March 1954 was used as a stage to prove to the world that Arbenz was a communist, or at very least that he entertained strong communist sympathies. In a telegram from Ambassador Peurifoy to Secretary Dulles on December 23, 1953 the ambassador suggested that the conference be used as a means of making the continuation of his regime more difficult.¹⁰³ Peurifoy further suggested that before the conference began steps should be taken to prepare other Latin American nations to support the anti-communist resolution which would be introduced. Also, communist developments needed to be publicized through press channels while

at the same time we should carefully avoid any overt acts to which Guatemalan delegates at the conference could point as evidence of persecution of Guatemala or intervention in affairs. We should also avoid emphasis on fruit company problems since these might cause confusion among Latin American delegates as to true nature of our differences with Guatemala.¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (December 23, 1953): 1093.

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 1093-1094

Secretary of State Dulles clearly followed this strategy as he made headlines with his opening remarks at the conference during which he detailed communist aggression and its danger to the Americas. Obviously, Dulles and Peurifoy conspired to push the communist threat, but Peurifoy's above statement illustrated that the financial interests of United Fruit were a secondary problem and that communism was the key.

The result of this conference essentially legalized the downfall of Arbenz. Although the Latin American nations were more concerned with economic issues, the United States was determined to make hemispheric communism the main topic. The outcome was the approval of the Declaration of Caracas which was a strongly worded anti-communist document aimed directly at Guatemala, though no nation was named explicitly.¹⁰⁵ The Declaration stated in part:

That the domination or control of the political institutions of any American State by the international communist movement, extending to this Hemisphere the political system of an extra-continental power, would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and political independence of the American States, endangering the peace of America, and would call for a meeting of consultation to consider the adoption of measures in accordance with existing treaties.¹⁰⁶

The Declaration of Caracas did not fool anyone. It was clearly an attempt to isolate Guatemala from the other nations in Latin America, and because of the economic strength of the United States the Latin American nations, aside from Guatemala, had little choice but to sign it. After the meeting at Caracas

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¹⁰⁵Department of State, "Declaration of Caracas." Department of State Bulletin 30 (22 March 1954): 420.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

the United States still believed that public attention in Latin America was slow in focusing on the issue of communist penetration and therefore responded by stepping up efforts to get evidence of communist ties published throughout the hemisphere.¹⁰⁷ Included in the efforts of the Information Agency were the distribution of two-hundred different articles, 100,000 copies of an anti-communist pamphlet and 27,000 pieces of anti-communist cartoons and posters.¹⁰⁸

Guatemalan Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello accused the United States of using the Declaration of Caracas to return to the "Big Stick" diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt and interfering in the internal affairs of Latin American countries who wished to establish economic independence by invoking the issue of communism.¹⁰⁹ The Arbenz administration recognized the Declaration of Caracas could easily be a prelude to invasion, and sought to prepare itself militarily. As early as April 14, 1954 the State Department was concerned about the possibility of Guatemala arming itself via European contacts.¹¹⁰ It was believed that any such armaments procured were to be used by political groups or communist cells to counter-balance the anti-communist elements in the Guatemalan armed forces, or were for use against other countries.¹¹¹ Either way, it was believed the result of a shipment of armaments reaching Guatemala was highly detrimental to the fight against communism. This belief combined with intelligence reports

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¹⁰⁷Department of State, "Report on Actions Taken by the United States Information Agency in the Guatemala Situation," IV FRUS (July 27, 1954): 1213.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 1215.

¹⁰⁹Blanche Wiesen Cook, Declassified Eisenhower, 262.

¹¹⁰Department of State, Walter Bedell Smith (Acting Secretary of State) to the Embassy in Portugal, IV FRUS (April 14, 1954): 1098-1099.

¹¹¹Ibid.

which indicated a steadily growing communist influence within the Arbenz government led many American diplomats to believe that decisive action was necessary against Arbenz.¹¹²

Any shred of doubt which remained in the minds of United States policy makers was quickly removed with the arrival at Puerto Barrios, Guatemala on May 15, 1954 of a shipment of two-thousand tons of small arms and light artillery pieces from Czechoslovakia carried on the Swedish freighter Alfhem. The exact contents of the shipment were not known initially, but there were reports that two more similar shipments were on the way, a rumor which was quite unsettling to many in the United States.¹¹³ In a May 20, 1954 memo from the Secretary of State to certain diplomatic offices in Latin America, Secretary Dulles wrote that the shipment was "especially disturbing in view of its evident effect of strengthening international communist link with Guatemalan regime. . . ."¹¹⁴

This shipment was regarded by Senator Alexander Wiley as "part of the master plan of world communism" and that it signified the arrival of communism in the Western Hemisphere.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, it was viewed as jeopardizing the entire safety of the Western Hemisphere due to its connection to communism and the belief that it was "totally disproportionate" to the needs of Guatemala.¹¹⁶ Foreign Minister Toriello

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¹¹²Department of State, John W. Fisher (Office of Middle American Affairs) to Henry F. Holland (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs), IV FRUS (April 19, 1954): 1099-1100.

¹¹³Department of State, Henry F. Holland to the John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State), IV FRUS (May 18, 1954): 1111-1112.

¹¹⁴Department of State, John Foster Dulles to Certain Diplomatic Offices in the American Republics, IV FRUS (May 20, 1954): 1117-1118.

¹¹⁵New York Times, 19 May 1954: 1:2

¹¹⁶*Ibid*, 13:4

publicly countered such arguments by replying that Guatemala was not a colony of the United States and that it had the right to buy armaments from whoever it pleased whether it had permission from the United States or not.¹¹⁷ Privately, Toriello reemphasized his claims in a meeting with Ambassador Peurifoy during which he confirmed that Guatemala had received an arms shipment, but said it had not come from any country which the United States considered a Soviet satellite.¹¹⁸ The United States already knew that this was untrue due to information supplied by intelligence reports, obviously leading many in Washington to believe the Arbenz administration could not be trusted.

The United States fear of a well-armed Guatemala was so sincere that it ~~quickly~~ formulated a policy concerning control over foreign ships carrying arms to Guatemala. Any suspicious ship spotted on the high seas was to be detained and inspected for arms. If it was necessary, force was to be used as a last resort.¹¹⁹ The fact that the Eisenhower administration was willing to take such a contrary stand on a freedom of the seas issue caused a stir among the European Allies and attested to his resolve on the Guatemala issue. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden agreed to do all in his power to discourage British shipowners and merchants from selling or delivering arms to Guatemala, but firmly rejected the possibility of British ships being

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¹¹⁷New York Times, 22 May 1954: 4:4

¹¹⁸Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (May 24, 1954): 1127-1128.

¹¹⁹Department of State, Henry F. Holland to John Foster Dulles, IV FRUS (May 21, 1954): 1120-1121.

searched on the high seas. The other European nations followed the British lead and the Eisenhower administration was forced to back down.¹²⁰

If there was anyone who doubted the communist connections of Guatemala the propaganda machine in Moscow helped to quickly erase their doubts. Otto Kuusinen of the Communist International wrote in Pravda soon after the arms shipment that the United States had "lost a war of ideas in Latin America," and that, "all honorable people in Latin America see the carriers of despotism in the representatives of Wall Street."¹²¹ Interestingly, Kuusinen predicted that the United States would attempt to organize a conspiracy or revolution against Arbenz.¹²²

Guatemala's actions were viewed under a microscope and any leftist leanings were now considered undoubtedly communist in nature. In fact, it was seen as a destabilizing factor in all of Central America as evidenced by State Department accusations that Guatemala was responsible for a labor strike in neighboring Honduras, and was therefore a threat to the strategically important canal zone, despite Toriello's "categorical" denial of any such influence in other Latin American nations.¹²³ The Secretary of State surmised that the "unrest in Honduras does not appear to be an entirely domestic matter," and that, the United States was "impressed with the coincidence that the strikes have occurred in an area where three Guatemalan consuls . . . have been declared personae non gratae by the government of

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¹²⁰Richard H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 160.

¹²¹New York Times, 22 May 1954: 4:3

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³John Foster Dulles, "General Strike in Honduras," Department of State Bulletin 30 (24 May 1954): 801.

Honduras."¹²⁴ In fact, the assessment of communist influence in the Honduran situation was so severe that the Department of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered using United States troops to restore order in Honduras if the situation required.¹²⁵ That this was even considered was a clear representation of the sincere belief in the growing and spreading influence of communism in Latin America.

Diplomatic action soon after the arrival of the arms shipment indicated there was a serious fear that Guatemala might invade other Latin American countries. National Security Council document 5419 was a plan of action in the event that Guatemala invaded another Latin American country. Among the primary fears this document expressed was that an armed attack could have brought about the fall of the Honduran government within a matter of hours, and that any replacement government would likely have had communist leanings.¹²⁶ Upon analysis of this document it was clear that the primary concern of the United States government was the protection of hemispheric solidarity and the turning back of the communist influence. Though much of the diplomatic correspondence did document a desire to protect the interests of the United States, this was clearly a secondary consideration behind the fight against communist aggression.

In order to insure public support and help build the case against Guatemala, the administration carefully planned every move that was made

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¹²⁴Department of State, John Foster Dulles to Certain Diplomatic Offices, IV FRUS (May 20, 1954): 1118.

¹²⁵Department of State, "Substance of Discussion of Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting" IV FRUS (May 21, 1954): 1118-1120.

¹²⁶Department of State, "Draft Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," IV FRUS (May 24, 1954): 1129-1130.

so that the communist threat appeared as significant as it believed it was. During a meeting of the National Security Council on May 27, 1954 CIA Director Allen Dulles noted that forthcoming arms shipments to Guatemala might come from countries other than those behind the Iron Curtain. Because of this, he suggested that future presidential statements should be changed to emphasize not the place of origin of the arms, but rather the way in which they were used.¹²⁷ In a news conference on June 21, 1954, Secretary Dulles expressed three significant facts about the communist influence in Guatemala. He noted that it was the only American nation which did not ratify the Rio Pact; it voted against the Declaration of Caracas; and it received an arms shipment from behind the Iron Curtain.¹²⁸ Upon closer examination these facts were clearly a misrepresentation of Guatemala's position. First of all, as was noted earlier, Guatemala did not ratify the Rio Pact because of its territorial dispute with neighboring Belize. Secondly, the Declaration of Caracas was clearly aimed at Guatemala and was used as a pretext for invasion. Guatemala recognized this and obviously could not sign it. Finally, Guatemala purchased armaments from Czechoslovakia because the United States would not sell any to its military. Guatemalan Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello claimed that his country had repeatedly tried to buy armaments from the United States and that the refusal to sell it any was an "act of aggression against Guatemala" which was meant to leave the country defenseless to an invasion.¹²⁹ The validity of claims that this arms

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¹²⁷Department of State, "Memorandum of Discussion at the 199th Meeting of the National Security Council," IV FRUS (May 27, 1954): 1131-1134.

¹²⁸John Foster Dulles, "Communist Influence in Guatemala," 873-874.

¹²⁹New York Times, 22 May 1954: 1:2

shipment was indicative of a communist expansion into Guatemala was also challenged by the later revealed fact that the majority of arms purchased from Czechoslovakia were either non-functional or useless for Guatemala's needs.¹³⁰ The United States had essentially built its case against Guatemala on evidence which was tenuous at best. Contrary to what many historians have said, this did not mean that the fear of communist aggression in Guatemala was a hoax designed to cover up the true intention of protecting United Fruit. Though it may have been misguided, it was sincere. The policy makers were essentially presenting the information in the best way possible to support their position. Clearly, they believed that a few misrepresentations were of little consequence when the stakes were so high. In their minds the future of the democratic system was at risk as they believed the communist threat to be real and therefore believed Guatemala was due no diplomatic courtesy.

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¹³⁰Ibid, 9 July 1954: 1:4

CHAPTER FOUR

REMOVING ARBENZ FROM POWER

Preparations for the invasion were well under way by early 1954. Permission was given from the highest levels of the government to the CIA to develop a plan which would engineer the downfall of duly elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz.¹³¹ Interestingly, the type of plan developed was based on the belief that the Guatemalan people did not want the leftist regime in power and that they would rise up en masse against the administration if given the chance.¹³² Allen Dulles wrote of the invasion and its leader that, "He is dependent for his success not upon the size and strength of the military forces at his disposal but rather upon the possibility that his entry into action will touch off a general uprising against the Guatemalan regime."¹³³ Since CIA guidelines forbade any direct United States armed intervention, the plan which was formulated was not one which relied on a massive United States supported intervention, but instead upon psychological impact.¹³⁴ Allen Dulles and other top CIA officials based

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¹³¹Robert H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," Political Science Quarterly 95 (Winter 1980-1981): 640.

¹³²John Foster Dulles, "Communist Influence in Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 30 (7 June 1954), 873-874. Willard L. Beaulac, "The Communist Effort in Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 31 (16 August 1954), 235-237. and John E. Peurifoy, "The Communist Conspiracy in Guatemala," Department of State Bulletin 31 (8 November 1954), 690-697.

¹³³Department of State, Allen Dulles (Director of Central Intelligence) to Dwight D. Eisenhower (President of the United States), IV FRUS (June 20, 1954): 1176.

¹³⁴Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 238-239.

their strategy on the belief that Arbenz and his military staff could be duped into believing that a massive counterrevolutionary force of Guatemalans had been gathered and that his downfall was unavoidable.

In keeping with the strategy which portrayed the invasion as a rising up of native Guatemalans, the CIA had to create the "invasion force." The first task in preparing for the actual invasion was to select a native Guatemalan to lead the assault. While many conservatives regarded Ydigoras Fuentes as the rightful heir to the presidency, the CIA believed he was too reactionary and was without political skills.¹³⁵ Instead, it was decided that Carlos Enrique Castillo Armas, a graduate of both the Escuela Politécnica, essentially Guatemala's West Point, and the United States Army Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, would lead the movement against Arbenz.¹³⁶ The materials Castillo Armas needed to mount his invasion were supplied by the United States government as was the army which was comprised of various mercenaries from around the area recruited and paid by the United States.¹³⁷ The arms were reportedly flown in on United States Air Force planes by order of the Pentagon.¹³⁸ Among the equipment sent to Castillo Armas' three-hundred-man army were twenty-five tons of rifles, machine guns, small arms and ammunition.¹³⁹

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¹³⁵Robert H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," Political Science Quarterly 95 (Winter 1980-81), 642.

¹³⁶Robert H. Immerman, The CIA In Guatemala (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1982), 142-143.

¹³⁷Eduardo Galeano, Guatemala: Occupied Country (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 50.

¹³⁸Tad Szulc, Compulsive Spy: The Strange Career of E. Howard Hunt (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 69.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

Propaganda and disinformation were vital to the goal of fooling and confusing Arbenz. The strategy employed was a technique developed during WWII known as the "Big Lie." The target of this program was the wealthier group of Guatemalans, many of whom comprised Arbenz's officer corps. It was believed that it was crucial to erode the support of this group of citizens for the operation to be a success.¹⁴⁰ In a memo from CIA Director Dulles to the President on June 20, 1954, Dulles highlighted this sentiment when he wrote, "the controlling factor in the situation is still considered to be the armed forces."¹⁴¹ The effort to sway the armed forces began on May 1, 1954 when a team of CIA trained Guatemalan exiles began transmitting anti-Arbenz, pro-Castillo Armas messages on a station they called the Voice of Liberation and adopted the slogan of Trabajo, Pan y Patria - work, bread and country.¹⁴² The broadcasters, led by CIA operative David Atlee Phillips, claimed they were operating from within Guatemala itself, though they never entered the country, and staged fake government raids on the station, only to miraculously transmit from another location the next day. In this way they urged support for the invasion, but also illustrated Arbenz's ineptness. According to Phillips, the radio broadcasts were a tremendous success. Nearly all Guatemalans with radios, including Arbenz and his military advisors, continually tuned in to the Voice of Liberation, which convinced them that there was a large, well-organized force coming together

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¹⁴⁰Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 164.

¹⁴¹Department of State, Allen Dulles to Dwight David Eisenhower, IV FRUS (June 20, 1954): 1174.

¹⁴²Robert H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," 643.

against the Guatemalan government. Within a week there was near panic in Guatemala City and the Voice of Liberation was the cause of it.¹⁴³

A variation of the propaganda campaign was necessary to garner the support of the largely illiterate Indian population who did not own radios. The strategy which developed took into account the staunchly anti-communist Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Guatemala, Monsignor Rossell y Arellano, called for Guatemalans to recognize the presence of communism in Guatemala and for them to unite to fight against the evil presence.¹⁴⁴ The Archbishop referred to the degree which communism had infiltrated Guatemalan society and had "left planted in many places its sinister seeds."¹⁴⁵ The CIA conducted several clandestine meetings with the native Catholic clergy which resulted in anti-communist sermons being delivered every Sunday to the peasantry. As historian Robert H. Immerman pointed out in his analysis of this technique, its success could not be accurately gauged, but the Indians were certainly more likely to listen to their pastors than to government representatives.¹⁴⁶

The Castillo Armas forces, which became known as the Army of Liberation, were trained in centers in Honduras and Nicaragua established by the CIA. Unknown to Arbenz and his military was the fact that the actual size of the Castillo Armas army was about 300 men.¹⁴⁷ The CIA radio network was able to override the Guatemalan national radio system and cause confusion through disinformation. At best, the only information

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¹⁴³David Atlee Phillips, The Night Watch (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 42.

¹⁴⁴New York Times, 18 April 1954: 12:3.

¹⁴⁵Willard L. Beaulac, "The Communist Effort in Guatemala," 236.

¹⁴⁶Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 164.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid*, 162.

Arbenz could get about the invasion force were wild rumors.¹⁴⁸ In keeping with this aspect of its plan, the CIA wanted Arbenz to know that troops were being trained outside of Guatemala's borders in order to convince him that an invasion was imminent. It is very likely that the CIA planned for Arbenz to discover correspondence between Castillo Armas and the Somoza family, who had wanted the leftist leaders out of Guatemala from day one, which supported the rumor of such military preparations.¹⁴⁹ This heightened the tension level and led Arbenz to believe that not only was an invasion about to begin, but also that the invasion force was large, well-trained and heavily armed. In truth, Castillo Armas was frightfully outmanned by the Guatemalan army, even considering the arms the United States had sent him.¹⁵⁰

The invasion began from Honduras on June 18, 1954 with a ground advance and an air attack conducted by several obsolete American bombers, flown by Americans, which were based at an airstrip in Managua.¹⁵¹ Their attacks consisted of aerial bombardments which were more damaging to the psyche than anything else. Since the distance between the targets in Guatemala and the international airport at Managua was considerable it restricted the number of heavy bombs the planes could carry due to fuel consumption, leading many pilots to substitute gasoline-filled soda bottles and dynamite sticks for larger bombs.¹⁵² The rebel planes soon became

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¹⁴⁸Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower, 284.

¹⁴⁹Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 162.

¹⁵⁰John D. Martz, Central America: The Crisis and the Challenge (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 61.

¹⁵¹David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, The Invisible Government (New York: Random House, 1964), 173.

¹⁵²Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 166.

known as sulfatos, meaning laxatives, for the effect they supposedly had on the government leaders.¹⁵³ Obviously, the purpose was not so much to inflict physical damage as it was to instill fear.

The attack patterns over the first forty-eight hours consistently included the strafing and bombing of Guatemalan towns, gasoline dumps and military barracks. In keeping with the psychological aspect of the invasion, the CIA also arranged for the dropping of leaflets throughout the countryside which criticized the Arbenz government. One of these leaflets had an especially important message. After the discovery of the cargo of the Alfhem, the CIA was informed that Arbenz no longer trusted his senior military officials and planned to distribute the arms to the countryside militia which was made up mainly by the loyal labor federation. This led many to the unavoidable conclusion that Arbenz planned to dismember the military. Leaflets were dropped with this message and the Voice of Liberation broadcast the same information, leading to fear and suspicion between Arbenz and his military leaders.¹⁵⁴ The importance of the military was still viewed as paramount as Allen Dulles wrote the president on June 20, that if the army remained loyal "and most of the military elements commit themselves to vigorous action against the forces of Castillo Armas the latter will be defeated and a probability of uprisings from among other elements of the population is considered highly unlikely."¹⁵⁵

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¹⁵³David Atlee Phillips, The Night Watch, 46.

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 43.

¹⁵⁵Department of State, Allen Dulles to Dwight David Eisenhower, IV FRUS (June 20, 1954): 1175.

The Arbenz administration sent telegrams to the President of the United Nations' Security Council and Secretary Dulles the day after the invasion began which implicated the United States in the invasion and requested that the Security Council meet immediately and take any necessary measures to prevent injury to international security in Latin America.¹⁵⁶ This created controversy and once again risked relations with the British and French as Eisenhower opposed bringing this matter to the United Nations and instead suggested that such an internal dispute fell within the responsibilities of the Organization of American States (OAS). The true motivation behind Eisenhower's position was thinly veiled, as seen in a conversation between Ambassador Peurifoy and Foreign Minister Toriello when Toriello responded to Peurifoy's query of why Guatemala had appealed to the Security Council. Toriello responded that, "Guatemala preferred the Security Council because members of the OAS were under great economic pressure from the United States. . ."¹⁵⁷ In a truly amazing series of events which followed Eisenhower risked the relations with the United States most valued allies and the future validity of the United Nations.

The United States did not want to make the Guatemalan "revolution" an international issue. Initially, the British and French representatives to the Security Council were willing to go along with a Soviet proposal to send observers to Central America. In an effort to avoid this, action was taken by the United States to have the issue moved to a body of the OAS known as the Inter-American Peace Committee (IAPC). United State Ambassador to the

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¹⁵⁶Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 169.

¹⁵⁷Department of State, John E. Peurifoy (Ambassador in Guatemala) to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 23, 1954): 1182.

United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge, told the Security Council that the United Nations must show restraint and not infringe upon the jurisdiction of regional bodies such as the OAS. He charged that the Soviets were attempting to use the Guatemalan issue to gain more influence in international issues via the Security Council and that by supporting such a move, the other members of the Security Council would be moving back the clock of peace and order.¹⁵⁸ Ambassador Lodge privately informed Assistant Secretary Holland that if the IAPC notified the UN that it had already organized a team of observers to investigate the situation in Guatemala the UN members might be persuaded to defer to the OAS.¹⁵⁹

In a sudden turnabout which infuriated the United States and was believed to empower the communists, the British and French decided to support the Guatemalan request to have its complaints heard before the UN. As Secretary Dulles cabled the embassy in France, "The result has been to complicate the task of the OAS in attempting to deal with this matter . . . regardless of the fact that the Guatemalan government is functioning as an agent of communist imperialism in the Americas."¹⁶⁰ Since Ambassador Lodge, as current President of the Security Council, had the power to delay further proceedings, the United States had time to react. The tactic employed was a relatively simple one commonly known as blackmail. Lodge, Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles agreed to inform the French and British that

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¹⁵⁸Henry Cabot Lodge, "The Guatemalan Complaint Before the Security Council," Department of State Bulletin 31 (5 July 1954), 26-31.

¹⁵⁹Department of State, "Notes of a Meeting of the Guatemalan Group," IV FRUS (June 23, 1954): 1178.

¹⁶⁰Department of State, John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State) to the Embassy in France, IV FRUS (June 23, 1954): 1182-1184.

if they took an independent line by backing the Guatemalans, it would mean the United States would "feel entirely free without regard for their position in relation to any such matters as any of their colonial problems in Egypt, Cyprus, etc."¹⁶¹ On June 24 Ambassador Lodge met with the British and French representatives and informed them of this news, which "was received with great solemnity."¹⁶² When the Security Council met Britain and France abstained from the vote on Guatemala's hearing which caused it to be dismissed by a one vote margin and therefore left in the hands of the OAS. The extent of United States domination, and therefore Guatemalan futility, in this arena was illustrated by Secretary Dulles when he cabled Ambassador Peurifoy that the United States should use its influence to insure that the IAPC produced the results the United States desired and that the international communist movement be condemned for its attempts to destroy the Inter-American system through subversive activities.¹⁶³ The Information Agency quickly began an aggressive effort "to expose and discredit the Arbenz regime as communist-dominated . . . and to encourage positive action by other American Republics."¹⁶⁴ The United States was pulling out all the stops and taking substantial risks by doing so. The fear of communism in the Western Hemisphere was the reason for this as policy makers knew that losing the battle for Guatemala would strengthen the Soviet's international position.

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¹⁶¹Department of State, John Foster Dulles, IV FRUS (June 24, 1954): 1184.

¹⁶²Department of State, Henry Cabot Lodge (United States Representative at the United Nations) to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 24, 1954): 1185.

¹⁶³Department of State, John Foster Dulles to the Embassy in Guatemala, IV FRUS (June 30, 1954): 1198-1199.

¹⁶⁴Department of State, "Report Prepared in the United States Information Agency," IV FRUS (July 27, 1954): 1214.

Meanwhile, in Guatemala the continual barrage of radio propaganda led to the realization of one of the CIA's most important objectives, the demobilization of Arbenz's air force. This was a vital accomplishment because aerial surveillance would have revealed that even Arbenz's air force could have taken out the obsolete United States supplied bombers which the Castillo Armas forces used.¹⁶⁵ The Voice of Liberation accomplished this feat by broadcasting stories about brave Soviet pilots who defected to the West in order to serve the cause of freedom, after which a well-known Guatemalan pilot emulated the act. When the pilot refused to broadcast a plea to his fellow Guatemalan pilots, the staff of the Voice of Liberation got him drunk and had him "practice" what he would say "if" he were going to make such an appeal. Unknown to the drunken pilot was the fact that the conversation was taped, edited and broadcast the next day. After the message was aired the entire Guatemalan Air Force was grounded for what turned out to be the duration of the invasion.¹⁶⁶

However, the Castillo Armas air attacks did run into several problems early in the campaign which jeopardized the success of the entire operation. Only four days into battle the aircraft, which played a major psychological role in the effort against Arbenz, were lost or badly damaged in battle. CIA Director Allen Dulles went immediately to Eisenhower to ask for replacements, but Assistant Secretary Holland was categorically against giving more planes to the Castillo Armas troops because he felt that once the fighting had begun further assistance would open the United States to attacks

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¹⁶⁵Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 167.

¹⁶⁶David Atlee Phillips, The Night Watch, 43-44.

of interventionism.¹⁶⁷ When the president asked Secretary Dulles what he thought the chances for success were without the planes, he replied "zero." When asked what they were with the planes he replied, "about twenty percent."¹⁶⁸ Eisenhower believed the estimates were honest and decided to supply the planes, reasoning that once a course of violence is undertaken, one was committed to carrying it out to the end.¹⁶⁹ According to his memoirs, Eisenhower essentially believed this was a moral issue. As he wrote, ". . . it seemed to me that to refuse to cooperate in providing indirect support to a strictly anti-communist faction in this struggle would be contrary to the letter and spirit of the Caracas resolution."¹⁷⁰ As far as Eisenhower was concerned the United States was committed to seeing through the downfall of Arbenz.

The supposed ground attack never really materialized as Castillo Armas and his Army of Liberation ventured only six miles into Guatemala and camped at the town of Esquipulas.¹⁷¹ Confirming the reliance on the psychological effects of the air campaign, the ground strategy was simply to wait for Arbenz to flee and then march victoriously into Guatemala City.¹⁷² The army, as the invasion itself, was symbolic of the power behind the scenes. In retrospect, there can be little doubt that the leaders of the coup were at best hesitant to instigate full-scale warfare in Guatemala. Castillo Armas did not have sufficient forces to win a major battle, let alone a war, and Eisenhower had made it clear that United States troops would be used only as a last

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¹⁶⁷David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, Invisible Government, 166.

¹⁶⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years, 425.

¹⁶⁹Ibid, 425-426.

¹⁷⁰Ibid, 426.

¹⁷¹David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, Invisible Government, 179.

¹⁷²Ibid, 177.

possible resort.¹⁷³ This situation left the United States with only one feasible alternative, that of scaring Arbenz out of power.

Arbenz's supporters disappeared quickly. The upper classes had not wanted him in the first place and were eager to see his removal as he challenged their traditional privilege. He had lost much of the vital middle-class support in recent months due to measures he had taken, including actions against opposition groups. His communist supporters were a significant factor in this as they became more and more radical in their pronouncements against the opposition. In fact, Ceasar Montenegro Paniagua of the labor movement called for the beheading of all anti-communist citizens.¹⁷⁴ These statements, which were denounced by several moderate newspapers, were viewed as a reflection of Arbenz's position and therefore caused many to withdraw their support from him.¹⁷⁵ Finally, as was planned, the military quickly abandoned him due to its anti-communist stance and the fear that he was going to arm the peasantry. This combined with the opposition of the clergy and the the lack of recent economic progress with constant political turmoil convinced many that it was time for Arbenz to go.¹⁷⁶

Foreign Minister Toriello met with Ambassador Peurifoy on June 27 to plead for an end to the fighting, saying that he knew Ambassador Peurifoy had the power to stop the violence in fifteen minutes if he so wished.¹⁷⁷

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¹⁷³Department of State, "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council," IV FRUS (May 28, 1954): 1135-1136.

¹⁷⁴New York Times, 5 June 1954: 1:1.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 198.

¹⁷⁷Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 27, 1954): 1188-1189.

During this meeting Toriello made a final attempt to save the Arbenz government and offered his personal resignation in an attempt to placate the United States. Peurifoy claimed to have no control over the situation, but suggested that a "clean sweep" was in order. Finally, Toriello asked if the fighting would be stopped if a military junta took over control of the country.¹⁷⁸ Clearly, the United States knew that Arbenz and Toriello were in no position to bargain, and since they were still believed to represent a communist threat they would not be allowed to remain in power.¹⁷⁹

Later that night Ambassador Peurifoy was called to a meeting with Colonel Carlos Enrique Díaz, Chief of the Armed Forces, Colonel José Angel Sánchez, Minister Of Defense, Colonel Enrique Parrinello, Chief of Staff, Colonel Felipe Antonio Girón, Chief of the Air Force, and Lt. Colonel Carlos Sarti. During the meeting Díaz asked if the fighting would stop if he assumed power. Ambassador Peurifoy stressed that he could only address the issue as an individual, not as a representative of the United States government, but added that "there was only one important problem between our governments: That of communism."¹⁸⁰ Colonel Díaz agreed that he would act quickly against all known communists within the country, but requested a cease fire immediately. Peurifoy responded that he would act once he knew Díaz was in power.¹⁸¹ All of those present agreed that Arbenz would be told that Díaz had assumed the presidency, and that the ruling junta would be made up of Díaz, Colonel Elfego H. Monzón, and Sánchez.

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¹⁷⁸Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 27, 1954): 1189-1191.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid, 1190.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

Díaz's tenure as president was short-lived. During Arbenz's radio speech announcing his resignation, he accused the United States and United Fruit of having engineered his downfall in order to protect the interests of all United States monopolies in Latin America. He said he had faith that Díaz would continue the reforms initiated during the October Revolution, after which Díaz took the microphone and pledged to continue his "friend" Arbenz's work.¹⁸² These comments enraged Ambassador Peurifoy who told Colonel Díaz the next day that he was "amazed and astounded at the fact that he had permitted Arbenz in delivering his valedictory to charge the United States was responsible . . . and to say we had used the pretext of communism."¹⁸³ Peurifoy went on to suggest that this was going to cause problems in working with him and that he might wish to designate Monzón, whose anti-communist feelings were well known, as president.¹⁸⁴ The United States was now in a position to call the shots. Díaz wasted little time in demonstrating that he was willing to continue with the same programs as Arbenz and therefore his continuation in power would have meant that nothing had been accomplished. Clearly, the United States wanted someone who would fall in line behind them and support their Latin American policies. Díaz did not appear to be this man.

Further complicating the situation for Díaz was the fact that Castillo Armas remained at the head of his troops and Díaz intended to continue the fight should he not quietly demobilize, arguing to Ambassador Peurifoy that

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¹⁸²Quoted in Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 204-206.

¹⁸³Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 28, 1954): 1192.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

Castillo Armas had been fighting under the banner of anti-communism and that if he was sincere, he would stop all hostilities at once.¹⁸⁵ Actually, Díaz was never trusted by Allen Dulles due to his links to Arbenz, but had been encouraged by Peurifoy to accept Arbenz's resignation, leading him to have very little support for his presidency in Washington.¹⁸⁶ Díaz, however, sealed his fate shortly thereafter when he announced his plans to release all political prisoners. This group would have included all of the known communists who had been recently arrested.¹⁸⁷ Feeling he had been double-crossed, Ambassador Peurifoy set out to engineer the removal of Díaz. With his only United States supporter gone, Díaz had little chance to stay in power.

Despite the junta's urgent requests, formal recognition of the new government was not forthcoming from Washington on the grounds that one of the prerequisites of recognition was control of territory and Castillo Armas controlled a portion of the country. The junta agreed to negotiate with Castillo Armas, but before the meeting could be arranged Peurifoy arranged for another air attack on Guatemala City on June 29 which was intended as a message to Colonel Díaz. Late that night Ambassador Peurifoy was in the office of the Chief of the Armed Forces to witness the removal of Colonels Díaz and Sánchez from the junta and the assumption of the presidency by Colonel Monzón with new junta members José Luis Cruz and Mauricio Dubois.¹⁸⁸

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¹⁸⁵Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the John Foster Dulles, IV FRUS (June 28, 1954): 1192-1194.

¹⁸⁶Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 174.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (June 29, 1954): 1197.

The upheaval was not yet over. Despite initial support for Monzón, Ambassador Peurifoy, Secretary Dulles and his brother began to have doubts as to whether Monzón could maintain control.¹⁸⁹ A meeting between Castillo Armas and Monzón was arranged to be held in El Salvador. In an effort to avoid the impression of undue interference by the United States, Peurifoy did not make the journey to El Salvador, and instead Salvadoran President Oscar Osario was employed as mediator. However, United States Ambassador to El Salvador, Michael McDermott, informed the Department of State that Castillo Armas and Monzón were at an impasse after the first meetings were conducted and no agreement was in sight.¹⁹⁰ The Secretary of State decided to risk negative publicity and sent Ambassador Peurifoy down to handle the situation.

As Ambassador Peurifoy put it, he was authorized to "crack some heads together" to get an agreement.¹⁹¹ The heart of the problem was Castillo Armas' unwillingness to take a back seat to Monzón by joining the junta in a lesser capacity. He said that not only was it a slight to him personally, but that his staff members would not allow it.¹⁹² Peurifoy responded by baiting Castillo Armas by asking him "point blank whether he was the chief of his outfit."¹⁹³ This was the turning point of the negotiations as it was agreed that fifteen days after signing a pact which made both Castillo Armas and Monzón part of the junta elections would be held. As

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¹⁸⁹Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 176.

¹⁹⁰Department of State, Michael J. McDermott (Ambassador in El Salvador) to the Department of State, IV FRUS (July 1, 1954): 1200-1201.

¹⁹¹Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (July 7, 1954): 1202.

¹⁹²*Ibid*, 1205.

¹⁹³*Ibid*.

Ambassador Peurifoy cabled Secretary Dulles, "Without actually saying it, the implication was that Castillo Armas would be elected."¹⁹⁴

After the final details were worked out Castillo Armas and Monzón returned to Guatemala City together as members of the ruling junta. Castillo Armas was elected provisional president of the junta and Monzón resigned to take over the armed forces. The following October elections were held for the permanent government, and due to Castillo Armas' screening of all candidates and the lack of a secret ballot, he received ninety-nine percent of the votes.¹⁹⁵ These elections were obviously corrupted and the United States was at least aware of this, but, as it would demonstrate in years to come, corruption was not an issue when it came to getting a supporter of the United States elected in Latin America. Furthermore, the best interests of those governed were not an issue either. The only important matter was making sure communist influences were not tolerated.

The United States quickly resumed normal relations with Guatemala once Castillo Armas had been elected. However, in an effort to maintain the veil of innocence, Secretary Dulles coordinated with other governments the order of formal recognition of the new Guatemalan government so that they would "not be conspicuously in the lead or behind."¹⁹⁶ This was part of a larger scheme which sought to cover up any United States complicity in the overthrow of Arbenz. Ambassador Peurifoy, his work completed, was viewed as too controversial to keep in Guatemala and was reassigned to

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¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 177.

¹⁹⁶Department of State, John Foster Dulles to the Dwight David Eisenhower, IV FRUS (July 9, 1954): 1211.

Thailand and replaced by the more experienced and distinguished Norman Armour.¹⁹⁷ The United States conducted a publicity campaign on several fronts to convince the world that Arbenz had been a communist and that the United States played no role in his overthrow. The United State Information Agency's part in this was to continue with its publicity effort in a campaign whose emphasis was to confirm "the communist nature of the Arbenz government and demonstrate the truth of the representations previously made by the United States."¹⁹⁸ Former Ambassador Peurifoy made speeches in which he outlined the communist aggression and the accuracy of the analysis by the United States Foreign Service.¹⁹⁹ He further stated that, "The task of liberation of Guatemala from communism was carried out by the Guatemalan people themselves, fortified by the determination of the Western Hemisphere to rid our American homelands of this poisonous virus."²⁰⁰ The Ambassador to Chile, William L. Beaulac, reiterated these same sentiments during a speech made in Chile.²⁰¹ The United States did not want to admit any responsibility for the situation in Guatemala, for if it had it would have been an open admission of interference in the matters of a sovereign nation, and its standing in the Western Hemisphere, as well as the world, would have been greatly jeopardized.

The United States quickly set out to develop the Guatemalan social, economic and political landscape in order to consolidate Castillo Armas'

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¹⁹⁷Richard H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 177.

¹⁹⁸Department of State, "Report Prepared in the United States Information Agency," IV FRUS (July 27, 1954): 1216.

¹⁹⁹John E. Peurifoy, "Meeting the Communist Challenge in the Western Hemisphere," 333-336.

²⁰⁰*Ibid*, 336.

²⁰¹William L. Beaulac, "The Communist Effort In Guatemala," 235-239.

power and stem any communist resurgence. The Department of State outlined Guatemalan military, social and economic needs and devised a plan to meet them.²⁰² The objectives of this plan were to draw Guatemala more tightly into the sphere of the United States and strengthen the anti-communist elements in the country. It was believed that the democratic forces in the Western Hemisphere needed to be bolstered and communist penetration exposed in order to avoid any further communist incursions. The situation was believed to be so volatile at that time that it was decided not to call the Constituent Assembly until the economy improved so that the jobless would not be subject to communist propaganda.²⁰³ Obviously, there was still a sincere concern of future communist efforts in Latin America.

Militarily, the United States agreed to resume the sale of equipment and armaments to Guatemala. Secretary Dulles made plans to give Guatemala a hemispheric defense role and arranged eligibility for increased military support beyond the levels of the Ubico era.²⁰⁴ This was largely because the months immediately after Castillo Armas' election were politically unstable and the fear of a communist resurgence was apparent and therefore a strong and supportive military was paramount. This threat was illustrated in late 1954 when the State Department urgently requested specific types of military equipment for the Guatemalan government to be used in a military demonstration for the purpose of encouraging anti-communist

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²⁰²Department of State, "Minutes of a Meeting, Held at the Department of State," IV FRUS (August 8, 1954): 1218-1222.

²⁰³Department of State, John E. Peurifoy to the Department of State, IV FRUS (September 2, 1954): 1225-1226.

²⁰⁴Department of State, John Foster Dulles to Charles Erwin Wilson (Secretary of Defense), IV FRUS (October 27, 1954): 1234-1236.

elements and discouraging further "communist conspiracies."²⁰⁵ Such perceived threats combined with the fact that Castillo Armas was moving in the correct political direction, as illustrated by the fact that the Rio Treaty was ratified by the Guatemalan government within a year of the overthrow of Arbenz, were viewed by the United States as further reason to accelerate the sale of military equipment to Guatemala.²⁰⁶ The United States was unwilling to waste any time in consolidating Castillo Armas' power and removing the communist threat. There clearly was no intention of curtailing United States influence in the country.

The social and economic portions of the plan were interrelated. Essentially, Guatemala, which was suffering from high unemployment, needed to get people back to work so that they would not be tempted by communist propaganda. Economic and financial strategies were set forth which sought to overhaul the Guatemalan economy and restructure it along United States lines with a considerable degree of United States influence. This included increased support for agricultural, health and sanitation and education programs, as well as loans for the Guatemalan government arranged through private banks.²⁰⁷ Ambassador Armour requested funds for the completion of the Guatemalan section of the Pan American Highway, calling them vital for the restoration of confidence in the economy and as a means of getting people back to work.²⁰⁸ The plan also called for the training

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²⁰⁵Department of State, John Foster Dulles Harold E. Stassen (Director of the Foreign Operations Administration), IV FRUS (November, 26, 1954): 1237-1238.

²⁰⁶Department of State, John Foster Dulles to Charles Erwin Wilson, IV FRUS (October 27, 1954): 1234-1236.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*

²⁰⁸Department of State, Norman Armour (Ambassador in Guatemala) to the Department of State, IV FRUS (October 22, 1954): 1232-1234.

of new labor leaders in the United States and the overhaul or replacement of the Guatemalan labor code. Certainly, the United States wanted more control in Guatemala, but this was not for purely economic reasons. Instead, labor was to be restructured because it had previously been a communist stronghold, education needed to be restored because there had been great communist influence in the school system and the overhaul of the financial system was seen as a way to keep communists from preying on victims of a stagnant economy.²⁰⁹ By controlling all of these aspects of Guatemala the United States believed it could keep communism out. This level of control was believed to be necessary because Guatemalans, as most Latin Americans, were viewed in the United States as simple, ignorant people who could not fend for themselves. The United States deserved criticism for these actions, not because it was imperialistic, but because it was ignorant.

The aftermath of the revolution was less than kind to the average person in Guatemala. Upon assuming power Castillo Armas immediately began to reverse all of the progressive measures which Arévalo and Arbenz had taken and by January 1956 99.6% of the land expropriated in Guatemala had been returned to its previous owners and labor and peasant organizations were crushed with former members suffering imprisonment, torture or even murder.²¹⁰ Ironically, when Castillo Armas assumed power he called for the complete eradication of communism, but followed this call by saying that, "To eradicate communism does not signify to persecute the worker and

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²⁰⁹Department of State, John Foster Dulles to Charles Erwin Wilson, IV FRUS (October 27, 1954): 1234-1236.

²¹⁰Jenny Pearce, Under the Eagle: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean (London: South End Press, 1981), 29.

honest peasant who in every case merits the protection of the government."²¹¹ In spite of this, the servitude of the Ubico years quickly returned.

The primary reason for Castillo Armas' crackdown on the majority of the population was his fear of a negative response from the masses to his programs, such as the return of the land to the elite and foreign interests. In order to avoid this, he set out to methodically eliminate all potential enemies immediately upon assuming office by labeling them all communists. Reportedly, within a few days of taking power he had arrested two-thousand suspected "communists" and an additional seven-hundred had taken refuge in various embassies.²¹² He was so intent upon eliminating his enemies that he was extremely hesitant to give safe conduct to any of those who had opted for political asylum, with exceptions made for a few women and children.²¹³ Unfortunately, the United States backed Castillo Armas in his efforts to strip suspected communists of their asylum privileges due to its recognition of "the danger of releasing into the hemisphere many communists and sympathizers among the asylees."²¹⁴ The United States was so determined to rid Guatemala of the suspected communist influences that it turned its head to numerous violations of human rights and stood idly by as many were executed without a trial or simply disappeared.²¹⁵ What it believed it gained was a supporter who would back the United States in its anti-communist

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²¹¹Quoted in Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 216.

²¹²Department of State, Henry F. Holland (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs) to John Foster Dulles, IV FRUS (August 10, 1954): 1222-1223.

²¹³Ibid.

²¹⁴Ibid, 1222.

²¹⁵Robert H. Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala, 199.

policies in Latin America. Once again, it was clear that human rights were a secondary consideration to the battle against communism.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL THOUGHTS

What was the meaning of these events? Before jumping to scathing revisionistic conclusions, one must temper one's attitude with the realization that, however misguided the policymakers involved may seem by today's standards, they were operating during an era of hysteria in the United States. They believed that they were serving the greater good in nothing short of a frontal assault on everything they had built their lives and their country around. In their minds, the ends justified the means. This does not, however, exonerate them. The cold war fed off itself and the fear which it inspired. There were many people within the Eisenhower administration who could have put an end to the insanity, especially Eisenhower or Secretary Dulles, but the forces at work simply appeared too strong. The downward spiral which would lead to the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs, death in Asia and domestic unrest in the United States had begun.

Guatemala was simply another casualty of the cold war and the irrationality and insanity which began and perpetuated it. The thinking which characterized Arévalo and Arbenz simply did not fit in the cold war world. The leaders of the United States were caught up in a whirlwind, unable to open their minds to beliefs which were slightly different, but not fundamentally counter, from their own. In the end, it was Guatemala's desire for independence, the very ideal which the United States was founded

upon, which led to her downfall. The events which transpired in Guatemala were the result of misconceptions, fear and ignorance. The basis of the October Revolution was not communism, but nationalism. However, Arbenz's programs were not consistent with the desires of the United States and they were therefore viewed as communistic. Cold war thinking allowed very little latitude of thought, and Arbenz overstepped these boundaries. In an age when political definitions were mutually exclusive, Arbenz tried to hold the middle ground, taking what he thought was best from all systems as they applied to the realities of Guatemala. Unfortunately, the middle road was not an acceptable choice. One could not sway from the positions of the United States and not be considered a communist because everyone was forced to choose sides. Conclusive proof of Arbenz's communist ties or aspirations was never uncovered and it was unlikely that they ever existed, but in the minds of the men in Washington his reforms were interpreted as unquestionably communistic.

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