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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RADICAL CHANGE: COVERT OPERATIONS IN GUATEMALA, 1950-1954

by

Gordon L. Bowen*

In June 1954 the elected Guatemalan government of President Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown, ushering in thirty years of dictatorial and pseudo-democratic government. How did the "Guatemalan affair" happen? What was behind the U.S. role in the coup? These are immediate concerns of this and other new research on the subject.

At a rudimentary level, both internal and external forces were involved in the overthrow of the Arbenz regime. The pivotal role of the Guatemalan armed forces in that event can be attributed to their growing alienation from the governments of President Juan José Arévalo (1945-1951) and Arbenz. The initial resistance of the more traditional group within the armed forces, the line officers, to the institution of popular democratic government in 1944 was mollified under President Arévalo by the continuation of a leading older line officer, Colonel Francisco Xavier Arana, as chief of staff of the armed forces. But when Colonel Jacobo Arbenz succeeded Arévalo in 1951 (following a campaign in which Arbenz' opponent, Colonel Arana, was assassinated and a rebellion by Arana's supporters suppressed), he favored a group of younger, technically trained officers with rapid promotion into political and government positions. This not only antagonized the older professional officers, but also, ironically, diluted the military effectiveness of officers loyal to him by placing them in essentially civilian positions.

At the same time, a growing body of scholarship (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982; Immerman, 1980-1981; Cook, 1981; Blasier, 1976; Jonas, 1974b) has documented that a significant role also was played by the government of the United States in the fall of Arbenz. But beyond the shared perceptions that the "Guatemalan affair" deeply influenced Guatemala and that international politics in the Caribbean-Central American region were affected, little consensus exists among scholars regarding the U.S. role.

Much of the controversy in the new research concerns the degree of importance of the United States in the coup and the degree to which United States should be seen primarily as a *capitalist* actor, riding roughshod to

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protect private U.S. corporations. Jonas (1974b) and, more recently, Schlesinger and Kinzer (1982: 54, 76,93, 105-106, 120, 126, 136) repeatedly characterize the affair in terms of economic imperialism, arguing that "the takeover of United Fruit land was probably the decisive factor pushing the Americans into action" (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 105-106). Even before Schlesinger and Kinzer uncovered a wealth of detail to support their view, this conclusion had been broadly disseminated in earlier political science writing, spanning the range of perspectives in that discipline from Samuel Huntington (1973: 359) to Richard Barnet (1975: 79).

Immerman (1980-1981) has also introduced an array of declassified documents which stress the importance of U.S. actions to overthrow Arbenz, but in contrast to the above view he downplays economic motives and stresses the importance of the affair in the evolution of U.S. anticommunist, diplomatic, and covert action strategy. Cook (1981: 218-292) reviews some new evidence to support the thesis of Wise and Ross (1964), a view which emphasizes the controlling influence of the United States, especially insofar as the affair emboldened the CIA's Office of Plans, the "dirty tricks" department. Among those who de-emphasize U.S. economic objectives, Blasier (1976: 204-205) fits his (pre-declassification of documents) study into the larger pattern of U.S. responses to radical change in Latin America. Blasier finds in the "Guatemalan affair" a ripe opportunity for the Eisenhower administration to demonstrate its intransigence toward nationalist deviation from hemispheric norms. While not abandoning the economic emphasis of her earlier, longer work, Jonas (1982: 124) has edged toward a more complex explanation by describing a U.S.-run "Guatemalan affair" as the first test of the Truman Doctrine to contain communism.

This article examines the fall of Arbenz drawing upon previously unused declassified documents as well as the new scholarship. It argues that the "Guatemalan affair" can be most clearly understood as a step (one of many) toward reliance upon Third World official military institutions as guarantors of U.S. foreign policy objectives. It presents evidence in support of an interpretation in which both Guatemalan and U.S. actors, perceiving their own vital interests to be in jeopardy, acted symbiotically, if not jointly, to bring about a coup in Guatemala.

A clear view of the "Guatemalan affair" also promises to enrich our understanding of enduring themes in the international relations of the Western Hemisphere. In the 1980s "cold war" rhetoric has reappeared in official U.S. policymaking circles and in the popular press to describe the struggles for national identity in Central America primarily in terms of a Cuban-communist threat. Similar denigrations of the Guatemalan quest for self-determination preceded Arbenz' downfall. Though the structure of the entire international system to a degree has changed in the interim, the United States remains the preeminent military power in the Caribbean-Central American region. Thus, clear thinking about the "Guatemalan affair" may help us to anticipate the types of conditions which in the contemporary situation may lead U.S. policymakers to perceive that a basic threat to U.S. interests exists in the region.

DOMESTIC FACTORS IN THE "GUATEMALAN AFFAIR"

Throughout the 1944-1954 "revolutionary era," U.S. policymakers were concerned with developments in Guatemala, especially in regard to the influence of communists. Prior to the election of Colonel Arbenz in 1950, the staff of the U.S. embassy had analyzed the nature of Arbenz' contacts with the left-wing groups then backing his candidacy for the Presidency. According to a top secret report (CIA, 1950: 8) of March 1950, Arbenz was a "ruthless opportunist with no pronounced political convictions . . . [who] plan[s] to eliminate the [leftist] extremists in due course." Milton Wells (1950: 1), Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. embassy in Guatemala, echoed the CIA's reserved confidence in Arbenz, cabling Washington that ". . . his attitude toward United Fruit and other U.S. business interests [is] seemingly realistic."

Throughout the preceding Arévalo Presidency (1945-1951) no legal communist party existed in Guatemala, but in the atmosphere of free expression which prevailed, proto-Marxist groups did organize—a development which concerned U.S. officials. U.S. officials also had monitored trends in the labor movement, noting that "Direct connections between Guatemala and Moscow are difficult to prove . . . no proof of direct control has yet been established" (CIA, 1950: 1).

Actions following the inauguration of the Arbenz government caused a reassessment in U.S. thinking. Union certification standards were relaxed and communist sympathizers were hired to administer labor laws. Also in 1951 the heretofore clandestine communist movement received legal registration for their Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (Guatemalan Workers' Party—PGT). U.S. displeasure over these changes was communicated to the Guatemalan government. American intelligence regarding Arbenz' policies, however, continued to criticize Arbenz' nationalism, describing it as a separate phenomena from the influence of Moscow or the influence of Guatemalan communists. Writing to President Truman in April 1952, CIA director Walter "Beetle" Smith (1952: 1) stated: "Even if communist influence should be drastically reduced, it is unlikely that there would be any diminution in the manifestations against U.S. companies operating in the country."

The most profound change in domestic factors affecting Guatemalan politics occurred after May 10, 1952, when President Arbenz introduced his agrarian reform ('Decree 900'). This reform was designed "to put an end to feudal properties in farming areas in order to develop capitalistic methods of production . . . [and to] supply land to farmers having little or none of it" (Arbenz, 1952). While Schlesinger and Kinzer (1982: 75-76, 105-106) have emphasized the March 1953 seizure of lands owned by the Boston-based U.S. multinational corporation, United Fruit Company (UFCO), as critical, many Guatemalans including officers tied to banana and coffee plantation families, had been affected as early as August 1952—seven months before the expropriation of 209,842 UFCO acres.¹

¹It seems that ultimately UFCO was the largest loser of land, but the extent of their losses is in dispute. Naylor (1967: 343) says 653,000 of 1,434,494 total acres expropriated were taken from UFCO. Cook (1981: 225) says UFCO losses were considerably less, 178,000 acres. Schlesinger and Kinzer (1982: 75-76) list UFCO losses at 386,901 acres. Blasier (1976: 153) and Melville and Melville (1971: 58) state that 83,029 hectares (205,164 acres) were taken. All sources agree that UFCO lost more land than any other company, family, or group. Whatever the actual amount, no one disputes that these lands were returned to UFCO by Castillo.

Domestic resistance to the Arbenz regime became more violent after Decree 900 became law, with incidents of antigovernment violence tripling between the first and third quarters of 1952. While nearly all violent antigovernment incidents (bombings, assassinations, etc.) before the reform occurred in the capital, two-thirds of the incidents after the reform were outside the capital. The scope of unrest was broadening. Landowning classes and a growing Church-backed, anticommunist mass movement complemented the clandestine, violent resistance to Arbenz. Military governors assigned to regional subunits of the nation (departments) confronted resistance to the reform from classes traditionally aligned with the military. Arbenz himself underlined the depth of domestic resistance to land reform more than a month before the first UFCO expropriation, saying to a large demonstration in the capital, "I can assure you that I am determined to apply the Agrarian Reform Law, regardless of what it costs . . . I can assure the feudal reaction that if it wants civil war, we shall be ready to fight it on whatever ground it wishes" (Arbenz, 1953).

U.S. officials were not indifferent to UFCO's losses, prodded as they were by a slick anti-Arbenz lobby and propaganda campaign headed by UFCO-paid luminaries Spruille Braden and Thomas Corcoran (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 82-93). Indeed, Undersecretary of State, "Beetle" Smith, in January wrote President Eisenhower characterizing the situation between 1952 and 1954, as a "merciless hounding of American companies . . . by tax and labor demands, strikes, and in the case of United Fruit Company, inadequately compensated seizures of land . . ." (Smith, 1954). But these concerns do not appear to have been of primary (or even substantial) importance in the declassified correspondence and secret U.S. position papers of the time. UFCO's fate was far from a central concern to the bare-knuckles brawler Eisenhower had made Ambassador in the fall of 1953, John Peurifoy. In his summary of the icy, initial Arbenz-Peurifoy dinner meeting, Peurifoy (1953: 1-5) reported that he cut Arbenz off when the UFCO issue was raised, turning the conversation immediately toward the communists in the Arbenz government, so as to put "first things first."

It may be, as Blasier (1976: 203) has argued, that "there has never been convincing evidence that the Guatemalan Communists . . . dominated the Arbenz government." However, U.S. officials needed little evidence to convince them that they did. Even a limited amount of communist influence, or any other anti-U.S. influence, was seen as pathological and in need of the surgeon's blade. U.S. regional objectives, as outlined later in 1954 by the National Security Council (NSC, 1954a: 5), were the "reduction and elimination of the menace of internal communist or other anti-U.S. subversion," not merely the overthrow of communist-dominated governments.

Insights from a thorough 1955 Department of State (DOS, 1955) analysis of the communist movement in Guatemala, based on years of DOS and CIA intelligence reports and over 50,000 pages of captured PGT documents, reinforce this interpretation. State Department (DOS, 1955: 2, 7) analysts admitted that the PGT was a Guatemalan phenomenon, saying that "the material does not reveal the existence of a well organized system of administrative dependence on centers of international communism . . . Tight

[Kremlin] direction was not necessary for communist success." What worried U.S. officials (DOS, 1955: 17) was the possibility that PGT influence would flourish as the society became more democratic and more reliant on nonmilitary institutions:

The most effective single instrument in building Communist influence in Guatemala was patronage . . . [a] system that was in many respects similar to that of a ward healer operation in a city political machine.

The effectiveness of such a system partly rests upon its manifest and personalized concern for the little people.

Put another way, the communists were too successful at democratic politics for the United States to allow democracy to survive.

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS IN THE "GUATEMALAN AFFAIR"

Just as the disunity among antigovernment forces during the 1953-1954 period concerned U.S. officials, it also troubled elements of the Guatemalan officer corps. There had been serious problems with internal security stemming from violence associated with the implementation of the land reform law. Cognizant of early signs of division within the armed forces, the U.S. government developed contacts to insure that any resulting vulnerability would not be used to benefit U.S. adversaries. U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy and his staff made a point of staying in contact with the more disgruntled elements, pointing out in frequent meetings the degree of U.S. displeasure over the role of communists in Arbenz' administration and its uneasiness about the volatility of the social mobilization occurring in the country. U.S. analysts perceived that doubts about Arbenz' ability to protect the special place of the military in Guatemalan society were widespread in the officer corps. They concluded that these doubts could be exploited in such a way as to spark a coup.

By January 1954 the officers who would lead a coup d'état against Arbenz in June of that year were reporting regularly to U.S. officials, projecting a move against the Arbenz government in four or five months (CIA, 1954b: 16). In April, Peurifoy returned to Washington for consultations. After a series of discussions among policymakers, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1954: 1) privately summarized the U.S. position regarding Guatemalan presidential-military relations which Peurifoy took back to his post:

By every proper and effective means we should demonstrate to the courageous elements within Guatemala who are trying to purge their government of its communist elements that they have the sympathy and support of . . . the U.S. . . .

One tactic used to hasten Arbenz' end was an arms embargo, which had actually begun during the administration of Arévalo in the late 1940s. At the same time, the United States sold new weapons to Guatemala's neighbors, promising future weapons purchases to the Guatemalan high command should Arbenz be removed from office. Already partners with the United States in a regionwide, mutual defense treaty (the Rio Treaty), Nicaragua and Honduras each signed supplementary military assistance pacts on a bilateral

basis with the United States. Simultaneous with the signing of these treaties, shipments of airplanes and small arms were sent to these governments from the United States. On this point, the memoirs of former President Eisenhower (1963: 424) report that, "Our initial shipment . . . comprised only fifty tons of rifles, pistols, machine guns and ammunition, hardly enough to create apprehension on the part of neighboring states." References made to these weapons in later secret U.S. analyses of Guatemala report their ultimate destination was a "liberation army" of Guatemalan exiles, led by former Guatemalan Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas (Hughes, 1963: 19). This was another provocation also designed to prompt the armed forces to act: if the army would not act, the suggestion was planted that it could be replaced. In the summer of 1953, when the covert operations committee of the NSC (the 54/12 Committee) approved planning for an operation to unseat Arbenz, the object was not so much to promote Castillo Armas as to use whatever means possible to subvert the loyalty of the army to Arbenz (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 108-110).

Throughout the period of reform politics in Guatemala (i.e., the administrations of Arévalo and Arbenz, 1945-1954) the dictatorial regimes of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic had been engaged in a propaganda campaign against Arévalo, Arbenz, their governments, their policies, and other members of the Caribbean Legion.² With the advent of the Cold War, these denunciations increasingly identified the dangers of "communism" in democratic reform efforts in Guatemala and elsewhere; they increased in intensity after the announcement of the agrarian reform in 1952.

As early as March 1950, U.S. intelligence sources had noted that Guatemalan leftists were making inroads into the neighboring Salvadoran labor movement (CIA, 1950: 12). In October 1952, the government of El Salvador imposed a "state of siege" (a suspension of constitutional rights) in order to repress "communists." The Guatemalan consul was arrested at a labor meeting there and some Salvadoran radicals sought refuge in the Guatemalan embassy in San Salvador (FBIS, 1952b).

The Salvadoran head of state, Major Oscar Osorio, began discussions with representatives of the four other Central American regimes (Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama), suggesting that all enter a joint anticommunist military pact (FBIS, 1953a). Though never formalized in a treaty, these forums became a mechanism through which anticommunist and anti-Arbenz tactics could be discussed and coordinated among Arbenz' neighbors. Guatemala was excluded from these discussions. When Castillo Armas ultimately did invade Guatemala fifteen months later, Osorio not only had prior knowledge of the invasion but had informed CIA operatives there

²The Caribbean Legion was a group of noncommunist supporters of political democracy and social change in the Central American and Caribbean region in the 1940s and 1950s. Never a large movement, and certainly never a legion in the military sense, these counterelites came to govern in some nations (Guatemala, Costa Rica, Venezuela) and remained in exile or in opposition in most other nations of the region. Jonas (1974b: 57-60) however, argues that little real unity of purpose existed among Legion members, since José Figueres (President of Costa Rica and Legion member) was involved in the plot against Arbenz. I have found no corroborating evidence in the State Department papers which would substantiate this charge.

that he had mobilized 2,500 of his own reserves to assist in a regional anti-Arbenz war if they were needed (CIA, 1954h: 16).

Guatemalan-Honduran relations also ebbed as the Guatemalan-Salvadoran rift widened. In Honduras, sanctuary was given to Arbenz' adversaries. According to the memoirs of General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes (later President, 1958-1963), it was from this haven that Castillo Armas kept in touch with Ydígoras, who had remained in El Salvador (Ydígoras, 1963: 46, 49-50). The Guatemalan government obtained communiques sent between these plotters which revealed collusion with "the Government of the North" and published them (Guatemala, 1954: 1). Simultaneously, the Guatemalan government registered a sharp protest with the Honduran government.

The regime of Anastacio Somoza in Nicaragua, which shared no common border with Guatemala, also cooperated. In 1953-1954 Castillo Armas' Guatemalan expatriate army trained in the Momotombo area northeast of Lake Managua on a Somoza family estate. Castillo Armas' air support during the actual attack was based in Nicaragua. Both Somoza and Rafael Trujillo (of the Dominican Republic) provided financial support.

This regional campaign was orchestrated by the United States. U.S. influence helped to sustain the hostility of the Honduran government toward the Arbenz regime during the crucial months prior to the Castillo Armas invasion. On this point the 1961 testimony of American Ambassador to Honduras in 1954, Whiting Willauer (U.S. Senate, 1961: 865-866) is illuminating:

I was called upon to perform very important duties particularly to keep the Honduran government—which was scared to death about the possibilities of themselves being overthrown—keep them in line so they would allow this revolutionary activity to continue, based in Honduras.

Castillo Armas and his U.S.-financed and equipped army were but one component in the broad array of activities involved in Operation PB SUCCESS, the secret name for the plan. In May and June 1954, CIA radio transmitters broadcast pro-Castillo Armas propaganda designed to neutralize the army. Nonexistent civilian uprisings, military defections and bogus incidents of sabotage were reported over CIA-manned Radio Liberation located outside Guatemala. When official Guatemalan radio stations attempted to counteract these erroneous rumors, Radio Liberation copied the identifying music and bells of the government station, enabling it to impose its own broadcast as the official government program, while jamming equipment in the U.S. embassy was blocking reception of the official station. According to the memoirs of CIA personnel, the broadcasters and technicians for Radio Liberation were CIA employees who had been trained in Florida. Among the major accomplishments of this project was the broadcast of a defecting Guatemalan Air Force pilot's denunciation of Arbenz—an act which so upset Arbenz that he grounded even the loyal elements of his air force throughout the crisis leading to his downfall. In addition to this tactically important result, the use of disinformation or "big lies" served to raise the anxiety of the general population and to undermine the confidence of the military regarding the capacity of the regime to restrain disorder (Phillips,

1977: 41-43; Wise and Ross, 1964: 318; Chancellor, 1965: 11; Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 167-170; Hunt, 1973: 5).

The Guatemalans were not the only ones prevented from obtaining a clear perception of the actual state of affairs in their country due to CIA pressures. Prior to the final acts of the anti-Arbenz Guatemalan-American conspiracy, CIA officials attempted to manipulate American press coverage of Arbenz' Guatemala. No less a player than (CIA director) Allen Dulles himself told *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger to keep Mexico City-based reporter Sydney Gruson away from Guatemala, arguing that Mr. Gruson was not inclined to "objectively" report on the situation, a view shared by his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that the (allegedly) pro-Arbenz Gruson had been expelled from Guatemala on Arbenz' orders in February 1954 (*New York Times*, 1954: 7). With the help of United Fruit Company press officers, the CIA also apparently undertook to prepare U.S. and other Latin American public opinion for the fall of Arbenz through fabrication of evidence of the "communist menace" in Guatemala. Former United Fruit Company public relations official Thomas McCann (1976: 59) reported that the CIA and United Fruit helped plant unsubstantiated stories in the American press about Soviet arms turning up in Guatemala. Indeed, Fruit Company-sponsored information constituted a near monopoly of the sources used in American press reports about Guatemala in this era (McCann, 1976: 57-62; Szulc, 1973: 21). U.S. Information Service documents show that even within Guatemala much of the Latin American comment on the "red menace" in Guatemala which was reprinted from Chilean and other "credible" Latin American sources was, in fact, originally written by CIA officers (Schlesinger, 1978: 440-441).

The CIA (1954b: 28) reported on June 3, 1954, that while a coup was not imminent, "many officers now believe the army is capable of acting independently and have spoken of a possible move to overthrow the regime." On the same day leading officers presented Arbenz with an ultimatum to purge the leftists from his government (Blasier, 1976: 173) by June 15. By that latter date the CIA could report to Eisenhower that top Guatemalan officers were meeting constantly to discuss plans to overthrow Arbenz (CIA, 1954d).

With Ambassador Peurifoy in daily contact with the military high command, Eisenhower and his principal advisers met on June 15, 1954, and approved the project: Castillo Armas would invade Guatemala so as to stimulate a coup against Arbenz (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 170). While no official source has been declassified which corroborates Schlesinger and Kinzer's information, much circumstantial evidence reinforces the accuracy of their account of Arbenz' denouement. From available official documents it is clear that the U.S. role in Castillo Armas' invasion of Guatemala began long before the June 17, 1954, border crossing and continued during the invasion and throughout ten days of fighting prior to the domestic coup which prompted Arbenz' resignation. On the morning of the invasion, U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, Whiting Willauer, cabled Washington to report that Castillo Armas' troops had begun invading (CIA, 1954f: 8). At this time the CIA knew the amount and types of war-making equipment in Castillo Armas'

arsenal, the number of soldiers in the invasion force, and their battlefield objectives (CIA, 1954g: 3). Moreover, a CIA memo to President Eisenhower on June 20, 1954, conclusively shows that top American officials had prior indication from Castillo regarding his plans. The four page memo (CIA, 1954g: 3) is filled with such clauses as: "*Castillo Armas himself is expected to leave his command post in Honduras today and join one element of his forces . . . From the command post he proposes to establish at this location, he will endeavor to coordinate the activities . . .*" (emphasis added).

Can there be any doubt what the relationship is between parties when one (Castillo Armas) "proposes" his battlefield plans to the other (the U.S. government)? Clearly, the U.S. role was the very essence of Castillo Armas' part of the "liberation," even if the ultimately decisive acts by the Guatemalan military commanders were less tightly under U.S. direction. The fact that former CIA officials have claimed responsibility for Arbenz' overthrow (Colby, 1978: 181) under Presidential direction (Cline, 1976: 133; Phillips, 1977: 35) further reinforces this interpretation.

Between June 17 and June 27, 1954, images of warfare and panic were created by American propaganda assistance to Castillo Armas. Actions included decoding military transmissions from Arbenz' field commanders, broadcasting false reports from the battlelines, jamming official reports on radio, and broadcasting pro-Castillo "Radio Liberation" reports (Wise and Ross, 1964: 167, 176-179; Phillips, 1977: 41-50; Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 167-172). A June 20, 1954, CIA-to-Eisenhower memo corroborates Presidential knowledge of and participation in planning these tactics. Clearly, black propaganda and disinformation were at the core of the tactics of the United States and of Castillo Armas:

. . . it will be seen how important are the aspects of deception and timing . . . in arousing other latent forces of resistance [to Arbenz] . . . the entire [Castillo] effort is thus more dependent upon psychological impact rather than actual military strength, although it is upon the ability of the Castillo Armas effort to create and maintain for a short time the *impression* of very substantial military strength that the success of this particular effort primarily depends. The use of a small number of airplanes and the massive use of radio broadcasting are designed to build up and give main support to the impression of Castillo Armas' strength as well as to spread the impression of the regime's weakness (emphasis in original) (CIA, 1954g: 4).

The "latent forces of resistance," of course, were the military officers *within* the official Guatemalan armed forces who remained to the end the primary object of U.S. anti-Arbenz policy. American policy sought to foment a military coup, not a popular conquest leading to an anticommunist revolution. Thus, the progress report by CIA Director Allen Dulles to President Eisenhower on the third day of the invasion (CIA, 1954g: 1) stressed that the "controlling factor" in Operation PB SUCCESS "remains very much in doubt . . . If it [the military] remains loyal . . . Castillo Armas . . . will be defeated and probability of uprisings from among other elements of the population is considered unlikely." This gloomy prognosis, however, was lightened by new information which Dulles could give Eisenhower on the mood of the Guatemalan military: "Various officers have declared themselves as willing to

take action against the regime given just a little more time or just a little more justification." Ambassador Peurifoy had done his job.

Justification for a coup was soon created by two events that further seemed to jeopardize the position of the Guatemalan military and which prompted leading officers to act. First, the capital, as well as Zacapa and Chiquimula were bombed by CIA pilots flying CIA-supplied airplanes. Fuel reserves at the international airport were destroyed (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 182-183). Second, on June 25, Arbenz ordered weapons to be distributed to "the peoples' organizations and political parties" (Blasier, 1976: 173-174; Immerman, 1980-1981: 650-651; Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 190).³ Chief of Staff Carlos Enrique Díaz and his subordinates refused to carry out this order.

On the diplomatic-legal front, the United States thwarted Guatemalan initiatives. The Arbenz government had sought review of its plight by the United Nations, charging in its appeal that it was the victim of international (U.S.) aggression. Circumventing a Soviet veto by procedural maneuvers, Security Council Chairman (and U.S. Ambassador) Henry Cabot Lodge succeeded in having the matter referred to the Organization of American States (OAS) for investigation. After a crucial delay, the Inter-American Peace Commission appointed by the OAS travelled only as far as Mexico, accomplished little there, and did nothing to block the unconstitutional seizure of power first by General Díaz, then by General Elfeigio Monzón, and finally by Colonel Castillo Armas (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 179-182; Blasier, 1976: 169-172; Jonas, 1974b: 71-72; Whitaker, 1954: 5; P. Taylor, 1956: 797-801).

On June 27, 1954, prior to notifying President Arbenz of the army's decision to oust him from the Presidency, Chief of Staff Díaz called on U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy to request that the United States help to end further fighting. Then Díaz delivered to Arbenz the coup de grâce: his Presidency was over. Immediately after obtaining Arbenz' resignation, Díaz again called Peurifoy to inform him of events (CIA, 1954i: 6). These gracious reports to a foreign ambassador would seem extraordinary if we were not fully aware of the U.S. role in encouraging the coup and in Castillo Armas' liberation campaign. Ultimately, Díaz and his collaborator, General Monzón, were persuaded to step aside and Castillo Armas became Guatemala's new strongman.

At the time of the actual invasion and coup d'état which it precipitated, U.S. policymakers in Guatemala and Washington continued to mask their catalytic role. While Dulles (CIA, 1954a: 45) deceptively claimed on national television that the events were made "by the Guatemalans themselves," Ambassador Peurifoy (1954: 690) dispensed the same "big lie" to Congress, saying that "the revolution that overthrew the Arbenz government was engineered and instigated by people in Guatemala." Only years later, when the CIA was besieged by criticism of their foreign and domestic transgres-

³Cook (1981: 276) argues that Arbenz never tried to distribute guns to nonmilitary allies, but the weight of the current evidence suggests that she is wrong.

sions, did it become convenient for a former CIA director (Colby, 1978: 181) to refer to the Guatemalan action as an American event.⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the American campaign to aid Castillo Armas' "liberation" of Guatemala is most exactly understood as only part of an overall U.S. campaign carried out through several bureaus, through the U.N. and the OAS, through neighboring nations and through an ostensibly Guatemalan-exiles' liberation army. It was a campaign to unseat elected President Arbenz primarily by a coup d'état, though contingency plans for a regional war in support of the exiles' invasion were readied. Some general conclusions emerge.

First, U.S. policy was supervised at the highest levels of the Eisenhower administration. Each foreign policy bureaucracy participated in aspects of the coordinated, total policy which was aimed at a shared goal. Despite minor disagreements over particulars (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 1982: 109-110; Immerman, 1980-1981: 645) bureaucratic competition in this affair seems to have been marginal and relatively inconsequential. Clandestine and diplomatic actors operated together in pursuit of the same ends.

Second, Guatemalan actions appear to have provided a model for later American covert policy. Most obviously, repetition of an exiles' invasion as a means to rid the hemisphere of an anti-U.S. regime seems to have guided the United States to the Bay of Pigs in Cuba in 1961. Many of the same advisors and personnel served in both actions (M. Taylor, 1961a; Phillips, 1977: 53). In each case an invasion by a group of exiles was perceived to be merely a means by which to ignite an internal uprising, and not the means by which the actual change in regime would be made (M. Taylor, 1961b: 2). When this tactic proved unsuccessful in the Cuban case, it seemed to fall into disuse until after the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979. Efforts to secure the cooperation of other governments of the region also have obvious parallels in subsequent U.S. policy in Central America.

Third, throughout the affair, geopolitical, rather than economic, considerations appear to have been the foremost matters of concern to policymakers.⁵ For domestic political purposes it was useful to characterize the anti-American aspects of Guatemalan policy as a function of communist domina-

⁴More than a decade later, when the study by Wise and Ross (1964) reported many findings similar to those which this study confirms, the CIA attempted to prevent publication of the book, visited the publisher to convey its displeasure, considered buying and destroying the entire print-run of the book, and finally commissioned reviewers to refute the book's "allegations" (Crewdson, 1977: 12).

⁵This should not be read to mean that the United States had no economic objectives in Latin America in the 1950s. Indeed, National Security Council document number 5432 of August 1954 lists as one of the priority objectives of the United States in the region "adequate protection in Latin America of and access by the United States to raw materials essential to U.S. security" (NSC, 1954a: 5). That document goes on to state that the United States should pursue a course of action to encourage Latin American governments "to base their economies on a system of private enterprise and, as essential thereto, to create a political and economic climate conducive to private investment, of both domestic and foreign capital, including . . . (2) opportunity to earn and in the case of foreign capital, to repatriate a reasonable return" (NSC, 1954a: 9).

tion. But the existence of a government that was simply anti-American was sufficiently at odds with the objectives found in the secret, newly declassified papers to explain U.S. actions. Arbenz' tolerance of even token communist influence redoubled official U.S. contempt for his government. Guided by such hegemonic thinking, the Eisenhower-Dulles group had extended the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine in enormous ways. When Arbenz bought Czech guns in the spring of 1954, even the palpable nonsense found in U.S. public denunciations of Arbenz seemed to be verified. Moreover, little risk of confrontation with the major adversary (the USSR) accompanied an affair in what policymakers considered their back yard.

Efforts by UFCO to encourage U.S. actions were extensive, and the company apparently worked very closely with the CIA in its disinformation campaign, but the efforts should be seen as complementary. They reinforced administration efforts to mold permissive congressional and public opinion. It is undeniable that the effect of U.S. actions was to secure the return of UFCO lands, regardless of the geopolitical intentions or motives of policymakers. Objectively, events unfolded in no substantial way differently than if UFCO's interests had been foremost in the minds of policymakers. But we should not be confused by this. It is the subjective reality which policymakers believe is real in which they make their judgements. Understanding that starkly clear world, one of good and evil, can be a difficult adjustment. But it is a vital adjustment which should be made in order to fashion analogies from history to fit subsequent situations.

Fourth, after the affair, the U.S. government instituted tactics which would more efficiently serve the primary objective here, the cultivation of pro-American attitudes in and actions by official military hierarchies. Thus, when regional policy objectives were restated by the National Security Council (NSC, 1954a: 2, 5) later in the summer of 1954 "the ultimate standardization of Latin American military organization, training, doctrine and equipment along U.S. lines" was a priority goal. By increasing weapons sales, training courses and military aid, it was hoped that "understanding of, and orientation toward, U.S. objectives on the part of the Latin American military" would be achieved. By this standard (orientation toward U.S., not national, objectives) future contenders for power would be judged.

In conclusion, the paramount political lesson of the "Guatemalan affair" was that the United States learned to rely on local militaries to serve as junior partners with U.S. covert operatives in the protection of U.S. interests. That this strategy has had an important impact on the role of Latin American militaries in politics is obvious. The corresponding impact on national self-determination of political institutions and socioeconomic priorities can scarcely be overstated.

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