



“ey’re OK if ey’re Our S.O.B’s” *United States Involvement in the 1954 Guatemalan Coup d’état*

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History 383

The United States Cold War history is shrouded in secrecy, and when revealed, it is approached with feelings of shame, anger, and frustration at events perpetuated by the U.S. government and foreign interests. Peering into recently opened Central Intelligence Agency documents and the memoirs of those prominent individuals in the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, casts new light on the U. S. role in shaping the emerging governments of underdeveloped nations in Latin America. Of these, the 1954 Guatemalan Coup d’état bears an obvious U. S. signature, both in the particular form of the coup (similar tactics were used in Iran in 1953) and the colossal misunderstandings in which the Coup succeeded. The U. S. misjudged the socialist reforms and communist presence in Guatemala’s new revolutionary government as the work of international communism looking to establish a Latin American Kremlin that would destabilize the United States economic and political interests in Latin America. The U.S. felt this view gave them the justification to instigate the 1954 Coup d’état that, due to a crucial lack of military support for the revolutionary government, replaced the Jacobo Arbenz administration with the U.S. supported Castillo Armas. This intervention by the U. S. in overthrowing a democratically elected government ran counter to its pro-democracy rhetoric, but fit perfectly in the line of Cold War foreign policy that sought to protect, at any cost, U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere.

From independence to the establishment of a democratically elected government in 1944, Guatemala progressed through a series of dictators. In 1872, a liberal government under President Justo Rufino Barrios took power marking a transition from a largely internal and atrophied economy to nascent industrialization and foreign investment.¹ Barrios established freedom of religion on March 15, 1873, in an attempt to weaken the control of the Catholic Church, while simultaneously encouraging immigration from “protestant and

modern countries” such as the United States and Germany.² Barrios hoped that an influx of Protestant missionaries would bring the values and appetites of their capitalist societies with them to Guatemala and act as a subtle influence on the Guatemalan people.

Pro-western reforms by the “liberals” had the effect of changing land ownership but not in a way that benefited the majority of the population³. The system of unequal distribution of land was a major cause of the 1944 revolution and the issue of land reform is crucial to understanding the events leading up to the 1954 Coup. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Caudillos* (elite landowners) and the government increasingly sold land to foreign business interests in the banana and coffee export markets. These companies offered low wages and relied on a system of forced labor to staff the ever-growing *Latifundias*, or large scale export farms⁴. The power of export agriculture in Guatemala cannot be overstated—at the time of the 1944 revolution bananas and coffee grown for export made up 90% of agricultural production.⁵ Bananas were the majority of crops grown on these *Latifundias*, and require periodic rotation on different plots of land to fallow making large scale ownership of prime agricultural land necessary by export companies. Ethnic Mayan Indians often owned very small plots of agriculturally poor land, or *Minifundias*.⁶ Due to the shortage of land available for personal cultivation, *Minifundias* were heavily planted on with no room to fallow, creating poor soil conditions and an ever increasing reliance on the poor wages provided from agricultural labor.

The United Fruit Company or UFCO, was the main exporter of bananas in Guatemala, and the source of serious resentment from the population and later Arevalo and Arbenz governments. From its formation in 1899, UFCO, known in Guatemala as *el pulpo* (the octopus), worked to secure a very profitable and monopolistic business environment in Guatemala. UFCO was the largest private landowner in Guatemala with just over three million acres, bringing its total property to more than the combined holdings of half of Guatemala’s landowning population.⁷ UFCO garnered an exclusive contract to transport the country’s mail to the United States, owned 690 out of 719 miles of railroad track and the shipping company (the International Railways of Central

1 Virginia Garrard Burnett, “Protestantism In Rural Guatemala, 1872-1954,” *Latin American Research Review* 24, no. 2 (1989): 127.

2 Burnett, “Protestantism In Rural Guatemala,” 128.

3 *Ibid* 127.

4 José M. Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention: e Case of Guatemala in 1954*, (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1978), 160

5 Richard H. Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala: e Foreign Policy of Intervention*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 30.

6 Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention*, 160.

7 Immerman, *e CIA In Guatemala* 71.

America or IRCA), built and maintained the telegraph system and owned the wharves at both of Guatemala's ports in the Pacific and Caribbean.⁸ Control of the railroad company meant that UFCO "arbitrarily increase[d] the costs of all its competitors by raising transportation rates," while keeping their own rates low.⁹ In one of the largest abuses of its influence on Guatemalan politics, UFCO, in 1936, extracted from President Jorge Ubico a contract that stipulated a ninety-nine year lease on its land holdings, freedom from almost all taxes, import duties, regulation, and the ability to severely undervalue its property tax holdings (an issue that would cause problems during the Arbenz administration). The tentacles of *el pulpo* reached deep into the fabric of Guatemala; the monopolistic control of the economy combined with their heavy political influence bred an anti-Ubico and anti-foreign investment sentiment that culminated in the Revolution of 1944.

The Revolution of 1944 ended a period of Guatemalan history filled with a succession of dictators and strongmen. The last of these, Jorge Ubico (president from 1931-1944), started his reign with the support of the *Caudillos* and the military, but thirteen years of massive concessions to foreign companies mainly UFCO), imprisonment of political opponents, and a general neglect of social inequality combined in a groundswell of opposition. Resentment was most profound in the emerging middle class of Guatemalan society located primarily in urban areas like Guatemala City. These blue and white-collar workers became politically radicalized during the Great Depression and were influenced by World War II rhetoric like that in the Atlantic Charter, with its call for freedom, advancement of social welfare, and self-determination.¹⁰ On October 19, 1944 a collation of students, intellectuals and young officers, led by Major Francisco Arana, Jorge Toriello, and Captain Jacobo Arbenz attacked the National Palace and forced the Ubico government to step down.

The United States initial reaction to the October Revolution was initially one of support, Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated in 1944 that "the United States has no intention of interfering in Guatemalan internal affairs."¹¹ The revolutionary government went on to hold "the first free election in Guatemala's history" on December 19, 1944¹². That the revolutionary administration held elections was promising (previous administrations had often reneged on such promises) and even more open was the fact that none of the revolutionary leaders sought office the first term. Guatemalans overwhelmingly elected Juan Jose

Arevalo Bermej, an intellectual who had no ties to previous administrations.¹³ Arevalo was a contradictory person to the Truman administration; a staunch democrat and defender of capitalism, he nevertheless believed in "Spiritual Socialism" or the idea that a "harmonious society" could be achieved through psychological liberation rather than a redistribution of wealth."¹⁴¹⁵ Arevalo's path to modernization and equality was through education and labor reform for the Mayan majority, thereby hoping to draw this group into government participation, and strengthening and widening the support of the revolutionary coalition while sapping influence from the *Caudillos*.

The new Guatemalan Constitution very much resembled that of the United States, but to encourage more variety in elections it banned foreign or international political parties such as Soviet Communism.¹⁶ Arevalo included Guatemalan communists in his government begrudgingly; the organizational and political experience was something the new government needed.¹⁷ Arevalo feared too much communist control in his government as it could be linked to the Soviet Union and used against him by his enemies. But correcting years of underdevelopment and economic exploitation brought on by United States business interests forced him to use the people at his disposal, realizing the U.S. as a direct threat more pressing than communism.¹⁸ Supportive at first, the United States soon became critical of the Arevalo administration. The existence of communists along with legislation to protect agricultural workers on Latifundias (which hurt UFCO interests), and Arevalo's entrance into the anti-U.S. Caribbean Legion drew harsh criticism and ire from the Truman administration¹⁹.

Arevalo was not popular with the *Caudillos*, many of whom wanted to oust him from power often accusing him of fermenting class warfare. Twenty-five coups were attempted during his six years in power—none were successful and in November of 1950, Jacobo Arbenz was elected president²⁰. Arbenz faced stiff competition in the election from his partner in the revolutionary coup, Major Francisco Arana, until he was conveniently eliminated in July 18, 1949.²¹ Arbenz soon

8 Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business With the Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944*, (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), 2.

9 Immerman, *The CIA In Guatemala* 70.

10 Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala* 37.

11 *Ibid* 42.

12 *Ibid* 44.

13 *Ibid* 45.

14 Stephen M. Streeter *Managing the Counterrevolution: the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 14.

15 Psychological liberation entailed that "each citizen has a responsibility to Guatemala and that the government had a responsibility to each citizen." From: Streeter *Managing the Counterrevolution* 14.

16 Immerman, *CIA in Guatemala* 49.

17 Ronald M. Schneider *Communism In Guatemala, 1944-1954* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1958), 23.

18 *Ibid* 23.

19 The Caribbean Legion was an organization comprised of radical democrats looking to oust dictators (often U.S. supported) from Latin American governments in hopes of creating a united Latin America to rival U.S. influence in the hemisphere.

20 Immerman, *CIA in Guatemala* 57.

21 The revolutionary government has been linked to Arana's assassination, but its role is suspect. Arana was reportedly on his way to uncover a stash

faced even bigger threats to his government as he tried to steer Guatemalan policy to one of self-sufficiency and freedom of foreign intervention, unfavorable to both foreign businesses and United States control in Guatemala.

Hoping to end the “development of underdevelopment” that resulted from Guatemala’s primary focus on export agriculture due to the stranglehold of foreign business interests, Arbenz set about attempting to modernize Guatemala and take the revolution farther than Arevalo²². In his inaugural address he expressed his desire to “convert Guatemala from a country bound by a predominantly feudal economy into a modern, capitalist one.”²³ To do this, Arbenz wanted to increase the role of government in the lives of citizens—funding educational, health, and social programs, while ensuring a smooth transition that would keep the masses behind his administration.

The greatest of all these programs, and the fulfillment of his campaign promise, was Decree 900 in 1952. Decree 900, which one U.S. scholar has compared to the Homestead Act, was influenced by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 401, which “sanctioned the use of agrarian reforms as an appropriate method for underdeveloped countries to restructure the agricultural sector of the economy.”^{24 25} Decree 900 had two goals: (1) to destroy the *latifundo-minifundio* system; confiscating unused export agricultural lands and redistributing it to farmers who could grow staple foods—decreasing Guatemalan reliance on imports, and (2) refocusing the newly unfettered export agriculture workers into an industrial labor workforce.²⁶ The promise of land reached across class and ethnic lines to draw support from the Maya, while further alienating the *Caudillos*, who claimed that

of weapons hidden by the Caribbean legion for use by Arbenz to arm his supporters. His limousine was stopped and “some 20 men jumped out from under a bridge, riddling the limousine with submachine gun fire. Arana died instantly.” (Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 59). The driver of the limousine, Lieutenant Chico Palacios, survived and claims to have seen Arbenz’s personal chauffeur and Lieutenant Alfonso Martínez Estevez (who later occupied several influential positions in the Arbenz administration) among the men, linking the assassination to Arbenz. Palacios’s survival to give these firsthand accounts, however draws suspicion and questioning of the assassination as the work of counterrevolutionaries looking to incite anti-Arbenz sentiment. The Arbenz government did not investigate the killing and several days later fighting broke out between Arana supports and the government. The Arbenz government won thanks to a raised militia made up of workers and students. The CIA took this opportunity during the fighting to attempt a coup; two U.S. pilots were arrested along with the coup leader Carlos Castillo Armas. Armas was subsequently exiled from Guatemala and would not return until 1954 as the leader of that successful coup. From: Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 60.

22 Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention: e Case of Guatemala in 1954* 6.

23 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 63.

24 Streeeter *Managing the Counterrevolution: e United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961* 19.

25 Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention: e Case of Guatemala in 1954*, 170.

26 Decree 900 only targeted *latifundios* of over 233 acres; this was meant to single out foreign export agriculture companies such as UFCO. From: Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 64.

communists were running the Arbenz government.

The United Fruit Company was the very symbol of “Yankee imperialism,” a combination of bribery and intimidation used to gain government concessions and racist, exploitative treatment of the native population that the revolutionary government was trying to excise from Guatemala.²⁷ Because of UFCO’s association with the Ubico regime, it was the major target of Decree 900. The bill provided compensation for land seized by the government according to the property tax value paid. The Arbenz government appropriated more than 500,000 acres of UFCO land, and when the government offered \$1.85 million (the amount on the last tax return) UFCO insisted the land was worth \$19.35 million.²⁸ The Guatemalan government refused to pay and UFCO took its claim to the United States government in 1953.

Economic and political connections between UFCO and the United States government in the beginning of the cold war are the subject of much axe grinding by scholars; however, it was an uneven relationship in favor of the United States government.²⁹ Despite deep personal connections and shared ideological affinities, U.S. government officials realized that UFCO’s corrupt relationships with Latin American dictators and contribution to the underdevelopment in the region were directly associated with the U.S. government and “Yankee imperialism.”^{30 31} The Justice Department during the Eisenhower Administration was pursuing an anti-trust suit against UFCO, which was suspended in 1954 during the Coup d’état but later that year resulted in a conviction against UFCO. From the end of the 1940s through the early 1950s, UFCO engaged in a vigorous press campaign against the Arbenz government in an attempt to win support for timely U.S. intervention in the wake of land appropriations under Degree 900.³² The campaign originally focused on the damage

27 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 74.

28 UFCO had deceptively undervalued the property tax value of the land under the agreement reached with Jorge Ubico in 1936. See pg. 4.

29 See Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* pg. 124 and Schneider *Communism in Guatemala* pg. 48. The connections between the United States and UFCO reach past coincidence and these links could be used to explain the acceptance of UFCO control of Guatemala and the delay in which UFCO was prosecuted for its anti-trust suit in 1954.

30 Eisenhower Secretary of State John Foster Dulles previously worked for Sullivan and Cromwell, a legal firm that represented UFCO in negotiations with Ubico in 1936. Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA during the Coup, was also a partner in Sullivan and Cromwell and owned a “strong interest” in IRCA. John Cabot, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs in 1953 and former ambassador to Guatemala held a large amount of stock in UFCO. Ann Whitman, the president’s personal secretary, was the ex-wife of a UFCO director who was then vice-president for public relations. General Robert Cutler first special assistant to the president for national security affairs and head of the PBSUCCESS planning board, had been board chairman of UFCO and its transfer bank, Old Colony Trust. Numerous other officials in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had connections to UFCO, ICRA, Old Colony Trust, and Sullivan and Cromwell. From *e CIA in Guatemala*, 124-125.

31 *e CIA in Guatemala* 74.

32 *Ibid* 111.

to the company, but finding little sympathy from the Truman administration the company decided to link the damage it sustained to its Guatemalan operations by the Arevalo and Arbenz administrations to the growing U.S. anti-communist cold war ethos. This was so successful that by 1953 the *New York Times* declared that the “immediate aims of the [Guatemalan] government and Communists are indistinguishable.”³³ Like a barometer U.S. policymakers gauged the relative stability of Latin American governments and their willingness to collude with U.S. foreign policy interests based on the relationship between foreign investment companies and the Latin American governments. Companies like UFCO did not want U.S. paternalism of their interests—their aim was to make money for shareholders. But in 1954 both UFCO and the U.S. wanted the removal of the Arbenz government and the return of favorable economic and foreign policy conditions.

The Truman and Eisenhower administrations perceived Guatemalan reform actions like Decree 900 not as agriculture reform created to undo the unequal distribution of land but as symptoms of an international communist takeover in Guatemalan politics. U.S. policymakers used the existence of 4000 registered Guatemalan communists in 1954 to claim widespread communist infiltration of the Arbenz government.³⁴ Communists like Jose Manuel Fortuny Arana the Secretary General of the National Agrarian Department occupied key roles in the government and often enjoyed the personal support of Arbenz whose wife was a communist. However this was an organic form of communism that was separate from the Soviet version. Guatemalan communists following the teachings of Karl Marx believed that their country needed to develop capitalism before it could reach socialism.³⁵ The Cold War scholar Ronald M. Schneider admitted in 1958 that the “Communists seemed preferable to the eternally quarrelling thoroughly opportunistic and often corrupt leaders of the other revolutionary parties.”³⁶ Communist supported programs such as state funded compulsory education workers organization and agriculture reform connected with many segments of Guatemalan society. Arbenz relied on the communists to be a core member of his governmental coalition a reliance that U.S. leaders viewed as promoting international communism.

The reforms of the revolutionary government threatened the goal of United States foreign policy that Guatemala remains “a place for capital investment.”³⁷ Decree 900 represented a “radical measure against a United States business” and thus

Guatemala was “dominated by Communists.”^{38 39} This broad generalization of communism created categories like that of “crypto-Communism” or those who did not identify as communists but allied or sympathized with the communist cause which U.S. policy makers believed were more dangerous because they were hard to identify and could be anywhere.^{40 41} To replace the Arbenz government without provoking a domestic or international outcry the U.S. needed to link the recent events in Guatemala to the United States ideological enemy: the Soviet Union. Richard Immerman outlines how this was accomplished:

The identification of the Soviet Union as the mastermind behind the Guatemalan conspiracy presented much less of a problem. In the bipolar world of the cold war United States leaders used “Communist” and “Soviet” interchangeably. In the words of the Eighty-third Congress’ Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Alexander Wiley “There is no communism but the Communism which takes its orders from the despots of the Kremlin in Moscow. It is an absolute myth to believe that there is such a thing as homegrown Communism, a so-called native or local communism.”⁴²

Having linked the events transpiring in Guatemala to the inroads of international communism via the Soviet Union the Truman administration in 1950 decided on taking greater involvement to reinstate United States hegemony in the region. Afraid that support to the enemies of Arevalo and Arbenz would be seen as Yankee imperialism the Truman administration decided to “withhold favors from the Guatemalan Government” which amounted to the suspension of military and economic aid in 1950.⁴³ In 1952 the U.S. denied Guatemala Mutual Security Aid while giving generous amounts to its hostile neighbors.⁴⁴

The newly elected Eisenhower administration decided in early 1953 to get rid of Arbenz and started planning a Coup d’état. Eisenhower administration officials and the CIA prized secrecy and covert tactics. They needed to provide an invasion force which would engage the Arbenz government in what looked like a civil war while using U.S. international power to condemn Arbenz for being a Soviet puppet and delaying any United Nations or Organization of American States action in

38 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 81.

39 *Ibid* 81.

40 Schneider *Communism in Guatemala, 1944-1954* 121.

41 The U.S. ambassador to Guatemala from 1949-1955, Richard Patterson recommended a rather nagodoches method for identifying a communist: the “duck test.” “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 that he swims like a duck. Then he opens his beak and quacks like a duck. Well, by this time you have probably reached the conclusion that the bird is a duck, whether he’s wearing a label or not.” From: Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala*, 102.

42 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 102-103.

43 *Ibid* 109.

44 Andrew J. Schlewitz, “Imperial Incompetence and Guatemalan Militarism, 1931-1966,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 4 (2004): 599.

33 *Ibid* 125.

34 Schneider *Communism in Guatemala, 1944-1954* 101.

35 Stephen M. Streever, “Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Post-revisionist Perspectives,” *e History Teacher* 34, no. 1 (2000): 67.

36 Schneider *Communism in Guatemala, 1944-1954* 38.

37 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 83.

Guatemala until the secret Coup d'état ran its course. During this time the CIA recruited Carlos Enrique Castillo Armas a Guatemalan exile who had previously tried to overthrow the government in 1951 and was living in Honduras trying to build a counterrevolutionary force.⁴⁵ Armas was everything the U.S. government was hoping for in a Latin American ally: a military man who was anti-communist held liberal economic ideas and was pro-Catholic.⁴⁶ Later in 1953 Eisenhower appointed John Peurifoy ambassador to Guatemala. As "a man of action" Peurifoy would serve as a vital link between the State Department and the CIA in Guatemala and as a democrat he would serve as an effective patsy in case the coup failed.^{47 48} The State Department's most vitriolic attacks against Guatemala came at the tenth Inter-American Conference held in Caracas Venezuela from March 1 to 28 1954. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles established the chief interest of the U.S. at the conference as "secur[ing] a strong anti-Communist resolution which would recognize Communism as an international conspiracy instead of regarding it merely as an indigenous movement."⁴⁹ At the conference Dulles proposed that "Communist domination or control of any country would justify 'appropriate action in accordance with existing treaties'"—giving the U.S. a legal background for intervention.⁵⁰ The United States built on its reasoning that all communisms are international communism in disguise; its existence in Latin America is not voluntary but must originate in the Soviet Union. Dulles's proposition known as the Caracas Resolution, passed with only Guatemala voting against.⁵¹ By tying the Caracas Resolution with other existing hemispheric defense treaties the United States had diplomatic carte blanche to move against Guatemala.

By mid-1954 Arbenz knew that an invasion led by Castillo Armas was only a matter of time. In an attempt to remove the reason for United States intervention he proposed arbitration between Guatemala and United Fruit in early 1954.⁵² When this failed Arbenz took drastic action to secure military aid for Guatemala; risking the ire of the United States and his own military Arbenz turned to the Soviets for assistance—reinforcing the U.S. claims of Soviet intervention in Guatemala. Czechoslovakia agreed to send two thousand tons of WWII surplus small arms aboard a Swedish freighter the *Alfbem*.⁵³ The *Alfbem* made port in Guatemala but the military fearful of Arbenz arming his civilian supporters seized the shipment in port. The CIA spotted the shipment in Poland informing

45 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 142-143.

46 Streeter *Managing the Counterrevolution* 25.

47 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala*, 137.

48 *Ibid* 136.

49 *Ibid* 145.

50 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 147.

51 Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention: e Case of Guatemala in 1954* 240.

52 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 155.

53 *Ibid* 155.

President Eisenhower who decided to invoke the Caracas agreement to arrange a meeting of the OAS while simultaneously stepping up planning for the Coup d'état.⁵⁴

Castillo Armas and 300 mercenaries crossed the Honduran-Guatemalan border in the early hours of June 18 1954 backed up by United States planes, a covert radio station playing anti-Arbenz propaganda, and full support of the Catholic Church.⁵⁵ Initially Armas moved only six miles into Guatemala called for Arbenz's unconditional surrender and then moved no further.⁵⁶ Armas's planes continued to make bombing runs on the capital Guatemala City causing panic and fear among the populace and the military the latter knowing that Armas was being supplied by the United States.⁵⁷ Arbenz decided to use diplomatic channels to resolve the situation as he was hesitant to attack an U.S. backed force. On June 19 Guatemalan Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello cabled the UN asking for the Security Council to send an observation team to Guatemala.⁵⁸ The U.S. dominated Security Council voted 10 to 1 the Soviet Union casting the nay vote in favor of returning Guatemala's complaints to the Inter-American Peace Committee an arm of the Organization of American States whose members "generally share U.S. views [and] a greater degree of control exists."⁵⁹ Arbenz then called for the military to release arms to his civilian supporters but the military refused and Arbenz blocked in the international system by the U.S. and pressured by his military officers resigned his presidency on June 27 1954. Stephen M. Streeter offers an analysis of the pivotal role the military played in the success of the coup:

Had the high command chosen to fight seriously they could have easily crushed Castillo Armas's ragtag band. Most military officers chose to abandon Arbenz however because they had grown weary of the ethnic conflict triggered by

54 The discovery of the shipment reads like a page from a spy novel. "Posing as a bird-watcher, the agency's operative in Stettin [Poland] spied what he believed to be arms. He then wrote a seemingly innocuous letter to a Parisian automobile parts concern. He meticulously pasted a microfilm dot over one period. The agent in Paris translated the microfilm message into code and immediately transmitted it by shortwave to Washington. The message read like the twenty-second prayer of David in the Book of Psalms: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Decoded, this meant that military supplies were on board the ship." From: Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* pg. 155.

55 The three aircraft given to Armas were lost after the first day and upon hearing the news Eisenhower decided to send more the next day. Needing to get the planes covertly to Castillo Armas, the CIA working with the Eisenhower administration used the services of William Pawley a Latin American businessman currently working for the Eisenhower administration. Pawley reportedly handed a briefcase filled with \$150,000 to the Nicaraguan ambassador, Guillermo Sevilla-Sacasa, who purchased the planes from the Pentagon and then flew them to Panama, where they were turned over to Armas. From Max Holland, "Private Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy, William Pawley and the 1954 Coup d'État in Guatemala." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7 no. 4 (2005): 61-62.

56 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 161.

57 Max Holland, "Private Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy, William Pawley and the 1954 Coup d'État in Guatemala." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7 no. 4 (2005): 63.

58 Immerman, *e CIA in Guatemala* 168-170.

59 *Ibid* 170.

the land reform and because they feared that thwarting PBSUCCESS would only invite a much larger U.S. military intervention. The transition between Arbenz and Castillo Armas represented in reality military coup not a mass-based revolution against communism.⁶⁰

The Guatemalan military role in the coup was lost to the planners of PBSUCCESS who ascribe Armas's success to U.S. support and planning. This shortsightedness came back to haunt President John F. Kennedy's administration as the Bay of Pigs invasion was based on the faulty CIA logic overstating the role of the U.S. in the 1954 Coup d'état.

On July 7 1954 Castillo Armas was elected president by the military junta placed in power after Arbenz's resignation.⁶¹ Armas immediately set out to reverse the policies of the revolutionary government. He banned the communist party arrested anyone he deemed a communist reversed the land seizures under Decree 900, and repealed the constitution of 1945.⁶² It was clear that Armas wished to be just another dictator in Guatemala's long history of repressive politics. To the U.S. the coup represented a "foreign policy panacea" a way to combat what they viewed as international communism but what was really a democratically elected government looking to reverse the long history of underdevelopment in Guatemala.⁶³ This type of foreign policy would in the end do the U.S. great harm as emerging governments in Latin America would remember how the U.S. treated Guatemala from 1947-1954.

In 1957 a Guatemalan Embassy official was overheard saying to the U.S. State Department that "though it was a difficult thing for a Guatemalan to admit no government could survive in Guatemala unless it was acceptable to the United States Government."⁶⁴ From independence in 1821 through the democratic revolution of 1944 Guatemalan politics saw the rise and fall of a series of dictators most of whom opened the country up to exploitative U.S. business interests. The revolution of 1944 looked to reverse this "development of underdevelopment" by instituting a series of social and agrarian reforms that would empower both the middle class and ethnic Mayan Indians while drawing their support to the struggling government.⁶⁵ These reforms first brought the Guatemalan government into conflict with the United Fruit Company a powerful U.S. business interest with connections to members in the U.S. government. Seeing these reforms as a threat to its economic and political hegemony in Latin America the United States noted the presence

of communists in the Guatemalan government and condemned them with Cold War rhetoric that linked Guatemala to the Soviet Union. Decree 900 enacted by the Jacobo Arbenz government was the largest of these agrarian reform and brought the U.S. into increased conflict with Guatemala. Cutting off all aid and looking to curtain what it saw as a beachhead of international communism the U.S. government started to take legal and covert action against Guatemala. On June 18 1954 the U.S. government supported a coup d'état led by Castillo Armas that was ultimately successful in replacing the Arbenz government due to a lack of military support to fight the invasion. The installation of Castillo Armas provided security for U.S. hegemony in Latin America at the cost of self-determination for the Guatemalan people and irreparable damage to the U.S. reputation in Latin America.

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60 Streeter, "Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist and Postrevisionist Perspectives," 70

61 Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala* 177.

62 *Ibid* 198-199.

63 Holland, "Private Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy, William Pawley and the 1954 Coup d'État in Guatemala," 51.

64 Schlewitz, "Imperial Incompetence and Guatemalan Militarism, 1931-1966," 586.

65 Aybar de Soto, *Dependency and Intervention: The Case of Guatemala in 1954*, 6.