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GUATEMALAN UPRISING AGAINST ARBENZ  
REGIME; STRENGTH AND SIGNIFICANCE  
OF THE SO-CALLED "FORCES OF LIBERATION".

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1. Following a period of build-up and preparation which lasted for a number of months, a small force consisting of Guatemalan political refugees under the leadership of Castillo Armas, entered Guatemala on or about June 18, 1954. The strength of this group of fugitives from the Communist-dominated regime of Guatemala has been variously estimated as consisting of between 100 and 200 men. It is reliably reported that Castillo Armas and his followers made their move on the assumption that one or both of the following two developments would occur if "touched off" by his re-entry into Guatemala, coupled with a call for a general uprising against the regime, viz.:

- a. There would be a large popular rallying to the cause of "liberation", and/or
- b. The officer corps of the Guatemalan Army would move against the regime;

and that either (or both) of these developments would produce sufficient force to upset the regime. It is believed that Armas was in touch with considerable numbers of militant anti-Communists on the inside of Guatemala who led him to believe that the bulk of popular sentiment was anti-Communist and that the time was ripe for his move; and that, moreover, the officer corps of the Army still held the balance of power and could without assistance bring about a change of Government if they could be induced to make the move which they had long been considering and discussing. The full details of the events which led up to the June 18 move on the part of Armas, and of the events which took place during the 9-day period of hostilities, are not yet known. However, certain facts have become quite clear, including the following:

- a. The successful penetration during the early days of June by the police and other agents of the regime, had resulted in far-reaching exposures of anti-Communists who were committed to militant resistance against the Arbenz regime. This penetration and exposure resulted in a considerable increase in police arrests, tortures and killings of anti-Communists generally. (It has been subsequently estimated that well over 500 anti-Communists were tortured and killed in various parts of the country,

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although the figures are not yet known because so much of this was accomplished secretly and at remote spots.) These developments are known to have caused the greatest concern to Armas, who estimated that if he did not make his move soon the main elements of potential resistance within the country would be crushed. It is further known that within the first two or three days after the entry into Guatemala of Armas' men the numbers of people joining his forces were small (due in part to remoteness of areas into which he came and also the fear of reprisal on the part of the Communists who had put out threats, followed by orders calling for the immediate execution of anyone assisting Armas). Thereafter there was a rapid accretion of strength to Armas' small forces, which included significant defections from the garrisons at Chiquimula and Zacapa.

c. Before the Armas forces had progressed significantly beyond Zacapa and before there was time or opportunity for additional uprisings to occur, the officer corps made a number of tentative moves against the Communists, with whom Arbenz had increasingly surrounded himself and by whom he had permitted himself to be led.

d. It is further reliably reported that Armas made extensive use of two or three aircraft, although restraining these from the bombing of cities or other non-military targets. There was much contemporary confusion of information as to the exact date when the first bomb was dropped in the vicinity of Guatemala City, but it is now well established that this did not take place prior to 25 June when a bomb was dropped on the Matamoros fortress on the outskirts of Guatemala City.

2. During the period of hostilities as well as for the weeks which immediately preceded June 18, there had been a very noticeable rise of popular antipathy toward the Arbenz regime and particularly the Communist leaders and the police, led by the ruthless Cruz Wer and his Deputy, Jaime Rosenberg. Reference has already been made to the suspicion and fear of the Communists among the top military officers. The arrival of the ALFHEM with a very substantial shipment of arms (valued at between five and ten million dollars) served to increase this concern

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on the part of the military. Whereas certain officers were at first happy that the arms had been received, they became alarmed upon discovering the fact that they had been procured clandestinely from behind the Iron Curtain and they were even more alarmed when they learned of Government plans to increase the size of the police and to arm cadres of Communist peasants. Moreover, other elements of the population took actions indicating mounting opposition to the Arbenz regime. The strong denunciation of Communism by the Catholic Archbishop of Guatemala had a profound effect. Also anti-regime and anti-Communist sentiments all found expression in pamphlets, posters, newspapers and a widespread campaign of writing the symbol "32" on walls and doors throughout the country. The significance of this symbol was understood by all to be a protest against the violation of Article 32 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which specifically prohibited political parties of foreign origin and connection. These sentiments appear to have been played on and developed by the use of a certain amount of clandestine radio on the part of Armas and his people. The Government made an all-out effort to locate and destroy the secret transmitters and on one or two occasions announced their success. The Government also declared that the hostile radio was variously located in different parts of Guatemala, in Mexico, and subsequently in Honduras. In evaluating the pressures which, in combination, resulted in the resignation of Arbenz, it seems clear that he was troubled about the activity of this radio which continued to ask sharp and revealing questions concerning the nature and extent of Communist infiltration and control of his Government.

3. In any event, Arbenz resigned during the night of June 27 and was permitted by his successor, Colonel Diaz, to make a long and violent radio broadcast. Diaz, who was long regarded as the most devoted and loyal supporter of Arbenz and the officer who got on best with the Communists, followed Arbenz on the air with a broadcast of his own extolling Arbenz and the virtues of his regime, and promising to carry on with the same governmental program. During the brief tenure of the Junta led by Colonel Diaz, most of the Communist leaders as well as Arbenz, the two Toriellos and many others, made good their escape into the protection of political asylum granted by other Latin American embassies. The embassies granting asylum to the largest number of the Communists and other fugitives were, and remain today, the embassies of Mexico, Chile and Argentina -- although considerable numbers found their way into the embassies of other nations adhering to the special Latin American practice of affording political asylum.

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