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Twists and Turns of Our Guatemala Policy

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GUATEMALA CITY

Top sources from the Kennedy administration have revealed that the United Nations instigated and supported the 1963 coup by the Guatemalan military to overthrow the constitutionally elected President Miguel Ydigoras-Fuentes.

In view of the crucial fight still going on to establish a stable, democratic government in Guatemala and in view of the original concept of the Alliance for Progress to encourage democracy in Latin America, the information writes a new chapter in hemispheric history.

According to these sources, who must remain anonymous, the decision to overthrow Ydigoras was made at a meeting of President John F. Kennedy and his top advisers early in 1963 and was pushed by the American ambassador to Guatemala, John O. Bell.

THE REASON was not to depose Ydigoras, a flamboyant general and dedicated anti-Communist who gave Guatemalan land for training exiles for the 1961 Cuban invasion. The purpose was to prevent what was considered to be an imminent presidential victory by Juan Jose Arevalo.

(Last of a Series)

At the meeting, the sources said, Bell argued vehemently that Arevalo, who had been president from 1944 to 1950, was a Communist and that his election must be prevented at all costs.

Moscoso Argued For Arevalo

They added that this point of view was opposed by Teodoro Moscoso, then administrator of the Alliance for Progress. Moscoso argued that Arevalo, who was a member of the democratic left and had pushed reforms during his administration, was no further to the left than ex-President Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela or ex-Gov. Luis Munoz Marin of Puerto Rico.

MOSCOSO, these sources said, argued that these men showed how, once in office, men of the non-Communist left developed reform-minded, progressive administration, and he pointed out that both had become favorites of President Kennedy.

However, when the vote was taken, the "coup bloc" won out—it was voted, that Ydigoras should be overthrown.

It is unclear whether the Peralta family was then chosen or whether they proffered their services. But Col. Enrique Peralta Azurdia, Ydigoras' defense minister, and his son then led the revolt that culminated in the overthrow on March 31, 1963.

In President Kennedy's council, the men who pushed the coup were Bell, who had been a top AID official for many years and is now political adviser to a U.S. military unit in Florida; Edwin M. Martin, then assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs and now ambassador to

Argentina, and Richard Helms, then a CIA official and now its director.

ACCORDING to the information, President Kennedy was himself unsure about the Ydigoras overthrow, but eventually relied on a simple vote of his advisers. There is also some evidence that lower-level CIA officials, who appreciated Ydigoras' help in the Cuban invasion, were not in agreement with the decision.

The Ydigoras coup came at a time when the brilliance of the Kennedy administration's early concern over pushing democracy in Latin America was dimming. The failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the concomitant new reliance on military regimes against communism, ignited the change. The new policy was being formed that came to be known as a more "pragmatic" approach.

IN PART, the Guatemalan coup led directly to today's problems in this most troubled country in Latin America. This is because it was followed by a military dictatorship whose unpopularity helped a Castroite guerrilla movement to flourish.

The Peralta military regime allowed elections to be held last March, and the middle-road government of President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro came into power. But the Mendez government is still trying desperately to straddle the two extremes.

On the right are some within the military and the economic groups who see any change as communistic. On

the left are the rapidly growing Castroite Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), made up of Marxists and young democrats who believe there is no longer any democratic way to bring social change to the country.

U.S. Diplomacy: Send in the CIA

The story of American diplomacy in Guatemala, which has played a major role in shaping present events, has been a story of continuous intervention, especially by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The problems started after Guatemala's 1944 revolution against dictator Jorge Ubico, when Juan Jose Arevalo, considered the "first president of the revolution," came to power.

He spoke in vague concepts such as "spiritual socialism," which meant a kind of mystical bond between men. He made reforms in education, introduced social security and medical coverage for the workers, encouraged industrial development and started unionization of workers.

There has never been any evidence that Arevalo was a Communist. On the contrary, he attempted to control the Communists. What worried some critics, however, is that in the last years of his presidency he became practically a prisoner of the army. His administration led to the far leftist administration of Col. Jacobo Arbenz Guzman.

THE ARBENZ years make up one of the most fascinating chapters in recent Latin Ameri-