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LETTER DATED 15 APRIL 1953 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
GUATÉMALA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On the second of this month I delivered personally to the Secretariat of the United Nations a document, signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, which described a series of facts amounting to open hostility and a threat of intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic of Guatemala.

My Government requested the Secretariat to communicate this statement to the States Members of the United Nations and to the Security Council, since the facts related therein affect the security and sovereignty of Guatemala. We hold that facts of this kind, since they endanger international security, may properly be brought before the Security Council at any time.

The Secretariat considers that it has sufficiently done its duty by circulating Guatemala's statement with a covering note to the States Members and to the members of the Security Council individually.

The Government of Guatemala, however, desires that the document should be laid before the Security Council as a body at its next meeting, so that that high authority may take note of the facts contained therein and of the declaration in connexion therewith made by my Government in the exercise of its lawful and incontestable rights. My Government does not intend to bring a charge, but to place this statement on record in case events should occur constituting a violation of Guatemala's territory and national independence.

I therefore request you on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Guatemala to be good enough, if necessary, to place this statement of Guatemala's upon the agenda of the Security Council's next meeting, purely for the purpose indicated above.

I enclose two copies of the document, in Spanish and English.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Eduardo Castillo Arriola
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Guatemala

DELEGACION PERMANENTE DE GUATEMALA
ANTE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS

Guatemala, April 1st., 1953.

To the Secretary-General,
United Nations, N.Y.

Sir:

On the instructions of the Government of the Republic of Guatemala, I have the honour to request you to inform the States members of the United Nations and the Security Council of a succession of developments in recent years which demonstrate the intention of certain international political circles to intervene openly in the domestic affairs of Guatemala, thus denying the right of self-determination of peoples, which is one of the basic principles of the United Nations.

In taking this step, my Government wishes to place on record the fact that its sovereignty is seriously threatened and to enter this protest in the form of a document that will be available as evidence in the event of an attempt, on the part of those who are pursuing these tactics, to infringe by force the territorial inviolability and the national independence of Guatemala. The developments referred to are as follows:

I. Since the Guatemalan Revolution of 1944, newspaper chains in the United States, important journals in other countries and the largest North American news agencies, have carried on a systematic propaganda campaign of false and tendentious reports which, taking advantage of the international tension that has prevailed for some years, attempts to represent Guatemala as an "outpost of Soviet communism on the American continent", a "tool of Moscow" and "spearhead" of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics against the United States of America.

An example of the lengths to which this campaign has gone is given by the report of a well-known British journalist who went so far as to state that there was a secret base for Soviet submarines in Guatemala.

It has also been said that Guatemala has concluded a secret agreement with Czechoslovakia under which it would receive arms in exchange for coffee.

II. Attempts have been made to represent the Guatemalan Government, as a "disturber of the peace in the American continent" and a threat to the "security of the countries of the Western Hemisphere". These accusations have repeatedly been made by, among others, Mr. Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, when he was President of the Dominican Republic and later in his present capacity of Minister for Foreign Affairs, Head of the Armed Forces of his country and representative to the seventh General Assembly of the United Nations. Mr. Trujillo has stated that armed units are being trained in Guatemala for the purpose of intervening in the domestic affairs of the Dominican and Cuban Republics. Mr. Trujillo is seeking to create an atmosphere favourable to the intervention of other countries in the domestic affairs of Guatemala, by representing the latter as a violator of international agreements between the countries of the American continent.

III. Among these actions designed to cause enmity between Guatemala and the friend nation of the United States of America, mention must be made of the unfortunate activities in which the former United States Ambassador to Guatemala, Mr. Richard Patterson engaged during his tenure of that post. Mr. Patterson announced openly that the Government then headed by Dr. Juan Jose Arevalo would be overthrown as the result of international pressure, incited; incited various groups of conspirators to engage in subversive activities against the constitutional regime and expressed to high officials of the Guatemalan Government the opinion that the Guatemalan problem was a matter which could easily be settled, as it represented a just claim and involved only a few million dollars, but that if the United States were to give way in the case of Guatemala, it would be obliged to do so elsewhere, which would mean a loss of many thousand million dollars.

IV. Although some Central American Governments formally state that they are animated by a spirit of Central American brotherhood and of friendliness toward the Government of Guatemala, in practice certain high officials of those Governments have been engaging in intensive diplomatic activity by no means friendly to the Guatemalan Government, since it is designed to form a coalition of Central American countries to exercise pressure upon Guatemala within the Organization of Central American States, and to arm a military conspiracy plainly directed against our Government.

These facts have been widely publicized in Central America and although there have been reports, unofficially, of instances of disagreement and even denunciation of them, there have not been the official denials which such acts of obvious aggression call for.

V. On 12 March 1953, Mr. Spruille Braden, former Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs in the United States Department of State, a person who is in close touch with some government circles in the friendly country, and who is a large shareholder in the powerful copper monopoly and head of the public relations department of the United Fruit Company, which, as you are aware, also operates in Guatemala, made a number of statements in the course of a lecture at Dartmouth College, Hannover, clearly suggesting the need for foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Guatemala and advancing the extraordinary argument that action by the armed forces of a foreign nation against a country which is - as is persistently alleged to be the case of Guatemala - a "communist" danger to the security of the United States, should not be regarded as intervention.

VI. The President of the United Fruit Company, which has extensive interests in Guatemala, recently stated to the United States newspaper The Times Picayune that the UFCO intended to ask the United States Department of State to intervene in the matter of expropriation of uncultivated land owned by the Company in Guatemala, which had been authorized under the Agrarian Reform Act, and therefore in exercise of the sovereign powers of the State of Guatemala and in accordance with the spirit of recommendations approved by the United Nations.

What is the purpose of the slanderous charges that Guatemala is an "outpost of Soviet communism in the American continent", a "secret base for Soviet submarines", etc., etc.? The purpose is obvious. Those who are interested in maintaining the present international tension and in fomenting antagonism between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to the grave detriment of world peace and international friendship, make these charges in order to represent Guatemala as an enemy of the United States. The truth is that the democratic Governments of Guatemala since 1944 have practised a policy of cordial and honest friendship towards the Government and people of the United States.

The Government of Guatemala is not a satellite of the Soviet Union, the United States or any other country. Guatemala has diplomatic relations with a great many countries, including the USSR. The USSR does not intervene, either directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of Guatemala, just as Guatemala does not intervene or attempt to intervene in or disturb the peace of any other country, since its international conduct is strictly in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the international agreements it has signed and its repeated desire that States should, in all circumstances, secure the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. The Guatemalan Government maintains a firm and unwavering policy of peace, because it believes that only thus will it be able fully to satisfy the aspirations of Guatemalan people.

My Government considers that the causes of this vast interventionist conspiracy against Guatemala are to be found in the powerful interests which are the reason for the backwardness of our country and against which a series of measures has been taken by the forces of democracy in Guatemala since 1944, when a historic popular movement brought to an end the succession of tyrannies which had denied the people of Guatemala the exercise of universally recognized human rights, and which operated against our people and in favour of the powerful interests of the monopolistic companies to which we shall refer below.

Guatemala is an under-developed country and at the present time is without the means to carry on freer trade, develop industrial production and agriculture and provide its own port facilities. It does not control its mineral resources and it had no large sources for the production of electrical power.

Almost all Guatemala's exports and imports are carried in vessels owned by the United Fruit Company, which earns substantial profits every year from this source alone. The United Fruit Company directly or indirectly controls the only three Guatemalan ports and holds a large number of shares in the International Railways of Central America (IRCA), which has a monopoly of rail transport in the country and charges the highest fares and freight rates in the world which are fixed entirely at the company's will, so that Guatemalan traders and producers pay more for the carriage of their goods from Puerto Barrios to Guatemala (200 miles) than from Europe or the United States to Guatemala. These facts have been verified by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which recommended that an early change should be made.

The Empresa Electrica de Guatemala, a branch of the well-known trust, "Bond and Share Company", has a monopoly of the supply of electricity to the capital of Guatemala and other large centres.

The three companies mentioned are operated in Guatemala under the protection of contracts signed many years ago by anti-democratic governments of Guatemala, and thanks to these contracts enjoy harmful privileges and concessions which place Guatemalan investors in a disadvantageous position as regards competition, and subject the entire country to high rates which raise the cost of living for our people.

Under the protection of contracts of this kind, the United Fruit Company is exploiting large areas for the cultivation of bananas and hemp, and, as a result of its monopolistic position is subjecting Guatemalan banana producers to crippling conditions.

The companies mentioned and the United Fruit Company in particular have never concealed their disagreement with the Labour Code and other social legislation promulgated by democratic Governments since 1944; they have described the Labour Code, for example, as "discriminatory" as an excuse for not giving it full effect as is the duty of any company which respects the laws enacted by the Guatemalan State in the exercise of its sovereignty.

When the workers of the United Fruit Company and the IRCA in particular, requested the companies to enter into collective labour contracts, the companies prolonged the labour disputes with serious prejudice to public order and on some occasions endeavoured to boycott the Government of Guatemala economically, as a means of coercion so that the workers would be obliged to accept disadvantageous agreements with the companies, by such measures as the suspension of the regular arrival of the United Fruit Company vessels which are the only vessels carrying the trade of our country.

In labour disputes, the IRCA, for example, acting in league with the United Fruit Company in order to put pressure on the Guatemalan Government, threatened the mass dismissal of railway workers on the false pretext of imminent bankruptcy.

The IRCA is illegally retaining many millions of dollars which, acting merely as an agent, it collected in the form of a welfare tax paid by the Guatemalan people.

The charges and services of the Empresa Electrica de Guatemala are also protected by one-sided and unfair contract, signed in 1922, as a reward for arranging the international recognition of a de facto government.

Recently, under the Agrarian Reform Act, 13,929 hectares of unutilized land have been expropriated from the Compañía Agrícola de Guatemala, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company, while in accordance with the provisions of the Act, the land under cultivation was not expropriated.

The Government of Guatemala, in response to the demands of all democratic forces in the country, is steadfastly pursuing a policy designed to adjust the operations of foreign undertakings to national interests, special emphasis being placed on the development of the national economy. The policy is intended, as is clearly stated in the programme of the Government of President Jacobo Arbenz, to "transform our country from a dependent nation with a semi-colonial economy into an economically independent country."

That is not all. As stated in the programme of the Government of President Arbenz and by the progressive forces of our country, Guatemala has for hundreds of years been a country with a predominantly semi-feudal economy, under which hundreds of thousands of peasants have lived in inhuman conditions; national industry has languished owing to the limited domestic market and the workers and the people have suffered as a result of low wages. Hence, in the interest of Guatemala's economic development, the Government last year promulgated an Agrarian Reform Act which met with opposition from all whose interests were contrary to the national welfare and were affected thereby.

The Guatemalan Government has pursued an unwavering policy of respect for democratic freedoms, which, to judge by the latest news reports, has become an undesirable practice at a time when fascism is rife in countries which were at one time members of the victorious alliance of nations that fought the threat of Hitlerian and Japanese fascism.

The Guatemalan Government considers that the facts mentioned, which have been all too briefly described, are the real cause of the threats of intervention and of the defamatory campaign which we are now reporting to the United Nations.

The Guatemalan Government has no doubt that it is the combination of foreign and domestic interests affected by its progressive and patriotic policy which is concealing its objectives behind the smoke-screen of "the fight against communism", which, there is no need to say, has always been used whenever it suited their purpose by those who cannot publicly avow their nefarious objectives.

Even as this communication is being drafted, new developments have taken place which give added force to my Government's protest; a group of rebels took up arms against the constitutional government, counting on reinforcements which they were to receive from abroad to ensure the success of their subversive actions. As proceedings have just been instituted in this case, my Government wishes merely to mention this serious incident.

This Government has always extended a friendly hand to all countries with a view to establishing the broadest possible peaceful collaboration and has always shown itself to be an unwavering supporter of the pacific settlement of all disputes between States. It consistently observes a policy of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations and on more than one occasion has expressed its just hope that international relations would be governed by the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

For these reasons the Guatemalan Government indignantly condemns and duly protests against the facts set forth in this document since it considers that they constitute a threat to its national dignity, sovereignty and independence and that attempts may be made to violate these rights by force. In conformity with the aforesaid principles, the Guatemalan Government affirms its full right to repel any act or threat of aggression, whatever its origin or pretext and whoever it may be who seeks to intervene in its domestic affairs.

Despite the threats and the conspiracy of foreign and domestic interests against its progressive and patriotic policy, the Guatemalan Government is firmly resolved to pursue its programme, which the people so urgently require, and is fully convinced that in so doing it is rendering the best possible service to the cause of democracy and of peace among nations.

I shall be very grateful to the Secretary-General for transmitting this communication to all Member States and to the Security Council.

