

seizures, communist involvement in them, and Arbenz' unwillingness to do anything about them led many, both in Guatemala and in the United States, to the conclusion that Guatemala was gradually drifting towards communism and that Arbenz himself was sympathetic to this trend.

Such conclusions were supported by the apparently growing strength of the communist movement, the various factions of which had merged in 1951-2 to form the Guatemalan Labour Party (GLP). This strength was evident not so much in expanding popular support for the party, as in growing communist control of the labour and peasant movements, the reasonably close ties between a number of leading communists and Arbenz and his wife, and in the appointment of communists to a number of sub-cabinet level posts. It would be difficult, however, on the basis of this evidence, to agree with Allen Dulles' assertion that Arbenz sought to create a communist state in Guatemala, with Eisenhower's reported contention that Guatemala constituted the communist danger for the Americas — the red menace in the western hemisphere, or with John Foster Dulles' (then Secretary of State) view that events in Guatemala constituted an intrusion of Soviet despotism, reflecting "the evil purpose of the Kremlin to destroy the inter-American system."²⁷ The communists held no cabinet posts and had no discernible influence over the principal coercive instruments of the state — the army and police. As Cole Blasier has pointed out, although the communists may have enjoyed considerable influence within the government, they clearly did not control it.²⁸

Just as it is difficult to document communist control of the Arbenz government, it strains credibility to maintain that the government was a Soviet proxy, as was apparently believed by leading US statesmen of the day. It is reasonable to assume that the Soviets enjoyed a degree of influence over the Guatemalan Labour Party. But given the lack of any deep Soviet historical connection with the region, the indifference displayed by Soviet leaders towards the Third World in general and towards Latin America in particular during the Stalin era, and the preoccupation of the Soviet leadership in the aftermath of Stalin's death with the succession, it is improbable that the strategy and tactics of the local party were in

²⁷ As cited in C. Blasier, *The Hovering Giant* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), pp. 162, 165, 171.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.