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¹ Nick Cullather, the author of the *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, aimed at writing about the operations by ³ the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in its choreographed ⁷ attempt to overthrow the government of Guatemala under the administration of President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán (Immerman 605). After the end of the cold war, the CIA declared a more transparent policy in regard to the proceedings of its secret activities. CIA was highly preoccupied with secrecy, an element that ensured that a larger percentage of its documents were classified. In order to achieve its mission of a more transparent record policy, the CIA hired highly skilled historians. Cullather was amongst the skilled historians hired by the CIA to help it in its mission to make public the Guatemalan operations. Cullather was a talented history student of ⁶ foreign relations of the United States, and his decision to accept the proposal by the CIA was motivated by the opportunity to access the files of the CIA.

Cullather had an immense contribution to the CIA's operations. Notably, being a history student, Cullather was acquainted with the rich historiography of PBSUCCESS. PBSUCCESS was the operation arranged by the CIA in 1954 to overthrow the Guatemalan government led by President Jacobo Árbenz (Immerman 605). With his wealth of information in matters pertaining

to history, Cullather acknowledged that a study authorized by an agency, despite its intention to be utilized as a training manual, would also function as an indicator of the value of CIA's archives. Therefore, Cullather intended to use the opportunity presented by the CIA to have access to the agency's records and assess the degree to which the agency spoke about the unanswered questions as well as solved contradictory interpretations. Following the mandate discharged by the CIA to its recruited historians, Cullather came up with ⁵Operation *PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Immerman 605). However, this manuscript was declassified by the CIA, although with many edits.

One of the key themes is the Guatemalan episode. One of the reasons why the CIA declassified the report by Cullather is that it revealed new and shocking details about the Guatemalan episode. Cullather noted that the CIA was largely involved in overthrowing President Jacobo and his administration. Jacobo Árbenz's reign as the Guatemalan president was marred by chaos and pressure from his opponents. In his presidency tenure, Jacobo made historical reforms, the most significant being the Land Reform of 1952 (Immerman 605). However, Jacobo Árbenz gave in to the increasing pressure from his opponents like the CIA, and he resigned in 1954, terminating a reform era and ushered in an era of authoritarian administrations. The demise of Jacobo Arbenz still remains obscurity. In his report, Cullather raised serious concerns like the CIA's record with no information about the agency's operations, methods and missions pursued by the agency, and the operation's aspects that were effective. Cullather also notes that certain details of places and names are not available.

In addition, the essence of the Arbenz era is a major theme from the author's manuscript. Notably, it is during the administration of Arbenz and his reign as the president of Guatemala that the country witnessed major reforms. One of these reforms was the Land Reform of 1952

(Immerman 605). Essentially, this reform divided underutilized land to local peasants and ensured the landowners were compensated using government bonds. Arbenz era was enigmatic, resulting in any kind of certainty the beholder desired to see. Those who hold the perception that the CIA triggered the fall of Arbenz view the actions of this agency as a conceited foreign policy in the country. Those who do not believe this perception hold that local Guatemalan opposition, reforms irreconcilability with the authoritarian history of Guatemala, and mistakes of Arbenz's government led to his killing. Other individuals still believe that the irrelevance of Arbenz is his essence.

Cullather's intention was to access the CIA's records and assess the degree to which the agency spoke about the unanswered questions as well as solved contradictory interpretations, and he was successful in fulfilling this intention. Notably, Cullather realized that the CIA had several unanswered questions and concerns. For example, Cullather found that the agency did not record how it conducted its operations and how the operatives of the agency constructed with the problem the agency was pursuing (Cullather 45). It was also not clear the purpose and approaches the agency pursued and the agency's operations aspects they were deemed successful. Additionally, Cullather found that the CIA allowed speculations on whether misunderstandings regarding PBSUCCESS resulted in overoptimistic agency operations. CIA did not provide specific particulars about names or places. Also, some information in CIA records was censored. For example, the CIA blanked out quotation sections from a scholarly article that had already been published.

Cullather's scholarly work is very useful to the readers. Notably, through this scholarly piece, readers are able to gain a better understanding of Guatemalan history, specifically under the leadership of President Arbenz. Readers are also likely to learn more about the CIA, an

agency that claimed to maintain a transparent foreign relations policy in the USA, although it never became. In addition, the scholarly piece by Cullather informs the readers about Operation PBSUCCESS, an operation choreographed by the CIA in its endeavor to overthrow the government of President Arbenz (Cullather 50). CIA was an external agency that exerted more pressure on Arbenz and his administration to the extent that Arbenz bowed to such pressure and resigned from his position as the country's president. The reading also provides readers with information about the Arbenz era, his achievements, reforms, his fall, and how dictatorial regimes succeeded in the reform era of Arbenz. Generally, the readings provide information about the rich and brief history of Guatemala under the reign of President Arbenz.

The author was very effective in the use of sources. Notably, the author uses both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of information provide first-hand information regarding the subject under study, while secondary sources second-hand information from other sources or researchers. The primary source used by the author was the records of the CIA. The author had direct access to the records of the CIA, and from this, he was able to collect first-hand information. The secondary sources of information used by the author were the agency's records and articles published by other scholars. After the author was recruited by the CIA, he was able to access its documents for information gathering. Cullather also borrowed information from other scholarly works like ² *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* and ³ *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, a book authored by Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer (Immerman 605). Specifically, the author used this source to elaborate on the role played by the CIA in overthrowing the then Guatemalan government.

The author was not biased in his scholarly presentation. Instead, he presented a judiciously balanced scholarly piece. For example, despite the author's obsession to access CIA's

documents and records, he does not solely rely on them. The author also incorporates other sources of information like books and articles published by other scholars in his scholarly development. Despite the worthiness of Cullather's scholarly piece in revealing details about CIA operations and the agencies of the then US government interacted, there are still suggestions for future research. First, the scholarly piece is not comprehensive and exhaustive. Second, in some instances, the manuscript reveals shallow apprehension of the history of Guatemala. Simply, the author does not provide adequate information that transpired during Operation PBSUCCESS and all information pertaining to the history of Guatemala. Therefore, there is a need for future research to develop comprehensive information about Guatemalan history.

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