

(Wednesday Feb 5, 92)

Picture parody

I am upset that the Daily has deleted important parts of my article "Kennedy sought peace" (Opinions, Feb. 4) and replaced them with illustrations that mock the arguments I made. The Daily did this and changed the title of my article without consulting me.

For example, the third illustration expressed that Kennedy's new policy toward Latin America was "Lots o' Bananas." The fourth illustration raises a motive for Kennedy's assassination as "Because of Bananas." Considering the content of my article, these can only be viewed as an attempt to distort and make a joke of my arguments.

The space that these illustrations took would have allowed for some of the serious statements that were deleted:

- The fact that ex-CIA director Allen Dulles — who Kennedy fired in 1961 — served on the board of directors of United Fruit Co., thus establishing a high-level connection between large corporate landowners and the CIA.

- The fact that United Fruit lost large properties to the Cuban Revolution and therefore had an interest in a U.S. invasion of Cuba.

- The reference to the CIA report "Survey of Latin America" of April 1964 that stated that "The climate for private enterprise has taken adverse turn." This showed

a CIA opposition to Kennedy's Latin America policy.

The deletion of these ideas and their replacement with illustrations that distort and mock my arguments — all without consulting the author — is a form of irresponsible editing practices, if not censorship.

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Tuesday, February 4, 1992

Opinions

Kennedy sought

By Andrés Belalcázar

... the hard reality of life in much of Latin America ... will not be solved simply by complaining about Castro, by blaming all problems on communism or generals or nationalism.

—John F. Kennedy, Nov. 18, 1963

The Kennedy administration had an innovative policy towards Latin America: "To us," Kennedy said in a campaign speech in 1960, "the major issue is the fight against communism, but to them, those who live to the south of us, the fighting is against poverty and disease and illiteracy and ignorance." As president, his unprecedented Latin American policy — especially regarding military interventions and land reform — earned him powerful enemies.

Although anti-communist, Kennedy reacted differently than other presidents when faced with an emerging communist government in the hemisphere (Cuba). Traditionally, when faced with these governments or insurgent movements, U.S. administrations have mounted covert and overt military operations to undermine them.

These operations have ranged from funding opposition parties, training and supplying "freedom fighter" guerrilla forces, to full-scale military invasions. Prominent historical examples include the 1954 intervention in Guatemala to oust Jacobo Arbenz; the 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic with 22,000 Marines to prevent Juan Bosch from taking power; the interventions to undermine the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua; the invasion of Grenada in 1984, etc.

In brief, the United States has traditionally considered communist insurgencies or governments as a threat to the American continent and thus has fought them militarily.



Kennedy was different. He was reluctant to send the U.S. armed forces to intervene abroad. As he said in his commencement speech to American University in 1963, "What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war."

In fact, he never authorized a full-scale invasion of Cuba despite considerable pressure from the military and intelligence circles. As shown by the mentioned record of interventions, not invading an emerging communist country in Latin America was very unusual and conflicted with traditional policy proponents.

The height of this internal conflict was the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, in which Kennedy refused to take advice from the military and CIA experts, and instead formed the "Excomm" committee with his closest personal advisers. The result: The United States did not invade Cuba, to the bitter displeasure of invasion supporters.

Kennedy was also different in that he confronted Latin American communist insurgencies with economic reform programs. He believed poverty caused insurgency. In a region with grave problems of malnutrition, illiteracy, inadequate health and inequitable land distribution, Kennedy observed, "If we are to halt the advance of Latin communism, we must create a Latin America where freedom can flourish — where long-enduring people know, at last, that they are moving



toward a better life for themselves and their children."

Consistent with his rhetoric, President Kennedy launched the ambitious Alliance for Progress intending to "satisfy the basic needs of the [Latin] American people for homes, work, land, health and schools."

Kennedy's personal commitment to the charter of the Alliance resulted in concrete results in its first years. Twenty billion dol-

peace

From
The Minnesota Daily
(Newspaper of the University
of Minnesota)

lars, was lent by the United States, and programs of land reform and agrarian development, housing and taxation were implemented throughout Latin America. There is much written about the Alliance's accomplishments and failures, but it is widely accepted that it was one of the main components of Kennedy's policy for containing communism in Latin America: a policy relying more on bread than on weapons.

This new outlook towards Latin America was the reason for the unprecedented popularity of Kennedy among the region's peoples. In his frequent visits thousands of people lined the streets from the airports to the inner cities. His name is carried today by neighborhoods, avenues, hospitals and schools in many Latin American cities. In contrast, Nixon was almost lynched on the streets of Caracas and Lima in his 1958 trip. No recent U.S. president — invisible behind severe security measures — has enjoyed the warmth of the Latin masses as Kennedy did.

His unprecedented reform programs, seeking diversified agriculture versus single



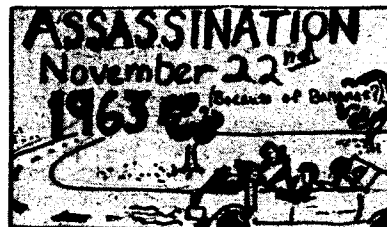
crop, took land away from large landowners and gave it to *campesinos*. A notable example of the affected was the huge United Fruit Company, which in 1955 owned 1.7 million acres of land in six Latin American countries, mainly producing bananas for export.

In summary, Kennedy's reluctance to use military force and his land reform programs in Latin America are consistent with the label "soft on communism" that he earned among his enemies. These were the large landowners and the friends of full-scale military enforcement.

After Kennedy's death, U.S. policy on Latin America was back to normal: Johnson maintained Alliance rhetoric, but cut funding in the subsequent years until it died in bureaucratic oblivion. In 1965 Johnson invaded the Dominican Republic with 22,000

Marines.

Kennedy's assassination, and the reversal to old military and economic policies, has shattered the hopes he inspired in Latin Americans. To this day, poverty and abysmal economic disparities continue to draw thousands of Latin Americans into insurgency. In 1988, 76 percent of the Guatemalan population lived in extreme poverty, according to the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The average Bolivian consumes only 78 percent of the minimum calorie and protein requirements, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Or-



Illustrations/Stefan Dalkert

ganization. A cholera epidemic — a disease of the middle ages — threatens several South American countries because basic water sanitation and sewage is unavailable. Seventy-five percent of the peasants in Guatemala, 60 percent in El Salvador and 35 percent in Honduras lack health care, according to the World Health Organization.

It is not hard to imagine how this desperate situation, and the inability of the system to solve it, breeds insurgency.

The Pentagon and the CIA continue to supply and train the Latin American military, which is in charge of containing this insurgency. A case in point: The Salvadoran Army, which, after Israel, has received the most U.S. military aid (approximately \$1 million a day during the past 10 years).

After Kennedy's death, the military approach to managing poverty continues in Latin America.

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