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CIA/ONE / STAFF MEM / 53-64

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

23 November 1964

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 53-64 (Internal ONE Working Paper --  
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: Ecuador: An Opportunity Going, Going, Nearly Gone

1. The Military Junta, which seized power in July 1963 from the discredited Arosemena regime, had widespread support and an opportunity to undertake far-reaching change.\* Although it declared its intention to effect badly needed political and social reform before returning power to an elected civil government, its performance has been disappointing. It has initiated some useful, though modest, measures, e.g., an agrarian reform law, a civil service act, and several financial improvements. But these measures, of which implementation has been slow, fall short of the reforms needed. And the outlook is not bright for more vigorous action during the next few months.

25X1

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2. The Junta has lost some of its initial popular support and is encountering increasing criticism within the military. There is wrangling and disagreement among its members.\* The one seemingly bright star, General Gandara, has faded perceptibly, though he has served as a partial brake on the ambitious Colonel Freile. We think the possibility has increased that the Junta will be realigned or replaced, perhaps as a result of a bid by Freile for sole power. Freile has a powerful trump card: the Air Force, competent and loyal to him, can pose a threat to the capital while enjoying immunity at a base in the Galapagos Islands, some six hundred miles off the coast; on occasion, he has moved his planes to the Galapagos to intimidate the other Junta members.

3. In accompaniment to these rumblings within the military, Ecuador's disparate political groups have voiced demands

25X1

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- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

for elections and a "return to constitutionalism."\* The parties, however, are as personalistic and archaic as ever. There is a dearth of responsible political leaders and a plethora of demagogues. Unhappily, the demagogues usually win in Ecuador (e.g., Velasco Ibarra has been four-times elected to the Presidency, thrice deposed). A military candidate might be nominated, the unsavory Colonel Freile a likely possibility.

4. In short, the prospects are not promising. Ecuador has yet to have a revolution, peaceful or otherwise, which will end or materially lessen the power of the short-sighted oligarchy which dominates the country. The longer this revolution is delayed, the more likely that its ultimate course will be violent and extreme; under these circumstances, the Communists, now few and badly divided, could be expected to gain much. The Junta has stumbled along for almost eighteen months; it may continue to do so. In any event, about the most that can now be realistically expected from it or any likely successor regime, military or civilian, is more of the same.

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\* The Junta has stated that it will announce in January its plan for the "return"; a possible turnover date is next summer or fall. The Junta, however, is almost certainly not in agreement on the matter.

- 3 -

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