

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF
AMERICAN DEPARTMENTS

JUN 7 1944
FOREIGN ACTIVITY CORRELATION

June 7, 1944

BOL

Mr. Keith

The attached FBI report on the revolution in Ecuador dated June 2 impresses me as being quite clear, and it contains some biographical data on several of the revolutionary leaders which may be of interest to you.

FC:JDHanley:VA



Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.

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AMERICAN REPUBLIC AFFAIRS

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
BY SPECIAL MESSENGER

Date: June 2 1944

To: Honorable Adolf A. Berle, Jr.
Assistant Secretary of State

From: J. Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subject: Revolution in Ecuador

As of possible interest to you there is being transmitted herewith a copy of a memorandum setting forth information received from confidential and reliable sources concerning the action by revolutionary elements in overthrowing the Ecuadoran Government.

This information has been made available to the American Embassy at Quito, Ecuador.

cc - Director of Naval Intelligence
Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2
War Department, Washington, D. C.

Attention: Colonel L. R. Forney

Enclosure



822.00/6-244

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REVOLUTION IN ECUADOR

Overthrow of Ecuadoran Government

When the government police at Guayaquil, Ecuador found bombs placed in a warehouse near the headquarters of the carabineros unit and on the property of wealthy individuals who supported the Arroyo administration, it was learned that the supporters of Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra, former President of Ecuador and presidential candidate sponsored by the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana, were contemplating a move to overthrow the government. When the plan of the opposition became known, the supporters of the opposition including Comandante Martinez, head of the Ecuadoran Army Artillery Unit at Guayaquil, initiated the revolution at about 11:00 p.m. by an attack against the carabineros. Hundreds were killed as a result of the conflict between the Army unit and a force of carabineros consisting of approximately 800 officers and men. Others were injured as a result of the general street fighting which occurred in Guayaquil. After approximately seven or eight hours of actual combat between the carabineros and the Army, control of the city of Guayaquil was gained by the opposition when the carabineros were defeated.

The revolution then spread throughout the Republic of Ecuador and success was attained in a short time in the city of Riobamba, Cuenca and Ambato.

On the morning of May 29, 1944, the capital city, Quito, was still in control of the government's forces, however, the situation was described as extremely serious as it was believed that armed forces favoring Velasco Ibarra would attack the loyal government forces in order to overthrow the government and gain control of the city. At 9:30 a.m. on May 29, 1944, all traffic and business in Quito was suspended. By noon street fighting was in progress, which action involved minor armed and unarmed groups. Tear gas was used by the authorities to disburse crowds and it appeared that it would be necessary for the opposition to use force in taking the city.

At 7:00 p.m. on May 29, 1944, President Carlos Alberto Arroyo del Rio and his entire cabinet resigned. Arroyo conferred the power of government upon Fausto Navarro (Allende), Vice President of the Senate and a loyal supporter of the Arroyo government. Army units at Quito were enraged over the succession of Navarro as the head of the government and would not accept him in this position. Immediately the Navarro government ordered the carabineros who were still loyal to the cause to attack the Army units, however, the carabineros forces did not take this action and awaited further developments. Major Leonardo Chiriboga who is known to have been previously associated with revolutionary elements in Ecuador and who is now temporarily head of the Ecuadoran carabineros acted with five other Army officers as intermediaries between the Velasco elements and the loyal carabineros. An ultimatum was delivered to the carabineros through Major Chiriboga demanding their surrender prior to 11:30 p.m. on May 29. Shortly after 2:00 a.m., May 30 the loyal forces of the carabineros surrendered to the opposition and thus complete control was obtained by the revolutionary elements over the city of Quito.

During the time the carabineros were holding out against the revolutionary forces Colonel Hector Salgado, Commander in Chief of the Carabineros, departed from one group of troops for the purpose of going to the position where another group was stationed. He has not been seen since this time. The Minister of Government, Aurelio Aguilar Vasquez, was arrested and confined to jail when he left the protection of a group of loyal carabineros. President Arroyo sought the protection of the Colombian Embassy and other cabinet ministers, with the exception of Minister of Government Aguilar Vasquez, were able to reach various embassies and legations in Quito where they remained in asylum.

Government Established by Revolutionists

Following the resignation of President Arroyo and his entire cabinet the power of government was conferred upon Dr. Fausto Navarro (Allende), Vice President of the Senate. The action of Navarro in succeeding President Arroyo was immediately met with opposition and he has now stated under pressure from the revolutionists that he has no constitutional claim to the presidency unless the President of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies were unable to accept the position.

Navarro was not acceptable to the opposition and there has been established a provisional government in Quito controlled by the political leaders of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana. This organization is composed of a coalition of all parties who were in opposition to the Arroyo Government. Members of the committee of the provisional government are reported to be Julio Teodoro Salem, representative of the Independent Party; Dr. Mariana Suarez (Veintimilra) of the Conservative Party; Manuel Augustin Aguirre representing the Socialist Party; General Luis Larrera Alba of the Vanguardia Revolucionario; Gustavo Becerra, Communist leader; and Camilo Ponce Enriquez of the Frente Democratico. The committee has stated that it will perform the functions of the government until the return of Velasco Ibarra. Velasco was expected to arrive in Quito on May 31, 1944 from Colombia. The Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana has stated that the first action to be taken by that group upon the arrival of Velasco Ibarra in Quito would be to declare him head of the provisional government. It is further reported that the provisional government will request the embassy where former President Arroyo is now in hiding to deliver him to the revolutionary forces.

A provisional government has also been setup at Guayaquil, Ecuador where the revolution was instituted. It is known that members of the committee at Guayaquil include Pedro Antonio Saad and Gilberto Gil, leading Communists in the Guayaquil area, who are now strongly entrenched in the opposition's ruling faction in that city.

It is not known whether the election scheduled for June 2 and June 3, 1944 will be held, however the deposed government's candidate, Miguel Angel Albornoz, is reported to be taking no part either for or against the government in this uprising. At the present time there is no evidence of disorder in Quito, however numerous speeches have been made to large groups of citizens and parades have been staged by several thousands of individuals who are carrying banners and posters hailing the success and return of Velasco Ibarra.

The provisional government now in control has declared that an election will be held within the next sixty days.

Political Unrest Preceding the Revolution

With the approach of the national election to be held in Ecuador on June 2 and June 3, 1944, the political situation became extremely tense. Events transpired which caused President Arroyo to fear that an attempt would be made to overthrow the government prior to the time of the election. President Arroyo has been exceedingly unpopular during his term of office and there have been numerous attempts to overthrow his government. Many reports have indicated that such action would be taken. The tense political situation has been furthered by the dissatisfaction of members of the government's party as well as disagreement between other parties with the nomination of Miguel Angel Albornoz as the presidential candidate for the Liberal Radical Party in the forthcoming election.

Albornoz presently served as Chairman of the Ecuadoran Senate and is stated to be approximately 70 years of age. His choice as presidential candidate was effected as a result of a compromise between the president's forces and those desiring to nominate Humberto Albornoz as the government's candidate. At the time the meeting of the assembly was to determine the candidate of the Liberty Radical Party Miguel Angel Albornoz plead with the assembly not to elect him because of his ill health, age, and incapacity to carry on the duties of the president. Reports were received indicating that President Arroyo would possibly avail himself of the party's candidate's excuse for not desiring to be elected president and would call another convention in order that his own nominee, Teodoro Maldonado, would succeed Albornoz as the presidential candidate.

The only organized opposition to the government's Liberal Radical Party was the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana. This group alleged that political freedom was being suppressed by the government and that an honest election would not be allowed. The candidate for the presidency as sponsored by the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana was Jose Maria Velasco (Ibarra), former President of Ecuador who had been exiled by the government and who the government would under no circumstances allow to return to Ecuador. Velasco Ibarra has resided in Chile and Colombia and has conducted his campaign for the presidency during recent months from Payan, Colombia, which is located only a short distance across the border from the Ecuadoran capital.

It has been alleged by the opposition that President Arroyo has not benefited the nation during his administration and has in fact been detrimental to the Ecuadoran cause by reason of the settlement arrived at with Peru over the question of the boundary of the countries. The opposition has alleged that the government ceded Ecuadoran territory to Peru.

The Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana was formed in July, 1943, by an agreement which resulted in a coalition of all parties in opposition to the incumbent government. This group has been a constant threat against the Arroyo administration for the reason that it had become a definite organized opposition. The coalition consisted of the Independent Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists, Communists, Vanguardistas and other lesser-known organizations.

Shortly after the formation of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana Velasco Ibarra was openly sponsored as leader of the group to run for the presidency of Ecuador in the next national election. Arroyo's action in refusing the entrance of Velasco Ibarra into Ecuador has increased his unpopularity. Recurrent demonstrations resulting in minor street disturbances occurred which resulted in citizens being killed and wounded. A general strike was planned which would take place among the working class in Ecuador in the event the government would not allow participation by the working class in an honest election.

As the situation became more tense a cabinet meeting was held on May 21, 1944 and again on May 22, 1944 which meeting included representatives of the Ecuadoran carabineros namely Colonel Hector Salgado and a few high-ranking Army officers. It was agreed that the government could not maintain order at the time of or following the election and it was believed that there would of necessity be extensive bloodshed. A triumvirate was proposed which would consist of a carabineros official, an Army official, and a civilian, which body would assume dictatorial power prior to the election. The formation of this group was unsuccessful, however, the government decided unanimously to proceed with the elections as scheduled and yet assure by every and all means that the government's candidate would be successful. It was admitted that this candidate could not legally obtain the necessary majority until plans were made whereby the leaders of the opposition would be taken into custody if this action were necessary.

Although the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana is the only organized opposition to the incumbent government that could possibly be successful in opposing the government, it is reported that there is a definite dissension in the ranks of this coalition. The conflict among the members of the organization is based primarily upon fundamental long-term ideological differences between the parties, jealousy, individual personal conflicts and the attempt of each group within the organization to assume leadership if and when Velasco Ibarra becomes president. It is known also that Ibarra does not enjoy the confidence of the more educated anti-administration elements and politicians, but he is the only available candidate who possesses political appeal among the great percentage of the voting public. There has been no evidence indicating organized Axis subversive elements to be currently influencing or leading any of the Ecuadoran political parties.

Revolutionary Personalities

Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra

Velasco Ibarra was born of a poor family. He was successful as a lawyer and was elected as a deputy in Congress by the Conservative Party. He made a reputation as a good orator and through political maneuvering led a revolution which ousted Juan Martinez Mera from the head of the government and establish himself as president. He has the reputation of being very changeable in his political feelings and at times being a strong Leftist and at other times a strong Conservative. He was deposed from the presidency when he attempted to become a dictator and was expelled from the country.

Francisco Arizaga Luque

Dr. Arizaga has been considered one of the sources of trouble to the Ecuadoran government for some time. He held the position of President of the Congress in Ecuador during 1938 and though formerly a member of the Liberal Radical Party which supported the Arroyo administration he has been a strong partisan of the former president Velasco Ibarra. Arizaga has been named as the leader of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana in Guayaquil, has supported Velasco Ibarra as the presidential candidate of this group, and has been accused of attempting to assassinate Arroyo and also participating in prior attempts against the government. He is a lawyer by profession and is alleged to have received funds from Victor Emilio Estrada, prominent Guayaquil banker, for the purpose of financing anti-administration activities in the furtherance of the program of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana. As recent as April 15, 1944, Dr. Arizaga was involved in an encounter with the Ecuadoran police at Guayaquil as a result of displaying pictures of Velasco Ibarra on his automobile.

One source in July, 1943, described Dr. Arizaga as being mentally unbalanced and to be suffering from illusions of grandeur thinking at times that he is president of the republic.

He has been named as a member of the provisional government at Quito, Ecuador now in control of the republic.

General Luis Larrera Alba

General Larrera Alba is a member of the provisional government as a representative of the Vanguardia Revolucionario replacing the Arroyo administration at Quito. He has been considered as one of the sources of trouble to the deposed government and early in 1942 was named as being one of the conspirators desiring to overthrow the government.

Julio Teodoro Salem

Salem represents the Independent Party in the provisional government now established in Ecuador. He has served as a deputy from Chimborazo and has been known to oppose President Arroyo. While on an election campaign several politicians of the Independent Liberal Party were suddenly arrested in Ambato including Salem, all of whom were taken to the Quito jail and incarcerated for reason of anti-government activities. He has been a member of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana since its inception.

Dr. Mariana Suarez (Veintimilla)

Dr. Suarez has been a member of the Chamber of Deputies in Ecuador and has been director of the newspaper "El Debate." He was at one time reported to have taken part in Falangist activities in Ecuador and to have praised Spanish influence in the country. He is described as being unfavorable to the United States and as a fanatical Conservative. He represents the Conservative Party in the provisional government now ruling the country.

Manuel Augustin Aguirre

Aguirre is a member of the Socialist Party and represents that organization in the new provisional government. He has been described as one of the individuals who has engaged in anti-government activities. He is known to have been associated with prior revolutionary movements and at one time remained in hiding in order to avoid arrest for anti-administration activities.

Gustavo Becarra

Becarra is the official delegate of the Communist Party of Ecuador to the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana. He is approximately forty years of age and formerly operated the print shop "El Correo" at Esmeraldas which was closed by the government. He was reported to have taken up the occupation of selling books and general merchandise at Quito and acting as Secretary General of the Communist Party. In April, 1942, when his newspaper was closed by the government he was arrested and held for some time in the federal prison at Quito. It was reported that he was later allowed to return to Esmeraldas where he must remain. Becarra is now a member of the committee holding control of the government in Ecuador.

Camilo Ponce Enriquez

Ponce signed the manifesto of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana for the Frente Democratico and now represents that organization on the revolutionist provisional government. He has been a supporter of Velasco Ibarra for some time and was formerly one of the younger members of the Conservative Party.

Major Leonardo Chiriboga (Ordonez)

Major Chiriboga is presently serving as temporary Commander in Chief of the Carabineros. He was involved in a revolutionary plot to overthrow the government in April, 1942, and was later incarcerated in the federal jail at Quito when this endeavor was unsuccessful. He was court martialed and later released from arrest. Chiriboga has been described as one of the most intelligent, best prepared and most valiant officers in the Ecuadoran Army, however, he is an admirer of the Prussian militarism of Germany, its discipline and rigidity and is stated to be antagonistic toward Fascism. A report received in February, 1942 indicated he admired the German Army and did not hide his sympathy for its organization, tactics and discipline.

Pedro Antonio Saad

Saad is an Ecuadoran national of Turkish or Syrian extraction and is a well known Communist in Guayaquil, Ecuador. He has been established as a member of the provisional committee at Guayaquil and is associated with the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana. He has been confined to prison as a result of the government's action against prominent leaders of Communistic tendencies in the Guayaquil area. Saad is a controlling figure in Ecuadoran labor movements and is described as the brain and nerve center of the Communist Party in the entire Republic.

Angel Felicismo Rojas

Dr. Rojas is the representative of the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana at Guayaquil, Ecuador. He is a member of the Socialist Party and has served time in the federal prison at Quito because of his activities of an anti-administration nature. Rojas is one of the principal leaders of the Socialist Party in Guayaquil and is a lawyer, novelist and writer by profession. On one occasion he stated that he was a member of the Socialist Party which group was fundamentally the same as the Communist Party, however, inasmuch as the government did not bother the Socialists that was the reason he was a Socialist instead of a Communist.

Enrique Gilberto Gil

Gil is described as the strong armed lieutenant and assistant of the Communist leader Pedro Saad at Guayaquil, Ecuador. He is a member of the Communist Party and is stated to be a representative of the society of Independent Writers and Artists as well as to have represented Ecuador at the International Youth Communist Conference in October, 1943. He with Pedro Saad and other Communists are reported to have openly boasted of reprisals and executions they intend to carry out when Communism becomes a dominating force in Ecuador. Gil is described as an Ecuadoran who is believed to be one of the most brilliant writers in the country. He is stated to be a decided partisan of both Great Britain and the United States.

Efrain Camacho (Santos)

Camacho is a member of the Conservative Party at Guayaquil, Ecuador who was exiled for political reasons in Esmeraldas during 1942. He is described as a poor but honorable individual who opposed the Arroyo administration. His exile was the result of an arrest by the Ecuadoran police when it was determined that a movement was being instigated in April, 1942 to attempt to overthrow the government. He was one of the signers of the democratic alliance formed by parties and political groups which composed the Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana.

Colonel Pablo Larrea Borja

Borja is reported to have established himself at the head of the provisional government in Quito after the downfall of the Arroyo government. He was soon replaced by General Alba who is now head of the political committee controlling the government. Borja has been described as one of the men most responsible for a more united Army in Ecuador and was previously stated to be loyal to the government.