

Maurice M. Bernbaum, Oral History Interview – 6/9/1983
Administrative Information

Creator: Maurice M. Bernbaum
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Biographical Note

Bernbaum, U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador from 1960 to 1965 and Ambassador to Venezuela from 1965 to 1969, discusses political regimes and military coups in Ecuador during his time as Ambassador, the relationship between Ecuador and Cuba, and President Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy's alcohol problem, among other issues.

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6-5-02

Maurice M. Bernbaum

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Oral History Interview

with

Maurice M. Bernbaum

June 9, 1983

By Sheldon Stern

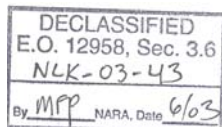
For the John F. Kennedy Library

STERN: ...background of your reappointment by President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. I know that you were originally appointed of course by President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower].

BERNBAUM: Yes, that was unusual. Well, I had a recess appoint in about October of '60. That's when I arrived in Quito, about October of '60. And I came to Washington just before Eisenhower relinquished his office. And I suppose the idea was I would meet with the foreign relations committee. But apparently he thought that wasn't necessary. But in the meanwhile since Kennedy took over before I was confirmed by the Senate, I was then reappointed by President Kennedy. I had a talk with Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] who apparently checked up on me to see whether I was a suitable candidate. I seem to have passed the test and that's why I was reappointed.

STERN: Did you meet with the President before you left for Ecuador?

BERNBAUM: No I did not meet with the President. The only one with whom I met with was Ralph Dungan.



STERN: _____ Upon your arrival in Quito, I was wondering if we could talk a bit about the embassy itself, the size of the embassy, the kind of staff you had, and maybe even a bit about how you ran the embassy. Very

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often, students who use these transcripts will ask some very basic questions, such as, they will say, "What does an ambassador do?" Maybe you could even talk a bit about if there is such a thing as a typical day. What does an ambassador do? Keeping in mind undergraduate students who might be interested in this.

BERNBAUM: Well, the styles vary with the individual....

STERN: Sure they do.

BERNBAUM: In my case, I maintained a morning staff meeting. Every morning. And usually about Wednesday this staff meeting was confined to what we call the country team. The heads of the various sections in the embassy.

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: And then on Wednesdays, I would also invite the junior officers to attend, to give them an idea what these staff meetings were like and also to participate if they wished, perhaps raise some points that they didn't think had been raised before. I found that was a rather useful exercise. At these staff meetings, each man would describe the developments of the day that he considered to be significant and noteworthy to discuss. Also, each member of the country team would be expected to give us a progress report on projects which had been entrusted to him before, because at each meeting we would have a decision as to what to do and if somebody would be given the responsibility for that. We had a combination of the two, the raising of new business and a discussion of progress and old business. And the emphasis was on stimulating conversation and the expression of opinions. And although I used to participate rather vigorously in some of the debates, I think I conveyed the impression that I wanted them to speak up; I wanted to know what they thought, even if they didn't agree with me. I don't think it was successful with all of the people, but it was successful enough with some of them to make the meetings productive.

Now that was the beginning of the day. And then of course whatever came up depended on the circumstances of the moment. There might be a discussion with the foreign minister about some subject that the Department of State had asked me to discuss with him. Or he might call me to discuss something that was of interest to him or we might have had problems that we would call for meetings with other ministers. And what we generally tried to do was to be flexible and not confine our contacts to the foreign office. The foreign office was aware of this so we always felt free to maintain contact with all the ministries. That was part of the job.

Perhaps the more important aspect of the job was to be in touch with the people, with political groups. I used to make a point to have luncheons, periodic luncheons, with the heads and what you might call the directors of the various political parties. This was to maintain current contacts and find out what they were thinking about and tell them whatever we thought that we'd like to have them know. That was useful because it kept us in contact with all sectors. The only ones we didn't have contacts with were the communists and I suppose there were two reasons for that. The main reason was, probably, that it wouldn't be looked upon kindly in Washington. And the second was probably that the communists themselves wouldn't

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be interested in having contacts at that time. But we did have contacts with socialist groups, left wing groups short of the communist elements.

STERN: Did you ever have unofficial contacts with the communists?

BERNBAUM: No. No, I never did. I never did. I occasionally used to drop in at some of the haunts of the communists groups. I knew where the communist groups would assemble, generally some restaurants in the center of town. I'd have a beer or I'd have lunch and as I remember at the beginning they didn't know who I was but then afterwards they became a bit too strange. Everybody would be looking at me. So I decided it wasn't productive. And then of course, we had people who wanted to see me. For various reasons. Economic proposals. Requests for scholarships. In some cases discussion of political matters. And in a country like Ecuador, which is not really politically stable, you constantly have the groups who are interested in unseating the government. And frequently and interestingly they'd want to speak with the American ambassador to find out what he thought about it. Of course, the invariable answer was that it's a democratic system and we're not going to interfere, but if you want our opinion, behave and wait for the elections to take place. It was interesting to find out how many of them were interested in finding out, probing our attitude toward possible changes.

STERN: I find that interesting. How about the Consul General's office in Guayaquil? Did you bring them into your meetings and that sort of thing?

BERNBAUM: Well, I'd invite the Consul General to come to Quito as often as he could make it. And of course then he'd participate in the staff meetings. And I would go down to Guayaquil perhaps four or five times a year to talk with him, talk with the staff, talk with the local people, and generally I'd have an opportunity to meet with the local political and business people at dinners, luncheons, and that kind of thing.

STERN: Did you have direct phone communication with Washington or was it strictly cables?

BERNBAUM: Cable and Telex.

STERN: Cable and Telex, yeah. I wonder if you could talk a bit about what you perceived upon your arrival as the major problems in US-Ecuadorian relations, what you thought would be your real difficult issues and to what degree that turned out to be true as things developed.

BERNBAUM: Well, I was very much aware that the big problem was going to be the Peru-Ecuador boundary dispute. There was to be a meeting of the Inter-American Conference, I think the tenth conference, was to take place in Quito later in the year and I was aware that this was a very controversial subject in Ecuador and that the President of Ecuador [José María Velasco Ibarra], a rather interesting, charismatic old fellow who was a lot better at giving

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speeches than he was at running a government, had declared the protocol on which the Peru-Ecuador boundary dispute had been placed was null and void.

STERN: You're talking about Velasco Ibarra.

BERNBAUM: Velasco Ibarra, correct. And so, I was in constant contact with the foreign minister and occasionally with the President on this subject and eventually they decided to cancel the Inter-American Conference. In the meanwhile, a question arose as to what attitude the guarantors of the protocol would take in response to Velasco Ibarra's denunciation of the protocol. This is a rather touchy question. The Peruvians were pressuring all the guarantors to announce their opposition to what Velasco Ibarra had said. My feeling was that this wasn't going to do us very much good, that it would merely stir up a storm in Ecuador and the wisest thing to do was just ignore it. But that wasn't the final decision. It was not ignored. We did join in a statement and what we got was riots and the stoning of the embassy. That was a rather interesting experience because the intensity of the riots illustrated the extent to which a political, that is, a nationalistic issue could arise among the populace. I was struck later when we had the Bay of Pigs incident...

STERN: I was just about to ask you about that.

BERNBAUM: ...the demonstrations were extremely limited. It had nothing to do with Ecuadorean nationalism. It was just a rather interesting educational experience.

STERN: So even the communists didn't attempt to make capital...?

BERNBAUM: The communists tried, but nobody would follow them. Whereas in the

case of the boundary dispute they had everybody in the country up in arms.

STERN: That's fascinating. In reading the material then, it was very clear to me that—well, I very much want to see if you'll actually want to confirm this—that Ecuador was really walking sort of a tightrope between the pro-Castro [Fidel Castro], in some cases, guerilla elements that were in the country, although it was very hard for me to tell how serious that really was and on the other hand, the real concern about that and fear of the possibility of something.... Ecuador becoming a second Cuba. ____ I'm not suggesting that....

BERNBAUM: There was no guerilla activity....

STERN: In the hills outside of Quito. I found a number of things named.... What was it? The National Ecuadorian Youth or something, they had arrested 40 people.

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BERNBAUM: You had student movements. You had student groups who were demonstrating against the Velasco Ibarra government. But I don't recall any guerilla activity in the country at the time. I don't know where you got those reports.

STERN: Maybe I'll come across them in a little while. Ambassador Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] visited in ____....

BERNBAUM: That was an interesting experience, yes....

STERN: Let's talk about that.

BERNBAUM: He came with Lincoln Gordon and Ellis Briggs [Ellis O. Briggs] and we met with Velasco Ibarra. I found myself the interpreter of that meeting. Now, I had known from previous conversations with Velasco Ibarra that the one American in whom he had a lot of confidence, whom he admired, was Adlai Stevenson. Generally, he had little use for the United States, for US culture. But he prepared for that meeting and I think the subject Stevenson wanted to raise was the relationship with the Castro government....

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: And every time we'd make a statement, Velasco would recall something Stevenson had said or something he had written which more or less refuted the viewpoints Stevenson had expressed. The man had done his homework. It was really very, very interesting. And another thing that really

made Stevenson throw up his hands was him discussing the danger of communism in the area. Velasco's response—which was very characteristic of Velasco—he said, “Oh, well, this would be—if we did have communism here, this would be an Ecuadorian communism which would have no necessary relationship with Soviet communism and in a few hundred years, it would make no difference whatsoever.” At this point Stevenson decided that we had better cut off the conversation.

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: I found out later that the conversation had been taped by the Ecuadorians.

STERN: Well, isn't that interesting. Without your knowledge I would imagine?

BERNBAUM: No, we were not aware of it. But we eventually had someone present us with a copy of the tape and I listened to it. It's rather interesting. Velasco never spoke English. I always spoke Spanish with him and the conversation was conducted in Spanish. That is I interpreted for Stevenson. But I did notice that Velasco would generally be aware of what Stevenson was saying and that once when I didn't give an exact interpretation of what Stevenson had said, he probed to clarify the point. So he did know

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some English.

STERN: That reminds me of—someone once gave me a very similar point about Charles de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle] who would only speak French but clearly knew what was going on.

BERNBAUM: This man was very similar in his attitude to de Gaulle. Kind of interesting. He was very much a Francophile. He admired European culture and had no use at all for American culture.

STERN: Fascinating. In July of '61, Admiral Arleigh Burke [Arleigh Albert Burke] came to inaugurate a naval academy in Ecuador. Did you have any.... Did you see him at that point? Did you...

BERNBAUM: I don't remember....

STERN: ...don't remember that. In truth it isn't all that important. One of the—you can begin to see the problems toward the late summer that would culminate in the coup. Very clearly in the number of incidents, one of them in July when the vice president, Arosemena [Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy] had just come back from a trip to the Soviet Union and advocated, openly advocated, closer ties with

the communist countries and Velasco denounced him. So, you can see that there was a problem there between the President and the Vice President.

BERNBAUM: ...personality.... Both of them were very unusual personalities.

STERN: And did you feel that a coup was likely and when did it seem to be likely to you? There were riots and demonstrations in August and September.

BERNBAUM: The students. There were student demonstrations against Velasco. He had made some rather controversial decisions including the devaluation of the Sucre, as I recall. And that started rioting. And I remember a visit he had made to _____. And my decision when I realized the likelihood of disturbances in _____ was not to go, not to become involved in this thing—and we hadn't. As I recall, there were, there were a few killings at the time. And the information we had was that the rioters had more or less stimulated this. There had been snipers who had been shooting at the procession. At the military. And then when the military reacted of course everybody was horrified. This was a very characteristic way of the opposition. In any case, these.... There was a crescendo in this and we had a meeting of mission chiefs in Lima and I debated whether to go and decided I would and told the Chargé to be on top of the situation but not to call me back unless it was really serious. Well, he did call me back, because it was really serious _____ of that. _____. And at that time the minister of defense wanted us to give them military equipment to resist the insurgents. Well, things happened very, very quickly. Even before we made a decision—and I wouldn't see us doing that anyway—

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and he was overthrown.

STERN: Do you feel that the fundamental reason for the coup was internal questions, cost of living, tax increases, or was it more the concern, particularly in the military about his apparent coziness with the communists? He had made some pro-Castro statements.

BERNBAUM: No, I don't think the military had anything to do with that coup. I think it that the public rioting which finally forced the military to kill Velasco. They just couldn't defend him anymore. He had to go.... It was not a military initiative. It was later, when Arosemena was overthrown...

STERN: Right. The choice of Arosemena was logical since he was vice president, although I gather from some of the material that there was some support for the supreme court justice by the name of Gallegos. But the air force apparently...

BERNBAUM: Now there was an interesting situation because Arosemena had been

put in jail before by Velasco, and the Arosemena supporters secured his release from jail and his appearance at the legislature. Then he proclaimed himself president. The opponents of Arosemena preferred Gallegos. And then you had another one, also. I forget who he was. But another contender. Sort of a comic opera situation because you have three presidential aspirants. And finally the air force did play a role in this supporting Arosemena. They did some demonstrations, aborted some military maneuvers and secured Arosemena for the presidency. It's sensational.

STERN: Right? The key ____ from the materials I saw is that he had support—it's sort of curious—from landowners and the military who clearly supported him, and yet among his first acts was to announce that he would trade, that Ecuador would trade, with the Soviet Union and restore diplomatic relations with Cuba. That struck me as kind of strange.

BERNBAUM: No, diplomatic relations had been.... No, he did not restore them. They were, were on-going.

STERN: Were they?

BERNBAUM: Yes. They had relations with Cuba. They did break relations with Cuba later.

STERN: Later on, that's right.... In April....

BERNBAUM: You see, Arosemena was a member of the oligarchy, of the coastal oligarchy. He was what you might call a sort of the rebellious member. Psychologically predisposed to be a maverick. But also looked upon by them as one of theirs.

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STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: He was a dipsomaniac. He had an uncontrollable liquor problem.

STERN: Right. I'll talk to you about that later.

BERNBAUM: He had been in trouble when he was secretary of the embassy in Washington. Had been arrested a number of times for drinking, for drunk driving. And that I think created an antagonism in his mind toward the U.S., feeling that he'd been humiliated in the U.S. So he had a chip on his shoulder with respect to the U.S. And I had a number of conversations with him when he was vice president and it was very, very apparent. I remember one day when he said, "Well, if you people in the OAS [Organization of American States] will not do for us what we feel you should do, we will leave the OAS." And that would be a real problem. It seems to me,

though, that a country like Ecuador might be, might be better off leaning on the OAS rather than being out in the cold all by itself. He just looked at me and grinned. He had a—it was really difficult to forecast what he'd do, particularly when he got drunk.

There was a reception one night which he attended and which the Colombian ambassador attended and he made a speech attacking Colombia for all sorts of reasons and the Colombians stalked out, out of the conference. Arosemena later had to apologize. Another time, this involved the Chinese ambassador, and he made some derogatory comments about the Chinese. He said, "The guy doesn't even.... He certainly doesn't speak Spanish. I imagine he doesn't speak English. And I wonder whether he speaks Chinese?" Things like that. So, he was a rather interesting personality. I got to know him very well later. We became pretty friendly. I remember one night when we crossed paths in, Ambato, yes, Ambato. There was some kind of celebration down the Riobamba. He was coming from it, I was going to it. We spent the evening at the hotel _____. When he found out I was there, he asked me to join him. I think we talked until about 3:00 in the morning. At which time I got to know the man quite well. He was certainly not, in private conversation, sober. He was certainly not the man he was looked upon, considered to be, in public. His father had been president and also with a drinking habit.

STERN: Oh really?

BERNBAUM: He was proud of the fact his father had been president. His ambition was to be one of the great presidents of Ecuador. He wanted to do some good for the country and it was a rather interesting, rather touching conversation. But his drinking, I think, prevented anything from being realized.

STERN: I found some fascinating cables you wrote not long after he had taken over—this was in January of '62—in which you told the State Department that he was regarded primarily as an Ecuadorian nationalist and you thought that he would avoid being too close to either the U.S. or the USSR and that you had been struck by the fact that—you were talking about Cuba _____ with Cuba and that he had equated

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Soviet influence in Cuba with American influence in Korea, Iran, and Turkey and that you were kind of struck by the fact that he thought of those situations as being essentially the same. Do you recall that conversation?

BERNBAUM: I think so. Generally, yes. I remember another conversation when he called me in. Quite interesting. I was playing golf. He always thought it very funny that I'd be playing golf. He took a delight in getting me off the golf course. This time he called me in and said he'd been under pressure from the military to break with Cuba. And he was reluctant to do it.... And he didn't think that the people of Ecuador were favorably disposed to breaking with Cuba. I referred to a demonstration in a number of places—a number of things—some women down in Guayaquil

protesting against relations with Cuba. So that was not at all significant. The important thing to consider was that all these people who were anti-Cuba are the kind of people who sit up in their clubs drinking whiskey. You don't find them down in the streets demonstrating. The pro-Cubans are the ones who'll demonstrate, but the anti— in other words, his people would not demonstrate. They would run for cover. That was his people. I didn't quite know why he was interrogating me about Cuba. He knew how, obviously I felt about it. And he wanted me to express an opinion. I said that was a problem. I couldn't express an opinion on their relationship with Cuba. It wouldn't be appropriate. Then he said, "Well, what do you think of this? What if I should call a referendum?"

STERN: A plebiscite on....

BERNBAUM: Yes, on the subject. I said, "I think that would be most unwise and I'd rather see you maintain relations with Cuba than call a plebiscite." He wanted to know why. I said, "All you would do, you would just polarize the country on the issue. It would not be any good for the country and it wouldn't be any good for you. It would be much wiser not to have a referendum, so I expressed an opinion on that one. That night, the minister of the interior came to the embassy and he told me that he had decided.... To tell me that he had decided to break with Cuba. To which he.... I think he wanted.... He must have made up his mind or was in the process of making up his mind and I think he wanted to be able to use the conversation with me one way or the other.

STERN: Yeah, that's what the cables seem to suggest. That he had been talking about a plebiscite as late as the second of April and that he broke...

BERNBAUM: That's correct. ____.

STERN: ...diplomatic relations on the third with both, both Cuba, Poland, and Czechoslovakia and made a very tough speech and of course Castro was very distressed. This is, by the way, one of the cables in which there was mention—we talked about before—of guerillas reported in the hills west of Quito. But again, I have no idea....

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BERNBAUM: There may have been some.... There may have been reports of a rebellion that we were getting, but I don't recall any real indications of guerilla operations. There may have been.... It certainly wasn't serious enough for me to remember it. There may have been small groups here or there. There was nothing similar to what had been happening in Venezuela, for example.

STERN: ____ the meeting you had just before the break with Cuba that, which was largely about economic issues between Ecuador and the United States and he expressed concern over the sugar quota, for example, and the fact that he felt that Ecuador was not being fairly treated and also the desire of

Ecuador replace Cuban tobacco in the United States, given the fact that obviously we weren't importing any of it. And he was also very concerned about pressures by Cuban exiles in Ecuador and suggested that the United States take some of them and your response was that we had already had our share.

BERNBAUM: [laughter]

STERN: Do you recall any of those economic issues...? How significant were those?

BERNBAUM: Well, he was always under pressure from the sugar people, particularly one man, a sugar cane grower in Ecuador, who had a lot of influence with him. Guayaquilengua who'd been propagandizing me and he took me on, took me on a flight around the sugar plantations. So I'm sure that he was put up to the conversation by this man and perhaps one or two other families who dominated the sugar industry. I might say I was never sympathetic to it. My tour of the sugar estates convinced me of one thing. That it was an industry that wasn't necessarily economic. It was run for the benefit of about three families. The workers' conditions are so absolutely miserable, I just didn't see any real benefit to the country from the sugar industry. So I never did act as an advocate for sugar in Ecuador. I felt that it just didn't make that much sense.

STERN: The plans began in the spring of '62 for Arosemena to visit Washington and you had some extensive discussions with him, about, essentially the agenda. As a matter of fact, there was one cable in which you said you were having a very hard time getting him to be very specific about what he wanted to talk to President Kennedy about. But at the same time there were a lot of concerns about the possibility of a coup coming. Regularly the cables going back and forth, that.... One for example, April '62, where you wrote that his position was continually deteriorating and that the military was talking seriously about getting rid of him.

BERNBAUM: He.... That related to a large extent to his drinking habits. He'd gotten into a number of scandals.... One of them, which was never confirmed, but believed by a great many people was that he was in a nightclub one night and pulled out his gun to do a William Tell and shot somebody in the head. Another one related to the visit of the president of Chile, Alessandri [Jorge Alessandri Rodriguez]. He passed through Guayaquil and was met by

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Arosemena who was completely drunk at the time. This was just around the Christmas period and the stories I heard were that if it hadn't been for Christmas and the desire of all military to be with their families, they would have overthrown him. And there were various incidents that, that made the military feel that he was more or less disgracing the good name of Ecuador, that he was not reliable. And then of course there were a great many right-wingers who never trusted him because he was known to be at least intellectually sympathetic to the

Cubans. He admired the fact that Castro stood up to the United States and got away with it. _____. And Velasco Ibarra felt the same way. So, those were the basis for the rumors that had been going on. Now, I don't know whether there's anything else that Arosemena had done that would have stimulated a coup.

STERN: There wasn't even a move in the Congress to declare him physically incapable of serving as president?

BERNBAUM: People were very, very unhappy about his drinking habits and they just were.... Just didn't seem to be suitable as president. It was a tragic situation because he was aware of it but he had companions who were constantly egging him on. His secretary general was a rather undesirable character. I always regretted his having been there. He never, he never tried to restrain Arosemena from drinking. He always catered to his desires. The invitation to Arosemena to visit the US was rather interesting. It started with a visit shortly after Arosemena became president, a visit to Kennedy by Klosson.

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: And Kennedy at that time said, "Well, we should have President Arosemena here one of these days as soon as we can do it." And Klosson conveyed that information. I had resisted the invitation for as long as we possibly could because I was afraid of what he might do when he got there. That he'd get drunk.

STERN: Which I gather happened.

BERNBAUM: Which did happen. And so I resisted it. And I remember that one of the Kennedy group, I think it was a fellow named Haddad [William Frederick Haddad], married to one of Kennedy's sisters, I think. Haddad or some Arabic name.

STERN: Doesn't ring a bell.

BERNBAUM: Anyway, he came there and we talked about it and I explained to him why I didn't think it was a good idea. And then he came to me one morning and he looked really down, [laughter], under the weather. He said he'd run into Arosemena at the Quito Hotel in the casino and they'd consumed one or two bottles of scotch! [Laughter]. And sat talking all night _____. And he said he thought that the visit would probably be a good idea. He didn't see any reason why we shouldn't do it. I said,

“Well, if you want to report it that way, go ahead, but I haven’t changed my mind.” In any case, there was, the matter was brought to a head by the foreign minister when he said that Arosemena had been expecting an invitation and was wondering whether it would come. [Laughter]. So I reported that to the U.S. ____.

STERN: And you of course accompanied him.... You were, during the visit...

BERNBAUM: I preceded him there and I spoke with the President before the visit.

STERN: Was that your first meeting with President Kennedy?

BERNBAUM: Yes it was. Yes it was.

STERN: What was your impression of him?

BERNBAUM: Rather interesting.... Very cool. Very much interested. Really was interested in the questions he was asking and in the answers I gave. Intellectually alert. But the thing that struck me though was the coolness. And I remember one question he asked me. He said, “What would they think about Jackie’s [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] inability to participate in the meeting?” I said they didn’t like it. He didn’t say anything.

STERN: That’s right, his mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] was the hostess....

BERNBAUM: His mother was stand-in for Mrs. Kennedy.

STERN: That’s right.

BERNBAUM: But Mrs. Arosemena, who was of British origin, had been looking forward to meeting Jackie Kennedy. She was very, very unhappy about it.

STERN: I noticed that fact when I was—what I gather from the substantive meetings that were held before the private meeting which, in which the problem happened, that Kennedy was very non-committal on some of Arosemena’s major demands, not demands, but requests. For example, on more U.S. aid through the Inter-American Development Bank and such. He just did not really commit himself. And I gather from the things that I read that he had been warned that the situation was very unstable and that he just was not sure that he ought to and I gather Arosemena was rather taken aback by that.

BERNBAUM: Well, he did support a balance of payments loan.

STERN: Yes.

BERNBAUM: That was the one achievement of the visit.

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STERN: Right. Then from a number of sources, I gather, during their private meeting, which was the last part of the session, Arosemena was indeed drunk.

BERNBAUM: Well, we had two meetings and he was alright the first meeting when substantive matters did arise, in a general way. And then at the second one, he showed up drunk. And I still remember—Ed Martin and I were in another room from Arosemena and Kennedy came in and said, “The guy’s plastered.”

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: So, we didn’t spend much time there. Then we went over to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Latin American Affairs. Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], I think, was there _____. And I took Humphrey aside and I said, “Look. He’s drunk and you’ve got cover us, prevent this thing from getting out of hand and getting into the press, and he said he’d do it.” But anyway, I remember that Arosemena was in a good humor during that meeting. He was constantly laughing and giggling.

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: And I was seated next to the senator from Delaware who turned to me and said, “Is he drunk?”

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: I said, “He’s had a few.” But that meeting went off alright. The people understood what the situation was. _____ Hickenlooper [Bourke B. Hickenlooper] made a few jokes about his visits to Ecuador. He’d been there when there was a water shortage and he said, “I realized that I wasn’t welcome because they cut off my water.”

STERN: [laughter] What about on the, some of the.... By the way, Kennedy had been warned in his background briefing materials, about Arosemena’s problems with drinking.

BERNBAUM: Yes.

STERN: So he hardly—probably—I’m sure he wasn’t surprised, but...

BERNBAUM: _____ startled him.

STERN: ...Moscoso [Teodoro Moscoso], though, reported in his oral history that Kennedy was furious about it and did not treat him very well and that he was very curt.

BERNBAUM: Then he got him out.

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STERN: Yeah.

BERNBAUM: He got him out.

STERN: Very angry.

BERNBAUM: I have spoken with Duke [Angier Biddle Duke], who was the chief of protocol at the time about liquor and I told him not to permit any liquor in Blair House. But he just couldn't resist it. I don't know whether he had to furnish the liquor or if they brought in their own liquor. But he did get drunk before going over to see the President.

STERN: Incredible. How about on the agenda for the, for the.... You said, the major session.... The boundary dispute with Peru, the fisheries issue, the sugar quota, the 11th Inter-American Conference which had been postponed. Were any of these issues—did you make any progress with any of these issues?

BERNBAUM: No, they were mentioned in passing, but there really wasn't much that could be done. The fisheries problem came to a head later and it was really responsible for Arosemena's overthrow.

STERN: Yeah. We'll get to that in awhile. I note in the boundary dispute....

BERNBAUM: Well, there just wasn't anything that could be done. No, no Ecuadorian president was able, could make any concessions to Peru and no Peruvian president was ever able to make any concessions to Ecuador.

STERN: It was just politically impossible.

BERNBAUM: _____

STERN: In June of '62, there were congressional elections and Arosemena's party got only 22 out of the 73 seats. That astounded me and I'm sure that also helped to undermine his position.

BERNBAUM: Yeah.

STERN: It was also at that point that the defense minister Tomaris, I think his name was, told you that pro-Castro force had been broken up in the hills west of Quito and 40 members of the Union of Revolutionary Ecuadorian youth had been captured. So these are the sorts of....

BERNBAUM: These were the....

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STERN: These are the things that come up now and then in the papers.

BERNBAUM: But it was never—I recall some of those things—it was never a really significant development, that would occupy our thinking. We knew it was a romantic movement by students, but nothing more. There was no charismatic figure ____, no Castro...

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: ...bringing this all together.

STERN: In August of '62, Ecuador signed a pact to take part in the Peace Corps. Was that something that you thought was beneficial?

BERNBAUM: Yes, I was very favorably disposed toward the Peace Corps. I had a number of conversations with Sargent Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] on it. I made myself very popular with him by saying, "Send as many as you can." And I think the Peace Corps on the whole, although many of these kids were really unable to make very much of a contribution, in some cases they may have created some harm. But on the whole, they were a good element. They were very highly motivated. They introduced a fairly large segment of rural Ecuador to American youth and I think, on the whole, it was a very good thing. More psychologically than....

STERN: How many Peace Corps people did...

BERNBAUM: I think we were, we had a couple of hundred.

STERN: Oh, really ?

BERNBAUM: Yes. Shriver at one time talked about 400. I don't know whether.... I don't think we ever _____. But we had them all over the country, in Guayaquil, in the barrios, and up in the Sierra. Sheep raising. Engaged in some projects. I participated with them in a conference in Cuenca one time. They all came down there. We had an interesting session. I remember traveling around that area with Justice Douglas [William O. Douglas]. I found him very much interested in what the Peace Corps people were doing, particularly the practical aspects. Some of these who had been brought up

on farms were showing the Indians how to do some farming and how to dig wells. These things, that you would have expected the Indians themselves would have been familiar with but weren't. I remember Douglas being impressed by that.

STERN: It's fascinating. There were a number of crises in, later in '62. In August, Arosemena's cabinet resigned following a series of strikes and riots that swept the country. There were bank workers, bank workers striking. In Guayaquil, newspaper offices were stoned. And again, there were continuous rumbles about a

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possible coup to overthrow him. It was.... One thing I wanted to ask you about. A curious series of documents. We've never explained this and I couldn't find anything about it. Something called the Chatarra incident.

BERNBAUM: Oh, yes, yes.

STERN: Involving an American by the name of Morris Klein whose name kept popping up. I was never able to find out what that was.

BERNBAUM: This was the purchase by an Ecuadorian military purchasing commission of used military equipment, surplus military equipment and the stuff arrived in an unusable state. Real junk.

STERN: It was purchased from where?

BERNBAUM: The United States.

STERN: The United States.

BERNBAUM: From dealers.

STERN: Private?

BERNBAUM: From private dealers.

STERN: Yeah.

BERNBAUM: And the allegation was, that, this was, this reflected corruption, that the Ecuadorian military involved in this had made a lot of money out of it. That there were many kickbacks and so forth. And it really ruined the reputation of the Vice President.

STERN: This is Varea [Reinaldo Varea Donoso], isn't it?

BERNBAUM: Varea.

STERN: Varea, yes.

BERNBAUM: He might have known very well. You see, was in, I'd been in Ecuador before, as DCM.

STERN: Right.

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BERNBAUM: And I'd known Varea very well. So we were pretty good friends. But it killed him. Killed him off because he was never responsible for it.

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: And I remember a query made of me by Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] during this period when the three presidents were vying for office and he asked me about Varea as a possible successor. I don't know _____. There's no reason we should get involved in this thing. Stay out of it. Didn't make any difference to us who was president. But he just asked what chances Varea had and I just said, "Not a chance in hell if that's your _____." You see, Varea had impressed the people in Washington because he was the one to whom we turned during the missile crisis. Because I was supposed to speak with Arosemena and he at that time was going down to Guayaquil for the funeral of one of his old friends. He was in a very, very bad state. He'd also been drinking. It was impossible to get in touch with him. So when he left for Guayaquil, I spoke with Varea who immediately went to bat and lined up everybody and the Ecuadorian government was forced right behind us on that issue. So they were impressed with him. Hadn't realized the significance on his career of the Chatarra incident.

STERN: I gather that's what made it essentially impossible, when they finally did get rid of Arosemena, for him to succeed him.

BERNBAUM: That's right.

STERN: That's why there had to be a junta, because...

BERNBAUM: Yep.

STERN: ...of his, the fact that he'd been discredited. You can begin to see the.... Well, there's a whole series of things about his drinking. How public—was that known publicly in Ecuador ?

BERNBAUM: It was.

STERN: Because obviously you had this move in October, October 2nd, to permanently physic.... declare him permanently physically....

[APPARENT GAP IN TAPE]

BERNBAUM:_____ I made an appointment to see him at the presidential palace. Showed up there and was told by the secretary general that the President was incapacitated and wouldn't be able to see me. So I suspected what was going on and I went back to the embassy and I hadn't been more than about ten minutes when I got a call from the President.

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[Interruption]

BERNBAUM: Where was I, now?

STERN: About finding out that he was incapacitated?

BERNBAUM: So he called me, and he, in rather a slurred voice, said, "They have no business saying I couldn't see you. Come on over. I'd like to see you." So I took a DCM along with me. And we went up in his apartment, his private apartments were just above the offices in the presidential palace. And he was seated there with a bottle of champagne and offered me a drink. I took. Then I realized he was drunk and it just wasn't the time to extend the invitation, so we just talked for about 15 or 20 minutes and we left. But this was his sickness. He just was sick. Couldn't control it.

STERN: That's extraordinary. What about the impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis in Ecuador. Do you...?

BERNBAUM: They were all behind us four-square. Just everybody, it seems. It was very impressive. We had laid the groundwork very well.

STERN: In what way?

BERNBAUM: Well, State Department.... Ed Martin handled me very well. We got the message the night before.

STERN: Before the speech?

BERNBAUM: Before the speech, right. We were told to arrange for appointments with the President before the speech was given that day. We laid the groundwork. The Ecuadorians were familiar with what was going on and I spoke with Varela and told him about it. I said, "We value your advice on this thing, we

would like to know what you think about it, you and your government think about it.” And they liked that. And they were right behind us.

STERN: No skepticism about the plans?

BERNBAUM: No, none whatsoever. None whatsoever. No, I might have gotten some from Arosemena, although I’m pretty sure that Arosemena would have backed us up, too. Because when the crunch came, he, he would do the right thing. He liked to be the *enfant terrible*, to sort of needle people. But basically I think his instincts were

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good. And he would have gone with us, I think.

STERN: Was it a very tense time, that week?

BERNBAUM: It was very tense, yes. We didn’t realize in Ecuador just how tense it really was.

STERN: And once the crisis was resolved, did you find that it strengthened the general position of the United States in the country? For example, Ambassador Stephansky [Ben S. Stephansky] said that it really was a tough blow to the left-wing people in Bolivia....

BERNBAUM: Yes, that’s right. That’s right.

STERN: It set them back.

BERNBAUM: It did. It did. In other ways, it demonstrated the protection offered by the United States against the Soviet Union. People suddenly realized what might have been happening. As a matter of fact they were ahead of us. I think some of the Ecuadorians were advocating a resolution in the OAS—condemning—and in the UN—condemning the Soviet Union for what it had done. We didn’t go along with that. But I think that if we had tried to get a resolution through, we’d have had solid Latin American support. Certainly we would have had Ecuadorian support.

STERN: It was just after the crisis that the incident occurred with President Alessandri whose visit you mentioned before.

BERNBAUM: Yes....

STERN: And then there were a number of cables, one in which you said, for example, and I’ll quote, that “Arosemena is fighting for survival with

all stops out.” And then you predicted that it was very likely there would be a coup except for the fact that it was the Christmas season...

BERNBAUM: [laughter] _____

STERN: ...and maybe that would save him.

BERNBAUM: Yes.

STERN: It happened, of course.

BERNBAUM: Yes.

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STERN: Yes. And there was also at that point, a little earlier, later in '63 the mention of this incident in this bar, apparently in Guayaquil in which a private citizen had been shot and the President's bodyguard was apparently taking the blame, as one of the cables suggested.

BERNBAUM: Yeah, uh huh.

STERN: Let's see.... Well, the next major thing of course was the fishing crisis...

BERNBAUM: Yes.

STERN: ...which broke out in May of '63 with the seizure of the tuna boats, the Ranger and the White Star. And that went on for some time, obviously, and I could see from the cables that you were a key person in negotiating that settlement. I wonder if you could talk about that, although I was struck by one thing. I had the feeling that the fact that the coup intervened in July and the President was overthrown, it seemed that progress really accelerated after that, toward a settlement and I wonder if you...?

BERNBAUM: This was largely the influence of the foreign minister, who had been _____ foreign minister. He had been ambassador to Washington, as well as secretary before. We had many conversations about the fisheries, the 200 mile limit.

STERN: Fishing rights?

BERNBAUM: He was intellectually opposed to it, and so.... It wasn't as difficult to negotiate with him as it had been with the Arosemena government.

And we finally did work out a modus vivendi.... Secretly. And shortly before I left, there was another foreign minister. He said he was worried about this modus vivendi, that if it ever out in public, it would create a storm in Ecuador and probably would be counterproductive. And he was wondering whether we could cancel the modus vivendi in return for an Ecuadorian commitment to do by legislation a number of the things that we had achieved in the modus vivendi and I thought that made a lot of sense. And when we got back home, we, we had a meeting with the Secretary and decided that we would go along with it. But I never did know what happened because I was out ____.

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: Apparently the modus vivendi was never cancelled and eventually it blew up in everybody's face.

STERN: Right.

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BERNBAUM: And the foreign minister who negotiated it had his political career completely ruined.

STERN: What do you think was the motivation of the Ecuadorians in seizing those tuna boats? I mean—from reading the material, I'm sure the fishing rights issue was a real one.

BERNBAUM: Before, yes.... Before....

STERN: In May of '63, I mean.... Why did they...? There were rumors of shots being fired, although I wasn't sure that that actually happened.

BERNBAUM: There may have been a shot fired across the bow.

STERN: Across the bow, yes.

BERNBAUM: Ecuador had been aligned with Peru and Chile in the 200 mile limit. This was a subject of active discussion, previously while I was director of South American Affairs in Washington. Well, I remember one day a meeting between our legal advisor and the Ecuadorian ambassador and me on this subject. And the Ecuadorian ambassador laid it out very neatly. He said, "You people decided that your off-shore oil was important to you. So, President Truman [Harry S. Truman] declared the 200 mile zone. Exclusive zone for exploitation by the United States. You were interested in the ocean bed." He said, "Well, we didn't have an ocean bed. The Pacific Ocean doesn't have a long—I forget what you call it—a stretch of shallow ground"

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: He said, “So, our solution was a 200 mile limit without that.” He says, “Now if you people were entitled to your 200 mile limit for oil, we were entitled to a 200 mile limit for the other resources of the sea.” That, of course, was the intellectual basis for their claim, going back to the Truman declaration. In a sense, we asked for it. This got to be a strong issue. It’s a nationalistic issue. The Ecuadorian fisherman are ____ preferred to do their fishing, which was done in a rather primitive way, without any competition from foreigners. You had fishing for anchovita, you create fish meal and fertilizer. So it, it was a pretty strong issue, especially along the coastal area. It was a nationalistic issue, too.

STERN: That’s what I meant by nationalistic—there was truly a political component to it.

BERNBAUM: In politics in Ecuador, were very important. The poorer the country, the more important politics becomes, nationalism becomes.

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STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: So it was—well, it was rather interesting, that you raise the fisheries matter, to describe how that was really the basis for Arosemena’s overthrow. I reported, as you may have it in your files, Arosemena gave a big dinner reception for the president of the Grace Lines, Admiral McNeil [Wilfred James McNeil].

STERN: McNeil. Correct.

BERNBAUM: And the reason was that they had inaugurated a few new vessels and Mrs. Arosemena had been invited to go on the maiden voyage of one of these and they treated her very well. So he wanted to reciprocate. He gave this dinner. And I remember arriving and instead of going to the office, I went up to his apartment, thinking that’s where the dinner was going to be given. And he was there with a few of his ministers, including the foreign minister and he was already half gone. And saw me, he said, “Ah, Ambassador,” he said, “Come on, have a drink. Glad to see you.” So, I ____ with one minister, managed to get him downstairs. And before going into dinner, he decorated the admiral. But he omitted my name. Usually he was very punctilious about referring to the various dignitaries ____ and whenever he omitted my name, I knew there was something sticking in his craw. He’d done that a couple of times before [laughter]. And I was wondering what it was when we sat down to dinner. And at the first.... At the soup course, he got up—and he was already drunk—and he made a rambling speech. Turning toward the Admiral, he said, “Admiral,” he said, “The United States exploits us, exploits us without,

pity. But that I know doesn't apply to the American people." He turned to me and said, "Isn't that right, Ambassador?" Well, I didn't.... [laughter]

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: What do you do? You laugh or you cry. So I just started to laugh. And I said, "No, Mr. President. When you speak with one, you're speaking with the other." So he turned across the table, and one of his pals who was a minister, and he said, "Paco, you agree?" And Paco was studying the molding on the ceiling at that time.

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: And he said, "Paco, don't you agree?" And Paco said, "No, sir." So he snorted, got up, staggered out. The dinner continued. And later, after the dinner, they all gathered around me and apologized, saying they hoped the—I wouldn't make anything of it. And I said, "No, forget it. I knew he was drunk. He didn't mean it." And just about that time, the sub-secretary of foreign affairs came over and he said, "It doesn't really make any difference what you do," he said, "I just talked to the heads of the three military units. They decided, 'This is it, he's out, he's finished.'" So, I was speaking to the foreign minister and said, "What brought this out? He said, "There was an article in the morning newspaper quoting the secretary of the American Tuna Fishing—Tuna Fishing

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Association ____ saying that the Ecuadorians were not negotiating in good faith with the tuna fishing." He said, "That, that made Arosemena furious." I learned later that my wife had been speaking with Mrs. McNeil. She was right across the table from the President. Mrs. McNeil had asked her where to find objects of art in Ecuador. And she said, "Oh, Mrs. Fishes." And she said she noticed the President looking at her when she said, "Mrs. Fishes." That reminded him of the fishery incident. That produced the speech.

STERN: Oh my God....

BERNBAUM: There you are.

STERN: The coup came fairly, shortly after this?

BERNBAUM: Oh, the following morning he.... Just by coincidence, I was giving a luncheon, a farewell luncheon, for our military attaché who was very popular there. And one of the men, who later became a member of the military junta, Colonel Gándara [Mario Gándara Enríquez] brought his wife over and said he couldn't stay, so I took him aside and said, "What's going on?" He said, well, he said, "We're having a meeting now." He said, "Arosemena is through." He said, "We couldn't

take that one because,” he said, “if we did, the junior officers would have overthrown him and they would have overthrown us, too. So we had to get him out.” He said, “I’m getting back to the meeting at the palace. And he did.

STERN: What was it like as an ambassador from an obviously interested nation when the country you’re in is having a coup and you obviously just stay back and hands-off?

BERNBAUM: Yes. Just avoid any participation or any appearance of participation because the knee-jerk reaction in Latin America always is that the US has a role to play in this thing, had played in it. And of course a great many people in Ecuador were certain that I had stimulated this coup because of what Arosemena had said. Unfortunately, there were all these people at the dinner who were witnesses to what had actually happened and what I had said.

STERN: This is the alleged personal insult, because I—there was a cable in which Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] mentioned a personal insult to the ambassador, I guess this must be the one.

BERNBAUM: This was it.

STERN: Yes.

BERNBAUM: This was a personal insult to the United States and that was it.

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STERN: That’s especially interesting because I found a telegram to Ted Clifton at the White House from Admiral McNeil.

BERNBAUM: Oh?

STERN: Yeah. Written a few days later in which he—after the coup, right after the coup—in which he said that the new junta would be, and I’ll quote it to you, “More conservative politically and economically,” and he hopes that, “the United States would avoid the mistake in Peru of a year ago.” He meant, of course, in delaying recognition of the junta for some loan business about 60 days or so.

BERNBAUM: We handled that one very badly....

STERN: Yes.

BERNBAUM: I remember that.

STERN: And he said that....

BERNBAUM: It was even worse than that because we threatened them, I believe.

STERN: That's right. And, he got a very, pretty much pro forma response from the White House. But basically that's what happened. I mean, the junta was recognized rather quickly.

BERNBAUM: Well, what we had was, I had further conversation with Gándara, in which I asked him what they proposed to do, how long they proposed to stay in power. And he said, "As short a time as possible, because the longer we stay, the more difficult it's going to be for us to leave."

STERN: Sure.

BERNBAUM: And so, I asked him how long. I said, "A year? Six months?" Well, that was too short, so, "A year?" And he said, "Maybe a year, maybe a bit longer." But it was on the basis of that conversation that I felt justified in recommending that we not wait too long.

STERN: _____ it was very interesting that there was an attempt in the Congress at that time to cut off American military aid to any nation in which a coup, in which a legitimate government was overthrown by force, and there were a number of cables back and forth in which you essentially argued that Ecuador should be excluded from this because this was, you called it a "personal tragedy," not a traditional military coup...

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BERNBAUM: That's right. It's right.

STERN: ...in an unusual sense, that's what it was.

BERNBAUM: That's right.

STERN: _____

BERNBAUM: It was a tragedy. I don't think there was any real animus toward Arosemena, more pity and sadness.

STERN: There's one very interesting, sort of footnote, but I think it struck me when I read it that there was a refusal in June of 1963 from U.S. longshoreman to unload Ecuadorian bananas because of rumors of the bubonic plague. And then there was a response in a cable in which you wrote that, well, this is, the disease is endemic in Ecuador, but as far as we know, there is no outbreak at this time. And that kind of surprised me. I just didn't know that it was....

BERNBAUM: I don't even remember....

STERN: [laughter]

BERNBAUM: I think some member of the staff must have written it.

STERN: But it was—your name was on it, though....

BERNBAUM: Yes, all, all messages had my name....

STERN: Yes. Sure. You might not have.... I realize that.... Let's see. The, the ambassador, the Ecuadorian Ambassador, Ponce Miranda [Neftali Ponce Miranda]—I think was, the pronunciation—left, then, to become foreign minister after the coup and he met with President Kennedy in July and they went over a number of points: cooperation in the Alliance for Progress, the need to control Communism, the need to find an agreement on the fishing dispute, etc., etc. Did the new foreign minister discuss this meeting with you at all when he got back, the meeting he had with President Kennedy ?

BERNBAUM: Yes, he spoke about it ____ way. He was not a very expansive person. He would, would produce comments when you asked him for it. He was favorably disposed to cooperation with the US. He was worried about the communist problem. The Cuban problem, basically, more than the communist problem as such. He would, he felt that the boundary dispute had to be settled one way or another and he was not very much interested at that point. And he did, he was sympathetic on the fisheries issue.

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STERN: In August, you wrote a long.... Actually, one other minor point that I found interesting. A number of key communists were ordered arrested in the wake of the coup and some were given asylum in the Bolivian embassy and then the Bolivian ambassador was accused of being pro-communist. ____ some of these people were then ferreted out of the country. Do you have any recollection of that?

BERNBAUM: No.

STERN: No. Okay. In August of '63 you wrote along memo—an assessment of the internal defense situation in Ecuador and on the whole you were very positive about the generals in the junta, particularly General G-A-N-dara.

BERNBAUM: Gándara, Gándara? He was really the intellectual....

STERN: You said he was the most intelligent, capable and really quite qualified and honest....

BERNBAUM: The others were not so honest....

STERN: Yeah, that's exactly what you said. What about the attempt, the so-called—cleanse the universities, get rid of communists, etc., outlaw the communist party. That did happen in the wake of the coup. Was there any serious political trouble about that?

BERNBAUM: No, I don't think anything substantial was done, either. As I remember, the rector continued. Very nice guy who—with whom I had a lot of contact. I don't remember anything very substantial having been done.

STERN: I was wondering if we could just talk briefly about the _____, yes, the understanding you did make on the fisheries issue and exactly what its major provisions were?

BERNBAUM: Essentially we worked out an agreement for a 12 mile fisheries limit. The establishment of a mutually satisfactory fee to be paid by the other fishers. Those were the key things. The extension, I think, of the agreement to the Gulf of Guayaquil.... Essentially that was it.

STERN: What about... ? There was a special problem of the, of the—how do you pronounce m-a-n-t-a...?

BERNBAUM: Manta.

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STERN: Manta area. Their special dependence on fishing. How did you deal with that?

BERNBAUM: That's where you had the, well, the idea was they had to police it, that they had to restrain the fisherman down in that area. And particularly, the military were stationed around there from going out against the tuna fish, tuna vessels, presumably they were ignorant of the 12 mile, the agreement on the 12 mile limit. So it was a rather sensitive issue. And I think you had a violation every once in awhile, but it was usually corrected by the military.

STERN: There were a number of rumors in October and November. One, as a matter of fact, you.... General Gándara specifically told you that Arosemena was back in Ecuador, hiding in Guayas province. Is that true, as far as you knew?

BERNBAUM: No.

STERN: There were also rumors that Velasco was trying to get Cuban help for a....

BERNBAUM: Those were rumors. I never _____.

STERN: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the impact of the assassination of President Kennedy, how that, how that hit the country?

BERNBAUM: It was really tremendous. It was very touching. I think they, they felt as bad about it as the Americans did.

STERN: How did they show it?

BERNBAUM: Well, I had a steady stream of visitors to both the chancery and the embassy residence. These were not just the socialite types or the business types, but it was laboring people, artisans, labor union people, and I remember _____ came on one time and his spokesman said, "I hope this will not in any way interfere with our program"—the Alliance for Progress, which was considered to be very important and they were very happy when I told them President Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] had already announced that it would not.

STERN: Right.

BERNBAUM: But.... There was, there was a sort of general outcry of sympathy and grief. We had a big mass—high mass—for the President. The cathedral was jammed, with people outside listening to the loudspeakers. It was very impressive.

[-27-]

STERN: _____... that so many people would pour in.... Fascinating.... Did you feel that things changed in any significant way in terms of US-Ecuadorian relations with the coming of Lyndon Johnson to the presidency.

BERNBAUM: Well, I think the Johnson administration, in terms of the President, had done everything possible to keep things going normally, as they had before, so the transition was quite, quite easy. People who were questioning our policy in the future were left reassured that we had no intention of changing it and we didn't. Really, the change came along not because of presidential action, but

because of the actions of the private interest groups in the United States who would take advantage of you and really destroyed it.

STERN: Right. ____ Oh. We'd better get going. Well, thank you very much.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]

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