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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25 February 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Preliminary Views on the Argentine National Elections*

1. Arturo Frondizi, candidate of the Intransigent Radical Civic Union, appears to have won a landslide victory in last Sunday's free elections. According to unofficial returns, he is assured of about 319 of the 466 seats in the electoral college. This far exceeds pre-election forecasts. Election returns for the Chamber of Deputies and the provincial governors and legislatures are still incomplete, but it appears that the victory of Frondizi's followers was comparable in these offices. The provincial legislatures so elected will choose the national senators not later than 31 March. The inauguration of the new president is scheduled for 1 May.

2. The clear mandate for Frondizi coupled with the provisional regime's long-standing determination to transfer power to an elected government considerably reduces the likelihood of

* This memorandum has been discussed with OCI at the working level.

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a coup despite the military's distrust of the left-wing Frondizi. "Quedantista" elements -- a military and civilian minority desiring to prevent a return to constitutional normalcy -- believe that the election of Frondizi is justification for a coup. However, they probably still lack the military support necessary for such an effort; they would face opposition from the provisional regime, many parties, the press, and the public. Frondizi is likely to have reassured the military of his good intentions, and the majority of the military are probably disposed to "wait and see" how he performs in office. On the other hand, should Frondizi show a disposition to permit Peronistas or Communists to exercise a major influence in his administration in return for their electoral support, the military probably would attempt a coup -- either before or after the inauguration. A military venture against a clear-cut resurgence of Peronism would enjoy at least some popular support.

3. Even if there is no attempt to upset the results of the election, the prospect is for a period of uncertainty and instability. The new president will inherit a host of formidable economic and political problems. The spectre of Peronist and even some Communist influence will lead to unrest, and to plotting among

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conservative military groups. At the same time, should Frondizi be unable to mollify his conglomeration of extremist supporters, he also will face troublesome subversive opposition. Despite any pre-election understanding with Peronistas, we believe that Frondizi as the next president will consider it politically inexpedient to permit Peron or the Peronista organization to obtain any position of power.

4. Frondizi is not considered particularly friendly toward the US; he espouses traditional Radical Party statist and isolationist policies which inhibit foreign private investment in oil and natural resources. However, his behavior in the presidency will of necessity be conditioned by the country's deteriorating economic situation, including the need for large-scale credits to rehabilitate basic industries and to refinance the foreign debt.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

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