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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

José FIGUERES Ferrer
President-Elect of Costa Rica

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COSTA RICA

José FIGUERES Ferrer

President-Elect of Costa Rica



THE VICTORIOUS PRESIDENT-ELECT

Elected President of Costa Rica on 1 February 1970, José "Pepe" Figueres will be inaugurated on 8 May 1970. Receiving 55 percent of the national vote, he defeated former President Mario Echandi (1958-62), his nearest rival and candidate of the National Unification (UN) coalition, by 73,000 votes. Figueres' party, the National Liberation Party (PLN), won a majority in the Legislative Assembly, which it has controlled since 1953.

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Founder and leader of the PLN, Figueres was President of the Republic from 1953 to 1958, but he has not held public office since leaving the Presidency. During the intervening years he traveled extensively and devoted a major portion of his time to party activities.

The 1970 Campaign

In his recent campaign Figueres concentrated primarily on countering the attacks of the UN coalition because of Echandi's attempts to link him with Communism. At first, Figueres belittled these attempts, and then, following a strategy meeting of the PLN in November 1969, he launched a series of counterattacks. In a televised speech that the PLN repeated several times, Figueres dismissed his adversary's charges as sheer demagoguery. The PLN labeled the *Echandistas* "purveyors of hate."

At the same time, the PLN expressed regret at the need to descend to the mudslinging tactics of the UN, and on several occasions it tried to discuss the problems confronting the nation. Figueres stressed the theme of the "forgotten one-third of the nation," those who had not benefited from Costa Rica's development. He elaborated on the domestic issues of malnutrition and unemployment but made few programmatic statements regarding foreign policy.



ONE VOTE FOR FIGUERES

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Foreign Policy

Despite the lack of a specific outline of his foreign policy during the campaign, Figueres is known to believe that Costa Rica must lead the fight in the Organization of American States to develop democracy in all Latin American countries. He favors arms limitation by the major powers. He also advocates that these powers give increased assistance to underdeveloped nations. Figueres is pro-United States, but he never hesitates to oppose or criticize this country if it suits his purpose.

In the economic sphere, Figueres advocates a US coffee quota for Central America such as that which currently exists for sugar. Like other coffee planters associated with the PLN, Figueres favors increased trade with Communist countries. He is also a firm proponent of the Central American Common Market.

Domestic Policy

More specific about his domestic plans, Figueres indicated that he favors forming a constituent assembly, composed of experts, to reform the present Constitution. He plans to create a Ministry of Culture, Youth and Recreation that will focus attention on the young--hopefully imbuing them with an appreciation of Costa Rican culture.

As noted in the campaign, Figueres plans to construct migrant worker camps to encourage migratory workers to settle in the Atlantic Zone, where work is available. He also advocates upgrading vocational training to coincide with employment demands. He intends to provide jobs for the unemployed through the construction of houses for the poor.

Hoping to lessen the economic gap between the rural dweller and his urban counterpart, Figueres wants to raise the rural income, provide improved housing and establish better health and educational facilities. He has announced that he will give high priority to enforcing the minimum wage.

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Figueres envisions reforming the Ministry of Agriculture to make it more responsive to the needs of the citizens. He recognizes the value of industrialized farming and a functional agricultural extension service. The President-elect sees further land reform as a necessary means of providing new land owners and private managers with enough land to increase productivity. To combat malnutrition, Figueres has urged the production of more nutritional foods; he has also stated his intention to educate the population in the value of a well-balanced diet.

Political Orientation

The President-elect is first and foremost pro-José Figueres.

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Figueres is known, however, as a firm proponent of democracy. In the late 1940's he was a member of the now defunct Caribbean Legion, an organization of several hundred Central American and Caribbean citizens dedicated to overthrowing the dictatorships in the area. He has been hostile toward totalitarian governments, such as those of Rafael Trujillo, former strong man of the Dominican Republic (1930-61), and the Somoza family, which has controlled Nicaragua since 1936.

Personal feelings, however, have tempered Figueres' hatred of dictatorships. He was notably tolerant of Argentine dictator Juan Perón (1946-55). His almost fanatic antipathy toward the Somozas stems primarily from the civil war of 1948, when the late President Anastasio Somoza García aided the forces who were trying to keep Costa Rican President Teodoro Picado in power illegally. The Somozas also aided Costa Rican exiles seeking to invade their homeland in 1948 and 1955.

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Attitude Toward Communism

Figueres has a long record of anti-Communism but he seems willing to ally himself with the Communists to serve his political purposes.

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Figueres later stated privately that any minority group that had organized itself into a political organization should have the right to participate in the electoral process and the opportunity to elect representatives to the Legislative Assembly. Figueres admitted that he might be belittling the possible dangers resulting from the legalization of the BOCI. He felt, however, that if they participated in the election they could elect only two Deputies, and he doubted that two Communists could seriously disrupt the legislative process. In July 1969, nevertheless, the Legislative Assembly proscribed the BOCI.

The following month, Figueres and other members of the PLN in the Legislative Assembly allegedly made it known that they would not support any attempt to proscribe another well-known Communist-front organization, the Socialist Action Party (PASO). The PASO did participate in the elections.

Early Life and Career

José "Pepe" Figueres Ferrer was born in San Ramón, Costa Rica, on 30 September 1906. His parents had recently immigrated to Costa Rica from Spain, where his father practiced medicine and his mother

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taught school. Figueres is a Costa Rican citizen by option. He received his early education in local schools. He went to the United States in 1923, residing in Boston and New York City, and worked as a translator, among other jobs. Figueres attended night classes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University, but apparently he did not graduate from either of these institutions.

Returning to Costa Rica in the mid-1920's, Figueres established himself as a farmer and businessman. For over a decade he steadily developed his enterprises and became a successful merchant and plantation owner, growing, processing and exporting coffee.

Entering politics in the early 1940's, Figueres became active in the opposition to the administration of President Rafael Calderón (1940-44), a regime associated with the Communists. Figueres spent most of the time between 1942 and 1944 in exile in Mexico and Guatemala.

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Figueres returned to Costa Rica in 1944 and was an unsuccessful candidate for a seat in the Constitutional Congress. In November 1945 he was instrumental in founding the Social Democratic Party (PSD), an opposition group. This party opposed Calderón's handpicked successor, President Teodoro Picado (1944-48).

The Civil War

Otilio Ulate was elected President in February 1948, but in March the Calderón-Picado forces nullified their opponents' electoral victory and attempted to perpetuate themselves in power. Figueres, a supporter of Ulate, then led a successful rebellion against the Calderón-Picado forces. In May Figueres and Ulate made an agreement whereby Figueres became head of an interim junta government, officially

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designated the Founding Junta of the Second Republic. The junta then suspended the Constitution and dismissed the Congress.

De Facto Head of the Government

Figueres remained *de facto* head of the government for 18 months. During that period he emphasized the role of the state in the nation's economy. He established many autonomous agencies, the most important of which were the Central Bank and the National Production Council. He also adopted a 10 percent capital levy. As a result of these measures and the arbitrary manner of their adoption, however, Figueres lost the backing of the older, wealthier and more conservative Ulate supporters. This group exerted its influence in the December 1948 Constituent Assembly elections, preventing a Figueres-sponsored draft from serving as the basis of the Constitution of 1949.

Ulate assumed the Presidency in 1949, but Figueres did not hold an official post in his administration (1949-53). In 1952 Figueres organized the PLN as an official vehicle for his own presidential candidacy. Following an overwhelming victory, he was inaugurated on 8 November 1953.

President of Costa Rica

As a constitutional President, Figueres pursued many of the same objectives and policies he had worked for as head of the junta. His commitment to a planned economy, stabilization, social welfare programs and public works has been likened to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. He even adopted the practice of frequent "fireside chats" in the Roosevelt fashion. As a result of his accomplishments, particularly in agriculture and social reform, Figueres enjoyed widespread popularity.

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Many Costa Ricans were concerned, however, about the possibility of deteriorating relations with their neighboring countries. They were alarmed by Figueres' denunciations of the so-called dictatorial regimes in the area. In January 1955, nevertheless, the people generally backed the Figueres government when Costa Rican exiles, aided by Nicaragua and other nearby governments, attempted to invade Costa Rica.

Post-Presidency

In accordance with the Constitution, Figueres did not seek reelection when his term of office ended in 1958; he concentrated on leading the PLN. In the early 1960's he launched a lecture tour in the United States. In 1964 he served as a member of the Costa Rican delegation to the UN Conference on Trade and Development. He was also a delegate to several sessions of the UN General Assembly.

With the elections of 1966 approaching, Figueres announced in February 1965 that he would not run for the Presidency. He thought that others should have a chance to attain this high office and thus preclude the country's lapsing into a cult of personalities. Some qualified observers speculated at that time that Figueres was deliberately waiting until the 1970 elections, when his arch rival, Mario Echandi, would be able to run for reelection.

During 1967-68 Figueres devoted his time to his private enterprises. At that time, he had large commitments to banks that he could not honor, but his current financial status apparently is improved.

Candidate for the Presidency

On 15 December 1968 the PLN nominated Figueres as its candidate for President of Costa Rica. Figueres had defeated his nearest rival for the nomination, Rodrigo Carazo Odio, by a vote of two to one. His selection, however, caused resentment among the more liberal members of the party who were seeking to discard the personal orientation of the PLN. The challenge to Figueres' domination of the

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PLN was revealed during the selection of candidates for the Legislative Assembly. Figueres threatened to resign unless the party removed at least two candidates whom he considered unacceptable and replaced them with his own choices. The ensuing impasse was finally resolved when the party met his demands, but a residue of ill feeling remained.

Foreign Travel

One of the few Costa Rican politicians who enjoy international stature, Figueres has traveled extensively in Central America, Europe and the United States. He also attended the meeting of the World Anti-Communist League in Saigon in 1968.

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To a large segment of the Costa Rican population Figueres is a national hero--a charismatic father figure of benevolence and security. An orator of note, he has an exceptional ability to arouse and hold his audiences, inspiring great trust and confidence in his followers. At the same time, however, he evokes strong bitterness and deep-seated enmity among his opponents.

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[Redacted]
[Redacted] He speaks fluent English.

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Family

Figueres has been married twice, both times to US citizens. He is divorced from his first wife, the former Henrietta Boggs of Birmingham, Alabama, by whom he has two children. On 6 February 1954 he married Rita Karen Olsen. They have four children, the oldest of whom, José, Jr., was born on 24 December 1954.



THE FIGUERES FAMILY (JOSE, JR., ABSENT)

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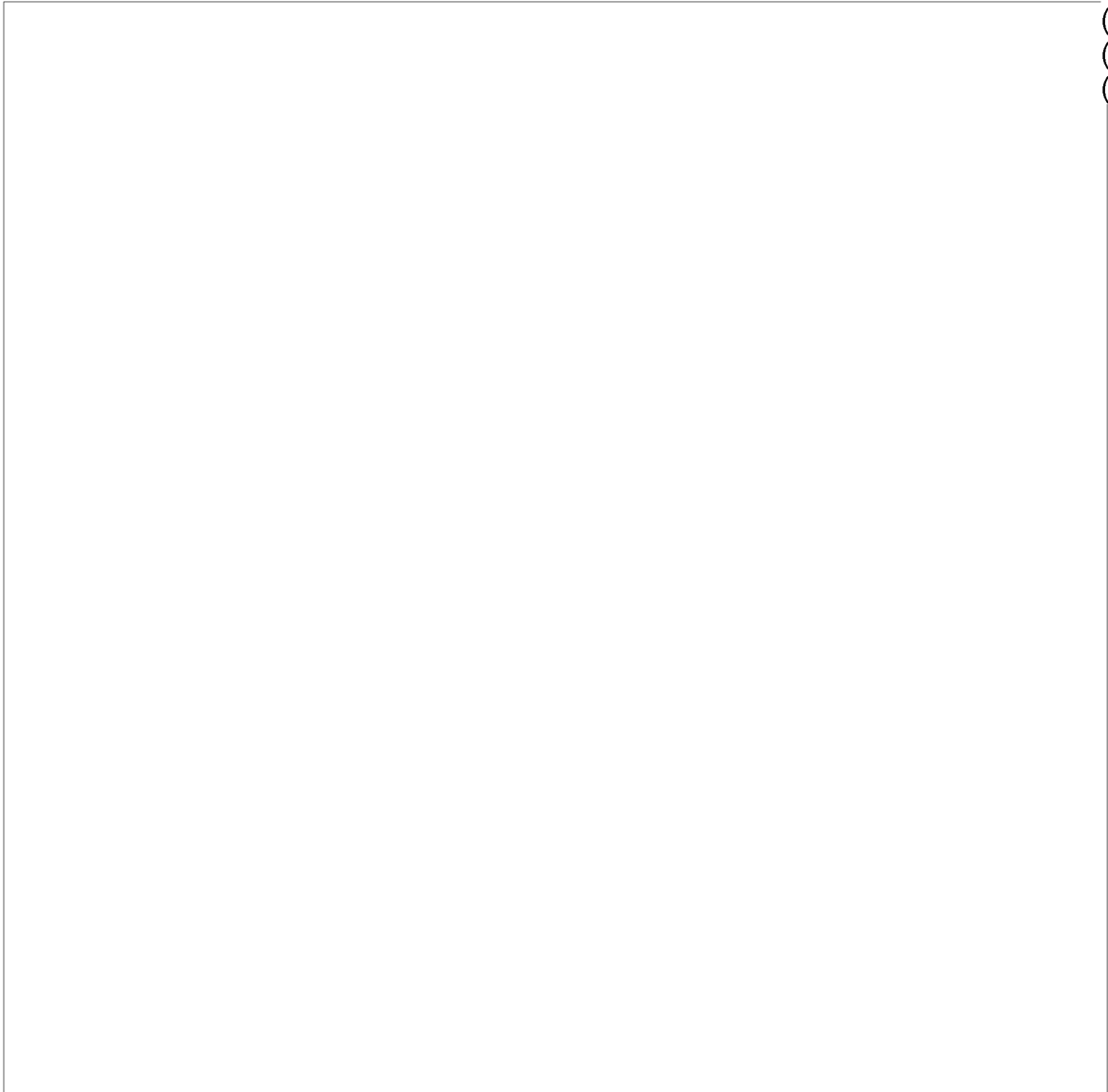
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