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INFO CIAE 00, DODE 00, GPM 03, H 02, INR 07, L 03, NSAE 00, NSC 10, P 04,

RSC 01, SC 01, SP 02, SS 20, USIA 12, SAH 03, IO 13, MM 01, AID 28, PC 4,

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Santo Domingo 1722
2/17/68

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4602
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1722

SUBJ: PRESIDENT URGES MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS BE OPENED TO ALL ELIGIBLE CONTENDERS

1. PRESIDENT BALAGUER TOOK UNUSUAL STEP FEB 5 OF PUBLISHING OPEN LETTER TO HYPERSENSITIVE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) EXPRESSING HIS WISHES RE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN COMING MUNICIPAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. HE PEGGED LETTER TO COMPLAINT OF MARIO READ VITTINI'S SMALL PDC, WHICH LAST WEEK DECLARED ITSELF IN OPPOSITION TO BALAGUER AND WITHDREW ITS REQUEST FOR RECOGNITION BY JCE, CHARGING IT HAMPERING PARTY'S PROSPECTS BY UNDULY DELAYING RECOGNITION.

2. BALAGUER WROTE AS FOLLOWS:

A. GUARANTEE OF NATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND DEFINITIVE PACIFICATION OF COUNTRY DEPEND IN GREAT PART UPON FREE MANIFESTATION PUBLIC OPINION IN PERIODIC ELECTIONS THROUGH

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WHICH MAY BE CHOSEN, WITHOUT SLIGHTEST COERCION OR RESTRICTION, THOSE WHO IN PUBLIC'S JUDGEMENT SHOULD OCCUPY ELECTIVE OFFICES. PRESENT JCE MEMBERS ARE OF IRREPROACHABLE CIVIC CONDUCT AND THEIR MORAL INTEGRITY CONSTITUTES GUARANTEE ACKNOWLEDGED BY ALL DOMINICANS THAT FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS THOSE PAST, WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN CLIMATE ABSOLUTE RESPECT OF VOTERS' WILL. BUT IT OBVIOUS THAT IT NOT SUFFICIENT THAT JCE MEMBERS ARE RESPECTED BY ALL. FOR ELECTIONS TO BE GENUINE EXPRESSION POPULAR WILL, IT ALSO NECESSARY THAT NO ONE BE RESTRICTED IN EXERCISE HIS CIVIC RIGHTS AND THAT RIGHT TO SUFFRAGE BE OPENED TO ALL POLITICAL GROUPINGS WHICH MEET CONDITIONS REQUIRED BY LAW AND WHOSE LINES ARE COMPATIBLE WITH PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.

B. MEMBERS OF JCE ARE WITNESS TO FACT MY GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER MADE SUGGESTIONS OR APPLIED PRESSURE THAT WOULD IN ANY WAY RESTRICT ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE WITH WHICH THEY PERFORMING FUNCTIONS VESTED IN THEM BY LAW. IN LIGHT THIS FACT, WHICH MUST BE RECOGNIZED BY JCE AND PUBLIC OPINION, "I PERMIT MYSELF RECOMMEND THAT JCE RECONSIDER CASE OF PD

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AND THAT ALL NECESSARY FACILITIES BE EXTENDED THAT GROUP SO THAT IT MAY PARTICIPATE IN COMING ELECTIONS AND THOSE OF 1970. I HOPE THAT THIS SUGGESTION, MADE WITHOUT SLIGHTEST INTENTION THAT IT BE INTERPRETED AS INTERFERENCE BY EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN MATTERS OF YOUR EXCLUSIVE COMPETENCE, BE RECEIVED FAVORABLY BY YOU, AS SUCCESS OF COMING ELECTIONS AND CONSOLIDATION DEMOCRATIC REGIME IN DR DEPEND IN GREAT PART ON ITS ACCEPTANCE".

3. JCE REPLIED IN OPEN LETTER PUBLISHED FEB 7. IT STATED ITS AGREEMENT THAT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS SHOULD BE OPEN TO ALL GROUPS WHICH MEET LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND ARE COMPTAIBLE WITH REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY. RECALLED, HOWEVER, THAT LAW STATES SUCH GROUPS MUST PROVE MEMBERSHIP OF AT LEAST 3 PERCENT OF VOTE IN LAST ELECTIONS (SOME 41,000), AND THAT, IN CASE OF PDC, THOROUGH AND FAIR INVESTIGATION OF ITS CLAIMED MEMBERSHIP LIST BY JCE HAD FAILED CONFIRM PARTY'S CONTENTION IT MET THIS

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REQUIREMENT. JCE THUS HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO REJECT PDC APPLICATION. BEFORE DOING SO, HOWEVER, PDC WITHDREW ITS APPLICATION AND CASE WAS CLOSED. "IT IS NOT POSSIBLE RECONSIDER CASE OF PDC", JCE STATED, ADDING IT HAD TAKEN

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DUE NOTE OF PRESIDENT'S DISCLAIMER OF INTERFERENCE IN ITS AFFAIRS "AS IN NO CASE WILL BOARD ADMIT INTERFERENCES IN EXERCISE ITS FUNCTIONS".

4. PDC, MEANWHILE, ISSUED STATEMENT ALSO PUBLISHED FEB 7 EXPRESSING ITS UNDERSTANDING THAT PRESIDENT'S LETTER DEMONSTRATED GOVT'S INTENTION CREATE "CONDITIONS ADEQUATE FOR SUCCESS OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS", THAT IT CONCERNED "ALL GROUPINGS WHICH MEET LEGAL REQUIREMENTS", AND THAT PDC THUS EXPECTS JCE TO TREAT IT WITH NEITHER MORE NOR LESS CONSIDERATION THAN THAT GIVEN ALL OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE APPLICATIONS FOR RECOGNITION ARE PENDING (IN OTHER WORDS, IT STATED ITS EXPECTATION OF RECOGNITION ON BASIS PRESIDENT'S LETTER).

5. COMMENT: A. ONE POLITICAL INTERPRETATION PRESIDENT'S LETTER (RE PDC) WAS ADVANCED IN SD-1710. BEYOND THAT, BALAGUER WOULD SEEM HAVE INTENDED REPEAT GARCIA GODDY'S "OPEN DOOR" POLICY TOWARDS 1966 ELECTIONS, IN WHICH ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE WAS DECREED FOR ALL PARTIES PREVIOUSLY RECOGNIZED, NOTWITHSTANDING FACT SOME HAD SUBSEQUENTLY LOST THEIR LEGAL STATUS.

B. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE, HOWEVER, ON WHY PRESIDENT

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CHOSE MAKE HIMSELF VULNERABLE TO PUBLIC REJECTION HIS SPECIAL PLEA ON PDC BY JCE, WHICH REACTED WITH INORDINATE SWIFTHNESS TO HIS LETTER. PRESIDENT MUST SURELY BE AWARE OF ULTRA-ZEALOUSNESS WHICH WHICH JCE (AND PARTICULARLY ITS PRESIDENT, ANGEL LIZ) GUARDS ITS SPECIAL PREROGATIVES, AND WOULD SEEM HAVE BEEN WELL ADVISED EITHER MAKE PRIVATE APPROACH OR TO AVOID SPECIAL PLEA IN OTHERWISE WELL RECEIVED GENERAL STATEMENT

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OF HIS DESIRES RE ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION. WOULD NOT SEEM THAT POLITICAL PROBLEM POSED BY PDC'S DEFECTION IS OF MAGNITUDE SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT CONTROVERSY WITH JCE OVER BASIC ELECTORAL PROCEDURES--CONTINUATION OF WHICH CONTROVERSY SEEMS ASSURED BY ALACRITY WITH WHICH PDC JUMPED INTO BREACH.

C. FURTHER, PDC WAS PLAYING POLITICS TO HILT IN "QUITTING" ELECTIONS WITH MUCH FANFARE. JCE SECRETARY TOLD US PDC TIMED WITHDRAWAL ITS APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION TO BEAT JCE ANNOUNCEMENT PARTY DID NOT MEET LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, WHICH ANNOUNCEMENT (WHICH HURTS PARTY) WAS NOT MADE UNTIL FORCED BY BALAGUER'S LETTER. NACIONAL FEB 7 REMINDED READERS PDC OBTAINED ONLY 9,378 VOTES IN 1966.

D. BALAGUER'S LETTER MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN RESPONSE TO

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 PRESSURES FROM OTHER PARTIES WHICH FEEL JCE HAS UNDULY DELAYED ACTION ON THEIR APPLICATIONS. PENDING BEFORE JCE ARE APPLICATIONS OF UCN (16,152 VOTES IN 1966), PRSC (30,660 VOTES IN 1966), PPDC (DID NOT PARTICIPATE INDEPENDENTLY IN 1966), AND TWO NEW INDEPENDENT GROUPS: AGRUPACION PROGRESISTA VEGANA INDEPENDIENTE OF LA VEGA AND MOVIMIENTO INDEPENDIENTE CONCILIATORIO OF SANTIAGO. OF THESE UCN HAS PUBLICLY AND PRSC AND PPDC HAVE PRIVATELY COMPLAINED OF JCE'S ALLEGED DILATORINESS.

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