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Remarks by Rafael Hernández Colón
Former Governor of Puerto Rico
at the Overseas Press Club of P.R.

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Dear friends of the Overseas Press Club:

I thank you for the opportunity of addressing your group of distinguished journalists, men and women who discharge their mission without favor or fear.

This is of crucial importance at a time of Puerto Rico's history when some people who are known to us have tried to buy the favor of the Press by all means, at times open and at times shadowy. When this has failed, Little Caesar has tried fear in an effort to silence and intimidate editors, editorialists, reporters, columnists and the many other men and women who discharge their mission without favor and fear. In both cases, the Little Tyrant has failed.

Now, as we enter into the 1980 electoral campaign, the Little Caesar is trying to surrender the people's will with the same shadowy means: partisan favor and fear.

It's no secret that Government funds are being openly and illegally used in a shameful effort to bribe the voters. What we have seen up to now is really nothing as compared with what's coming. You wait and see.

At the same time, the Little Tyrant is trying fear as a means to subject a free people. The ugly face of fear has already appeared in more ways than one, and there is much more to come. Fear to lose our American citizenship, Social Security benefits, food stamps and other rights we have and will continue to have as American citizens, living in permanent union with the people of the

United States. Fear to communism-- the big lie of an unexisting conspiracy to deliver Puerto Rico to Moscow and Castro. Even fear to be what we are: Puerto Ricans who are proud of their heritage.

I think Little Caesar is up to a big disappointment. The people of Puerto Rico can occasionally err, as in any human conglomerate, but it can't be subjected by demagoguery, bribes or fear. I predict that next year the people of Puerto Rico will stand up valiantly and put an end with votes to this disastrous shame. Shame on you, Little Caesar!

I am sure that you will report these momentuous events in their true perspective. Fearlessly!

The Little Tyrant is now saying that the Popular Democratic Party campaign will be based on slander and defamation. That's, in mud-slinging. A big lie. Tyrants have always said that repeating and repeating a lie may convince the masses that it's a truth. Little Caesar approves. But again I say: he doesn't really know the people of Puerto Rico. He's up to a great disappointment. I have said, and I want to repeat it now, that he who with lies floats, with truths will submerge. "Quien con mentiras sube, con verdades baja!"

It's with these obvious and multiple truths that the Popular Democratic Party will conduct this crucial campaign. Contrary to the Little Tyrant, who introduced in Puerto Rico the evil practice of paid and organized personal and political defamation, that never was or is in my party's style and tradition. Even if we didn't

have that honorable tradition, we wouldn't need to turn our backs on plain political decency. The charges against the Little Tyrant are "verdades como templos". Our people have the right of being reminded of them.

Little Caesar's big lie that the Popular Democratic Party will engage itself in mud-slinging is no more and no less than a smoke screen with which he tries to hide its own hideous history, too fresh in our minds to be forgotten, and to distract the people's perceptions of his own intentions and tactics. The NPP paid and organized rumor mongers are already spreading their lies against me and my party throughout the Island. They are saying that I am a communist. That I am crazy. Even that I dream about Little Caesar, and cry. To give an appearance of truth to these obvious lies, they are following a book Little Caesar wrote himself. He calls it The Bible. With names, places and dates to make the big lie sound as a truth. ¡Bendito! The Little Tyrant doesn't really know our people.

I will make no bones about it. The main issue of the 1980 political campaign is Little Caesar.

And this must be so because all other issues-- social, economic and political-- hang on the results of the 1980 election. These real issues concerning education, employment, health, housing, environment, youth, women's rights, the political status, criminality, drugs, and others I thoroughly discuss in my New Thesis, a document that took many months of sweat and thinking. I did it in consul-

tation with labor leaders, youth, farmers, industrialists, educators, economists, newspapermen, and scores of women and men of goodwill throughout Puerto Rico.

The New Thesis is not an expedient politically-motivated document. It's a serious paper which I conceived with the future welfare of all my countrymen in mind. As a matter of fact, I resigned the presidency of the Popular Democratic Party before undertaking the preparation of the New Thesis. Because I wanted to give my mind and my soul to a plan that will truly go to the heart of our Island's problems, hopes and predicaments. Should anyone of you have any doubts about the contents and intention of the New Thesis, I will be glad to personally clarify them. We owe Puerto Rico a clear understanding of our problems and a clear cut proposal for its hopes and aspirations, of the place that rightly belongs to us in society and the world. This I have tried to do in the New Thesis.

In 1940, Don Luis Muñoz Marín taught our people that he who sells his vote will sell his sons. The Republican leaders of the 30s, as you will recall, used to buy votes by giving away small sums of money, pants and shirts and other trivia. Today's Republican leaders are trying to buy votes with billions of dollars, most of them belonging to the taxpayers. Basically, the Republican leaders of today are no different in attitude than the Republican leaders of yesteryear, the Infamous Thirties, "Son los Mismos". Except that they now call themselves "Progressive" (Ha!). Except that Little Caesar is worse.

It was at that historical time when the Popular Democratic Party commenced to construct over the ashes left by the Republican administrations that Don Luis Muñoz Marín advised the people of Puerto Rico not to forget the abuses of the reactionary Republican leaders of yesterday. For that purpose he asked our people to write all of these barbarisms in "La Tablita". The people did, and the Republicans were thrown out of power. As they will be in n-xt year's election. Of this I am sincerely convinced.

Muñoz Marín's "La Tablita" is no longer sufficient to list the multiple errors, contradictions, big lies and little lies, abuses, cynicisms and other sins, venial or mortal, of the present Republican administration. What we need to list at least some of these sins is something much bigger than the scoreboards of all the baseball and basketball parks of Puerto Rico combined.

It is of this long historic listing of truths that Little Caesar is afraid of. So, he calls them lies. And defamation. And mud-slinging. And what not. He is the worse ruler Puerto Rico ever had, but he is good at smoke-screening and lying. He is up to a great disappointment. He doesn't really know the people of Puerto Rico.

I will not engage myself today in listing all the errors, contradictions, unfulfilled promises, cynicisms and cruel abuses of the Little Tyrant's management. Or, to say it in more truthful words, mismanagement. This is fresh in your unforgetting minds. But let me mention at least some of them, because we must constantly remind ourselves of the lessons of history.

Palabras finales:

Dear friends of the Overseas Press Club-- I again thank you for lending me your ears to listen to some of the truths that must be said and repeated, and will be said and repeated during this crucial campaign. I will say these truths with no fear, as I know you will report them with no fear.

We must beware of fear. Because fear, as Goethe said in his "Conversations with Eckermann," produces a morbid state of weakness and insensibility in which we could be an easy prey of an adversary.

In his "Memories," André Maurois cautioned that, so as misery engenders envy, fear engenders cruelty. Legions of Puerto Ricans will attest to the cruelty they have suffered at the hands of the present-day rulers.

Our great Latin American poet, Amado Nervo, said: "Fear is worse than perfidy and more of an assassin than anger." Anger engenders homicide. Let's we forget Cerro Maravilla.

My friends of the Overseas Press Club, I will be seeing you again in our cities and towns, and in our valleys and mountains, wherever the truth should be said and repeated during the campaign. And at La Fortaleza-- on January, 1981.

Finally, I would like to quote Aesop, in his famed fable "The Mouse and the Courtier". Said Aesop: "It is much better to lead a humble life than to swim in affluence at the cost of fear."

Paraphrasing the great fabulist, I say to the Little Caesar:
"If I fall, and I will not, I shall fall with dignity. And
no fear."

Thank you.

