

# FORD SEEKS VOTES OF FLORIDA LATINIS

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## But the President Has Lost Favor With Many Over His Policy Toward Cuba

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MIAMI, Feb. 27— A group of 1,200 persons, most of them Cubans, will be sworn in as United States citizens here tomorrow morning and President Ford will welcome them personally in what appears to be a last-minute, probably vain, effort to attract the disenfranchised Republican Hispanic vote.

Even Mr. Ford's campaign officials believe the prize is out of reach, conceding that a large majority of Florida's 50,000 Republican Latin voters will support Ronald Reagan in the March 9 primary election.

"Latinos here identify with Reagan," said Dr. Fernando Penabaz, the Hispanic coordinator of the Ford campaign in Florida. "We still haven't been able to establish any meaningful rapport with the Latinos for whom President Ford is a distant, unknown figure."

The Reagan people are, of course, delighted. Albert M. Cardenas, co-chairman of the Dade County (Miami) Reagan committee, said that a canvass of area Republicans showed that "while Anglos are more or less split evenly between Ford and Reagan, the Hispanic voters favor Reagan by five to one."

"This means," he went on, "that to carry the county's three districts, Mr. Ford would have to get about 60 percent of the non-Latin vote and not even the Ford people are predicting that."

Interviews with a number of Latin voters showed that Republican opposition to the Ford Administration stems primarily from disapproval of its foreign policy, specifically the idea of détente with the Soviet Union and with Cuba.

"Last year, when Ford and Kissinger were saying that the time has come to start talking to Fidel, Reagan was warning about the dangers of dealing with the Castro regime," said one Cuban Republican in a typical comment. "Now, after Angola, there is no doubt in my mind; Reagan es mi hombre [is my man]."

The Latin vote is considered crucial in the Republican primary because the votes will be tabulated separately in each of Florida's 15 Congressional districts and the winner—either Mr. Ford or Mr. Reagan—will take all the delegates in each district. Florida will send a total of 66 delegates to the Republican National Convention.

### Distribution of Republicans

The Republican-Hispanic vote is concentrated in the five Congressional districts of south Florida where there is a more pro-Ford Republican base among non-Latinos than in conservative north Florida. Thus Mr. Ford could be badly hurt by a Latin block vote for Mr. Reagan in the south.

There are about 30,000 registered Republican Latinos in Dade County out of a total strength of 118,000 registered Republican voters. Additionally, there are about 10,000 Latin Republicans in neighboring Broward County, 3,000 in Palm Beach County, 3,000 in the Tampa area, 2,000 in Jacksonville and some 2,000 scattered through the rest of the state.

Some 80 percent of the state's Hispanic Republicans are of Cuban origin, most of them refugees from the Castro regime. There are more Democrats than Republicans among Latinos, with some 35,000 Hispanic Democrats in Dade County.

Florida has a Latin population of 1.5 million. Many are not naturalized citizens, however, and many are children.

In addition to being resentful over the Ford Administration's foreign policy, many Latin Republicans here are still fuming over the White House appointment last year of Ricardo Nunez, a wealthy Miami businessman, as head of the Cuban Refugee Program.

Mr. Nunez, once an announcer with the Voice of America and a self-admitted informer for the Central Intelligence Agency, left Miami in 1968 to become vice president of Gramco, a Nassau-based investment fund once owned by Robert L. Vesco, the fugitive financier. Gramco is now defunct. Mr. Nunez returned to Miami in 1971 a multimillionaire, and became active in Republican politics.

A number of prominent Latin Republicans, among them Dr. Penabaz, the Ford campaign official, unsuccessfully urged the White House to rescind Mr. Nunez's appointment.