

THE DOMINICAN CRISIS OF 1962-1965,
COMMUNIST AGGRESSION
OR U.S. INTERVENTION

by

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ABSTRACT

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In this paper I deconstructed the U.S. Invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. I also look at the events leading up to the military intervention, such as assassination of Trujillo, the Bosch presidency, and the turbulent period of the military junta. The paper also takes a broader look at the implications of communist expansion and the U.S. response under George Kennan's Domino Theory.

I utilized a number of primary documents that have been recently made public to examine the U.S. response to what was seen as a left leaning rebellion within the Dominican Republic. I found that the Cuban Missile Crisis still fresh on the collective minds of President Lyndon Johnson and his State Department, the U.S. wanted to prevent another Caribbean country from going communist. I concluded that while the U.S. response was heavy handed and intrusive it yielded results in that democracy was restored, any communist threat was negated, and the Organization of American States was able to oversee the elections adding legitimacy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When Castro began his socialist revolution in Cuba, the State Department concluded that leftist nationalism was beginning to spread throughout the Western Hemisphere. Previously the U. S. government had acted upon the notion that the struggle between communism and capitalist democracies was more likely to manifest itself in the “primary space”, the developed industrialized nations of Europe and Asia. The Third World nations, a classification under which the Caribbean and Latin America fell, were thought to be of a lesser importance in the Cold War. These areas were meant to supply the industrialized “primary space”, Europe and the United States, with raw goods in the event the Cold War went hot.¹ However, with the success of Castro’s revolution in Cuba, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and the shock of the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy government came to believe that the communist cause was advancing through a series of popular socialism outbreaks across the globe, especially in the Caribbean and Latin America. Soon any theater around the globe, no matter how small, would become a contested battleground for the United States, a nation that had firmly embraced a policy of containing communism.

The unstable political situation within the country after Trujillo’s assassination led to a period of unrest and violence from 1961 to 1965. During this time the nation went through a number of governments, military coups, periods of civil war, and even the election of the nation’s first popularly elected president, Juan Bosch.² However, despite Bosch’s popularity among the poor, he was unable to unite the country or bring about civil order. Alienated from the upper classes, lacking middle class support, and generally disliked by the military, Bosch was unable to put out the fires of unrest that still raged within the Dominican Republic. Despite support from President John F. Kennedy and President Johnson, Bosch isolated himself from the United States due to constant rumors about his affiliation with Dominican communist

elements. Bosch lost the support of the Dominican military and the trust of the United States, thus the Dominican Republic plunged once again into chaos. Obviously here there are certain parallels between the previous U.S. invasion, and the intervention of 1965.

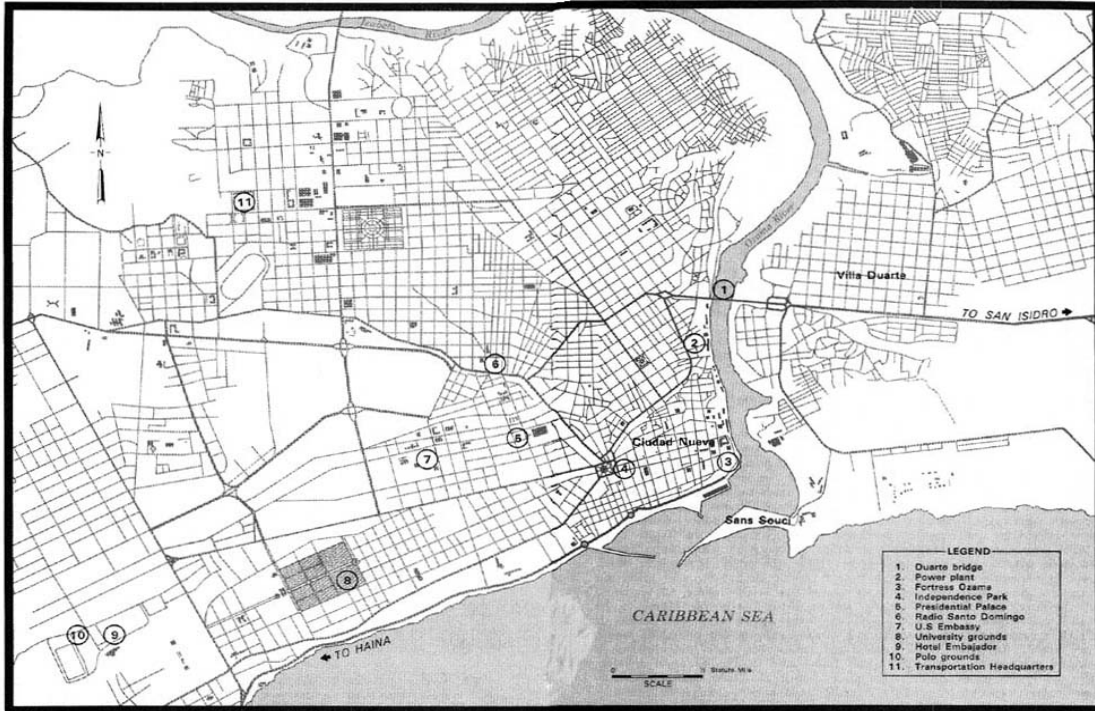


Figure 1.1 Santo Domingo 1965

In 1965 the State Department, the U.S. military, and President Johnson decided that allowing turmoil to continue within the Dominican Republic constituted an open invitation to communist control. The fear of another “domino” falling into the communist camp prompted Johnson to use strategic military force in hopes of stabilizing the Dominican Republic and preventing another Cuba. Once again the marines were called upon to pacify and subdue the Dominican Republic in order to bend it to U.S. desires and to prevent a foreign power from exerting influence in the Western Hemisphere. It is here that all similarities cease. The previous U.S. intervention was a long drawn out affair that lasted the better part of a decade and involved

an occupation force shaping the island nation. The U.S. invasion and occupation of 1916 also created the National Guard, which gave birth to the Trujillo dictatorship.

On the other hand, the limited U.S. intervention of 1965 proved highly successful and added confidence to the shift in U.S. Cold War foreign policy from one of European preoccupation to preventing the spread of communism in the Third World. After the fall of Batista in Cuba the U.S. soon realized that powerful anti communist dictators were not enough to stave off popular communist uprisings. This was particularly true for the oppressive regime of Trujillo; Clear signs of unrest began to appear underneath the grip of his repressive dictatorship. Furthermore, intermittent U.S. support for the ruthless tyrant fueled the anti-United States communist rhetoric of the Cold War. When Trujillo was assassinated in May 1961 allegedly with the help of the CIA³, a power vacuum ensued leading to further tumult and possible communist infiltration. The LBJ cabinet soon realized that involvement was necessary. Through OAS intervention and covert manipulation, a pro-United States government assumed power and the Dominican crises subsided. By the end of 1965, United States military forces withdrew and the Organization of American States (OAS) intervened, making the occupation a joint effort of American nations. Whether or not a communist takeover was imminent in the Dominican Republic is still a point of contention between historians. Regardless, the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic represents a crucial turning point in the U.S. attitude toward Latin America and other parts of the Third World during the Cold War. United States policy now became firmly committed to ensuring that smaller peripheral nations did not fall under communist rule, even if that required the use of force, for example, Granada.

Recently there have been a number of U.S. government documents that have been declassified on the subject of the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic. While the popular narrative during the 1960's directly after the invasion was that the marines invaded at the behest of President Johnson to preserve life, the actual goal was to prevent the communist takeover of another Caribbean nation at all costs. Since many of the primary documents used

here were unavailable soon after the U.S. invasion the official story was widely accepted, even if a number of skeptics doubted it. Even today the relative obscurity of this event and the newness of said documents means there is little scholarly work revisiting the motives behind the Johnson administrations actions. While preserving innocent life and ending the bloodshed caused by the civil war between Loyalist and Rebel factions was certainly the initial motive that prompted Lyndon Johnson to send in the *USS Boxer* and its contingent of marines, it was the specter of communism that would ultimately motivate his administration.

While there is ample evidence that communist agents and their fellow travellers were operating within the Dominican Republic, their numbers and influence seemed to be very small. However, the idea of any communist activity in the Dominican Republic was enough to prompt the Johnson administration to do anything necessary to prevent a communist revolution. Therefore I will prove that U.S. foreign policy concerning the Dominican Republic stems from the fear of communist aggression. This fear, whether based in reality or unfounded was enough motivation to prompt the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic. I also hope to show that while such an invasion is usually politically unpalatable the invasion of the Dominican Republic was carried out with the right amounts of force and diplomacy. The 1965 Invasion of the Dominican Republic stands in stark contrast to both Vietnam and the Bay of Pigs fiasco. The situation within the Dominican Republic had the ability to quickly spiral out of control, and too heavy a military reaction would have alienated U.S. allies within the Western Hemisphere and turned popular opinion against the United States. By utilizing clandestine measures to force an outcome in the Dominican Republic that was fulfilled U.S. desires while simultaneously using foreign oversight to add legitimacy the Johnson administration successfully changed the political course of the Dominican Republic. I will therefore show that while fear of communist expansion motivated the Johnson administration, quick and concise military action combined with shrewd political maneuvering helped create a pro U.S. Dominican Republic.

CHAPTER 2

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, A PROLOGUE

When Christopher Columbus lost his way trying to reach India and instead set foot on the island that would later be known as Hispaniola, the island became a place marked by strife, violence, and foreign intervention. Whether under Spanish rule or the influence of France, Haiti, or the United States, the Dominican Republic, the eastern portion of the island, struggled to create and maintain its own identity. Part of this struggle lay in the fact that the Dominican people shared the island with Haiti, a neighbor with whom the Dominicans often skirmished. Additional challenges to sustaining a national identity came from France and Spain, each of which exercised disastrous control occupation of the island.

Problems within the Dominican Republic began brewing long before Rafael Trujillo and the Cold War. Since its inception, the small nation of the Dominican Republic had been wracked by internal and external conflicts that threatened its sovereignty and led to Trujillo's dictatorship. The Dominican Republic had been a Spanish and French colony, conquered by the Haitians, and occupied by both France and the United States.⁴ Because of this, the Dominican people were never able to coalesce and form a cohesive society devoid of foreign interference and influence.

In order to fully understand the nature of the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic one must be familiar with the events of the first U.S. intervention and the brutal dictatorship of Trujillo, for both events played a major role in the later political and social conflict. The turmoil began almost as soon as the Spanish established their first permanent colony on the present site of Santo Domingo.⁵ The fertile land and abundance of gold lured the Spaniards to settle, and it was not long before the Taino Indians, who had first welcomed the Spaniards,

suffered multiple abuses and used as slave laborers.⁶ At the heart the Dominican Republic's lack of a diverse society was the repartimiento system, a form of feudal servitude in which the crown gave Indian labor to Spanish settlers. The repartimiento system resulted in an almost nonexistent middle class, a largely uneducated lower class, and a few land owning elites. Despite an attempt at rebellion that the Spaniards brutally put down, it was not long before disease and harsh treatment decimated the native population.⁷ Gradually, with Hernán Cortés' invasion of Mexico and the colonization of the rest of the Americas, the prestige of Santo Domingo declined.

On the other end of the island, the French colony of Saint-Domingue was growing and prospering, rapidly surpassing its Spanish counterpart in notoriety and prestige. The plantations that the French established in 1697 on the western third of the island prospered and a steady supply of African slaves maintained production in the growing sugar cane business.⁸ While the Spaniards imported few African slaves into Santo Domingo, the French imposed harsh conditions and ruthless treatment of their African slaves. This, combined with the rapidly growing slave population, became a powder keg waiting to explode. In 1791 the untenable situation finally erupted into violence with Francoise-Dominique Toussaint's slave rebellion when insurgents massacred all the French plantation owners.⁹ Soon the new Haitian republic turned its attention toward capturing the remaining two-thirds of the Island. In 1821 Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer invaded Santo Domingo, beginning twenty two-years of Haitian hegemony.¹⁰

During this time many Dominicans were mistreated, had their land confiscated, or fled to Spain in fear. Finally, on February 27, 1844, Dominican rebels seized Ozama fortress and drove the Haitian occupiers back to their side of the Island. Independence became short lived, however, because soon Spain annexed the Dominican Republic once again in 1861.¹¹ This turbulent time initiated the first of many power struggles that the Dominicans would face over the next century, marking the beginning of the Dominican tradition of both despising and fearing

a return to Haitian dominance as well as loathing foreign control. The tumultuous relationship with Haiti may also explain Dominican society's emphasis on the superiority of Spanish and Taino heritage. All things deemed African were considered inferior including those citizens with African features; on the other hand Spanish culture dominated Dominican society. Mulattos and Blacks had a hard time gaining power and prestige within the Dominican Republic since Spanish and Taino features were considered superior. However, by the mid nineteenth century the population consisted of only 40,000 Spaniards, the rest of the country's population was either free blacks or mulattos.¹² Despite the overwhelming majority of African descent Dominicans, these discriminative racial preferences exist even into the twenty first century.¹³

The tumult of this period prevented the Dominicans from developing a strong government, economy, or military. It also established the Dominican tradition of strongmen, warlords, and tyrannical rule. The notion of the caudillo, or strong dictator, had come to define Dominican leaders. From Columbus to Ovado, Santanna, Baez, and Heareaux, each man had shaped the nation by their own will.¹⁴ For this reason, Dominicans welcomed Trujillo as a strong national leader. He embodied the spirit and will of the caudillo and, while he ruled with an iron fist, he also improved the Dominican Republic, bringing economic growth after years of chaos. Yet Trujillo would never have had the opportunity to rule the Dominican Republic had it not been for the intervention of U.S. marines.

After the Spaniards withdrew from the Dominican Republic in 1865, a civil war between factions enveloped the country. Soon European nations as well as the United States began calling in debts. President Theodore Roosevelt decided to intervene in 1901 to protect the lives of U.S. citizens residing in the Dominican Republic, and to protect its investment, the Santo Domingo Improvement Company, from the civil disquiet.¹⁵ In 1904, Roosevelt signed an agreement with the Dominicans ensuring United States oversight of its debt repayment as well as the collection of duties and tariffs.¹⁶

However the warring factions that made up the Dominican political hierarchy could no more fulfill their monetary obligation than they could effectively rule the island nation. A series of botched and fraudulent elections further convinced President Woodrow Wilson, in 1916, that only U.S. military force could put an end to the political infighting.¹⁷ Soon Rear Admiral William Caperton, the commander of the U.S. military forces in the Dominican Republic, had forced Dominican resistance forces to retreat from Santo Domingo by threatening the city with naval bombardment.¹⁸ The first Marines landed in Santo Domingo, three days later on May 16th 1916.¹⁹

Although the small Marine force established effective control over the city, the marines did not proclaim a military government until November 1916, as they were still occupied with eliminating guerilla forces in the countryside.²⁰ Under the new U.S. control most Dominican laws and institutions remained intact. However the small number of Dominican elites willing to cooperate with the occupying force required the military governor, Rear Admiral Harry S. Knapp, to fill a number of government positions with U.S. naval officers.²¹ This hesitance on the part of the Dominican elites to work with the U.S. occupiers would soon lead to their irrelevance, since the marines were content to fill positions with Dominicans who were willing to join the new government, regardless of their social stature. The new government was not well received in Santo Domingo, and under U.S. occupation free speech was limited and the press and radio were censored; possibly laying the groundwork for Trujillo's own heavy-handed control. However, not everything the U.S. did during the occupation was negative. During their stay the marines restored order throughout most of the republic, balanced the country's budget, and spurred economic growth. Also the marines embarked on a number of infrastructure projects that produced new roads linking all of the Dominican Republic.²² The most lasting legacy of the U.S. occupation was to be the Dominican Constabulary Guard, later named the National Guard, a highly trained national force that replaced the indigenous factions that had previously vied for power.

After World War I, public support for the U.S. occupation turned sour. Warren G. Harding, who became president after Wilson in 1921, made a campaign promise to end the occupation of the Dominican Republic. Therefore, In June 1921 the Harding Plan, a list of demands for U.S. withdrawal, was presented to the Dominicans. The Harding Plan called for Dominican approval of all acts of the U.S. military government, acceptance of a loan for \$2.5 million that would be used for further public works, the recognition of the National Guard, and finally free elections under U.S. supervision.²³ The Dominicans bitterly accepted the demands and prepared for self-rule. During the first Presidential election held after the U.S. occupation, Horacio Vásquez Lajara easily defeated his opponent Francisco J. Peynado in March of 1924.²⁴ While the period of Vásquez' presidency would be peaceful time for the Dominican Republic, it would not be long before an era of economic turmoil would once again derail Dominican democracy.

CHAPTER 3

THE TRUJILLO YEARS

Between 1930 and 1961, Rafael Trujillo's repression of the Dominican people became the single greatest catalyst for the unrest that occurred within the Republic. A paranoid and cruel man, Trujillo ruled his country with unyielding brutality, using the police and the army as his professional terror machine. In the words of John Bartlow Martin, former U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic, "Trujillo was no old fashioned comic-opera Latin American caudillo. Except that it lacked an ideology, his was a true modern totalitarian state, complete with racism, espionage apparatus, torture chambers, and murder factories."²⁵ The dictator displayed an aptitude for controlling his enemies by intimidation, torture, and murder. In 1937 Trujillo brazenly order the mass execution by the Dominican military of almost 20,000 Haitians living within the Dominican Republic. Surprisingly the dictator only received a slap on the wrist from the United States, ultimately paying a fine of 525,000 dollars.²⁶ Enemies of the dictator, and their friends and families, were subject to rape, beatings, electrocution, execution, or the sharks in *La Píscina*, a beautiful but shark infested bay off of the Dominican coastline.²⁷ No one was safe from the dictator's reach despite his or her social or economic position. An example of Trujillo's cruelty, that earned him lasting infamy, occurred when his goons murdered the Mirabal sisters. Trujillo had been enamored with Minerva Mirabel, one of the four sisters. She spurned his advances and went on to become a lawyer; however, her actions had so infuriated Trujillo that he kept her from getting a license to practice. Eventually Mirabel and her sisters, who were wealthy members of the upper class, began to protest and speak out against Trujillo. Her insolence infuriated Trujillo, who had the women jailed and eventually ordered them murdered; a national tragedy that became the basis of a popular movie.²⁸ Trujillo even thought his power

so absolute and far reaching that in 1956 he had his henchmen kidnap and murder Jesús de Galíndez in New York City, after the Spanish scholar had written a scathing article about Trujillo.²⁹ Not only did Trujillo inspire fear among his people at home and abroad, he led the Dominican Republic into an era of economic stagnation.



Figure 3.1 Dictator Rafael Trujillo

Trujillo's heavy-handed actions stifled the country, yet what affected the Dominican Republic most was the fact that no stable institutions outside of the Trujillo-controlled military ever developed and existing ones, like the Catholic Church, were weakened. In other similarly turbulent Latin American countries such as Mexico and Nicaragua, known for their frequent struggles and corruption, they at least developed institutions that carried a sense of national identity through periods of dictatorial rule. Not so in the Dominican Republic where no political parties developed, no modern varied social structure emerged, and a weak religious tradition existed that could tie the pre-Trujillo era to the post Trujillo years. This resulted from the republic's nearly constant disruption at the hands of Haiti, the United States, and other outside forces, made worse by the Dominican Republic's lack of a rich religious or political tradition that could be used as a template for a stable government. Whereas in Mexico, for example, the Catholic Church established itself early on as a major force in the country, it never did so in the Dominican Republic. Catholicism is the official religion of the Dominican Republic, established by a Concordat with the Vatican. While 90 percent of the population is Catholic, however, religious practice is limited and few actually attended Mass regularly. Popular religious practices are far removed from Roman Catholic orthodoxy, and what little religious instruction most Dominicans traditionally receive is in the form of rote memorization.³⁰ During the Trujillo years

the Catholic Church had fewer than 200 priests and supported the existing power structure for fear of reprisal, it would not be until after the 1960s that the Catholic Church would advocate moderate change.³¹ As a result the Church never formed the educational or social institutions found in other Latin American countries. Furthermore the middle class and the military, two forces that normally shaped political changes in Latin America, had been recreated and controlled by Trujillo.³²

Everyone who lived in the Dominican Republic came to know the greed and corruption that characterized the Trujillo regime. No businessman or military leader could make a career in that country without coming into contact with the absolute power of the Trujillo family.³³ The elites, many of whom were apolitical, still despised Trujillo since he had risen through the military and did not represent the Dominican upper class. They viewed him as second rate since he was not a pure blooded Spaniard.³⁴ Furthermore, Trujillo shut out all Dominicans who refused to yield to his corruption. He also controlled more than 50 percent of the country's wealth, preventing any type of viable middle class from forming.³⁵ Trujillo and his family ended up owning around 65 percent of the nation's sugar industry and 60 percent of the best land in the country. Furthermore, the regime employed 80 percent of the nation's workers.³⁶ He ran the country as his own private enterprise and enriched himself with yachts, palaces, and built monuments to stroke his own ego. Trujillo even had the capital, Santo Domingo, named by Christopher Columbus after Spain's patron saint, changed to Ciudad Trujillo.³⁷ However, while Trujillo spent vast sums to aggrandize his personal image, he neglected the country and spent little on improving its infrastructure.

For the U.S., the problems caused by the Trujillo regime became compounded by the fact that while the United States had never openly endorsed Trujillo, it had done little to blunt his tyranny in the Dominican Republic and more to facilitate it. From 1916-1924, a period of U.S. military occupation, the marines began a program to train the Dominican officer corps including Trujillo. Elected without opposition on May 16, 1930, Trujillo became president of the Dominican

Republic after a coup that he orchestrated ousted President Horacio Vásquez.³⁸ Trujillo's training at the hands of the United States marines had been indispensable, moving him from the rank of captain in the National Guard to commander of the police on June 22, 1925.³⁹ Trujillo took to his new post with vigor, reorganizing and modernizing the police force while simultaneously molding it into his own personal army.⁴⁰

The National Guard promoted Trujillo to the newly created rank of brigadier general - a position that put him in control of the military thus giving him an opportunity to begin plotting the 1930 coup that would elevate him to dictator.⁴¹ While there remains little evidence to tell exactly what led to the overthrow of President Vásquez, one thing is certain: Trujillo became the ultimate benefactor. During the uprising, Trujillo wisely remained out of the public eye, neither announcing his support for the revolt nor doing anything to stop it. In fact, the rebellious troops leading the coup claimed Generals José Estrella and Rafael Urena led the movement.⁴² In actuality, Trujillo was playing the dual role of feigning loyalty to President Vásquez, while simultaneously controlling the main part of the army at Fortress Ozama.⁴³ The violence of the coup eliminated Trujillo's competition, securing his place as the only victor. Intimidation and corruption secured his landslide in the subsequent presidential elections. In August 1930, the once poor son of a peasant defied his lowly birth and became elected to office with 99 percent of the votes cast.⁴⁴ The era of Trujillo thus began with the simultaneous acts of a violent coup and a popular election, dual changes that characterized the Dominican struggle: one a bloody conflict, and the other a seemingly legitimate election.

One of Trujillo's first acts as president created the illusion of an officially democratic government and not a dictatorial regime. Part of this required the creation of state-controlled opposition parties to give the appearance that he was allowing some semblance of ideological divergence. Therefore, in 1947 Trujillo officially legalized the creation of the Dominican Communist Party allowing it to participate in staged elections, though in reality it was a puppet organization.⁴⁵ Trujillo wanted to create the image of peaceful coexistence in a functioning

democracy between many different political ideologies. In truth, Trujillo became the Caribbean's biggest opponent of communism and ordered many Dominican communists jailed and murdered. This tied nicely to Trujillo's early realization that his fortune and that of the Dominican Republic relied heavily upon a beneficial relationship with the United States.⁴⁶ This relationship is best exemplified by the words of the U.S. Secretary of State from 1933 to 1944, Cordell Hull, who said, "he may be a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch."⁴⁷ Trujillo began promoting within his country a number of political programs that would bind the Dominican Republic to the U.S., the biggest of which was his crusade against communism.

Trujillo quickly became an ally of the United States during the Cold War. Praised by anti-communist hardliners because of his unwavering stand against the Red menace, many businesses hailed the Dominican Republic as a U.S. investor's paradise.⁴⁸ The United States ambassador to the Dominican Republic after Trujillo's death, John Bartlow Martin, thought Trujillo so dependent upon U.S. favor that he recalled: "Nobody knows how many hundreds of thousands of dollars Trujillo spent in the United States, trying to influence votes in Congress, policy in the executive branch, and public opinion through the press."⁴⁹ Martin also stated, however, that the United States never fully supported Trujillo due to his numerous human rights violations, and that the U.S. government had only used him to maintain stability within the Caribbean.⁵⁰ Trujillo's tacit U.S. support did not last; his strong anti-communist actions were not enough to maintain this much-needed relationship for Trujillo. In November 1959, after the Eisenhower administration decided it could not deal with Castro, State Department officials decided that the United States could no longer afford Trujillo.⁵¹ Trujillo, who had once been seen as a Caribbean ally, was now seen as a liability. President Eisenhower stated: "It's certain that American public opinion won't condemn Castro until we have moved against Trujillo."⁵² The communists and Dominican nationalists were determined to use anti-U.S. sentiments among the Dominican people against Trujillo, and Eisenhower was not going to allow communism with or without him.

Not long after Trujillo lost support within the White House, the CIA began discussing a weapons transfer to dissidents who vowed to assassinate Trujillo. On January 3, 1961, Eisenhower gave the go ahead for the CIA's action committee 5412, which oversaw covert operations, to send small arms to Dominican dissidents.⁵³ On the night of May 30, 1961, disillusioned military officers gunned down Trujillo, thus ending his reign of terror.⁵⁴ The men who killed Trujillo (in a gangland style shootout on the side of the road, an act many thought aided by the CIA, although never confirmed⁵⁵) had been close to the dictator and complicit in his crimes, yet they had grown disenchanted with his merciless rule. However, with the death of Trujillo came a new Pandora's box. Almost everyone within the Dominican Republic with any authority or power had been close to the dictator through necessity, even if they despised Trujillo. No one within the nation could shake the stigma of complicity, and those in exile were alienated from the military power base that still controlled the country. Even members of the Trujillo assassination plot were deemed suspicious; alienated and hunted by Trujillo's son, only two survived. Luis Amiama Tío and Tony Imbert⁵⁶ were each viewed skeptically after the provisional government (Consejo) had ousted Trujillo's puppet president, because they had negotiated with the Trujillistas. Eventually, after the civil strife had ended, they were looked upon as heroes by the Dominican populace and became members of the Consejo that was to rule briefly under President Rafael Bonelly, who had founded the National Civic Union or UCN⁵⁷.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONSEJO AND CHAOS

Generalissimo Trujillo's assassination did not end the woes of the Dominican people, nor did it bring freedom and stability to the nation. Instead, with the sudden death of the autocratic despot, a huge power vacuum developed. The remaining members of the Trujillo family, including the dictator's son Ramfís Trujillo, the leader of the Dominican Republic's air force, quickly sought revenge and tried to consolidate power.⁵⁸ For a brief period Ramfís controlled the Dominican Republic's army and air force. Ramfís however valued his playboy lifestyle over ruling the country, and quickly made plans to exact revenge and flee to Paris. With Ramfís out of the picture and the military remaining as the only viable source of stability, the dictator's assassination left more problems than answers. Furthermore, progressive elites, conservative military men, communist agitators, nationalist exiles, and others who had been repressed under the dictatorship began to jostle each other for power.



Figure 4.1 Ramfís Trujillo

While the de facto leader had always been Trujillo, at the time of his assassination Dr. Joaquin Balaguer was leader of the Dominican Republic. Balaguer officially acted with the title of president while Trujillo still held real power and called the shots. After the assassination it therefore fell to Balaguer to usher in the post Trujillo era, a task complicated by Ramfís Trujillo, and those who considered Balaguer complicit.⁵⁹ It is important to note that Balaguer had a long political history under Trujillo starting in 1930 when Trujillo appointed him state attorney of the

Lands Tribunal.⁶⁰ In 1956 Trujillo promoted him to secretary of the presidency and on May 16, 1957 he was elected vice president of the republic. With Trujillo's official resignation as president on August 3rd, 1960; Balaguer became the official head of the Dominican government in order to perpetuate the farce of Dominican democracy, while Trujillo retained real power.⁶¹ After Trujillo's death, Balaguer broke with the Trujillistas, and began guiding the country towards democratization.⁶² Balaguer's reforms were too little too late and his association with Trujillo tainted any positive actions he undertook. Serious rioting during January 1962 forced Balaguer from power.⁶³



Figure 4.2 Dr. Joaquin Balaguer

From May 1962 until elections were held in December, the armed forces, the UCN, and Trujillo's assassins chose a Council of State. The remaining Trujillistas, the anti-Trujillista UCN, and of course the assassins Amiama and Imbert shared power.⁶⁴ On the morning of November 18th 1961, Ramfís Trujillo got his parting shot, literally, by gunning down 6 remaining suspected assassins with machine guns on his family's hacienda.⁶⁵ Using the ensuing chaos as cover, General Trujillo's brothers Hector and Arismendi Trujillo, as well as his son Ramfís, managed to escape with large sums of money.⁶⁶ Ramfís then boarded the family yacht, the *Angelita* with millions in cash, his father's body, and fled the Dominican Republic for good.⁶⁷



Figure 4.3 Luis Amiama Tío

Without the patriarch, the remaining Trujillo clan could not maintain control; however, the remaining army officers loyal to the Trujillo family attempted a coup meant to dislodge the UCN and the Council of State. On January 16, 1962, General Pedro Rafael Rodriguez Echevarria, the right-wing commander of the Dominican air force, attempted to seize power and oust the Council of State.⁶⁸ With the help of General Elias Wessin y Wessin of the Dominican army, the coup was stamped out and Trujillo's protégé Joaquín Antonio Balaguer was forced to resign and leave for exile in the United States.⁶⁹ Throughout 1962, the Kennedy administration attempted to guide the Council, but it proved futile since Amiama Tío and Antonio Imbert were better assassins than leaders. Gradually the State Department began to realize that only a popularly elected government could restore order within the Dominican Republic.

Under Trujillo, the Dominican military had been well funded and grew to enormous dimensions. However at the same time, the paranoid dictator placed his military men under constant surveillance. This created a love/hate relationship between the military and the Dominican populace, yet there was no denying that the military was virtually the only established sector of the Dominican Republic's social strata. The elites were out of touch with the general population and apolitical, the middle class was almost non-existent, the students were deemed too radical, and the poor were too worn out after years of oppression and hunger to rise up. Therefore, the well-funded and organized Dominican military assumed the role of governing the nation.

However, within the violent and turbulent world of Dominican politics even the military could not rule effectively. The instability of the Dominican situation was perhaps best expressed by the words of JFK speechwriter Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., who wrote soon after Trujillo's assassination, that only three possibilities existed for the Republic: The first was a decent democratic regime; the second was a continuation of the Trujillo regime; and the third was a Cuban communist regime.⁷⁰ Kennedy and Johnson knew that the Caribbean people would not support another Trujillo-like regime, and that such a dictator would be overthrown much like

Fulgencio Batista.⁷¹ A communist orientated government was out of the question. Therefore, Kennedy and the State Department decided that the only hope for the Dominican Republic was a democratically elected president behind whom the Dominican people could rally.

CHAPTER 5

U.S. COLD WAR POLICY

The death of Trujillo and the resulting power struggle posed a problem for Kennedy and his advisors. To U.S. foreign policy makers, the Dominican Republic represented much more than civil strife in a Caribbean nation. By the 1960s, every conflict was viewed as a power struggle between the forces of Western democracies and a Soviet led communist juggernaut.⁷² It is important to understand this mindset that would shape Kennedy's and, more importantly, Johnson's actions. The decision to intervene in Dominican affairs, the fear of another Cuba, and the perceived need for an armed military response to possible communist infiltration stemmed from the notion that communism must be contained or it would spread across the globe.

The end of World War II marked a dynamic shift in global power. The wartime struggles had combined with the collapse of the old colonial system and a rebirth in self-determination.⁷³ Out of the ashes of war two superpowers emerged, the United States and the USSR, both of which solidified their positions as victors in a new global order. The ruins of Nazi Germany still smoldered in February 1945 when these two allies began to perceive each other as direct threats to their respective national securities. Opposing ideologies took on moral and spiritual overtones, leaving little room for compromise. As Kennan put it, the Soviets required a, "necessary overthrow of rival power which, in their view, had to precede the introduction of Socialism."⁷⁴ Conflicting ideologies led to unrestrained post war animosity that created problems for both superpowers, since neither side wanted to concede power within Europe and risk losing ground. Both nations wanted to create a sphere of influence to add credence to their ideologies and perhaps even act as a geographic buffers or forward strongholds in the case of future conflict. Joseph Stalin was especially concerned about national security and he formed Soviet satellite states to provide that certainty. In reality he was more of a realist than an ideologue

committed to worldwide communist revolution.⁷⁵ Truman also wanted to create a sphere of influence, but one governed by self-determination, democratic governance, and capitalism. As the Secretary of State George C. Marshall stated:

The remedy seems to lie in breaking the vicious circle and restoring the confidence of the people of Europe in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole... Aside from the demoralizing effect on the world at large and the possibilities of disturbances arising as a result of the desperation of the people concerned, the consequences to the economy of the United States should be apparent to all. It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.⁷⁶

Stalin, on the other hand, preferred to impose his will unilaterally and by force, which in turn frustrated U.S. policy makers who, under domestic pressure, turned to a policy of containment.⁷⁷ Many policymakers saw no other alternative, for as Secretary of State Rusk mused:

During the postwar years it looked as though the mudslide of communism would continue unless stopped. The origins of the Cold War arose from this doctrine of world revolution and actions by various Communist countries to try to move that revolution ahead by force. On the basis of our experiences in the thirties, we felt that the time to stop aggression was at the beginning, before it developed a momentum.⁷⁸

Those in charge of creating and implementing the U.S. response to communist actions had decided that the best course was to confront signs of communist aggression with force.

The origins of this mindset, the need to squash all perceived communist movements lest they spread, has its origins in a State Department document written by George F. Kennan, the U.S. Deputy Chief of the Mission to the USSR. This document became the foundation upon which subsequent administrations based their attitude towards the Soviets and all communists. Written by Kennan in February 1946, he tried to examine the Soviet psyche and motives. In the document Kennan surmises that there can be, "no peaceful coexistence," with the USSR.⁷⁹ The "Long Telegram," as it came to be known, is insightful since Kennan realized that Soviet

expansionist ideals were born out of a fear of Western intrusion and a need to create a buffer. He also surmised that communism required constant struggle to topple capitalism and that, "ideology, as we have seen, taught them that the outside world was hostile and that it was their duty eventually to overthrow the political forces beyond their borders. Then powerful hands of Russian history and tradition reached up to sustain them in this feeling."⁸⁰ Kennan created the Domino Theory that would guide U.S. actions during the Cold War when he extrapolated that for Stalin, "Everything must be done to advance the relative strength of USSR as a factor in international society. Conversely, no opportunity must be missed to reduce strength and influence...of capitalist powers (meaning the U.S.)."⁸¹ These words by Kennan formed the bedrock of future Cold War policies and actions from 1947 to the civil war in Vietnam. The future of democracy and capitalism had now become a zero sum battle between the U.S. and its allies while the world became the playing field. The general impression by Washington officials was that all forms of communism were a threat, not just the Soviet variety; there were now "two ways of life."⁸² Suddenly Europe was not the only place in danger of Soviet subversion. The State Department concluded that communist movements from China to Cuba to Vietnam advanced as one giant red menace.⁸³

Closer to home, the need to check communist aggression became increasingly important. Beginning in 1821, European powers pulled out of Latin America leaving immense power vacuums to be filled either by tin pot dictators or popular movements. In order to protect its interests in Latin America, the nations to the south came under the U.S. sphere of influence, invoking the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.⁸⁴ In addressing the political climate in Latin America, Kennan observed,

Toward colonial areas and backwards or dependent peoples, Soviet policy, even on a official plane, will be directed toward weakening of power and influence and contacts of advanced Western nations, on the theory that in so far as this policy is successful, there will be created a vacuum which will favor Communist-Soviet penetration.⁸⁵

Latin America fit the mold for Soviet incursion in that the economically backward region experienced political turmoil and had already undergone a number of progressive revolutions.

With Kennedy's election in 1960 the bonds between the United States and Latin America deepened with a renewed pledge to place the entire hemisphere under U.S. protection. In his inaugural address Kennedy stated,

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge to convert our good words into good deeds in a new alliance for progress to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.⁸⁶

This assertion by Kennedy would soon be tested only forty miles from Florida. In Cuba Kennedy became forced to back up his promise to "oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty."⁸⁷ In order to show that he was not going to be soft on communism and to establish himself as a strong leader in international affairs, the Kennedy administration sought to oust Fidel Castro and his Soviet backed government. The Cold War in Latin America became hot on April 17, 1961 when a force of sixteen hundred guerrillas supported by the CIA landed at the Bay of Pigs in southern Cuba.⁸⁸ While the invasion failed miserably and the situation resulted in the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy's action plan of covert as well as blatant intervention in Latin America formed the new precedent for handling perceived communist encroachment.

After Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963 Johnson inherited both Kennedy's staff as well as his policies towards communism and Latin America. However, unlike Kennedy, Johnson had not wanted to focus his efforts on international affairs. Instead Johnson had hoped to "build a great society" within the United States by fighting poverty and inequality with sweeping social programs.⁸⁹ Johnson therefore followed the advice of Kennedy's people and continued his interventionist policies. Soon CIA agents became involved in elections in

British Guiana and Chile, spending money on polling, posters, advertisements, and anti-communist projects all designed to bring down perceived communist sympathizers.⁹⁰

In no way did the Dominican intervention become an isolated incident. Under Johnson, Latin America would evolve into a hotbed of CIA anti-communist adventures.⁹¹ U.S. coercion or covert infiltration seemed to penetrate every Latin American country; even in Brazil the hidden hand of the CIA was part of the April 1964 coup that toppled João Goulart.⁹² Perhaps the United States' fear of communist penetration in Latin America became a self-fulfilling prophecy; where the U.S. interfered to root out communist sympathizers, anti-U.S., pro-communist sentiments, were more likely to spring up. The situation in the Dominican Republic may have been a product of an overly-vigilant containment policy, yet as Johnson himself stated:

"I realize I am running the risk of being called a gunboat diplomat, but that is nothing compared to what I'd be called if the Dominican Republic went down the drain...it would be a hell of a lot worse if we sit here and don't do anything and the Communists take that country."⁹³

For Johnson and his administration, the course of action deemed necessary in the Dominican Republic left little room for error. The previous administration's Latin American policies meant Johnson had to involve the U.S. and that he could not allow a communist victory. In response to the rebel forces in Santo Domingo, Johnson's hands were tied. He would use a rationale from Kennan and put forward "strong resistance" to all perceived communist elements.⁹⁴

CHAPTER 6

AMBASSADOR MARTIN AND PRESIDENT KENNEDY

The U.S. embassy became one of the major driving forces within the Dominican Republic. With the restoration of a U.S. ambassador on March 2nd of 1962⁹⁵, after the death of Trujillo and the gradual reinstatement of U.S. aid, ambassador John Bartlow Martin soon found himself wielding tremendous bargaining power within the ad-hoc government. Add to that the fact that virtually anyone seeking power within the Dominican Republic needed an endorsement from the United States usually had to be gained through the ambassador's influence. In fact, the opinions of U.S. ambassadors during the crises went a long way in determining with whom Kennedy would place political backing and even determined whether or not the United States was willing to commit itself militarily or involve the OAS. Despite the power the U.S. ambassadors wielded within the Dominican Republic and with the Kennedy government, their motives and intentions are not always clear.

John Bartlow Martin was born on August 4th, 1915 in Hamilton, Ohio, the oldest son of John W. and Laura Martin.⁹⁶ Mockingly referred to as a bookworm by his father, ambassador Martin had a rough childhood growing up in depression era Ohio where both of his younger brothers died at a young age, a tragedy that tore apart his parent's marriage.⁹⁷ From an early age Martin began to write, graduating from high school and attending DePauw University. At first he had trouble with his studies, getting expelled, but his interest in writing got him a job at the *New York Times*, where he excelled.⁹⁸ Martin soon found his calling when he became a speechwriter for Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and for Kennedy during his 1960 presidential run.⁹⁹ As a result of his help in getting JFK elected, Kennedy rewarded him with his first political post, U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

Martin arrived in Santo Domingo in February 1961 as a member of the OAS' Mission to the Dominican Republic.¹⁰⁰ There Martin witnessed first hand the oppression and poverty of the Dominican people under Trujillo and began to form an opinion on what the Kennedy government needed to do in order to improve economic, social, and political conditions within the country. Perhaps the words of ordinary Dominicans instilled in him the idea that, "if the United States didn't help them there would be a bloodbath, or they would go Communist," and later solidified his position that the United States was to play a vital role after Trujillo's murder.¹⁰¹ Ambassador Martin was a learned man, an idealist, and a liberal who believed that President Kennedy's approach to communism and Latin America was wise and just. Martin was willing to listen to the people and believed in the Alliance for Progress. He knew communism was a danger but realized that the Trujillo rightists posed a far greater threat to U.S. interests and advocated that the country ought to be "occupied and reconstituted" rather than let Trujillo's puppets rule.¹⁰²



Figure 6.1 Ambassador John Bartlow Martin

When Martin was sworn in on March 2, 1962, he had little idea how difficult his ambassadorship would be.¹⁰³ His mistaken conception of the job became sharply corrected soon after he arrived when an angry mob roving the capital set fire to the embassy car. This early act of public rebellion characterized the magnitude of the problems he would face as an ambassador within the Dominican Republic, yet he never wavered in the tenacious performance of his duties.¹⁰⁴ Juan Bosch, became the Dominican Republic's first elected president in three decades (Trujillo had ruled from January of 1931 to May of 1961) greatly respected the ambassador and wrote that Martin and Newell F. Williams (the head of AID, or Agency for

International Development), “did not appear to be agents of the U.S. government but rather two Dominicans anxious as the best of Dominicans to accomplish the impossible for us.”¹⁰⁵ Martin was a proponent of the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress and seemed to sum up in every way the characteristics of a “good” ambassador from a contemporary best seller, *The Ugly American*.



Figure 6.2 President John F Kennedy

Most of the major players within the Dominican Republic liked Martin. He was a friend and confidant of Trujillo’s assassins and political successors Amiana and Imbert. Bosch praised him highly, stating, “He was a man with a hard face and a good heart, and the mind of a Kennedy liberal.”¹⁰⁶ However, he also believed that the United States had an obligation within Latin America to promote democracy and fight communism. Martin believed deeply that, “our purpose was, as President Kennedy said, to defend freedom around the world, we could not turn our backs on unable governments and hapless people.”¹⁰⁷ Because of these sentiments Martin often interfered in Dominican affairs to a level unappreciated by Bosch and other Dominican politicians. On one occasion, Martin tried to get the two main parties in the 1962 Dominican election to meet and agree to support the incoming regime, allowing the opposition to exist without persecution.¹⁰⁸ While this meeting obviously emerged from noble intentions, both Dr. Viriato Fiallo of the UCN, and Bosch grew to resent the ambassador’s meddling in their political parties. Despite these setbacks, Martin maintained the shared interests of most Dominicans and the United States at heart and hoped to reform the turbulent nation.

CHAPTER 7

THE BOSCH PRESIDENCY

During the years of Trujillo's dictatorship, Juan Bosch spent his time in exile. His return signaled a chance for the Dominican Republic to finally maintain a democratic government. A nationalist, Bosch began to campaign vigorously for the presidential seat and Martin soon realized that Bosch was a master of political tactics, a great writer, and able to cut his opponents to pieces in the electoral campaign.¹⁰⁹ Bosch eventually garnered over 60 percent of the votes, by reaching out directly to the previously disenfranchised Dominican lower class, and assumed the presidency on February 27, 1963.¹¹⁰ Bosch's party the PRD also gained a two thirds majority of the legislature, giving him enough of a popular mandate to begin the reform platform he had campaigned on.¹¹¹ Kennedy immediately made it clear that the United States had committed itself to the Bosch presidency by inviting the newly elected president to Washington and even sending Vice President Lyndon Johnson to his inauguration.¹¹² Ironically, the *USS Boxer*, the same helicopter carrier that would support the U.S. invasion three years later, arrived at the inauguration at the request of the Secret Service, which wanted support in case trouble should arise during Bosch's accession to power.¹¹³

When Bosch garnered wide popular support among the Dominican people in the 1962 elections and beat his nearest competition, Dr. Viriato Fiallo of the National Civic Union, he became a favorite of the United States. To the Kennedy administration, the liberated Dominican Republic under President Juan Bosch seemed to be a showcase of democracy in the Caribbean, and a direct challenge to Castro's Cuba.¹¹⁴ Martin viewed Bosch as an excellent choice for president of the Dominican Republic. Bosch had survived meticulous scrutiny by U.S. intelligence agencies who assumed he would not betray the United States.¹¹⁵ Martin also

believed that Bosch would be better at dealing with communists due to his years in exile even if he was not well connected as Dr. Fiallo, who the middle and upper class liked.



Figure 7.1 President Juan Bosch

The problem with Bosch was that while he was a brilliant orator and philosopher, he became a dismal leader. He did not know how to handle the complex Dominican political and social jungle, nor did he know how to control the sleeping lion that the Dominican military personified. Bosch was a weak administrator at best. He was not a tactician, but rather a poet, unwilling to compromise his morals and honor.¹¹⁶ A large number of Bosch's problems arose from the fact that he never gained a popular following among property owners, the church, the military, or the elites.¹¹⁷ Further, Bosch failed to organize his substantial popular base among the working class into an effective political force and he reacted against the communists only when they posed a direct threat to his own power.¹¹⁸ He often reacted too slowly to incidents and was unsuccessful in garnering support among the Dominican masses after his initial success in the 1962 elections.

Bosch had a habit of blaming others for his problems and failed to seek aid from the United States, undoubtedly his closest ally. He realized the power of U.S. interests in the Caribbean and the fact that Kennedy was unwilling to risk another Cuba, yet he stated he would not turn to Washington for help.¹¹⁹ Bosch held the Latin American viewpoint that the United States wanted too much in return for its help, and therefore alienated and infuriated Kennedy and the State Department. He believed that only the Dominican people could lead themselves towards democracy, a belief that would soon isolate the idealistic but naïve president. Bosch failed to act against the communists because he saw actions against communists as only

inciting more communist aggression. He blamed the clergy and the Catholic Church for his problems, stating that they were the architects of the rightist coup and the agents of communist agitators.¹²⁰ He incited the common people and created distrust among the elite by claiming they were *tutompotes* (a Dominican word for big shot) set on stirring up class conflict.¹²¹ Furthermore, he began to clash with the State Department and, in Martin's words, "Where President Kennedy asked for unity, Bosch attacked."¹²² Despite early support, members of Kennedy's staff soon began to view Bosch as a problem. Secretary of State Dean Rusk criticized Bosch, stating, "he had zero governmental and administrative experience, and he surrounded himself with people who knew even less about running a government than he did."¹²³ Undersecretary of State George Ball became so harsh in his scorn for Bosch that he considered him, "unrealistic, arrogant, and erratic, incapable of even running a small social club, much less a country in turmoil."¹²⁴ Bosch quickly lost supporters, and even his close friend José Figueres Ferrer of Costa Rica deemed Bosch "a poet and a dreamer... he isn't capable of organizing a government and running a country... he won't last a year."¹²⁵ His lack of political skills and administrative experience became blatantly obvious to even his closest supporters. In short, he created enemies and failed to act decisively in a time when the country needed a leader willing to enact drastic change while simultaneously controlling the various elements of the government.

From the very beginning of his presidency, the rightists within the Dominican political parties attacked Bosch and his populist actions, like redistributing land. Having few friends among the business and political elites in the Dominican Republic, Bosch was an open target for criticism of his social policies. A common theme was that Bosch was leading the country directly into the arms of communists. In a widely heard radio speech on September 3, 1963, Dr. Angel Cabral, president of the rightist political party Unión Cívica Nacional, bitterly denounced Bosch and the PRD, Partido Revolucionario Dominicano.¹²⁶ This added fuel to the charges, since the PRD itself was suspect of communist sentiments and an exile party founded in 1939

by Dominicans living in Cuba.¹²⁷ His tirade addressed Bosch's attempts at land redistribution and expressed disgust at the invasion of private property by landless campesinos. Dr. Cabral denounced Bosch as untrustworthy and leftist stating, "You call a rascal one who lives by rascality, and a communist one who proceeds as would a communist."¹²⁸ Dr. Cabral's speech went beyond inflammatory rhetoric and called on the armed forces and the masses to prepare for a "struggle without quarter,"¹²⁹ alleging that Bosch and the PRD had joined members of a frightening conspiracy, working to destroy private property, incite class warfare, and prepare the country for communism. These allegations would almost be comical had they not resonated deeply within many factions of Dominican society. The church, the upper class, the military, and the business owners saw Bosch as dangerous. Martin was even accused of doing grave damage to the Dominican Republic by "helping to maintain Juan Bosch in power."¹³⁰ Martin shrugged off this personal attack as a "prime example of Dominican political oratory,"¹³¹ showing how little the ambassador and the State Department realized the gravity of the right wing threat. The abolition of private property in the 1963 Dominican constitution presented a huge problem to the Dominican elite. Obviously wealthy landowners, businessmen, and the upper class saw this as a direct step down the road leading to a communist Dominican Republic. It also frightened even the smaller landowners and added fuel to Bosch's U.S. critics providing an example of his supposed communist sympathies.

The only institution that remained intact enough to wield real power within the Dominican Republic was the military. After Bosch came to power, the military realized quickly that he was not going to continue their preferential treatment. In fact Bosch knew he needed to cut back on military spending and reduce its ranks, since a number of useless high-ranking officers from Trujillo's reign still held positions.¹³² Bosch however failed to take these measures, which resulted in frustration among younger officers, like Colonel Francisco Caamano, who was a supporter but wanted more in the way of reforms. Providing greater opportunities to younger officers could have boosted morale and removed those who would soon revolt against his own

leadership, but Bosch did not have the political will to take on that task. Further exacerbating this weakness was the fact that Bosch could not or would not directly confront the military. A great example of this occurred when General Miguel Atila Luna, the commander of the Dominican Air Force, wished to spend five million dollars on British Hawker Hunter fighter aircraft.¹³³ The general admitted to Ambassador Martin that there was little military justification for the purchase, but that if he did not keep his pilots happy he was worried about “revolution,” and would therefore buy the planes anyway.¹³⁴ In the end Bosch “washed his hands” of the matter in order to avoid saying no to the general and to keep the air force content by letting them do as they pleased, rather than confront them over the budget issue.¹³⁵ While Bosch may have been hoping that such acts would keep the rightist military satisfied and loyal, it seems that his inactions had the opposite effect. Without taking control of the military and firmly establishing his role as president and their commander in chief, Bosch appeared weak and ineffective. On one hand Bosch desired to curtail the power of the Dominican military, and on the other hand he was unable or unwilling to do so. After years of Trujillo imposing his iron will on the military, Bosch’s distaste for confrontation became interpreted correctly as weakness.

The most striking example of Bosch’s inadequacy and his inability to govern came in the form of a conflict with Haiti. A small number of Haitian guerrillas had begun attacking Dominican installations. For years the Dominican Republic had simultaneously feared and despised the Haitians. They thought them racially and socially inferior and worried that Haiti, controlled by the Francois Duvalier dictatorship, would invade.¹³⁶ Bosch particularly hated Duvalier and feared that the dictator wished to kill him. Events began to spiral out of control when Haitian troops surrounded the Dominican embassy in Port au Prince in May 1963.¹³⁷ The Duvalier government had alleged that an exiled Haitian general, Leon Cantave, had invaded Haiti with the help of Dominican forces.¹³⁸ General Cantave had in fact tried to overthrow Duvalier a number of times and was seeking asylum in the Dominican Republic. Bosch claimed to know nothing of the event, but apparently Dominican army officials had aided the Haitian

rebels without his approval, and the army had already begun to mobilize troops without the knowledge of the president.¹³⁹ Once the military was doing whatever it pleased, completely ignoring Bosch as their leader, the situation became ripe for a military coup. It had become abundantly clear that Bosch could not control the volatile situation within the country.

While it is true that Bosch only held office for seven months, and that little can be accomplished by anyone in such a short time, it is doubtful whether more time would have helped Bosch and the Dominican Republic. Sadly and ironically, Bosch reflected later upon the deteriorating situation within the Dominican Republic, stating: "If, as I had hoped, the OAS had investigated and gotten to the bottom of matters, I would have discovered what hidden hand was pulling the strings and causing my administration to appear ridiculous."¹⁴⁰ It would have probably hurt Bosch deeply had he known that the United States, the very ally that had helped him win the 1962 election, was pivotal in bringing about his downfall. In fact, despite the early approval of Bosch's presidency and rise to power, the United States quickly turned on him when it became apparent that he could not control the military, could not quash the communists, and would not come further into the fold of U.S. influence.

CHAPTER 8

THE DOMINICAN CONSTITUTION OF 1963

While many charges had been levied against Bosch from both political spectrums within the Dominican Republic; he had been labeled too soft on communism or too slow to suppress dissidents, land reform became the most cited example of his alleged communist leanings. For many within the military and the elite the most damning example of his supposed communist tendencies was embodied in the 1963 Constitution, the cornerstone of the new Dominican Republic. Prepared by the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture the *New Constitution of the Dominican Republic*, announced on Monday April 29 1963, was a huge departure from the Constitution put together only one year beforehand.¹⁴¹

The Constitution of 1962, drafted solely by the Consejo that assumed power after Trujillo's assassination, reads as a very conservative document. While it does provide for human rights, free public education, and public welfare, the manuscript deals mainly with enumerating the powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The 1962 Constitution was also mainly an extension of Trujillo's constitution and was therefore unpopular. It is noteworthy that the 1962 Constitution has a large paragraph dedicated to protecting property rights.

Here the document puts forth that;

A general confiscation of property is prohibited, except as punishment of persons guilty of treason or espionage in behalf of an enemy during a time of legitimate defense against a foreign state or guilty of abuse or usurpation of power or of any public function for purposes of enriching themselves or others. In these last cases the property acquired by the state through confiscation ordered by law will have first priority as means of repairing moral and material damage caused by the usurpation or abuse of powers or public function. The law may establish special procedures for acquisition by the state of areas or portion of rural lands that may be needed for introduction and developing adequate systems of agrarian reforms, in which case the same law shall regulate the form of indemnity of compensation.¹⁴²

The constitution went further adding a clause about the inviolability of the home, and stating in Article 11, "relations between Church and State are regulated by the Concordat between the Holy See and the Dominican Republic, in accordance with the law of God and the Catholic tradition of the Dominican Republic."¹⁴³ Obviously under this constitution the Dominican Republic is a center right government. The ideals of private property are strongly supported in this document, making it hard for the state to intrude on private enterprise and break up the large haciendas. Furthermore the 1962 Constitution puts the Catholic Church into a prominent position within the Dominican Republic by making it the official religion. While the practice of other religions isn't outlawed, it is obvious that Catholicism will be the preferred religion. There is little doubt then why this constitution was very important to the ruling elite and military officers, many of whom possessed large plantations, and why the Dominican Catholic Church backed it, since they would for the first time be given specific power.

If the Constitution of 1962 is a fairly conservative document, then it is easy to see why the Constitution of 1963 was a radical departure from the Dominican norm. While the 1962 constitution intended to establish a new regime, drafted by Bosch and ratified by the PRD the 1963 charter was endeavored to reform that country and establish a social pact with the lower and middle classes.¹⁴⁴ Compare, for example, Title I of both constitutions. In 1963 the basic aim of the government is to "protect human dignity and to promote and guarantee respect for it; to strive for the elimination of economic and social obstacles that limit the equality and the liberty of Dominicans."¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, the 1962 constitution deals only with establishing a government without putting forth any lofty ideals.

The real problem within the Constitution of 1963 comes from article 23 and 24 under section 2, titled property. Here Bosch pushes his agrarian reforms that would so alienate many Dominicans.

It is declared to be against the public interest for persons or private enterprises to own land in an excessive amount. Consequently, large private estates are forbidden, regardless of the way in which the holdings may have originated. The law will determine

the maximum amount of land that may be owned by a private person or entity, taking into account agricultural, social, and economic factors. Personal enterprises may not acquire ownership of land except in the case of land destined to the improvement of communities and the erection of industrial and commercial establishments, according to the corresponding legal regulations.¹⁴⁶

The document then goes on to state:

The ownership and cultivation of excessively small plots of land is declared uneconomic and anti-social. The law will determine the meaning of this section and will take the necessary steps to obtain the integration of such plots into units that can be exploited with economic and social profit.¹⁴⁷

In one fell swoop of the pen the new Dominican government under Juan Bosch made the land of both the large plantations owned by many officers and Dominican businessmen, as well as the smaller homesteads of the middle and lower class that dotted the countryside, subject to state confiscation. While the Trujillo family had been the biggest landowner before the assassination, members of the military also benefited, and the remaining peasants possessed only very small estates of one or two *tareas* (one sixteenth of a hectare).¹⁴⁸ This meant that most landowners in the Dominican Republic, large or small, were now in danger of having their homestead absorbed and redistributed by the new government. The Constitution of 1963 is also silent on what, if any, role the Catholic Church would play under Bosch's Presidency. A complete turnaround from the previous year, this meant the Catholic Church would once again be relegated to a small role in the new Dominican Republic as well.

Finally, in the Constitution of 1962 the Dominican military is referred to as a "specialized and technical institution...governed by their organic law and their members cannot be separated from their posts nor deprived of their ranks without justifiable cause."¹⁴⁹ In the Constitution of 1963 the military, "may be called upon by the Executive Power to collaborate in plans for the socio-economic development of the country."¹⁵⁰ It is easy to see why the Dominican military, the most favored and best-equipped institution under Trujillo and last bastion of strength in the Dominican Republic, would be dissatisfied with being demoted from a specialized and highly technical fighting force to become basically a pool of labor for a works progress administration.

From the standpoint of Dominican generals and high ranking officers, the remaining upper class, landowners, and the Catholic Church it is easy to see why they painted Bosch as a leftist at best and a closet communist at worst. It is also easy to see why U.S. ambassadors, the State Department, and especially the CIA started to have misgivings about the intentions of Bosch. However, much of this assessment is off the mark, most of the land in the Dominican Republic that had been owned under the Trujillos would be later distributed to the lower class by President Balaguer in his own land reform attempts during the 1970s.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the Constitution of 1963 addressed a number of human rights issues, such as illegal imprisonment and murder that had been left out of the 1962 Constitution. However, the Dominicans that had the most to lose under the 1963 constitution felt they had to reject both it, and Bosch, before any such reforms were implemented. It was a result of these feelings that senior Dominican military officers, aided by other right wing elements of the Dominican Republic, enacted a bloodless coup to oust President Bosch and the PRD in September of 1963.¹⁵²

CHAPTER 9

AMBASSADOR BENNETT

President Johnson appointed the second ambassador, William Tapley Bennett Jr., in 1964 after the resumption of diplomatic relations following the coup that ousted Bosch.¹⁵³ A far different type of ambassador than Martin, Bennett became less inclined to listen to the Dominican people, since he felt it below his position as an ambassador. Furthermore, he was adversely inclined to believe the communist threat from the beginning since none of his political aides had held prior positions within the embassy, except for the CIA officials who were known for their distrust of Bosch.¹⁵⁴ Bennett was also a friend of Tony Imbert, one of Trujillo's assassins and a Dominican political strongman, as well as a foe of Bosch.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, it was no real surprise that Bennett assumed that the return of Bosch to the Dominican Republic would mean the installation of a communist government.



Figure 9.1 Ambassador Bennett

Despite Bennett's unfounded fear of Bosch being a communist, he did have a reason to worry about the very real threat that the rebellion could turn into a communist revolution. For the U.S. officials stuck in the embassy with only limited television news getting through to them, the situation in the Dominican Republic seemed disturbingly similar to that in Havana before Castro assumed power.¹⁵⁶ Bennett informed the State Department that Bosch "has been a deep-cover communist for many years," adding "we should attempt to take his government away from

him."¹⁵⁷ Bennett distrusted Bosch deeply; taking umbrage that Bosch did not defer to his advice and expel anyone suspected of being a communist.

Bennett had worked as a freelance journalist as well as on the campaigns for Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson, and despite having no diplomatic experience thought himself an expert on the Dominican situation.¹⁵⁸ Once Wessin y Wessin ousted Bosch, Bennett's correspondence between Santo Domingo and the State Department tilted constantly in favor of Wessin y Wessin and the military junta. As State Department Undersecretary George Ball noted, Ambassador Bennett was "a conservative Georgian who instinctively tended to favor the established hierarchy... whose basic sympathies were clearly with Colonel Wessin y Wessin."¹⁵⁹ Because of those sympathies, Bennett constantly undermined the rebels who wanted to reinstate Bosch with reports that "all indications point to the fact that if present efforts of forces loyal to the government fail, power will be assumed by groups clearly identified with the Communist party."¹⁶⁰ On more than one occasion Bennett sent out messages making it clear that he regarded Caamano's pro-Bosch rebellion as a communist movement and that only U.S. intervention could change the situation.¹⁶¹ Bennett's constant manipulation of the situation, and his reports concluding communist involvement played a major role in Johnson's decision to land marines.

As an ambassador Bennett was as overly critical of Bosch as he was unprepared to deal with the situation that unfolded around him in the Dominican Republic. From Bennett's frantic situation reports about communist infiltration to his unwavering assumptions about Bosch's political affiliations, Bennett's prejudiced mindset became apparent. Embassy colleagues would often remark that Bennett didn't seem to know anyone left of the Rotary Club.¹⁶² From all of this one can assume that Bennett was the wrong man for the Johnson administration to rely on when they made the decision to intervene. However, Bennett was the highest-ranking diplomat within the Dominican Republic at the time and despite his prejudices, he could better determine what to do than others thousands of miles away in Washington.

Finally, just because Bennett became preoccupied with communist infiltration doesn't mean that communist infiltration did not exist.

CHAPTER 10

THE COUP AND THE REBELLION

Disillusioned by Bosch's failure and fearful of communist infiltration into Bosch's administration, the military carried out a coup on September 25th 1963. Major General Victor Roman, the army chief of staff, and Wessin y Wessin, chief of the national police, were the primary participants.¹⁶³ The generals responsible for the coup were strongly anti-communist and inclined to believe that communism strongly influenced the moderate leftist Bosch government. With the failings of the Bosch presidency, the new regime garnered passive U.S. support through its strong anti-Castro and anti-communist position.¹⁶⁴ A memo for ambassador to Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, pointed out that the Johnson administration had rejected the notion of using military force to keep Bosch in power for the stated reason that Bosch himself would have rejected such an action. Furthermore an unstated assumption existed that the Johnson administration had become "prepared to accept the inevitable" overthrow of Bosch.¹⁶⁵ The military officers who started the coup also favored a return of Balaguer, one of Trujillo's former puppets who had turned anti-Trujillo, mainly because he was believed to be rightist and pro-military.

The stated aim of preventing a communist takeover became the rationale for the revolt. Partially to explain their actions and to legitimize them, the coup members produced a manifesto of sorts. Here the military and the national police explained why they abolished the Bosch government and the 1963 Constitution. The following excerpt released by the coup on September 25, 1963 explains the military distrust of Bosch:

"In view of these alarming events and the precarious state of the nation's health, which is worsening by the hour, we have decided to act to bring order out of this chaos and to halt the disintegrating revolutionary movement of communism, which has endeavored to destroy by violence the motto on our coat-of-arms, on which 'fatherland' has been placed between 'God' and 'Freedom.' It is obvious that, in addition to being responsible for law and order, the armed forces and the national police have a duty to society, outside the scope of regular duties, especially when the order is obviously in jeopardy, and the institutions with which society has

provided itself for carrying out its purposes are so seriously endangered that they find it impossible to ensure public welfare. Moreover, when such institutions are so profoundly affected and the atmosphere is threatened with a violent disruption of the nation's estates. It must be admitted that such serious problems cannot be resolved within the framework of strict constitutionality. The constitution, established to safeguard the peace and the rights of the people, cannot be an impenetrable dike when it is not even able to preserve peace and the people's rights. This is especially true when the followers of treacherous communism hide behind the government and the political parties, using powers which their own doctrine denies and which their system will then deny to their proselytes, who will cease to be free citizens and will be converted to enslaved proletarians. The constitution is invoked only to be destroyed later."¹⁶⁶

All motives aside, these are certainly the most damaging acquisitions leveled against Bosch by the military. Whether or not Bosch involved himself with communists, and most likely he did not, the military obviously interpreted Bosch's left leaning policies as an invitation to communist infiltration and a direct threat to Dominican institutions. The document continued by outlining exactly what steps the military decided to take in order to oust Bosch and stop the perceived communist encroachment. First, the military junta banned communism, socialism, and Castroism as well as any parties that secretly or openly supported Marxism.¹⁶⁷ This had been something the United States had urged Bosch to do, but Bosch would not undertake due to constitutional constraints. Secondly, the coup removed Bosch and his government from office because "it has proved itself incapable of setting the country on a course of law and order, respect for the law, general security, peace, progress, and general welfare."¹⁶⁸ The third act abolished the 1963 constitution and reinstated the constitution of September 17, 1962. Both of these actions erased the Bosch government and the leftist reformation that he had thus enacted. Yet the military coup did not simply seek to remove Bosch in order for the military to seize power. The sixth step is very telling, for here the military automatically set limits on its powers.

"At the earliest possible moment a provisional government will be formed, headed by an eminent citizen who has no connection with the militant political parties; meanwhile, the armed forces, represented by the undersigned, will assume the executive functions."¹⁶⁹

This was no empty promise because the military factions that ousted Bosch surprisingly stuck to their pledge and soon turned the government over to a non-military interim government. That act alone confers a sense of legitimacy on the actions of the officers involved in the coup. If they had been simply seeking long-term power, they would have established a military dictatorship promoting one of their own to a position of leadership. Too often in other Latin American countries the military refuses to relinquish power after seizing the government; in this case the Dominican military junta established a ruling triumvirate of civilians, stepping down from their newly found power.



Figure 10.1 Colonel Wessin y Wessin

After the military ousted Bosch and sent him back into exile, they installed a triumvirate government with Donald Reid Cabral, a Dominican car salesman, as the interim head.¹⁷⁰ While Cabral admired the United States, he suffered from political illegitimacy due to his climb to power with the help of the military coup.¹⁷¹ Because of this the State Department hoped to encourage him to install a more constitutional government and step aside. Those implementing the coup and the members of Cabral's government obviously felt that they would receive Kennedy's support for their actions. However the State Department in no way sought to openly turn its back on the democratic process within the Dominican Republic, even if it meant the ousting of an anti-communist regime that had come to power illegitimately. Despite widespread criticism that the State Department or the CIA had been instrumental in bringing about the coup, there was little U.S. support for the military revolt. The State Department gave specific instructions to Ambassador Martin to

“cease all formal contacts with members of that government, unless constitutional succession followed...Until such a government is formed and recognized by U.S., Embassy personnel should scrupulously avoid any official contact with military or civilians associated with the coup or likely to be named to the new governing body which could imply approval of coup or foreshadowing recognition of whatever government may hereafter be established.”¹⁷²

While the Kennedy administration would not act militarily on behalf of Bosch, the State Department did not give open support to the leadership of the coup. If Kennedy had wanted Bosch deposed in favor of a more malleable Dominican government, his administration was not doing anything at all to indicate such a desire. At the beginning of the coup the Kennedy government was a model of neutrality. Johnson would retain this position until the rebellion against the bloodless coup threatened to develop into civil war.

After the installation of the pro-Balaguer triumvirate, on April 24, 1965, a pro-Bosch faction rebelled within the Dominican Republic.¹⁷³ The group had been planning to oust Cabral's government since January 1965, seeking to sneak Bosch back into the country and reinstate the constitution of 1963.¹⁷⁴ However, the rebel group was divided and the plan never came to fruition. Then on April 24th, General Rivera Overta, Cabral's chief of staff, jailed six of the rebel officers.¹⁷⁵ News of this action spread quickly throughout the ranks of the Dominican military providing the perfect catalyst for rebellion. Soon afterwards furious non-commissioned officers freed the prisoners and captured General Overta.¹⁷⁶ This army rebellion called itself the "Constitutional Military Command" and its officers, among them Colonel Caamano, favored a return of the Bosch government.¹⁷⁷ At 1:45 in the afternoon on April 24th, Peña Gomez, an announcer for the PRD radio station, officially announced that the rebellion had begun.¹⁷⁸ Despite being trapped in the presidential palace, a defiant Cabral announced that he would not surrender, counting on the support of Wessin Y Wessin and his tanks. The opportunistic Wessin Y Wessin; however, declined to help telling Cabral that his tanks would remain safely at San Isidro.¹⁷⁹ An isolated Cabral, only managing to muster the support of around 500 loyalist troops,

stepped down on April 25th ceding power to the rebels.¹⁸⁰ The remaining loyalist troops abandoned their posts and either fled to San Isidro, or disappeared.

The rebel "Constitutional Military Command" associated itself with a number of leftist elements; Bennett believed them to be part of a communist faction seeking power.¹⁸¹ Particularly damning was Bennett's assertion that "recently intercepted correspondence of Pablo Mella proved the link of Bosch with Communists and Caamano and his group were Bosch stooges."¹⁸² The Johnson administration, thanks to Bennett, now became convinced that Caamano's rebellion posed a threat to U.S. interests. Even though Bosch argued that the young officers had learned democracy in U.S. training institutions and supported the same struggle that "Washington and Jefferson fought," Johnson had already decided to back Balaguer's and Wessin y Wessin's forces.¹⁸³

However, despite unspoken U.S. support of the Wessin y Wessin group, the outcome of the struggle remained undecided. At first the rebel forces enjoyed success. With Cabral and the loyalists gone, or holed up at San Isidro and Fortress Ozama, the poor of Santo Domingo rushed out into the streets and began dancing, celebrating the CMC's bloodless coup. The peaceful celebrations were short lived. Pent up anger over years of oppression boiled over and the mob became violent, looting and rioting, they descended on the homes of Trujillistas, setting fire to buildings, and attacking the Guatemalan Embassy where some loyalists were hiding.¹⁸⁴ The mob also turned its rage against police. Any policeman within Santo Domingo, whether in uniform or not, was in danger of being murdered in response to years of repression at their hands.¹⁸⁵ Officially the CMC forces led by Caamano were in charge, but chaos reigned.

On the morning of April 28 Caamano led a successful attack with a combined force comprised of rebel soldiers and armed civilians against police strongholds within Santo Domingo.¹⁸⁶ Insurgents were running rampant throughout downtown Santo Domingo and soon the military forces that had rebelled hauled an estimated seven thousand rifles and submachine guns in army trucks into the city and passed them out to the pro-Bosch fighters.¹⁸⁷ The situation

within the city became grim and the CIA reported to the embassy that rebels were executing loyalists, a report which was not confirmed, but seemed plausible as the fighting increased. Furthermore, the city's electrical supply had been interrupted and all forms of civil authority vanished.¹⁸⁸ The 14th of June movement, the MPD, and the PSPD, all of which were pro-communist parties, came out in support of Juan Bosch's PRD, calling for his immediate restoration.¹⁸⁹ Despite the anarchy in the streets of downtown Santo Domingo, perceived communist infiltration, and the precarious position of the regime, Johnson was not yet inclined to act.



Figure 10.2 Colonel Caamano

The loyalist Wessin y Wessin forces, located at the San Isidro airbase, soon retaliated; using tanks and fighter planes they drove the rebels back to a stronghold at the Duarte Bridge. The bridge represented the eastern edge of town and led to the San Isidro airbase. The rebels held the core of the city but the loyalists had the rebel forces surrounded. An emboldened Wessin Y Wessin finally decided to take back Santo Domingo, and ordered his armored units to cross the Duarte Bridge into the heart of the city. The tanks soon became bogged down in fierce combat. Hemmed in by the narrow streets of Santo Domingo, civilians armed with rifles and Molotov-cocktails destroyed them. Panicked, the loyalist troops realized that they did not have the strength to push into the heart of Santo Domingo; they abandoned their attack and fell back to San Isidro¹⁹⁰. Furthermore, their leader, Wessin y Wessin, lacked the popular support to rally any type of outside backing from other garrisons. By this point Wessin y Wessin had become the arch-villain to the rebels and therefore would not negotiate any sort of cease-fire with him.¹⁹¹

On the morning of the 29th rebels held every strongpoint within downtown Santo Domingo, and were launching attacks against fortress Ozama and the National Police Headquarters.

Yet with the rebels cut off, the loyalist forces unable to enter the city, and the rural population content to sit out the fight, the conflict settled into a bloody standoff. By the end of the heaviest fighting, the Dominican Red Cross estimated that as many as nine hundred to one thousand people had died.¹⁹² Despite loyalist attempts to mop up resistance, the warring factions entered into a deadly stalemate. Both sides became convinced that they were in a struggle to the death and neither would concede any type of compromise. About all the State Department could get the factions to agree on was that they both wanted the OAS to serve as an arbitrator.¹⁹³ The need for seemingly impartial arbitration of the situation became omnipresent since neither side trusted the other and the United States could not become unilaterally involved to support one side.

The theme of U.S. non-involvement actually permeated the early phase of the conflict within the Dominican Republic. Publicly the State Department adopted a position of neutrality choosing neither Bosch nor Wessin y Wessin and the interim government. This infuriated Bosch. Despite being exiled, Bosch had enlisted the support of former Puerto Rican governor Luis Muñoz Martin to talk personally with Johnson about having him back the Caamano faction.¹⁹⁴ Johnson declined and stated that he would keep the marines in place and not recognize anything beyond the interim government until elections could be held. Bosch had no way of knowing definitively that the Johnson administration and the State Department had turned its back on him; however, he now began to suspect that he was out of favor. Johnson's response drove Bosch into fits of despair, which in turn led to an extremely anti-U.S. outlook in the Bosch camp.¹⁹⁵ This anti-U.S. sentiment was so extreme that Bosch's own son began to sympathize with Fidel Castro.¹⁹⁶ Even if Johnson and the State Department had not yet decided to cut Bosch loose in favor of a more pro-U.S. government, his reaction to supposed U.S. neutrality forced Johnson's hand.

This did not mean that the United States was going to act militarily or politically in a fashion that would show definitive support for the Wessin y Wessin forces or even for the more conservative Cabral government. The State Department realized the gravity of the situation and wished to curtail further infighting while at the same time denying communist infiltration into another Caribbean nation. Unlike the fall of Batista in Cuba, the United States government wanted to back the winning side in such a way that Johnson could deny direct U.S. influence. Many understood that Wessin y Wessin was unacceptable as a replacement because he was too closely tied to Trujillo and too much of a rightist. His assumption of power would guarantee a popular backlash ripe for communist exploitation. Here was the tight rope that the Johnson administration would have to walk; U.S. troops would have to appear neutral, Johnson could not lend political support to either side. Clandestinely, the CIA had to limit communist influence, and publicly Johnson needed an international coalition to help hold elections. Finally, these elections needed to favor a pro-U.S. Dominican government.

CHAPTER 11

THE COMMUNIST THREAT

At the heart of the debate as to whether or not the United States government under Johnson should have intervened in the Dominican Republic and dragged the OAS into the situation, is the question of communist strength and influence within the Dominican Republic. Castro himself had ample reason to prevent another pro-U.S. government from taking power. The Dominican Republic under Trujillo had been a source of frustration for the Cuban dictator since Trujillo had ordered his arms factory to crank out thousands of rifles and submachine guns for Batista's army.¹⁹⁷ Batista recognized Trujillo's support by fleeing to Ciudad Trujillo as Castro's forces entered Havana on New Year's Day, 1959.¹⁹⁸ Trujillo's aide for Batista and his regime did not go unnoticed by Fidel Castro, Castro began collaborating with Dominican exiles in Venezuela to overthrow the Dominican government. On the 14th of June 1959 around 180 Cuban and Dominican communist infiltrators entered the Dominican Republic by air and boat. The invasion was a disaster and the entire force was either killed or captured.¹⁹⁹ A huge roundup and torture of suspected communists ensued within the Dominican Republic, as Trujillo sought revenge for the attack. The roundup succeeded in that hundreds were tortured to death. But in the long run it ultimately backfired, creating the 14th of June group made up of survivors and sympathizers, the largest communist force in the Dominican Republic.²⁰⁰

While the exact numbers of communist agitators and revolutionaries in the Dominican Republic may never be known, the United States, Bosch, and the Dominican military were aware that communists operated within the country. In 1964 a telegram from the embassy to the State Department warned that a leftward drift appeared. Here poverty, unemployment, and unrest are said to be causes of a steady leftist drift among the Dominican masses; also mentioned was the propaganda campaign being waged by the pro-Castro 14th of June

Movement.²⁰¹ Furthermore, it was known that the 14th of June was issuing weapons to the masses and revolutionary youth. Castro's backing of the 14th of June was well known, therefore any communist threat bearing its name was taken seriously by the Dominican military, government, CIA, and the U.S. State Department.

During the conflict the CIA, the State Department, and army intelligence sought to determine just how much of the rebellion was part of a greater communist movement, or whether a portion of the country wanted change so badly that they were willing to fight and die for it. One would assume disaffected youth and young idealistic army officers would be drawn to the leftist agenda, even more disturbing to the CIA was a possibility of the rebellion spreading to the general population. Some evidence indicates that Castro may have been more heavily involved with Bosch. In a memo from the CIA on October 3, 1963, the intelligence agency claims to have intercepted a communiqué from the Dominican Communist party to the head of the 14th of June. In this memo, Manuel Tavares, a known communist and head of the 14th of June, is recalled to Cuba to talk directly with Castro about collaboration with Bosch since, "they were making progress with their plans with him."²⁰² As ominous as that would sound to any State Department official, the memo went on to claim "Castro had promised him and other communists that he would send them aid, i.e. weapons and men, as they were in the mountains."²⁰³ Did this mean Bosch was willing to work out some sort of deal with the Dominican communists or did it simply mean that Castro thought Bosch would be leftist enough to not be a threat to Cuba if he regained power?

With information such as that it was no wonder that the United States government felt it could not sit idly by, either waiting for the military junta to fall apart, or for the communist forces to begin fighting. The CIA noted that the Dominican communist organizations were pleased that the U.S. had not yet recognized the junta since it gave them time to organize their forces.²⁰⁴ The 14th of June was using this time to, "establish as many cells as possible within the armed forces."²⁰⁵ Therefore, while neither Bosch nor Camaano had been tied implicitly to any

communist group, a body of evidence indicated that these men could have been influenced by or at least lent support to such activity. The most damning evidence of Bosch's ties to the Dominican communists was that they claimed to have told Bosch they could overthrow the junta militarily if necessary and had therefore received secret approval of their plan even if Bosch would still publicly renounce bloodshed.²⁰⁶

Besides the 14th of June groups, other communist groups operated within the Dominican Republic. Among these was the PSPD, a Moscow orientated communist party that had begun preparing for the growing rebellion within the country.²⁰⁷ It was well known that the PSPD had close relations with the Cuban Communist Party, even though it had only 200 to 300 members, and that it claimed to be the only true Marxist party.²⁰⁸ Another party leader that needs to be mentioned is Máximo López Molina, a confirmed communist who Bosch allowed into the Dominican Republic. He established the Castroite Movimiento Popular Dominicano, or MPD, and played a leading role in organizing the rebels.²⁰⁹ The MPD was gaining increased control of the street gangs and members of the MPD succeeded in procuring weapons. The early Johnson administration, however, did not view the communists as much of a threat and, in an intelligence memo, even stated that they did not pose a serious danger.²¹⁰

Even though the State Department considered communist parties within the Dominican Republic to be weak, Johnson could not afford to let them grow. Although the CIA had strong evidence that communists held as many as eight top leadership positions on the rebel side, no one in the State Department could confirm this.²¹¹ Highlighting this uncertainty, Johnson addressed journalist Arthur Crock saying, "for all we know there are 800 leaders... no one on earth knew if this was a pro-Castro Communist affair."²¹² Whether it was eight communists or eight hundred, the Johnson administration began to realize that even a few trained communist operatives in the right place at the right time might have seized control amongst the fragmented rebel forces. Increasingly the State Department received reports that communist sympathies could overcome the entire nation and spread outside of Santo Domingo into the surrounding

countryside. Informants continually reported that rural areas were on the verge of going over to the rebels and the country would be lost to the communists.²¹³ Particularly disturbing was the fact that the U.S. ambassador believed Bosch's PRD and the rebelling army officers had lost control of the street gangs to the Castroite MPD, who were passing out Molotov cocktails and guns.²¹⁴ López Molina was an effective organizer among the rebel factions. In response to a U.S. advisor probing into the arming of the communists, Caamano replied, "I know we've given the communists plenty of guns, but we had to do it to win and get rid of Reid."²¹⁵ It appeared that the situation within the Dominican Republic was moving rapidly towards a communist controlled rebellion, even if the nature and size of this insurrection could not be pinned down.

When it came to the actual U.S. and OAS intervention in the Dominican Republic, the communist factions became actively engaged in direct warfare. The rebels fired frequently at U.S. troops attempting to man checkpoints and enforce no fire zones. The communist threat may have been exaggerated by the CIA and U.S. embassy, but even Caamano admitted to arming the general populace with no idea of who he was giving weapons to.²¹⁶ The communists actively agitated the local people and exacerbated the situation with sporadic sniper fire and inflammatory rhetoric. A rebel-held radio station often urged the populace to resist the U.S. occupation. An excerpt from one of the broadcasts exemplifies the depth of communist misinformation.

"It is not true there has been an agreement to make so-called neutral zones as large as possible; what the invaders seek is to rob land. All of our people should receive Yankee invaders as enemies; all of our people should fire on Yankees...Kill foreign invaders and their lackeys."²¹⁷

While the State Department did in fact favor the Wessin y Wessin faction, the Johnson administration in no way wanted to take sovereignty away from the Dominican Republic and certainly the mission of U.S. troops was not to occupy Dominican land. If there was one part of the U.S. intervention that was honest it was the cessation of hostilities, the enforcement of a cease-fire, and the desire to restore a Dominican leader.

This was no easy task, and when it came to combating propaganda and popular sentiment it was an uphill battle. Latin America and the Caribbean have long seen their neighbor to the north as often bothersome and sometimes onerous. The communist element in the Dominican Republic was doing its best to capitalize on this sentiment. The communists enjoyed popular support by the masses, the rebels, and even certain portions of U.S. academia and media. In the Dominican Republic the rebels succeeded in linking the communist cause with food, jobs, and as champions of the masses against the U.S. military. Their propaganda and popular sentiment created a huge hurdle for Johnson, the State Department, the CIA, and the U.S. military. In order to check communist influence in Santo Domingo all actions had to have international legitimacy and U.S. military intervention had to be brief.

The counterculture within the United States was also doing a very good job of turning popular support against U.S. international intervention. The anti (Vietnam) war movement began to emerge and insisted that any response by the U.S. against foreign communist threats should be considered U.S. imperialism. A pamphlet circulated by students from the University of California titled "We Dissent, the U.S. Invasion of the Dominican Republic," highlighted the emerging anti-war tone on many college campuses. The entire pamphlet can be abridged to three major sentiments. First is a rejection of current U.S. foreign policy. Second is a statement of guilt over manifest destiny. Third is a rejection of the notion that communism is an actual threat.²¹⁸ Already a small portion of the public was "expressing sympathy for the Dominican freedom fighters that died defending their right of self determination."²¹⁹ The thirteen-page pamphlet also highlighted the need for U.S. neutrality and OAS legitimacy. Soon not only college students were speaking out against intervention aimed at stopping communism in the Dominican Republic; the biggest critic of Johnson's actions became Senator J. William Fulbright who held the powerful chairman position on the Senate Foreign Relations committee. Fulbright criticized Johnson's support of the Wessin y Wessin faction.

"We cannot successfully advance the cause of popular democracy and at the same time align ourselves with corrupt and reactionary oligarchies: yet this is what we seem to be trying to do. The direction of the Alliance for Progress is toward social revolution in Latin America; the direction of our Dominican intervention is toward the suppression of revolutionary movements which are supported by Communists...Since just about every revolutionary movement is likely to attract Communist support, at least in the beginning, the approach followed in the Dominican Republic, if consistently pursued, must inevitably make us the enemy of all revolutions and therefore the ally of all the unpopular and corrupt oligarchies of the hemisphere...The decision to land thousands of marines on April 28 was based primarily on the fear of "another Cuba in Santo Domingo."²²⁰

To a degree Fulbright was correct in his criticism because the cause of democracy would be ill advanced by supporting dictators over reformers in order to combat communism. At the heart of the Kennan strategy of containment is an overriding problem; how do you establish a democracy while battling popularly backed communist groups and siding with dictators? Fulbright's criticism fell on deaf ears as members of Johnson's administration rejected the possibility of coexisting with communism. As Rusk so succinctly put it:

"In fact, if the United States subscribed to President Woodrow Wilson's somewhat holier-than-thou doctrine that dictatorships or any government coming to power through unconstitutional or illegal means shouldn't be recognized by the United States because they don't represent the expressed wishes of their own people, the United States would have found itself without relations with most Latin American countries."²²¹

Therefore, while Johnson did not want to be accused of gunboat diplomacy against the Dominican Republic, he realized that a communist takeover of another Caribbean nation could have taken place and therefore forged ahead despite the criticism.

Slowly the Johnson administration came to the realization that the problems within the Dominican armed forces, the economic destabilization, and the lack of qualified Dominican politicians had pushed most of the populace of Santo Domingo towards communism.²²² The Johnson administration realized that the Dominican Republic could only deal effectively with the communist problem when the rebels had laid down their arms, and stability could be restored.²²³ Because of this stance on the part of the Johnson administration, Bennett convinced Johnson that only military intervention could stop the bloodshed between the warring factions and restore

order to the Dominican Republic. No longer could the Johnson administration stay out of the Dominican Republic if it wanted to definitively thwart a communist influence. With the threat of U.S. military intervention, the Caamano leadership within the Dominican Republic made a firm agreement with the OAS to withdraw from the rebel movement, even though a small number of communist guerrillas still continued to fight.²²⁴

CHAPTER 12

THE U.S. INTERVENTION AND AFTERMATH

By the time the Johnson administration finally became convinced that failure to act would result in the Dominican Republic being taken over by revolutionaries, blood flowed freely between the two warring factions, and the rebels controlled most of Santo Domingo. It was now evident that Johnson had to act to find a quick and diminutive solution before the Dominican Republic slipped into the communist sphere. While the official stance declared that Johnson began acting to ensure the welfare of U.S. citizens, the administration hoped to return the Dominican Republic to representative government and change public opinion in the Western Hemisphere in favor of anti-communist intervention.²²⁵ With his decision made, LBJ announced publicly the operation and landed 400 marines in order to protect U.S. citizens still living in the Dominican Republic.²²⁶ This action seemed necessary since Bennett had already stated that the embassy had been fired on, and that rebels had fired upon the Embajador Hotel with machine guns where a number of U.S. citizens had sought refuge.²²⁷ Within the first hours of the arrival of the helicopter carrier *USS Boxer* on April 26th, and the landing of the first marines, 1000 refugees, mainly women and children, were ferried back to safety aboard the ship.²²⁸ The *Boxer* was not the only U.S. warship sent to the Dominican Republic on a humanitarian mission. The *USS Yancey*, located in San Juan, Puerto Rico also rushed to the Dominican Republic on the sixth day of the crisis and its crew rescued an additional 593 evacuees, including the ambassador's daughter and 16 nuns on April 28th, 1965.²²⁹ This set the principle (or guideline) that intervention in the Dominican Republic was foremost a peacekeeping mission for the U.S. forces.

With that accomplished, C-130 transports began landing over 2000 paratroopers from Fort Bragg in order to establish an international safety zone when the OAS granted

permission.²³⁰ Also, the Ready Amphibious Task Force and the Sixth Marine Expeditionary Unit, anchored off of the coast of Puerto Rico, began arriving in the Dominican Republic on April 29th. Within this task force the *USS Boxer*, an amphibious command ship, became the flagship of the U.S. forces.²³¹ This task force came to be known as Operation POWER PACK and it had three primary objectives. First, evacuate all non-military U.S. personnel; second, halt the Dominican rebels and restore order to Santo Domingo; and third, re-install a democratic government in the Dominican Republic.²³²



Figure 12.1 *USS Boxer*

The *Boxer* played a pivotal role in the evacuation of Santo Domingo and became responsible for delivering around 2,400 U.S. citizens to safety. The United States had approximately 6,000 Marines involved as well as Army airborne units and over 38 Navy ships.²³³ By May 2, more than 14,000 U.S. troops were in Santo Domingo and had made contact with Wessin's forces outside the city.²³⁴ By the height of the U.S. intervention, the total number of U.S. Marine, Army, and Navy manpower peaked at 23,850 soldiers, a number that soon dropped due to continued OAS involvement.²³⁵

After rescuing all evacuees and refugees trapped between the warring factions within Santo Domingo, the Marines of the 65th Expeditionary Unit and the Army soldiers of the 82nd Airborne began the difficult task of securing a safe zone and enforcing a cease-fire. They began by establishing a containment line around Ciudad Colonial in Santo Domingo.²³⁶ Entering the "Old Town" was not easy since it was a rebel stronghold and constant sniper fire harassed the marines. Rebels urged the Dominican people in Santo Domingo to receive the "Yankee invaders as enemies; all of our people should fire on Yankee invaders."²³⁷ Despite the flying

bullets from many rooftop snipers, the marines and soldiers completed their assignments of securing the U.S., Guatemalan, and Italian embassies; providing security for the CARE warehouse, U.S. Aid offices, the Colegio Santo Domingo, and the ambassador's residence; and finally securing the main supply route and the port.²³⁸ After this the marines established a number of checkpoints within the international security zone and removed all Dominican soldiers from the area. From there on out the military's main task was to provide security and enforce the cease-fire by manning a number of checkpoints and roadblocks throughout Santo Domingo.²³⁹ This was not an easy task since rebel forces still viewed the U.S. troops as their enemy and loyalist troops still sought to oust the rebel forces.

One of the biggest hurdles that U.S. troops encountered in the Dominican Republic was the requirement that they maintain neutrality in action. This was difficult to accomplish since the Johnson government was depending on the success of Balaguer and the loyalists led by Wessin y Wessin that supported him. The U.S. troops, however, had to restrict the effectiveness of the loyalist forces since they were part of the OAS force. The United States military forces went as far as "bottling up" the loyalist forces and restricting their use of the navy and aircraft all in the name of taking "an impartial course."²⁴⁰ In the eyes of the State Department and the Department of Defense, maintaining the cease-fire until an election could be held became vital. However this was not always easy since the rebel forces under Caamano did not always consider the U.S. troops as friendly. Caamano's forces and other rebel sympathizers violated the cease fire some 462 times against the 82nd airborne division, earning the moniker "unfriendly", whereas the U.S. forces never had documented cases of loyalist troops attacking U.S. soldiers.²⁴¹ The complete lack of fighting between U.S. soldiers and loyalist troops is partially due to the international security zones set up in rebel held territory, that the loyalists were mostly outside of the city, and because the marines often let the loyalists pass through their ranks freely. Despite the rebel attacks, the initial number one priority of the U.S. forces was protecting the civilian population against attack, especially against naval and air bombardment

by the better-armed loyalist forces.²⁴² As General Palmer of the 82nd Airborne pointed out, “there are innocent civilians involved... as long as the fighting continues death and bloodshed are being inflicted upon not only military troops but also innocent civilians who are caught in the middle of the terrible crisis.”²⁴³ Despite allegations to the contrary, many U.S. soldiers in the Dominican Republic considered their mission a humanitarian peace keeping operation.

However, the extent of U.S. intervention exceeded basic military actions. With uncertainty over the political future of the Dominican Republic rising, the State Department began to back Joaquín Balaguer because the remaining Dominican institutions supported him, including the armed forces and the Church.²⁴⁴ The problem with Balaguer was that he remained linked closely to the Trujillo regime and, not surprisingly, became unfavorable to the more progressive Dominican elements. Therefore his reinstatement could be used in anti-U.S. propaganda. But, by 1965 Balaguer seemed to be the only suitable candidate. In an internal memo Johnson revealed his disenchantment with Bosch and doubt over his character, decency, behavior, and integrity. He expressed deep misgivings about a possible Bosch return, and a fear that a reestablishment of a Bosch government would lead to disaster.²⁴⁵ Now the Johnson administration decided that Bosch was no longer capable of being a constructive force and that the winner of an eventual election should be someone capable of leading a government deemed acceptable by the United States.²⁴⁶



Figure 12.2 President Lyndon Johnson

It became increasingly evident to the Johnson administration that every step necessary to ensure the stability of the Dominican Republic and a pro-United States government must be

taken. For President Johnson this created an urgent realization that “the American Nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another communist government in the Western Hemisphere.”²⁴⁷ In short an international fiasco would not be tolerated on his watch. However this edict reminded many of the tendencies of Washington policy makers to oversimplify a situation in order to use policies like the Monroe Doctrine in the Caribbean.²⁴⁸ While the Johnson administration openly did all it could to ensure that the U.S. government and the OAS could be viewed as creating a climate fostering a democratic electoral process, this did not take place. The Johnson administration appeared to be working hand in hand with the OAS to ensure a fair and open campaign that even included the ousted Bosch.²⁴⁹ In reality the show of fair elections was an attempt to appease the many Dominicans who already thought the United States favored Balaguer winning the election. An exposure of an organized campaign to back Balaguer would have been damaging to U.S. goals.²⁵⁰ Therefore, despite State Department efforts to appear neutral in the upcoming Dominican presidential elections, a December 1965 CIA memo sheds light on the shocking reality.

In a concise and clearly worded memo, the acting director of the CIA, Richard Helms, outlined LBJ’s intentions. In a brief paragraph the director states:

Therefore, I want to reiterate, for the record, that the President told the Director and me on more than one occasion between May and mid-July, he expected the Agency to devote the necessary personnel and material resources in the Dominican Republic required to win the presidential election for the candidate favored by the United States Government. The President’s statements were unequivocal. He wants to win the election, and he expects the Agency to arrange for this to happen.²⁵¹

The CIA responded by putting together a committee working in the shadows to ensure that Balaguer would emerge the winner in what would appear to be an unhindered election. With the help of the CIA, the outcome of the 1966 presidential elections, despite the presence of OAS supervisors, was already in the bag. Balaguer would win. In a document from April 1966, concerning stability in the Dominican Republic, Secretary of State Dean Rusk states that Balaguer would probably provide the country with an abler group of administrators and have a

better working relationship with the military than Bosch.²⁵² The Johnson administration clearly deemed Bosch incapable of keeping communism out of the Dominican Republic and maintaining stability. Johnson spoke in some detail regarding his change of view when it came to the Bosch presidency. Having once been in favor of Bosch, Johnson indicated that he had become thoroughly disenchanted with him.²⁵³ Clandestinely and militarily, the Johnson administration had prevented Bosch from being reelected, reinstated Balaguer, and brought order to the nation with only 8 deaths among U.S. soldiers.²⁵⁴ Balaguer remained in power for the next twelve years. Finally, in 1978, the Dominican people elected Dr. Antonio Guzman of the PRD and President Jimmy Carter supported the election results. Despite opposition from the military and Balaguer, once again another joint U.S. and OAS venture maintained democracy, this time under President Carter.²⁵⁵



Figure 12.3 The OAS

From the Latin American and U.S. perspectives, the primary security concern of the OAS was to protect the independence of its member states from foreign coercion or control.²⁵⁶ The OAS provided the US with an international body that it could exert influence over to keep out European and Russian influence and stop Latin American countries from controlling their neighbors. The OAS, in this case, also acted as an anti-dictatorial alliance by helping the United States crush the Trujillo era and presumably head off a communist threat.²⁵⁷ When Johnson finally decided to get the OAS involved, it may also have been due to the fact that the Soviet Union had formally requested a meeting of the UN Security Council in order to determine the legality of Johnson's intervention.²⁵⁸ However, by getting the OAS involved, the Johnson

administration managed to keep the incident within the realm of U.S. influence, avoid worldwide involvement, and limit international criticism.

The OAS was formally created with the signing of the Charter of the American States in Bogotá, Colombia in December 1951,²⁵⁹ to establish an International Union of American Republics. The mission of the OAS was to foster “an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.”²⁶⁰ This made the OAS a quasi NATO for Latin America since it constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the hemisphere. Made up of 35 member states it contains every nation in the Western Hemisphere (Cuba was voted out in 1962 but has since been reinstated) and therefore a resolution passed by the OAS is significant.²⁶¹ When the OAS intervened in 1965 both Col. Caamaño of the rebels and General Imbert of the loyalists were pleased with the regional presence and pledged their support.²⁶² The OAS commission immediately went to work interviewing and taking complaints from those most affected by the civil war and acting on behalf of political prisoners of both sides.²⁶³ As the OAS commission traversed the Dominican Republic its involvement lent credence to the Johnson administration’s claims that the intervention had always been a humanitarian effort.

The first part of the OAS contribution involved stationing its troops into the Dominican Republic in order to replace of U.S. military forces. In fact, as soon as the U.S. military stabilized the Dominican situation, Johnson publicly downplayed the military action and sought assistance from the OAS.²⁶⁴ The Johnson administration realized that if the conflict continued, support within the United States would turn sour. The international community also began to doubt the outcome of the U.S. intervention; a number of countries campaigned for UN intervention into the crisis. The Johnson administration sought to avoid UN intervention since the OAS would be easier to control and sympathized with U.S. goals.²⁶⁵ The OAS was a good choice for President Johnson since the commission would be made up of Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras, and Nicaragua, all of which were controlled by pro-U.S. dictators.²⁶⁶ Most importantly, the State

department investigations revealed that OAS monitored elections would be acceptable to the Bosch/Camaano factions, meet U.S. requirements, and attract more conservative elements of the Dominican body politic.²⁶⁷ The rural population had become weary of the fighting in the capitol and sought a resolution. There was a significant segment of the Dominican population that had stayed out of the fight, and the State Department worried that if a positive democratic outcome was not achieved, the unrest would spread outside of the capital.²⁶⁸ Therefore, the Johnson administration concluded that the only way to break the present political impasse and restore harmony would be to allow the people to decide for themselves through seemingly free and open elections supervised directly by the OAS, to add legitimacy. This plan would hopefully attract broad support in the Dominican Republic as well as the international community.²⁶⁹ Ambassador Bennett became particularly impatient to involve the OAS and begin the provisional elections since numerous UN representatives vigorously opposed U.S. efforts and he believed UN intervention would soon go beyond "comfortable levels".²⁷⁰

On June 18, 1965 the OAS Ad Hoc Committee met in Washington at the Pan American Union, the general secretariat of the OAS, and developed a solution to the Dominican crises. The committee suggested that presidential and congressional elections should be held as soon as possible with an OAS advisory commission to oversee the electoral process.²⁷¹ The OAS meanwhile selected a number of ambassadors from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, and Guatemala to go to the Dominican Republic as a peace committee.²⁷² However, OAS action did not come easily. Only after a bitter debate in which Mexico, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela dissented did the OAS vote to form an Inter-American peace force.²⁷³ However, this Inter-American peace force eventually became highly successful and well regarded in Latin America since it made the situation a multilateral peace keeping mission. In addition to continental military forces, OAS ambassadors from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Panama arrived in Santo Domingo.²⁷⁴

The South American and Caribbean presence in the Dominican Republic cannot be considered immense. The United States military bore the brunt of the fighting and supplied the most troops. With almost 24,000 Marines, soldiers, and paratroopers, the U.S. presence dominated the OAS forces. The significance is that almost every Latin American country sent some type of force to augment the United States' presence. To Johnson and the State Department, this commitment became crucial; critics could not claim this was unilateral or that no international cooperation or consent existed. The OAS presence also negated UN objections, something that Johnson wanted to avoid.

The following contributions provide an idea of the scope of Latin American involvement: Bolivia sent doctors and medical aid; Brazil sent a contingent force of 900 soldiers; Chile could not send troops but sent relief supplies; Colombia promised a military unit; Costa Rica sent a "symbolic" force; El Salvador also sent a military unit; Guatemala sent a rifle unit; Nicaragua sent a small contingent of troops; Panama sent nurses and doctors; Paraguay sent military forces once a majority of Latin American countries committed; Uruguay would not send troops but sent medicine and food; finally, Venezuela and Ecuador also provided moral support by showing their flags.²⁷⁵ Mexico remained aloof from the fray, strongly opposing any action interfering in Dominican affairs. Finally Haiti, despite wanting to get involved, and possibly influence their neighbor's affairs, could not join the list of OAS countries involved due to the ongoing conflict within the Dominican Republic.²⁷⁶ Though perhaps small, or even merely symbolic, this long list of international contributions lent the air of legitimacy necessary for such an operation. Interestingly George W. Bush attempted to mirror LBJ's actions by gathering a powerful international coalition against Iraq in 2003. By far the greatest support for the U.S. intervention into the Dominican Republic came from Brazil. Acting as a counterweight to Mexico's criticism, the Brazilian government was an outspoken proponent for OAS action. Highlighting the importance of Brazil's help, a memo sent by President Johnson contains a handwritten note to personally thank the Brazilians for their support.²⁷⁷

The OAS presence within the electoral process and military operations gave an air of legitimacy to the United States' actions within the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, the fact that a number of member states participated meant that the operation was officially a joint Latin American and U.S. operation, sending a message that the Western Hemisphere was capable of acting multilaterally against instability and perceived communist threats. The success of the U.S. action internationally can be measured by the words of Brazilian ambassador to the OAS, Ilmar Penna Marinho, who stated that all five members of the OAS committee believed that U.S. intervention had saved the Dominican Republic from anarchy and communism.²⁷⁸ Clearly Johnson's decision to turn the Dominican Republic over to OAS supervision eliminated much of the stigma of a U.S. occupation. It also alleviated the burden of U.S. involvement and limited the effect of anti-imperialist communist propaganda.

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSION

The decision by the Johnson administration was and still is a controversial topic that encourages one to debate the validity of U.S. actions when dealing with a foreign nation's internal problems. Then, and today, the United States is increasingly faced with the tough decision of whether or not to interfere in the sovereignty of another country for the welfare of U.S. citizens and the benefit of U.S. policy. One cannot judge the actions of the Johnson administration on the grounds of whether or not the U.S. action taken was legally justifiable - a review of the facts brings one to conclude it probably was not. However, after taking into account the perspectives of President Johnson, the U.S. ambassadors, the U.S. military, the CIA, and the State Department, a majority of the U.S. population deemed the action taken by the Johnson administration necessary and proper at the time. As conservative historian Max Boot states. "American troops can stop the killing, end the chaos, create a breathing space, and establish the rule of law. What the inhabitants do then is up to them."²⁷⁹ In the Dominican Republic the U.S. intervention bought enough time to end a potentially destructive civil war.

The true nature of the communist threat in the Dominican Republic and Latin America may never be known. The documentation I have found has proven to be inconclusive on the exact size and nature of the communist threat. However, even if it was insignificant, as many have maintained, it still posed a viable threat to the stability of the Caribbean and U.S. foreign policy. In 1965 the Domino Theory had become widely adopted and a seemingly accurate model of communist expansion in the Third World, and especially in the Caribbean. From Saigon to Santo Domingo, the Johnson administration faced an increasingly difficult choice in terms of dealing with a groundswell of popular communist movements. While these mass communist movements were often only loosely connected to the Soviet Union, if at all, Castro

had already proven nationalistic communism far harder to contain than Soviet ambitions. Furthermore, nationalistic movements that sprang up far from the Soviet sphere of influence would prove very hard to quash through simple brute force. A case in point is Vietnam where U.S. involvement utterly failed to sustain a regime sympathetic to U.S. interests. Overwhelming use of military force could too easily turn the population against the U.S.; therefore, the Dominican situation called for a high degree of finesse, carefully applied international support, and a measured use of military force.

Invading a sovereign ally under a weak pretense, having the CIA rig an election in order to oust a democratically elected president, and using the OAS as cover to legitimize the entire situation is in no way morally justifiable, but for the Johnsons administration it became the best course of action at the time. U.S. intervention ended a potential communist revolution from engulfing the Dominican Republic – an event that could have spread to other Latin American nations and established a larger communist foothold within the Western Hemisphere. It also diffused a tumultuous situation and saved the lives of Dominicans and Americans living in Santo Domingo. Furthermore it cut short the ambitions of the older Dominican generals and kept the country from falling into another dictatorship. Certainly if the Dominican Republic had once again become a military dictatorship a wide spread popular revolution seemed inevitable, and past events had shown such revolutions were easy targets for communist infiltration.

In the end, while the CIA did manipulate the elections of 1966, the voting provided a solid footing through which the Dominican people could slowly but steadily work toward a more stable democracy free from the ghost of Trujillo and the threat of communism. One then must ask whether or not the actions taken are justified by the end results. Is it acceptable for one nation to meddle in the affairs of another in order to restore order and avert a course towards communism, civil war, or a military dictatorship? This question remains incredibly relevant today. Once again the United States is militarily involved in another country, trying to rebuild a nation after ousting a dictator. Here Johnson attempted to avert civil war, stop a perceived

communist force from gaining influence, and ultimately tried to cultivate the flower of democracy in unforgiving Caribbean soil. In conclusion, while there is little evidence to support the presence of a concentrated communist force, obviously Bosch and Caamano were not communists, the mindset of the Johnson administration during the height of the Cold War was enough to justify such fears. History had proven that even a small group of communist agitators could quickly sway public opinion against the United States, a result that the Johnson administration could ill afford.

I have also found through my research that the Johnson administrations decision to incorporate the OAS and orchestrate a seemingly uncorrupted election was a prescient answer to a difficult problem. The military intervention was enough to end the deadly street fighting that had enveloped Santo Domingo. However, had the occupation lasted too long both U.S. and Dominican popular opinion would have turned the situation into a military boondoggle. By acting quickly to co-opt the OAS and bring a presidential election to the Dominican Republic the Johnson administration had distanced itself as occupiers. It also allowed the peaceful assumption of power by a man who was acceptable to the U.S., the Dominican military, and even palatable to most of the Dominican people. Amazingly the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic encouraged a democracy where none had existed before denying communism any chance of another foothold within the Caribbean.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Cary Beshel has been a student on and off for the better part of two decades. It has taken quite a bit of time for him to finish his master's degree in history. In that time he has gotten married to a wonderful wife, had an amazing and intelligent child, who is now 3, and has changed careers twice. He is a member of the Phi Theta Alpha honors society at UTA and hopes to graduate Cum Laude. Cary has concentrated my research on Cold World U.S. and Latin American history since he enjoys delving into history that is still being written. He also loves Hispanic culture and its people and wants to explore in great detail Latin America and its dynamic with the United States. After earning his masters he wishes to go on and teach at the college level, eventually earning a doctoral degree.