

INTERVENTION IN SANTO DOMINGO

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LIBERATION

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"IT'S GETTING more and more uncomfortable to be an American." So said not a Red, not a radical, or a pacifist, not even a customary critic of United States foreign policies, but a simple TV news announcer, NBC's usually meek John Chancellor, as he concluded an hour-long, impartial look at the operations of the C.I.A. last May 4th. Any such look would, of course, show that the C.I.A. has been involved all over the world in immorality, subversion, aggression, and murder, and the NBC program, matter-of-factly entitled "The Science of Spying," did just that. And yet, on that day, the outrages perpetrated by the C.I.A. came across as rather mild. For by then the United States had already openly intervened in the internal affairs of the Dominican Republic, sending in the Marines for the first time in three decades. Their purpose, whatever the excuses issued in Washington and at the United Nations, was clearly to salvage a repressive but pro-U.S. regime. And to do it, the Marines slaughtered hundreds of innocent Dominicans. For the first time in modern history, the United States had become, unequivocally, the aggressor.

Those of us who oppose the war in Vietnam are in the habit of condemning the United States bombing raids there with equal verve. But the war in Vietnam does present many extenuating circumstances which give Washington at least some basis (erroneous in my view) for arguing that our involvement is purely defensive. We can, of course, rightly claim, with Senator Gruening, that "The President's policies are leading to a general war. He says he wants no wider war, but he is widening it all the time." But we cannot accuse President Johnson, or his predecessors, of having gone into Vietnam for purely selfish economic interests, as we can so accuse him in the case of the Dominican Republic. Nor can we be absolutely sure that the President wants to turn Vietnam into a United States colony, but we can be certain that such is his intention in the Dominican Republic. All it takes is a little review of history, a

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review that no newspaper in the United States has so far been willing to undertake.

Until 1916, the Dominican Republic was ruled by dictators who were corrupt, inefficient, and ruthless, but who lasted usually for only short periods. For 72 years, the country averaged a revolution every fifteen months and a new "president" every twenty months. Meanwhile, United States businessmen profited grandly, and easily managed to force the Dominican Republic to indent itself to the United States beyond all hope of repayment. Thus, when we demanded that the government allow us to supervise its finances (which no country in the world would accept) and it refused, we had an excellent justification to occupy the country. We did, from 1916 until 1930 with insignificant holiday reprieves. We trained the constabulary and educated its chief extremely well; he became more corrupt, more ruthless and more efficient than any previous dictator—so much, so, in fact, that he lasted almost 32 long years. His name was Rafael Leónidas Trujillo y Molina.

The incredible inhumanities perpetrated by Trujillo and his goons are too long, too ugly, and perhaps too well known to describe now. Suffice it to remember that even Laura Bergquist, a *Look* senior editor, could not refrain from writing about one monstrosity, despite the magazine's genteel "family" readership. "I still shudder," she wrote, "about Snowball, a dwarf—now jailed—whose specialty was biting off men's genitals." But Trujillo was "anti-Communist" and hence our friend. Even after the O.A.S. condemned him for trying to assassinate Venezuela's President Rómulo Betancourt, important members of our government and of our Congress not only defended Trujillo publicly but also supported his claim for a higher sugar quota. For example, on January 7, 1961, Marcos A. Peña, Trujillo's consul general in the United States, wrote Trujillo that North Carolina Democratic Representative and, at the time, Chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, Harold D. Cooley "reiterated to us his previous promise of working firmly in favor of our sugar."

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Nevertheless, opposition at home and throughout Latin America became too vociferous that year, and so, on May 30th, 1961, a C.I.A.-organized plot against Trujillo was put into operation. Trujillo was assassinated by a bunch of his own goons, including one of the most vicious military gangsters on Trujillo's payroll, Colonel (now General) Antonio Imbert Barreras. But lest the Dominican Republic take on a Leftist regime, Washington immediately tried to ensure a "gradual process of change." We were ready to accept an old Trujillo puppet named Joaquín Balaguer or Trujillo's son Ramfis or a military junta "in the hope," as the *New York Times* put it "that [one of them] could bloodlessly 'democratize' Trujillo-land." United States officials, complained Dr. Luis Baquero, a very moderate and pro-United States leader of the *Unión Cívica*, "were always trying to get us to settle for less, a Balaguer, a military coup, or Ramfis. We knew that a process of 'slow democratization' was impossible. We knew our people; they didn't."

After Trujillo

Finally, a seven-man Council that included General Imbert was set up as the government. It did nothing to control the armed forces or the police, both trained by and dedicated to Trujillo. Perhaps it couldn't; they were too strong. But the Council did schedule free elections for December 1962, did allow free speech (except for "extremists," of course, who were called *Los Tigres* and characterized as hooligans), and did refuse to sell to private firms Trujillo's former properties.

To the United States, disposition of Trujillo's former wealth was the crucial issue. Trujillo, who always got along well with United States corporations, had accumulated holdings valued as high as one billion dollars. According to the conservative estimates of Dow Jones' *National Observer* (which also owns *The Wall Street Journal*) this amounted to "60 per cent of the industry and 50 percent of the arable land." It was probably more, but even if not, it was enough to transform the Republic into a socialist state by default. With the dictator's property in government hands, Communists could not shout "Expropriate the land." And anti-Yankees could not raise the slogan "Expropriate United States monopolies."

There were, of course, some big United States holdings in the Dominican Republic, notably the South Puerto Rican Sugar Company, United Fruit's Granada Company, Standard Oil's subsidiaries, and the usual ill-functioning Telephone Company. But so long as the government owned 50 per cent (or more) of the arable land, on which it could carry out an agrarian reform, and 60 per cent (or more) of the industries, from which it could earn enough money to finance social welfare projects (under Trujillo, all these companies earned high profits), the Dominican Republic could indeed become, as President Kennedy hoped, a showcase of democracy in Latin America.

But neither the C.I.A. nor United States embassy officials, nor United States agitators sent in by secret societies, wanted it that way. Their pressure to force the Council to sell the former Trujillo holdings was tremendous. I remember one United States Embassy economic attaché telling me in 1962:

We consider this a test case. If the government is going to play to the masses without accepting fiscal responsibility then it will hold on to these holdings, and we will have to conclude that it is not seriously interested in democracy. If, on the other hand, it decides to sell its confiscated property, on open bidding, then it can expect the United States to back it up all the way.

Incredibly, the Council held out, refusing to sell that property. It did, however, sign with the United States an investment-guarantee treaty, by which the Dominican Republic gave the United States the right to impose its will on all Dominican policies pertaining to such investment. At that moment, this did not seem to matter too much, since United States investments in the Dominican Republic were relatively slight. But in an underdeveloped country the signing of such an agreement is always the beginning of the end of self-determination. Thus, the Dominican Republic became a United States colony, occupied as in 1916 by United States forces—dollars instead of Marines.

Such a statement deserves some explanation. Once a nation is fully developed, huge concentration of wealth in the hands of a few may be ethically and socially unjust, but it does not necessarily retard progress. The trusts can set up lobbies, finance elections, buy newspapers and radio stations to support their candidates. There is no doubt that big money can bulldoze through its candidate over others not so wealthy. But big money alone is not enough to win all the time—or to maintain an arrogant state of mind. The economics of overdeveloped countries produce enough of a monetary surplus so that even the funds of a limited minority can be used to help candidates opposed to Big Business, enough so to force all elected officials to keep public opinion in mind for their own interest (their reelection). No matter how hard it tries, Big Business cannot destroy our Constitution, organize, finance and arm internal revolutions, or give our land, factories, trade and reserves to a foreign power. In Latin America, Big Business can do all these things—and it has done them, many, many times.

The reason is simple: there are no countervailing forces to the rich. Except in a few of the larger countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Chile, the middle class is too small to be meaningful. Significantly, wherever the middle class does have some power, there is a history of nationalism and of policies independent of the United States. Chile was the first nation to have a Socialist president; Argentina and Brazil have both had popular anti-United States strongmen; and Mexicans, after winning their social revolution and fighting the United States Expeditionary Forces of General Pershing to a draw, have been able to force us to talk to them with some modicum of respect.

But even in these countries, and certainly in the rest of Latin America, the poor are outside the power-structure altogether. Workers are much too underpaid to keep up even with their own dues, and salary check-offs are unheard of in ninety-nine per cent of the unions. What's more, illiterates do not vote in most countries, and in Latin America, where illiteracy can be as high as 96 per cent (Haiti) but averages about 65 per cent, that means that there is no such thing as true democracy. In the last elections in Chile, for example, where the pendulum finally swung to the left, 8 out of 10 of those not voting because they were illiterate would probably have voted for the Socialist candidate, Salvador Allende—more than enough to have given him the Presidency.

Under such conditions, the rich rule. And in Latin America, the rich—and the foreign investors—are the local oligarchs. Of these foreign investors, Americans are the biggest.

Latin America's Gross National Product is about sixty billion dollars. United States private investment there is more than fifteen billion dollars, but it controls forty per cent of the G.N.P.—more than all Latin American budgets put together. United States companies invade every possible phase of the economies, and, as the *Readers' Digest's* Edward Tomlinson, who certainly cannot be accused of being anti-business, has written, these companies "dig out of the earth everything from gold and silver to the vitally important new alloys necessary to all the metal and metallurgical industries in the United States."

Since competition is non-existent or very limited, the big corporations in Latin America have set up operations in such a way as to develop huge particular industries without regard to the country's needs or to its internal balance. Many companies assemble cars, for example, but not one will ever build a factory capable of turning out cars from brute steel to finished product. Nor are they interested in using locally refined manufactured goods. These companies, therefore, do not generate industrialization. The big corporations are interested in profits, not development. Dartmouth Professor of Political Science Kalman Silvert has written:

Private enterprise, when operating within a system in which checks and balances of government and other competing groups are impossible, simply cannot be trusted to be moderate, unselfish, and farseeing. To ask an angelic role of American direct investors abroad without control is not only to plead for the impossible, but is also an unwarranted cession of the making of American foreign policy.

But in Latin America, foreign policy is made by private United States investors. Whenever a Perón, a Vargas, an Arbenz, a Goulart, an Arosemena, or a Juan Bosch raises his voice against private investors, or tries to control them, the investors' apparatus goes to work. Civilian committees for "the defense of democracy" are launched. The church is enlisted. The C.I.A. and the F.B.I. are called on for help. Nationalists are denounced as "Communists" (or, in the case of Vargas and early

Perón, who ruled while we were allied with Soviet Russia, as "Fascists"). And a coup or revolution—or now, an outright invasion—is engineered to overthrow them.

To United States businessmen, a nationalist is much more dangerous than a traditional Moscow-oriented Communist. The nationalist's sense of pride, of independence, of "Motherland" is much too emotional, uncompromising, and irrational. Venezuela's nationalists, for example, would expropriate the American oil companies even at the risk of a United States-imposed boycott and blockade, whereas the Communists would not, for, as Party chief Machado once said, "We cannot eat oil." That is why American businessmen, who often make compacts with local Communists, want all nationalists squashed. And United States policy in Latin America has, in fact, always squashed them.

There were some indications, however, that President Kennedy, after his Bay of Pigs fiasco, had finally learned that such a policy could only lead, eventually, to a Maoist sweep of Latin America. He therefore gave his full support to the Dominican Republic's moderately leftist and nationalist president, Juan Bosch, who was elected in December 1962. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress people also wanted to help Bosch. But they were naive. They did not understand that in Latin America, it is the private sector that rules, and private businessmen were determined to bring Bosch down.

Specifically, what United States and Dominican businessmen had against Bosch was not that he did not persecute Communists, not even that he refused to arrest them unless they were caught breaking the law. The businessmen hated him for his "Confiscation Law," which questioned all transfers of former Trujillo property. The Santo Domingo daily, *El Caribe*, once Trujillo's mouthpiece, fell under that law's scrutiny; the daily therefore increased its opposition to him. So did many industrialists who had profited under Trujillo.

Juan Bosch was an idealist. He had been a poet, a novelist, a teacher—that is, an honest man. And he was not corruptible in office. He stood by the Investment Guarantee treaty with the United States, but he did not sell the former holdings of Trujillo to private firms. Bosch also slowed down (to nineteen per cent of the banks' assets) loans to private businessmen, which had been fifty-nine per cent during 1962. And he tried to cut down the armed forces' budget, which, through official and unofficial channels, amounted to more than half of the government's total expenditures.

But Bosch was a weak man. He did not try to restrain the numerous agitators who flocked in from Florida and California with the express purpose of smearing him. Nor did he try to limit the military's power. And so, barely seven months after he had been inaugurated, Juan Bosch was overthrown by a military clique that had been bought by the private sector and was led by none other than old C.I.A. handyman, Gen. Imbert. Said Imbert with pride, as he arose triumphant: "We are turning the country into a rightist state."

And he did. He quickly jailed twenty thousand "extremists," ordered the police to search all "suspicious" homes (which they did after smothering them with teargas), then settled back behind a junta of civilian frontmen who did exactly as he told them. The junta was headed by Donald Reid Cabral, a car dealer and financier who believed in authoritarian rule as the basis for democracy. That was just fine with United States investors and their local collaborators. "Donny" Reid did everything he could to make them feel even better. He instituted "austerity measures" which the United States Embassy gleefully interpreted as "fiscal responsibility." He froze wages and freed prices, which naturally soared. And he smashed all strikes. Last year about this time, for example, he broke up a strike of eight thousand cab drivers by jailing eight hundred of them, completely ignoring their pleas, which were so simply put by cabbie José Beltrán: "We cannot eat with prices of rice and beans and plantains rising every week."

The Reid Program

But that's not all that Reid did. Last August, for example, he levied a fifteen per cent tax on all imported consumer goods, and in November, put on an additional fifty per cent tax on domestic consumption of imported beans, potatoes, onions, garlic; fresh, frozen, processed and salted meats; poultry—and four United States cents on each individual egg. This would have been bad enough were the Dominican Republic producing the food it needed to feed its people. But under the brilliant management of austerity-minded Reid, the country was so short of food that it had to import \$40 million worth in 1964 alone—for a population of less than 3.3 million.

Meanwhile, it was considered a crime against austerity to spend money for social welfare. In a country where infant deaths per 1,000 live-births had risen from 51 under Trujillo to 102.3 in 1964 (Latin American average is 56), the government allocated less than eight per cent of its budget for health, and that included the operating expenses (i.e. salaries) of the Secretariat of Health and Social Security. For housing, the Reid government, which even the *New York Times* praised for its sensible austerity program, spent exactly zero in 1964, though the Inter-American Development Bank, which adheres to the principles of austerity, estimated that by 1963 the housing shortage was 59,400 units in towns and 147,000 units in rural areas, adding: "Of the 592,000 housing units available, only half are considered to come up to average standards of adequacy."

But Reid was a great friend of the United States. He encouraged private investors to exploit iron ore and bauxite minerals (all of which are shipped out of the country, mostly by Alcoa). He handed out tax concessions by the truck loads. And he started giving away former Trujillo lands to those farmers who could develop them, i.e., the rich ones. The result of all these austerity measures, by which United States embassy officials judge whether a government is truly demo-

cratic, is that deficit payments increased, so did inflation—and so did the poverty of the poor. The United States tried to help with ninety million dollars a year. But dissatisfaction went unabated. Reid then said he would cancel the elections he himself had scheduled for September of 1965, and then made his fatal mistake. Strongly squeezed by deficits, he announced that he would trim some of the armed forces' budget, and tried to stop their favorite pastime—smuggling.

That did it. A few army officers rebelled and stormed the palace. Then, when they were counter-attacked by the loyalist troops of General Elías Wessin y Wessin and by the airforce, the rebel officers started giving out arms to the population. Thus, the rebellion against Reid became a popular revolution.

United States Ambassador William Tapley Bennett Jr., a Georgian whose father had been a top railroad executive, immediately saw Red. His first preoccupation was to get assurances for United States property, but then he cranked out the old "Communist takeover" clichés, a tactic that President Johnson seems to favor highly. Remember how Deputy Defense Secretary Cyrus Vance blamed the whole Panama riots on ten Castroite agents who "were identified by our own people" in 1963? Now, of course, no one, in or out of Washington, would seriously pretend that Communists had organized and controlled the anti-American riots; on the contrary, most correspondents are convinced that the outburst, generated by Canal Zone chauvinism, actually caught Panama's few Communists completely off guard. But the charge worked. It put pressure on conservatives everywhere, and the United States eventually weaseled out of the Panama incident with neither promises, nor commitments, nor even a healthy denunciation that stuck in our memories.

And so, now too, the United States fingered the Communists. And by the time it had to be specific—listing 53, then 54, finally 58 Communists, "pro-Communists" and "Castroites" (one of whom, at least, was in Paris, being interviewed by the press)—it was too late: we had used the Red smear to ship in our Marines and put down the people of Santo Domingo who wanted only one thing—the return of their freely-elected anti-Communist president, Juan Bosch.

Col. Francisco Caamaño Deñó, leader of the revolt, was even more anti-Communist than Bosch. He had proclaimed that "I will not tolerate dictatorships of the Left or Right." He had been trained in the United States, especially at the Marine training center of Quantico, Va. (where his proclaimed hero was General of the Army Douglas MacArthur). His father had been a Trujillo aide and general, and Caamaño himself was a wealthy practicing Catholic who had served Reid well as chief of the riot police—in which capacity he had constantly tangled with nationalists and "Reds." Nevertheless, the United States Embassy smeared him too, saying he was the "confidant" of leading Dominican Communists. Naturally, Washington refused to recognize him as provisional President, even though he was

chosen—as the Dominican constitution provides in the absence of a popularly elected President—by 17 of the 27 Senators and 41 of the 74 deputies. In fact, the United States claimed that the Dominican Republic was in a complete state of anarchy, justifying the need of United States Marines. And yet in the Organization of American States, the United States conveniently forgot about that anarchy, accepting Reid's representative as the legitimate Dominican delegate.

The O.A.S. decision to back the United States intervention, incidentally, was won by just the needed two-thirds. Interestingly, of the five opposed countries (Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru), only one—Ecuador—is not a democracy. Venezuela, which also has a form of democracy, abstained, despite the fact that it is plagued by "Castroite" guerrillas and would love to see all Latin American leftists deported to the moon. As for the 13 countries voting with the United States, nine are ruled by military dictatorships, two by entrenched oligarchies, and only two by democratically elected parties.

Irrespective of the vote of the O.A.S. (which does not and never has represented the people of Latin America), the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic is illegal. The O.A.S. charter (articles 15 and 17) prohibits any and all forms of intervention whatsoever. But in the United Nations, Ambassador Stevenson managed to find a loop-hole: "The emergency action," he said, was "not for the purpose of intervening in the affairs of the Dominican Republic . . . [but] to protect lives." Feeling, I imagine, that the slaughter perpetrated by the Marines might undermine such an argument, he added that the O.A.S. charter "did not preclude the use of armed forces for the humanitarian purpose of saving lives of foreigners." But that argument was exploded by the *New York Times* which reported that at the very beginning of the revolt, General Imbert "was flown on a United States helicopter to the *Boxer*, flagship of the United States Naval forces in the region, to be groomed for political leadership in case of the need." The *Times* added editorially a few days later:

American correspondents on the spot agree that General Imbert, now head of the junta, was chosen, groomed and put in by the Americans and is being kept in power by Americans.

Most of the so-called Communists and "pro-Communists" deftly "exposed" by Bennett and the C.I.A. are, of course, simply nationalists; but even if they were all die-hard Reds, then what? Caamaño's answer seems irrefutable:

How can you believe that 53 persons can dominate a nation where there are so many thousands of military men and where the military command and the people want only one thing: the return to constitutionality?

Obviously, the explanation for our intervention lies elsewhere, and how it came about was probably described accurately by Bosch's Dominican followers. They claimed to have intercepted a telephone call from loyalist General Elías Wessin y Wessin to the U.S. Em-

bassy. Wessin said that he "was defeated," but an Embassy officer told him to keep fighting and "order a heavy bombing early Wednesday [April 28] and be confident because Marines were arriving that day to support him."

If Bosch's explanation is not convincing enough, certainly the reports of C.B.S.'s correspondent Bert Quint should be, for what he saw also shows the United States to be the aggressor. Quint's telltale report was broadcast on the 7 pm news on May 7th, long after both sides had signed a cease-fire (which was initiated at Bosch's suggestion and the signing of which was witnessed by Ambassador Bennett). And yet, said Quint, the Marines were continuing to shoot down the Dominicans. "We didn't sign it, so we don't have to obey it," was the Marines' justification, as Quint heard it. Quint further reported that Wessin's forces were also firing; they took their orders, Quint said, from the Marines.

The Verdict Is Clear

Shattered are the intricate excuses, rejected are the pleas of innocence. The verdict is clear: the United States is guilty of aggression.

To President Johnson, this is not incompatible with American principles, as he sees them. What's more, those principles are going to apply to all hemisphere nations, whether they like it or not: "The American nations," he says, "cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western hemisphere." This is the Johnson Doctrine. It is, as Uruguay's ambassador to the United Nations puts it, "The Johnson Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine."

Who, according to this corollary, decides what constitutes a "Communist government?" From the definitions machinegunned into the poor bellies of the Dominicans, some hack Ambassador and Johnson himself. And by what criteria?

A few months ago, President Johnson defined his U.S. critics as "bellyachers." Now, his "Truth Team" declares them all to be "extremists." What's next?

President Johnson insists that he has at least one last justification: We don't want any more Munichs, he says. True enough, so he has us all commit our first Czechoslovakia.

Jean Daniel, the famous French reporter who greatly admired President Kennedy and was admired by him, has seen the true significance of our intervention, as it reflects upon each and everyone of us. He says:

To break the peaceful coexistence, to lose all listeners in the Third World, to discredit Liberalism, to slow up the movement of emancipation of the Communist states, to achieve the destruction of the Alliance for Progress, was not enough [for President Johnson]. There had to be added Santo Domingo. It happened and it was perhaps on that day that President John F. Kennedy was truly assassinated.

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