

## Dominican Episode

9 of 3/17/73

Can you imagine a trained, dedicated guerrilla slipping ashore to start a revolution, bringing with him documents linking him to the ruler's resident political opposition, and then being gunned down on an open highway? This is the Dominican Republic's version of the last days of Col. Francisco Caamano Deno, the officer who played a leading role in the effort to restore President Juan Bosch to power in 1965 after he had been overthrown by a coup. This effort was labeled "rebellion," chock-a-block with Communist potential, and this determination led Lyndon Johnson to intervene with 30,000 U.S. troops. As part of an American plan to put Humpty Dumpty back together again, Caamano was exiled to a diplomatic post in London. But he quit, apparently disillusioned by the failure of his faction to be reintroduced into the army as promised, and disappeared. Some said he was in Cuba—Santo Domingo says he slipped in from there before he was caught and killed. Others wonder if, possibly being already in custody, he was simply taken out and shot. Those at all familiar with Dominican ways will recognize how hard it is to know for sure.

Whatever the facts of the Caamano episode, one consequence of it is clear. The government of President Joaquin Balaguer took it as occasion to jail hundreds of the main opposition party, Bosch's PRD, and to close the universities as well. Bosch himself went into hiding; he emerged briefly the other day to urge his party to keep fighting for constitutional government. Party secretary general Jose Francisco Pena Gomez also went into hiding; he is the likeliest candidate to oppose Mr.

Balaguer, if the latter runs, in presidential elections scheduled next year. The uses to which the Balaguer forces have put their traditional army and police bases of support in the Caamano episode give a fair picture of the Dominican scene. To those who once hoped that the death of the dictator Trujillo in 1961 would clear the path to a political revitalization of the land he wasted, it is a dismal picture indeed.

To help the Dominican Republic after 1965, and perhaps also to calm protests and assuage guilt over the American intervention, the United States poured in upwards of \$400 million in aid; the figure last year was \$30 million. The benefits of this assistance to the desperately poor majority of the Dominican people are, unfortunately, a good bit more difficult to establish than the benefits to President Balaguer. The aid marks him as Washington's chosen instrument to bestow stability, if not social progress, upon the Dominican Republic. When he treats his political opposition as he does, therefore, it is the United States which many Dominicans identify with his rule. Senator William Fulbright (D-Ark.) has made the minimal and sensible proposal that, to break what ties remain between Washington and the security forces of the Dominican government, the U.S. military assistance advisory group and the A.I.D. public safety (police) program be completely ended. This would not produce political miracles in Santo Domingo but it would put some useful distance between the American government and the Dominican government's misuse of power.