

Dominican Republic

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Looking Forward



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The Roots of the Dominican Crisis

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The Roots of the Dominican Crisis

By Theodore Draper

WHEN DOMINICAN PRESIDENT Juan Bosch was overthrown in September 1963, President Kennedy publicly deplored the military coup, broke off diplomatic relations with the new self-appointed Dominican government, halted all economic and military aid, and withdrew U.S. personnel from Santo Domingo. Though diplomatic relations were re-established three months later, Bosch did not complain of the U.S. government's lack of sympathy. He recalled, on the contrary, that U.S. Ambassador John Bartlow Martin had offered to call for the U.S. carrier *Boxer* to deter the military conspirators. But Bosch did not wish to owe his political survival to a show of U.S. force in Dominican waters, and refused the offer.

On May 2 of the present crisis, President Johnson declared that the pro-Bosch uprising had begun as "a popular democratic revolution committed to democracy and social justice." He also said: "We hope to see a government freely chosen by the will of all the people." On May 3, the chief U.S. spokesman at the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, assured the world organization that the U.S. government had "never" considered Bosch's political party to be "extremist" and called attention to U.S. "cooperation" with Bosch's regime in 1963.

From all this it would seem that the general line of U.S. policy in the present crisis should have been quite clear—firm support of the man who headed the only government freely chosen by the will of the Dominican people in this century. The last thing one

would have expected, if words were deeds, was U.S. support of the militarists who overthrew him in 1963 and were fighting him two years later.

To understand how and why a mockery was made of everything the United States supposedly stood for, it is necessary to go back at least as far as Bosch's term of office and its immediate antecedents. The present crisis is, in essence, merely a continuation of the process which led to Bosch's overthrow. If the military coup of 1963 was a crude political swindle, as U.S. official policy statements have implicitly agreed, the military cabal to prevent Juan Bosch's return to power in 1965 was exactly the same thing.

Nothing has changed, not even the names.

In December 1962, Bosch's *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD) won an overwhelming electoral victory. But it was an unexpected victory, at least for his conservative opposition, the *Unión Cívica Nacional* (UCN), which could not reconcile itself to defeat. Bosch took office on February 27 the following year, and he learned of a plot to overthrow him on March 9, ten days later. Another coup was scheduled for April, a very serious one barely failed to come off in July, a third miscarried in August, and the successful one was perpetrated in September.

In the atmosphere of Santo Domingo, these conspiracies were known to Bosch almost as soon as they were hatched. When Bosch heard of the last one, he called the military leaders to his office and decided to force a showdown by demanding the dismissal of

one of the ringleaders. The officer he named was Colonel Elias Wessin y Wessin of the San Isidro Air Base outside the capital. In reply, the military made Bosch a prisoner in his own office for four days and then put him on a boat to the island of Guadeloupe, from which he quickly made his way to Puerto Rico. Less than two years later, Wessin y Wessin, now a Brigadier General, emerged as the leading military figure in the attack on the pro-Bosch forces.

Why was Bosch so vulnerable to the camarilla of generals and colonels at San Isidro? The question takes us close to the grandeur and fragility of Bosch's regime.

In the last years of the Trujillo dictatorship, the legendary tyrant no longer wholly trusted the regular police and Army to protect him. He tried to reinsure himself by adding tanks and infantry troops to the San Isidro Air Base under the command of his son, Ramfis. San Isidro thus became the military citadel of Trujilloism, and the commander of the tank corps, Colonel Wessin y Wessin, was one of the citadel's key chieftains.

When Bosch took office in February 1963, he inherited the old Trujillo armed forces intact. They continued to remain intact under Bosch because he knew that a much-needed purge of the top leadership would immediately trigger a military coup and plunge the country into civil war. He was determined to rule peacefully or not at all, and therefore deliberately took the calculated risk of leaving the Armed Forces alone. Thus Bosch survived in office seven months; otherwise, he might not have survived seven days or even seven hours.

Would a Communist or a Castroite have made such a decision? The very basis of Castro's power in 1959 had rested on the total destruction of the former Cuban Army and its replacement by the new "Rebel Army." Bosch did not have a "Rebel Army" at his disposal because he had taken power peacefully and democratically. He might have used his Presidential power to organize a "popular militia" or some form of personal military force. He refused to play this game because he made it clear at the outset that he would rather relinquish power than be forced by his enemies into adopting their own methods of rule.

Was this an evidence of his "weakness"? I do not happen to think so. Only a man of rare strength of character could have made such a compact with his conscience and remained true to it to the bitter end. But it is not the kind of strength that cynics of the Left or Right can understand. Above all, if it proves anything about him, it proves that Communist strategy and tactics are totally alien to him. The almost excruciating irony is the fact that, if he were more of a Communist, he might have held on to power more tenaciously.

BOSCH was also faced with another delicate problem. By the time he returned to the Dominican Republic in October 1961, after 24 years of exile, he had to reckon with the presence of other revolutionary groups of a far more extremist nature than his own.

The oldest of them was the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP), the old-line Communist party which had been organized in the early '40s. The Castroite influence was reflected in the formation of the *Movimiento 14 de Junio* (14th of June Movement) in 1959, when the old dictator was still alive. This group was made up largely of middle-class students and young professionals for whom Castro's 26th of July Movement was the model. It was followed by the *Movimiento Popular Dominicano* (MPD), which called itself "*marxista-leninista-fidelista*," before Castro and the Castroites were ready to avow their "Marxism-Leninism," and soon took on a Maoist coloration.

The PSP had, like most Communist parties, a checkered political past. For a time, in the mid-'40s, it had even entered into an alliance with Trujillo, and he rather than the Communists broke that alliance in 1947 when it no longer served his purposes. This short-lived collaboration later plagued the PSP as a somewhat different partnership with Batista in 1938-44 haunted the similarly-named Cuban Communists. After Trujillo's death, the PSP continued the policy of seeking power by working with or inside whatever groups seemed to have most power at the moment. As long as the conservative UCN was the most promising political force, the PSP gave it the benefit of its favors. Since its services were not rejected by the UCN, post-Trujillo Dominican politics was marked by some strange bed-fellows.

All three—PSP, 14th of June and MPD—considered themselves to be Communist groups. Each of them warred shrilly and incessantly against the others. The UCN was glad to accept the support of both the PSP and the 14th of June because the former furnished it with organizational cadres which it needed badly, and the latter gave it an opening to the radical youth. Since the UCN leaders later provided the main civilian cover for the military coup, they were truly in collusion with the Communists before they accused Bosch of having committed the same crime, which is why this part of the story is so curious.

Writing in *THE NEW LEADER* ("The Dominican Upheaval," May 10), Sam Halper, former head of *Time's* Caribbean Bureau, noted that the 14th of June's leader, Manuel Tavarez Justo, accompanied UCN representatives to Washington to plan the post-Trujillo government with the State Department. The pieces of the puzzle fit together neatly.

Meanwhile, Bosch and his party had to adapt themselves to these peculiar political alignments. They were

not, however, confronting this problem for the first time. In exile, the Communist PSP had long concentrated its fire on Bosch's PRD, and scarcely an issue of the Communist organ, then published in Guatemala, had failed to carry some sort of scurrility about Bosch or his chief associates. In Cuba, where Bosch had spent almost 20 years of his exile, Bosch had been associated politically with former President Prío Socarrás, the *bête noire* of the Cuban Communists, who had taken control of the Cuban labor movement away from them in 1947 and had even tried to shut down the official Communist organ, *Hoy*, in 1950. Not that Bosch necessarily approved of everything Prío did in power or that Prío later approved of everything that Bosch did in power. But after Bosch's overthrow in 1963, Prío said: "I know him well because he was at my side for 20 years. He's no Communist, and time will confirm it."

The political line adopted by Bosch after his return in 1961 was simple: complete independence and no entangling alliances. Since the PSP and the 14th of June were then working with the UCN against the PRD, the first two Communist groups did not constitute a problem. But the third one, the MPD, had tried to work inside Bosch's party. Before Bosch and the older PRD leaders had been able to get back in the country, the MPD had succeeded in entrenching itself in the PRD's youth section. As soon as the exile leadership was able to size up the situation, it disbanded the entire PRD youth section and thereby discouraged all further attempts at Communist infiltration of the party.

No one in Santo Domingo in his right mind would have thought of linking Bosch with Communism or Communists in the last months of 1961 or the first months of 1962. In fact, while other Dominican politicians opened their parties to one or the other Communist groups, Bosch seemed to have a positively quixotic, doctrinaire unwillingness to have anything to do with them. As long as Bosch and the PRD were not taken seriously as contenders for government power, the Communist issue simply did not arise.

But in 1962, the political alignments were reshuffled. As the conservative UCN began to groom itself to become the party in power, and as it sought to insure itself of U.S. support, it decided to sever its embarrassing ties with its Communist supporters. In January, it broke with the 14th of June Movement. In October, the UCN Executive Committee in Santo Domingo was rid of its Communists, and the resignations revealed that they had numbered no less than 18 out of 24. About two dozen well-known Communists were expelled from the country. By the end of the year, the UCN leaders decided to ride to power on an anti-Communist program. And it suddenly occurred to them that Bosch's party was catching up and they might not win.

It should be kept in mind that we are not dealing with a man who began his political career in 1962. Bosch had been active in politics, Cuban and Dominican, for over a quarter of a century. For most of those years, the Communists had abused and reviled him, as they had abused and reviled Bosch's friends, Luis Muñoz Marín of Puerto Rico and Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela. Anyone who wishes seriously to look into the question of Bosch and Communism cannot ignore or neglect decades of political formation and conviction.

The first attack on Bosch as a Communist came from a Jesuit priest, Lático García, just before the election of December 20, 1962. All the Communist groups had decided to boycott the election and were assailing Bosch's party furiously for taking part in the "electoral farce." Thus Bosch found himself in a cross-fire of contradictory calumnies. Padre García's campaign boomeranged. Bosch confronted him in a famous television debate and made a shambles of the Jesuit's equivocations. When the votes were counted in the election, which was supervised by the Organization of American States (and, therefore, one of the few undeniably honest elections ever held in Latin America), Bosch's party came out ahead with over 60 per cent of the total vote. In a country with a total population of only about three million, the PRD gained about 650,000 votes, and the UCN, its nearest rival, less than half as many. The PRD elected 22 Senators and 52 Deputies, the UCN only 4 Senators and 13 Deputies, and the other parties shared a handful of both.

IF THE OPPOSITION was right, an overwhelming majority of the Dominican electorate had knowingly voted for a Communist. This was the *reductio ad absurdum* of the malodorous anti-Bosch campaign.

The real Communists and Castroites, of course, knew better. It is enlightening to see what the Cuban press was saying about Bosch at this time. Here is how the official organ of the Cuban Armed Forces, *Verde Olivo* of December 30, 1962, commented on a threat made by Bosch to withdraw from the elections if the Communist charges persisted:

"The gesture of Bosch, whose adherence to the policy of the United States, as well as his anti-Communist position, are most notorious, was interpreted in two ways: either as a last-minute act to enable his chief rival, Viriato Fiallo [the UCN candidate], whom the U.S. Embassy and the reactionary clergy support, to gain the victory in the electoral farce, or as a reflection of the pressure exerted by the masses of people so that he should not participate in the electoral trickery. A number of democratic [*sic*] organizations, as is known, have denounced the electoral farce and have appealed to the people not to take part in the elections."

When Bosch made a trip to Washington after the election, another Cuban magazine, *Bohemia*, of January 4, 1963, wrote: "Juan Bosch is propping himself up in the United States, personally affirming his submission to the White House, where he has solicited the blessings of Kennedy." *Bohemia* of January 11, 1963, scoffed at the "electoral farce, which was so completely within the inter-American system that whichever of the candidates were elected counted in advance on good terms with Washington. Viriato Fiallo and Juan Bosch wear the livery of lackeys with exactly the same aptitude and ease." *Verde Oliva* of February 17, 1963, published a photograph of Bosch under which appeared the following words: "Juan Bosch is the candidate chosen by Yankee imperialism to check the growing liberation movement of the Dominican people which surged forward after the assassination of the dictator Trujillo." *Bohemia* of March 29, 1963, ran another photograph of Bosch, this time embracing Vice President Johnson, who was President Kennedy's chief representative at Bosch's inauguration. The accompanying caption read: "HE IS ONE OF US: This is what Yankee Vice President Lyndon Johnson appears to be saying as he was embraced by the new puppet of Uncle Sam, the slippery Juan Bosch of Santo Domingo."

(One wonders whether this Bosch-Johnson photograph will not be used one day to prove that Lyndon Johnson was the puppet of Uncle Juan. Stranger things have happened.)

Denounced by reactionaries as an "agent of Moscow" and by the Communists-Castroites as an "agent of Yankee imperialism," Bosch took office on February 27, 1963. The task before him seemed almost insuperable. He knew that the Armed Forces were plotting against him as soon as the election had been decided. He has said that he was aware of only one priest who was opposed to the conspiracies against him. The business interests had almost universally backed the conservative UCN. The middle-class youth and students were for the most part infected with Castroism. The press remained exactly the same as it had been under Trujillo. The civilian bureaucracy was virtually unchanged. Bosch's immediate predecessors, now among the most rabid anti-Communists in the country, had put Communists in key positions in various government agencies, the trade unions and elsewhere.

On the other hand, a popular landslide had put Bosch in power. For the first time in Dominican history, the "masses" had become an active political force, and they were massively behind Bosch. The U.S. Ambassador, John Bartlow Martin, and the head of the Alliance for Progress program in the Dominican Republic, Newell F. Williams, were among Bosch's most ardent supporters. In his recent book on the 1963 crisis, Bosch has written: "In truth, Martin and Wil-

liams did not appear to be agents of the U.S. government but rather two Dominicans as anxious as the best of Dominicans to accomplish the impossible for us."¹

Bosch handled the Communist problem on the same principles that he applied to the military problem. Since the former has become uppermost in the present crisis, I am going to pursue it, for lack of space and time, to the exclusion of other important aspects of his regime.

In effect, Bosch refused to govern by the use of any other force than moral force, which was about all he had anyway. During the 31 years of Trujillo's reign of terror, anyone whom the tyrant had wished to destroy had been indiscriminately labeled a Communist, and Bosch himself had been one of the chief victims. Now he was determined to inaugurate an era of peace, tolerance, social reform and constitutional democracy. He ruled out, as beyond both his principles and his power, any course of action which risked incipient or outright civil war, whether by moving against the Armed Forces, carrying out a mass purge of Trujillistas, or conducting a repressive campaign against the Communists. In the crisis of July 1963, he actually told the seditious Army officers that he could not govern the country if they persisted in demanding repressive measures because "I did not return here to shed blood."

As we have seen, Bosch was accused of being a Communist, or little better than one, before he assumed power, and so the origin of the charge has little or nothing to do with anything he did in power. It is also untrue that once in power Bosch refused to make his views on Communism clear, though it must have been distasteful for a man whom the Communists had vilified most of his life to plead innocence of Communism. Only a few days after he had assumed office, one of the disappointed politicians, Horacio Julio Ornes, President of the *Partido Vanguardia Revolucionaria*, which had been particularly badly beaten in the elections, came out with a charge that Bosch was planning a program of "Communist indoctrination" in the Armed Forces. If Bosch had any such ideas, the Armed Forces would have been the last on his list of suitable places to try them out; the story, duly published in the Dominican press, was merely a sample of the utterly unscrupulous slander that Bosch was up against from the outset. Nevertheless, at an Army ceremony, Bosch soon found an occasion to say that he considered the choice before Latin America to be "one thing only and very clear: democracy or Communism. And Communism means death, war, destruction, and

1. Juan Bosch, *Crisis de la Democracia de América en la República Dominicana* (Mexico: Centro de Estudios y Documentación, 1964), p. 155. This book, to be entitled *The Unfinished Experiment: Democracy in the Dominican Republic*, is scheduled for publication in English next fall by Frederick A. Praeger, Inc.

the loss of all our blessings." (*La Nación*, Santo Domingo, March 13, 1963).

None of this helped, of course. The campaign of defamation went on; if he was not called a Communist or a "Communist agent," he was accused of permitting or encouraging "Communist infiltration" of the government. The UCN leader, Dr. Viriato A. Fiallo, raised a storm by declaring publicly that Communists were occupying "key posts" in the government. Bosch dared him to name them; Fiallo refused to accept the challenge. An enterprising reporter who frequently writes in these pages and was then with the *San Juan Star* of Puerto Rico, Norman Gall, soon examined a list of Dominicans who went to Cuba for the 26th of July celebration in 1963. In the *Star* of August 1, he did name names, and most of them turned out to have held leading positions in Fiallo's UCN until the previous October. Not a single one had ever belonged to Bosch's party.

Bosch took some practical steps to cut down Communist influence. Whereas a Communist-led trade union movement had been formed in 1961, when the Communists had enjoyed the patronage of Fiallo's UCN, a "free" trade union center, affiliated with the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (which includes the AFL-CIO), was set up. Bosch broke the hold of the Communists on the electrical workers, the government employes and other unions. And in order to get around Communist entrenchment in the economic planning board, Bosch turned over most of the state planning activities to a private organization, *Centro Interamericano de Estudios Sociales* (CIOES), supported mainly by U.S. foundations and headed by a Rumanian-born personal adviser, Sacha Volman. Scholarships for Dominicans to study in Soviet Russia and other Communist countries, through the United Nations, were prohibited.

But Bosch refused to be pushed into unnecessary and provocative reprisals. The pre-Bosch government, for example, had rented a school building to a well-known Communist leader, Dato Pagán, for an "educational" center. When Bosch came in, a campaign was whipped up to make him evict Pagán and close down the center. Bosch opposed hastily breaking the existing contract and recommended taking back the school at the start of the school season on the reasonable ground that the Ministry of Education needed all its buildings for its own use. Yet, as the story was told in the United States after Bosch's overthrow, he had refused to close down "an out-and-out school for Communists held in the classrooms of a Santo Domingo public school" (Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *New York Herald Tribune*, October 7, 1963).

IN ONE RESPECT, however, Bosch's enemies and critics were right. He held out unyieldingly against

making martyrs of the local Communists. He turned his face sternly against all methods of repression and coercion as long as the Communists behaved within the law. He permitted the newly exiled Communists to return. He believed passionately that the worst way to handle the Communist problem in the Dominican Republic was through a policy of suppression.

For one thing, he did not think that the choice was between having and not having Communists in the Dominican Republic. The real choice was between having them in the open or underground, making political propaganda or waging guerrilla warfare. The experience of Venezuela disquieted him. "In our countries," he said on March 24, 1963, "any attempt to suppress the native Communists by direct persecution only succeeds in turning them into guerrillas and terrorists, as has occurred in Venezuela." It was, then, up to the Communists to choose to be guerrillas and terrorists, not for him to turn them into guerrillas and terrorists if he could help it. In any case, he could only have suppressed the Communists by making himself a prisoner of the Armed Forces, the same Armed Forces with which Trujillo had suppressed all those whom he had pleased to call Communists. The anti-Communist campaign, as it unfolded, was a not-too-subtle stratagem not only to make Bosch betray his principles but to commit political suicide.

Moreover, the Dominican Communists were just then fighting each other as hard as they were fighting everyone else. In 1963, during Bosch's term of office, the split in the Communist world had reached the point of open, escalating hostilities, and it was reflected in the internecine struggles of the Dominican Communist groups. In the middle of that year, Tavarez Justo carried out a purge of both "moderates" and old-line Communists in his 14th of June Movement. An indiscriminate campaign of anti-Communist repression would only have solved the Communists' internal problems, driven them into each other's arms, and given the repressive agencies of the state the delicate responsibility of deciding who was and who was not a Communist.

But these practical considerations were not the main ones in Bosch's mind. He was primarily concerned with the problem of the middle-class youth who, as he put it in his latest book, "initiate and direct Latin American revolutions." In the Dominican Republic as elsewhere, their heads had been turned by the success of Castroism. Bosch himself did not feel that he could influence them personally; he mentions that he did not make a single visit to the University during his term of office. One reason for his estrangement, he sensed, was social; he was born into a poor family in a small town and was largely self-educated. Though he had won recognition as one of Latin America's foremost men of letters, he could never, even in power.

cross over to the other side of the tracks. Paradoxically, the radical youth and the conservative adults came from the same social class, often from the same families, and Bosch, the exile, came home to become—for both of them—Bosch, the outsider.

Yet Bosch had lived long enough in Cuba to understand something of the new revolutionary wave. He had not left Cuba until April 1958, eight months before Batista's downfall, and he had watched at close range as a constitutional government had been overthrown by a military coup and a military coup had drawn an entire generation into revolutionary terrorism and guerrilla warfare in the name of restoring constitutional government. Like two sides of the same coin, Batista and Castro had been related to each other, repression feeding on revolution and vice versa. In the Dominican Republic, these same forces were itching to break loose, to gain strength by devouring each other. Instead of Batista, there was no longer the far more evil and monstrous figure of Trujillo; there was only all that Trujillo had created and left behind. Instead of Castro, there were inexperienced and untried youths yearning to prove that the "violent way" was the right and only road to revolution.

Bosch and his movement interposed themselves between these two forces. Just as Bosch abhorred the living symbols of Trujilloism, so he rejected what Castroism had become, and yet he had to live with both in order not to be destroyed by both. In his book, he tells how he was living in Venezuela and his family was still living in Cuba at the beginning of 1959, when Castro came to power. His family wanted him to return to Cuba, but after watching the course of the Castro regime from afar for only three months, he decided in March of that year to bring his family to Venezuela rather than hold a reunion in Cuba.

What disturbed Bosch was not that he felt Castro had immediately set out to make a Communist revolution; he rather disapproved for the reason that Castro failed to take those measures which Bosch considered indispensable for a democratic revolution. And when Castro publicly declared that he was a "Marxist-Leninist" in December 1961, and had been moving in that direction in the very years that he had claimed to be a constitutional democrat, Bosch realized that Castro had become a "Typhoid Mary" of the democratic revolution in Latin America. Bosch's reflections on this score are so revealing of his own problem in the Dominican Republic that they are worth quoting:

"With this declaration [of December 2, 1961] Fidel Castro, who had been the leader of a fervently popular democratic revolution, engraved in red one single word, 'Communist,' on every attempt to make a democratic revolution for a long time to come. It is hazardous to say whether he did so consciously or un-

consciously, but there can be no doubt that by doing so he rendered an incalculable service to the cause of world Communism, since after his declaration it became virtually and even totally impossible to make a democratic revolution in this part of the world, and without a democratic revolution in Latin America there is no way out. The Latin American revolution, which is inevitable even if it takes 15, 20 or 25 years, should not be Communist, but the fear of the democratic revolution will make it sooner or later fall into the pattern of a Communist revolution."

In another passage, Bosch adds prophetically:

"Anyone who does not demonstrate in a satisfactory manner that he respects and will continue to respect the established order in Latin America, that he will not touch a single hair on the head of the vested interests, and that, on the contrary, he will dedicate himself to defend them with body and soul, night and day, is transmuted into and suspected of being a secret Communist. A chorus of voices all over the Continent accuses him of being an agent of Moscow and of Fidel Castro. The pressure raised everywhere in response to this accusation is of such a defamatory nature that few can suffer it calmly. But there is an answer to this accusation: When the youth of Latin America becomes indignant at the injustice committed against honest democratic leaders, they react by shifting toward Communism. If the accusation comes from the most hated circles in the Hemisphere, the youth respond to it by taking a position against the accusers at precisely the opposite extreme. And so, day after day, the most audacious young people in Latin America, led by those from the upper and middle strata of the middle class, have been swelling the Communist ranks in all our countries."

IN THE Dominican Republic, the hardened, experienced, old-time Communists were relatively few. The greater danger came from the more amorphous, smoldering underground of existing and potential Castroite sympathizers. In 1962, the State Department's intelligence report, *World Strength of the Communist Party Organizations*, wrote off the total Communist strength in the Dominican Republic as "negligible." The 1964 edition of the same report, issued after Bosch's overthrow, noted that only the Castroite 14th of June Movement "is reputed to have a mass following." This report stated: "Pro-Communist influence has been found among some university and secondary students, in a small segment of organized labor and, to a limited degree, among young professionals." This rather sober assessment hardly suggests that the Communists in 1962-63 had found a way to gain the mass strength needed to make a bid for power.

In its formative and early stages, Castroism does not say that constitutional, democratic reform is unde-

sirable; it says that such reform is impossible. That is why all variety of Dominican Communists, including the Castroites, considered the election of December 1962 to be a "farce" and refused to take part in it. That a free, honest election was possible, that a dark-horse candidate like Bosch could come from behind to win it overwhelmingly, and that he could even gain the support of the United States—these indisputable facts constituted a defeat for Castroism in its deepest political essence and broadest popular appeal. The idea that a Communist takeover of the Dominican Republic was threatened by the "infiltration" of a few individual Communists in mythical "key positions" in Bosch's government derives from an obsessively conspiratorial understanding of traditional Communism and an utterly grotesque misunderstanding of Castroism. If the Cuban experience proved anything, it proved that without a Batista there would have been no Castro. And where there is no Batista, the Castroites have to invent one or live for the day when a reasonable facsimile gives them the right to say "I told you so" by making his appearance.

The real Castroites always understood that Bosch had put up a constitutional wall between them and a successful struggle for power. The 14th of June leader, Tavarez Justo, continued to attack Bosch after the election because Bosch would not attack the United States, just as the reactionaries continued to attack him because Bosch would not illegally repress the Communists. The Cuban organ, *Bohemia*, of May 10, 1963, wrote: "Of course, Bosch's regime is least suspected of sympathy for the Cuban revolution." At the same time, Bosch refused to permit the Dominican Republic to become a center of anti-Castro exile activity or to make anti-Castroism a divisive issue at home. As a result, the anti-Castro exile leaders from Left to Right, with few exceptions, covered themselves with ignominy by applauding and justifying the military coup which overthrew him.

That military coup of September 1963 was a disaster; the propaganda that accompanied it was a disgrace. And it was no less a disaster and disgrace for the U.S. than for the Dominican Republic.

The anti-Bosch propaganda played variations on two themes. The main one was the charge of "Communist infiltration" of his government. The minor one accused him of such crimes as "stubbornness," "vanity," and "incompetence," especially the latter.

The "infiltration" charge proved to be a grim farce. Only one name was ever offered to back it up. It happened to be that of Sacha Volman, the director of CIDES, who was quickly hustled out of the country. It also happened that Volman had been, for years, a well-known anti-Communist whom Bosch had met in 1957 in Costa Rica at the Institute of Political Education, a training school set up with U.S. encouragement

to give the Communists some sophisticated political competition in Latin America. More recently, Volman has been secretary of the Institute of International Labor Research in New York City. Its chairman is Norman Thomas and its board of directors includes some of the most knowledgeable anti-Communists in the United States. Yet, incredibly, Volman was the *pièce de résistance* of the whole case that Bosch had been responsible for Communist "infiltration" in high places. Countless news stories and editorials in the U.S. press repeated this word as if it were a superstitious incantation that was self-explanatory and self-enforcing.

I know that some of Bosch's friends and admirers did not consider him, as one of them put it at the time, "the world's greatest public administrator." Bosch was no more the ideal bureaucratic executive than is Charles de Gaulle; he was, above all, an inspirational force and a national conscience. But even a good bureaucrat needs a good bureaucracy, and Bosch had inherited one of the weakest and worst in Latin America, which is saying a good deal. In any case, if "efficiency" or "competence" or other personal characteristics are made the test of a democratic leader's right to remain in power, and his own opposition is given the privilege of deciding his fate according to such criteria, few if any democratic regimes could survive very long. Bosch was elected for four years, not for a lifetime, and the democratic process gives the electorate the right to decide on the relative "competence" of candidates for office. Bosch was given only seven months to clean up the political stable left to him; and he had to live with the threat of a coup before he was able to get started and there could be any test of his competence. If the same rules had applied in the United States, John F. Kennedy would have been through in April 1961, but Kennedy went on to learn and grow.

One would imagine that journalists and editorialists in the United States would consider it almost degrading to have to be told such things. Yet it is necessary. The U.S. press was full of precisely such apologetics for the coup, with or without the Communist theme.² And the same leering references to Bosch's alleged "incompetence" began to reappear in the past month to "explain" why the United States did not want him back in power.

ONLY THE Communist issue, however, could provide any serious political cover for the coup. For if Bosch were really turning over the Dominican Republic to the Communists, he could be held responsible for betraying the democratic order, and his enemies

2. A typical example: "Bosch is accused of many things, including stubbornness, vanity, failure to halt Communist infiltration of his government. But the most damning indictment against him appears to be plain incompetence" (New York World Telegram, September 26, 1963).

could appear to be saving the country, if not for democracy, at least from Communism.

A peculiar role was played by some U.S. journalists in the months before the 1963 coup. Of one of them, Bosch has written: "There was a U.S. journalist, no less than a Pulitzer Prize winner, who dedicated all his energies to calling the government headed by me Communist. For seven months, he devoted his life to the task of destroying a democracy. He went so far as to say that CIDES, an institution established expressly to mold the democratic conscience in the Dominican Republic, had trained no fewer than 17,000 Communist guerrillas."

This writer, Hal Hendrix, was able to give the Scripps-Howard Newspapers a scoop on the coming military coup 24 hours before it happened. The last words of this communiqué may seem familiar to readers of recent Dominican reports and editorials: "Whatever develops in the next few months, the U.S. has made it plain that it will not let the Communists gain control in Santo Domingo. High ranking officials have stated emphatically there will not be another Cuba in the Caribbean" (New York *World Telegram*, September 24, 1963).

That night, Bosch received a telephone call from Rafael Molina Morillo, then executive editor of *El Caribe*, one of the most virulent of the anti-Bosch newspapers in Santo Domingo, published by a brother of Horacio Ornes, the politician. As Molina Morillo later told the story, he informed the President that *El Caribe* had received the text of Hendrix's sensational article and intended to publish it the next morning. Bosch replied, in effect, that it did not merit any comment from him. Yet, according to Molina Morillo, the article which he read to Bosch on the phone was one of the key events of the day that alerted Bosch to the imminent coup (*Ahora*, Santo Domingo, November 1-15, 1963).

Another U.S. journalist, Jules Dubois, of the Chicago *Tribune*, provided the Dominicans with the first "inside story" on the coup. On September 27, 1963, the Chicago *Tribune* published an interview with Brigadier General Antonio Imbert Barreras, whom Dubois described as "one of the leaders of yesterday's coup." The banner headline on page one screamed: "BOSCH'S RED PLOT BARED!" A three-column head over the story added: "Dominican Revolt Head Tells Commie Plan for 'Second Cuba.'" Dubois quoted Imbert: "Sure, we violated the Constitution by ousting Bosch, but I believe that it was absolutely necessary to place the constitution in recess in a desk drawer."

It was necessary, according to Imbert, because as head of internal security he had given Bosch on September 19 a three-page document which claimed that the Dominican Communists were planned to stage an uprising the following January. The information

allegedly came from an informer's account of a "secret meeting of Communist leaders." The military leaders used this ostensible report to demand that Bosch should give them orders to repress the Communists and "crack their heads." When Bosch reportedly told Imbert that he refused to make the Dominican Republic into another Venezuela "because terrorist activities and anarchy would follow," the military decided to get rid of Bosch and the Constitution.

The Santo Domingo paper, *Prensa Libre*, of October 1, 1963, ran the interview under the headline: "Imbert Declares: Overthrow Prevents Second Cuba." April 1965, then, was not the first time that the bloody shirt of a "second Cuba" was waved to cover up an anti-Bosch policy. It had been successfully tried out in the dress rehearsal of 1963.

Imbert's revelations were, of course, anti-climactic. No reader of Dubois' story could have discovered a "Red plot" by Bosch. If there was any Red plot, it was against Bosch. If Bosch were such a benefactor and protector of the Communists, it made no sense for them to want to overthrow him. The interview did not even mention "Communist infiltration" of Bosch's government as an alibi of the military's action. But the cream of the jest was still to come—after Bosch was overthrown, the "triumvirate" that succeeded him in power outlawed the smaller PSP and MPD but not the much larger Castroite 14th of June Movement.

A few weeks later, General Imbert's intelligence report of September 19 was put to the test. Late in November, Tavarez Justo and a small band from the 14th of June took to the hills to wage guerrilla warfare against the new order. They were so badly armed and trained that they were no match for the government forces. Tavarez Justo was soon slain and his men gave up the struggle. Such was the gravity of the Communist plot which was supposed to have made the Dominican Republic into "a bridgehead for subversive operations against Venezuela and Haiti."

According to Sam Halper, in the article previously cited, the Dominican military decided to oust Bosch "as soon as they got a wink from the U.S. Pentagon." Halper seems to have reason to believe that "the Pentagon undercut the State Department" and Ambassador Martin, who was trying to help Bosch. The latter, however, does not go so far. In his book, Bosch states: "I never had proof that the U.S. military in Santo Domingo conspired to overthrow my democratic government, although I frequently heard rumors to this effect; but I am sure that if a captain in the mission would have said that the government should be overthrown, it would have been done in an hour because such a captain has more authority over the Dominican military high command than the people, the Constitution and the President."

Whether or not the "wink" came from the Pentagon, the U.S. military mission's responsibility for restraining the Dominican military was decisive for the success of U.S. official policy, since the military mission was much closer to the Dominican military than the diplomatic mission was. It is most disturbing that a responsible journalist, in close touch with Dominican affairs, should find it necessary to allude publicly to the Pentagon's complicity in the 1963 coup. One thing is certain: With all the dependence of the Dominican Armed Forces on the U.S. military establishment, the latter was singularly incapable of exercising a restraining influence.

In his May 2 speech, President Johnson inexplicably referred to Bosch's overthrow in 1963 as a "revolution." It was, of course, nothing of the sort; it was a plain, old-fashioned, conventional military coup. The slip, if it was a slip, might tell us much, if we knew who put that word in the speech.

On May 8, 1965, a new five-man junta was appointed to take the place of General Wessin y Wessin's three-man junta. And who was head of the new junta? None other than Brigadier General Antonio Imbert. And who, if we may trust press reports from Santo Domingo, chose General Imbert? None other than the U.S. Embassy.³

Meanwhile, in the "first Cuba," few tears were wasted on what had happened in the country that had just been saved from becoming a "second Cuba." The Cuban Communist organ, *Hoy*, of September 27, 1963, devoted an editorial to the "lesson" of the Dominican coup. "It simply revealed," stated the editorial, "the degree of decomposition and the crisis through which so-called 'representative democracy' is passing." Then it taxed Bosch for having failed to nationalize any U.S. business enterprises, establish diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba, make a commercial pact with Soviet Russia or purge the Armed Forces. Bosch was gravely advised that his main error had consisted in "not understanding that the middle way does not exist." And, therefore, "his overthrow was inevitable."

The next day, Fidel Castro touched on the same subject. He also insisted that the coup had been "pre-determined" because no democracy could be based on Trujillo's Army. Bosch had been "handcuffed" by that Army even though he had tried to pursue a more "discreet policy." Castro conceded that Bosch was a little different and merited a little more respect. "Why? Perhaps because he defended us? No. He had his great weaknesses; he came to power with the good will of the imperialists." But Bosch was given some credit for not being a Betancourt in his policy towards Cuba; Bosch merely dedicated himself to the problems

of his own country; he maintained a "discreet attitude."

The moral, said Castro, was that even such a man could not survive the "Trujillista gorillas" who would not leave him alone even if he left them alone. The lesson for the Dominican people was that there was only one road, Castro's road, not Bosch's road—"liquidate the gorillas, combat the gorillas, defeat the gorillas and execute the principal gorillas." In short, Castro tried to make political capital of the Dominican coup by emphasizing the difference between his violent, revolutionary road and Bosch's peaceful, democratic road. Bosch's defeat was as much a victory for the Fidel Castros and Che Guevaras as for the Wessin y Wessins and Antonio Imberts.

DO NOT wish to suggest that Bosch's way of handling the Communist problem in the Dominican Republic was beyond questioning or criticism. I can well imagine that equally well-intentioned persons might differ in some respects with him. Should he speak out against Castro, whom he personally detested? When and how should Dato Pagán's "school" be moved out of a public building? What are the constitutional or practical limits of freedom of speech and assembly? Bosch acted against the local Communists in some areas and not in others. Someone else in his place might have done some things differently.

But if Bosch's policies may be questioned, they must first be clearly understood and fairly presented. For most of his 31 years in power, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo had persecuted and tortured his opponents, most of them simple democrats, in the name of "anti-Communism." Bosch himself had lived with the great lie for decades. When I was in the Dominican Republic in 1950, in the heyday of Trujillo's power, even a member of the U.S. Embassy had been visibly afraid to talk to me outside the Embassy itself. Trujillo had so debased and debauched the very word, "Communism," that he had made anti-Trujilloism and Communism virtually synonymous. Less than two years after Trujillo's death, the political air was still so polluted that anti-Communism did not necessarily mean devotion to democracy; it could easily be turned into protective coloration for a Trujillista comeback.

The younger generation, which was Bosch's prime concern, had only begun to know what democracy in practice was or could be. The older politicians, who were Bosch's chief affliction, had not been nurtured in a democratic environment in which the limits of a democratic opposition were clearly recognized. For Bosch, every day that a legal, constitutional government survived was itself a victory over both the Trujillistas and the Communists. More than anything else, he needed time, and he was willing to buy it, but not at the cost of his principles. He did not wish to cut himself off from the radical youth, to give them up

3. "The psychological warfare resources of the United States Information Agency and of the military assist the national council, headed by Brig. Gen. Antonio Imbert Barreras, who was picked by the American Embassy" (Tad Szulc, *New York Times*, May 11, 1965).

for lost, to take the initiative in drawing a line of blood between himself and them. He preferred to show them that the rule of law and freedom applied to everyone, and he could not start by taking it away from anyone.

Bosch has been dismissed as a "dreamer" and an "idealist." Those who do so might give some thought to the fact that Castro's predecessors, the practical politician, Carlos Prío, and the tough ex-sergeant, Fulgencio Batista, did not, in the long run, come out too well. A little more idealism might have held off Communism in Cuba more effectively than anything else.

In any case, there is no one way to handle the Communist problem in a democracy. There are hardly two free countries in the world that manage it the same way. When Bosch was overthrown in 1963, I wrote: "It would wreak untold havoc in the democratic world, especially that part of it most like the Dominican Republic, if treatment of the local Communists or policy toward the anti-Castro exiles were made the determining factors in deciding whether one or another democratic government had a right to exist" ("Bosch and Communism," NL, October 14, 1963). Yet this is precisely what was presumed in the case of Bosch's government, and it is one reason why the Dominican precedent has caused such consternation in the most democratic countries of Latin America.

In a distorted fashion, the Imbert-Dubois interview had an essential element of truth in it, if not about the alleged Communist plot then about the military plotters. The interview made clear that the issue on which Bosch stood or fell was not his own sympathies for Communism or Communist infiltration of his government. Imbert's story rightly implied that the crucial question had been freedom of speech, press, and assembly. Bosch refused to deprive the Communists or anyone else of those freedoms as long as they did not commit illegal or violent acts. He declined to declare preventive war on the local Communists and "crack their heads" because he believed that the cure was worse than the disease.

There may be differences of opinion with Bosch or with his methods and tactics. But this was not enough. Juan Bosch had to be scurrilously tainted with Communism itself. He had to be presented as the perpetrator of a "Red plot," a Communist stalking-horse, a front for "Communist infiltration."

This was the infamy.

IN 1963, Dominican Communism was not averted; Dominican democracy was suffocated. This is not merely my personal view. It is the official U.S. position. That is why, as I noted at the outset, President Kennedy spoke out against the coup and temporarily broke off diplomatic relations with the new ruling group. That is why President Johnson was justified in charac-

terizing the pro-Bosch uprising last month as "a popular democratic revolution committed to democracy and social justice." If Bosch had not been committed to democracy and social justice in 1963, how could the movement behind him be committed to them in 1965? That is why Adlai Stevenson was able to boast of U.S. "cooperation" with Bosch's government in 1963. Why boast about it if that government was practically being turned over to the Communists?

Yet a strange thing happened between Saturday, April 24, and Wednesday, April 28. Instead of supporting the forces "committed to democracy and social justice," the U.S. decided to support the forces that had overthrown them in 1963 and were determined to prevent them from returning to power in 1965.

It appears, curiously enough, that the present crisis remarkably resembles the previous one in 1963, at least in its origins. A number of correspondents have intimated that the present struggle did not begin merely as a pro-Bosch revolt. It began, in part at least, as another military coup, this time against the post-Bosch junta headed by Donald Reid Cabral, a former automobile dealer.

At least five different reports seem to agree on this. In the *New York Times* of April 27, Tad Szulc mentioned an "unconfirmed report" that "an agreement among most of the military commanders, including General Wessin y Wessin, to form a military junta at once" forced Reid to resign as head of the ruling junta. But, Szulc added, a group of young pro-Bosch Army officers refused to go along with the plan to replace Reid with a military junta and insisted on restoring Bosch's constitutional rule.

Basically the same story was told in a UPI dispatch from Santo Domingo dated April 28. (I have seen it only in Spanish in the *El Diario-La Prensa*, New York, of April 29). In the Hearst papers of May 4, a former press officer of the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Paul D. Bethel, reported from Santo Domingo that Reid Cabral's decision to fire two Army colonels for graft and disloyalty had set off the entire chain of events on Saturday. Another Santo Domingo story in the *U.S. News & World Report* of May 17 attributed Reid Cabral's downfall to "enemies within the Armed Forces" who were out to get him because he wanted to eliminate "a contracts racket operated by top military men."

And on May 2, President Johnson seemed to confirm the essentials of Tad Szulc's unconfirmed report when he declared: "Elements of the military forces of that country overthrew their government. However, the rebels themselves were divided. Some wanted to restore former President Juan Bosch. Others opposed his restoration."

If this account, in essence, proves trustworthy, it will almost seem to be an echo of the story told by

Bosch. About a week before the 1963 coup, he had made a short trip to Mexico with, among others, General Pablo Atila Luna, head of the Dominican Air Force. On the plane, Atila Luna had presented Bosch with a proposition to buy \$6 million worth of British war planes. The minimum rake-off or kickback on military purchases was 10 per cent, though it sometimes went as high as 15 per cent. In this instance, Atila Luna apparently expected to get as much as \$1.2 million or 20 per cent. Bosch told him that a country as poor as the Dominican Republic, where people died of hunger, could not afford to spend so much on military planes. One wonders whether Bosch's regime would have lasted longer if he had agreed to the purchase. In Bosch's view, "corruption" was more responsible for the 1963 coup than any other cause.

From this point, however, the two coups tend to diverge. In 1963, there was no evidence of any effort by pro-Bosch forces in the Army to fight for him. In 1965, it appears clear that the pro-Bosch forces came close to winning a quick, easy and almost bloodless victory in the first two days. The tide was turned against them mainly by Air Force planes strafing Santo Domingo on Sunday and Monday, April 25 and 26. Wessin y Wessin sent his tanks from the San Isidro Air Base toward the capital. By Tuesday, April 27, some pro-Bosch leaders evidently faltered and considered their cause lost. They took refuge, the story goes, in foreign embassies and asked U.S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett Jr. to arrange a cease-fire.

THE NEXT 24 hours were crucial. As long as the forces "committed to democracy and social justice" seemed to be winning—and, according to one of our best Latin American observers, Tad Szulc, their victory was still expected as late as the morning of Tuesday, April 27—no word of encouragement or sign of sympathy came from Washington. But on the morning of Wednesday, April 28, Washington officials became more loquacious. John W. Finney reported from Washington to the *New York Times* on April 29: "Early yesterday Administration officials were expressing relief over the apparent collapse of the insurrection led by young Army officers supporting a return to former President Bosch." We will be able to understand more about U.S. policy at this critical juncture when we know who these Administration officials were. In any event, their relief was premature.

On that same day, Wednesday, April 28, the seemingly victorious military commanders named a three-man junta to govern the country. According to Dom Bonafede and Douglas Kiker of the *New York Herald Tribune's* Washington Bureau, State Department officials discussed the possible recognition of this junta, controlled by General Wessin y Wessin, the San Isidro Air Base's strong man. But recognition was post-

poned as bad news began to come in that day.

The bad news was the virtual disintegration of Wessin y Wessin's fighting forces. Why they disintegrated from Tuesday to Wednesday is a question to which we will return. The fact that they did, however, appears to be indisputable. In his May 2 speech, President Johnson told that he had received an urgent cable from Ambassador Bennett at 5:14 P.M. on April 28 advising that the Dominican military and police had completely lost control of the situation and could no longer guarantee the safety of Americans there—as if they had been able to "guarantee" their safety previously. Under Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann, whom all agree bears the brunt of the responsibility for working out U.S. policy in the crisis, informed Max Frankel of the *New York Times* (May 9) that Wessin y Wessin's military forces had suffered a "virtual collapse" and that "almost complete chaos" had suddenly occurred by the afternoon of April 28.

In Puerto Rico, Juan Bosch seems to have known that Wessin y Wessin was getting much the worst of it as early as Tuesday, April 27. Bosch was in daily telephonic contact with his supporters and had apparently sized up the military situation correctly. He later told Homer Bigart of the *New York Times* (May 8) that he had spoken to the Dominican Republic's Papal Nuncio, Msgr. Emanuele Clarizio, who happened to be in San Juan on April 27, and had told him: "Our forces were winning whereas the forces of General Wessin y Wessin are almost defeated." Nevertheless, Bosch said, he had told the Papal Nuncio that he did not want more death and destruction and, therefore, approved of negotiations to call off the fighting.

Then Bosch gave this version of what had taken place on that fateful April 28: "On Wednesday, the Papal Nuncio made contact with Wessin. But Wessin refused to deal with the Nuncio that day because he had received from the Americans the offer of Marines' support."

On the television program *Face the Nation*, Bosch summed up the situation as the U.S. Marines arrived in Santo Domingo on Wednesday evening: "When they landed, Wessin y Wessin's forces were defeated. Twenty-four hours more and the Dominicans would have solved their own problems."

Moreover, there is some reason to believe that there was more in Ambassador Bennett's cable of April 28 than President Johnson chose to reveal four days later. "United States assistance in restoring law and order," John W. Finney reported from Washington to the *New York Times*, "was requested yesterday [April 28] by the provisional government of Brigadier General Wessin y Wessin and the police chief in Santo Domingo. This has not been made public." If this is confirmed, it would mean that Wessin y Wessin recognized that he was going down to defeat on April 28 and asked

the United States to bail him out.

There are two interrelated questions about the reason for this sudden turn of events. One is the cause of Wessin y Wessin's "virtual collapse." Why did his apparent defeat follow so quickly on the heels of his apparent victory?

The official U.S. answer was given by President Johnson on May 2. After having conceded that the pro-Bosch struggle had started as "a popular democratic revolution," he claimed that it had been "taken over and really seized and placed into the hands of a band of Communist conspirators." Curiously, Under Secretary of State Mann did not go so far in his statements to Max Frankel. Mann merely said that U.S. intelligence had "from the very beginning" reported that "the revolutionary movement itself was probably led by elements in the Dominican Revolutionary (pro-Bosch) party" but that it was clear "very early" that "elements of the three Communist parties" had organized, armed and moved into the streets "very sizable para-military forces." Mann attributed the necessity for landing the Marines to the "virtual collapse" of the "regular forces." At no time did he go so far as to assert that the Communists had succeeded in seizing control of the "popular democratic revolution." It might be assumed that Wessin y Wessin's disintegration could have given the Communists a free hand, but Mann was careful to stop short of crediting them with an accomplished fact.

Nevertheless, it was President Johnson's version which Administration sources increasingly pressed in the next few days. Thus arises the second question: What was the truth about a Communist "takeover" of the pro-Bosch revolution around Wednesday, April 28? It is difficult to separate these two questions, and to some extent they must be examined together.

The official U.S. version suggests something like this: On Tuesday, the virtuous pro-Bosch revolution seemed to crack up. At this point, "a small group of well-known Communists," as Adlai Stevenson was instructed to put it on May 3, "quickly attempted to seize control of the revolution and of the armed bands in the streets." Within 24 hours or less, these Communist-led "armed bands" had so reorganized and revitalized the dying revolutionary movement that Wessin y Wessin's planes, tanks, naval vessels and infantrymen were thrown on the defensive and faced virtual defeat, and their commanders were forced to betake themselves to the U.S. Embassy to ask for help.

If this is going to remain the official story, then the United States is going to provide Castroism with one more myth of how Communist-led street fighters were able to defeat a "regular army." In Cuba, Castro's guerrilla fighters had needed two years to defeat Batista's Army. In the Dominican Republic, Castro's disciples may be able to cite President Johnson as

their authority that they had needed only 24 hours.

WAS IT REALLY necessary to make revolutionary supermen of "a small group of well-known Communists" in order to explain Wessin y Wessin's defeat and justify the landing of U.S. Marines?

Ironically, the key is probably in President Johnson's phrase, "a popular democratic revolution". The restoration of Juan Bosch was undoubtedly an overwhelmingly popular cause. Another outstanding U.S. Latin American correspondent, Barnard L. Collier, observed in the *New York Herald Tribune* of May 2 that Wessin's junta was "highly unpopular," "despised by many Dominicans who call them corrupt." He reported: "The demoralized, dwindling group of perhaps 2,000 loyalist troops under strongman Brigadier General Elias Wessin y Wessin have virtually given up." A UPI report from Santo Domingo on May 2 said that Wessin's forces had lost 21 of their tanks. An Associated Press dispatch of May 10 took note of "unverified reports that two-thirds of the military defected after the civil war started."

On the basis of available information, we cannot, of course, be sure what caused Wessin y Wessin's troops to make such a poor showing. What appears to be quite clear is that his forces, not Bosch's, "virtually collapsed," as Under Secretary Mann put it. The pro-Bosch popular movement seems to have been hard hit on April 27, and some of its leaders suffered a temporary loss of morale, but the movement as a whole quickly caught its second wind the following day. Once Wessin y Wessin's men quit, they quit for good. They started with such an enormous advantage in arms that it is hard to believe that they could have been routed so easily unless two conditions obtained: first, that they fought halfheartedly and gave up easily, and second, that they were overwhelmingly outnumbered—which would be an indication that this *was* a "popular revolution."

There is, we should not forget, a precedent for this kind of collapse. When the tide turned against Batista in 1958, the bulk of his troops also refused to fight for him. Under stress, in the face of a popular movement, troops who have to fire on their own people cannot be expected to be loyal to generals whom they have seen use their positions mainly to enrich themselves. Batista still had an overwhelming advantage in troops, tanks and planes when he decided to give up and get out with the loot.

Now we have come to the point that will undoubtedly provide controversy for years to come—the alleged Communist "takeover" of the pro-Bosch movement. And before we go further, it should be remembered that we are dealing with the decision of April 28. What evidence was there for President Johnson's assertion that "a popular democratic revolu-

tion" was "taken over and really seized and placed into the hands of a band of Communist conspirators"?

On April 29, John W. Finney sent a report from Washington to the *New York Times* which stated: "The situation this evening was said to be just as confused as it was yesterday when President Johnson ordered the Marines into Santo Domingo. Mr. Johnson had reports that at least two and perhaps seven or eight of the leaders active among the rebels were Communists."

On the same day, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara discussed the Dominican situation with the Senate Armed Services Committee, and he was reported to have persuaded some of its members that "an element" of the pro-Bosch forces was "Communist-led." But he did not suggest that the Communists had gained control (*New York Times* April 30).

Yet, on April 29, the word went out from Washington that the landing of the Marines had not been ordered for humanitarian motives only. It had also been designed to prevent a "Communist takeover."

It was only on April 30, according to Max Frankel in the *New York Times* of May 6, that the number of "prominent Communist and Castroist leaders" active in the struggle was increased from "at least two and perhaps seven or eight" to as many as 55 or, according to another version, 58. The revised estimate was provided to the President by the CIA, Douglas Kiker was able to report in the *New York Herald Tribune* of May 2. Ironically, Kiker was also told that "U.S. intelligence experts now trace the beginning of the Communist growth in the Dominican Republic" to the period after the overthrow of Bosch in 1963. It would be hard to think of a more devastating commentary on the legend that Bosch was overthrown to prevent a Communist takeover then and that the military coup was the best cure for Communism. It was not until May 5 that official Washington sources released a list of 55 "Communist and Castroist" names, duly published in the *New York Times* the following day.

We are now in the shadowy realm of "intelligence." The wonder is that the CIA could only scrape together 55 names from the combined PSP, MPD and 14th of June Movement. Evidently the list itself failed to impress the correspondents in Santo Domingo. Barnard L. Collier wrote on May 7: "Correspondents were told that there were over 50 hard-core Communists directing the rebellion, and a list naming them was passed out by the Embassy. Up to now, no hard proof that the names are any more than names has been provided by any official sources here, although reporters who know the Dominican situation personally have found that several of the listed are Reds and active here." *Newsweek* of May 17 blandly passed on this information: "The embassy failed to convince the 156 foreign correspondents in Santo Domingo that 'the 58'

were a menace." And, to be sure, after May 5, not a single one of the 58 names was mentioned again in the press reports from Santo Domingo. The Communists who had "taken over," who should have been most active and prominent, mysteriously faded away. The U.S. intelligence services, which had just given the press the most secret, lurid details about the now open Communist ringleaders, seemed to lose interest in them or at least made it necessary for the press to lose interest in them.

By chance, moreover, U.S. intelligence in the Dominican Republic was not exactly at its best just prior to the outbreak of April 24. Ambassador Bennett says that he knew trouble was brewing there. *Newsweek* of May 17 was permitted to divulge a sentence from a personal note to Under Secretary Mann: "We are almost on the ropes in the Dominican Republic." A message from the Ambassador early in April of this year contained these oracular words: "Little foxes some of them red are chewing at the grapes." But Bennett was not at his post in Santo Domingo on April 24, when the trouble broke out. He had left for Washington on "routine consultation" the day before, and he was not able to get back to the Embassy until April 27. To make matters worse, 11 of the 13 officers of the Military and Assistance Mission were off in Panama, and the resident head of the Agency for International Development was in Washington, all of them at routine conferences, in the first days of the crisis. For an Embassy that was so spectacularly out of touch with the immediate realities in the Dominican Republic on April 23, its outpouring only a week later of the most intimate revelations, all of them compromising Bosch or his men with Communism, was remarkable.⁴

WHETHER U.S. intelligence in this instance was good or bad, however, it seems clear that intelligence did not fashion policy. As so often happens, policy fashioned intelligence—or at least the kind of intelligence made public.

For, as we have seen, on April 29 President Johnson apparently had reports of only two and perhaps seven or eight Communists active on the pro-Bosch side, and the ostensibly frightening figure of 55 or 58 was put before him on April 30. By then, U.S. policy had been decided for days, and the "small group of well-known Communists" had had little to do with it.

That is why "Administration officials" were so relieved early on April 28 that Bosch's forces had apparently collapsed. That is why the first contingent of Marines was ordered to patrol the streets of Santo

⁴Samples: "U.S. intelligence flatly reported that ousted President Bosch had been in contact with several Communist leaders from the Dominican Republic shortly before the rebellion" (*Time*, May 14, 1965). "U.S. officials here [Santo Domingo] . . . say of Bosch that he is probably not a Communist, but that he has been playing the Communist game for too long" (*National Observer*, Washington, March 17, 1965).

Domingo in company with the military remnants of General Wessin y Wessin's junta—the first visible sign to the populace that, despite all protestations to the contrary, the United States Government was in fact supporting the junta. That is why Tad Szulc was able to write on April 29: "There was no question that the United States was fully supporting the three-man military junta even though it could not control the city." By May 1, Szulc called the junta "a fictional government" with which "there is no question that Washington is lined up." Other correspondents sent the same reports.

De facto support of the military junta on April 28 could only have meant a decision to prevent Juan Bosch from returning to office. At least one U.S. official said as much: "We can't afford to let Wessin lose. We're not going to allow Bosch to come back and let the country drift into chaos so that the Communists and pro-Castro elements can take over." This candid statement appeared in *Life* magazine (May 7, 1965). But at least this official did not say that the Communists and pro-Castro elements had already taken over. The line was now the old one of 1963—Bosch led to Communism, and to prevent Communism, it was necessary to prevent Bosch from returning to power.

This devious policy could only be put across deviously. In Santo Domingo, some U.S. correspondents have been appalled at the lengths to which U.S. officials have gone to mislead them. At least two, John MacCartney of the *Chicago Daily News* and Barnard L. Collier of the *New York Herald Tribune* have devoted entire dispatches to their disenchantment with the official briefings. Collier, on May 8, cited a number of concrete cases which give some notion of the kind of propaganda that has been emanating from an Embassy that was publicly protesting it was not "taking sides." A group of correspondents were told at the Embassy that 12 "anti-rebel" Dominicans had been lined up against a wall and personally machine-gunned to death by the anti-junta leader, Colonel Francisco Caamaño Deño to the accompaniment of the Castroite cry, "*Paredón!*" (To the wall!) "Not a single reporter," wrote Collier, "has found concrete evidence of the episode, and there are now reports that one of the key men said to have been killed in that incident is alive, although wounded." Embassy sources also assured correspondents that Caamaño's forces had committed "stomach-turning atrocities." Collier simply states: "Reporters have found no confirmation." It is even to be feared that a campaign may be whipped up against some of our best Latin American correspondents on the ground that they have not followed the U.S. party line or, as it will probably be translated, shown too much sympathy for the "rebels."

Thus far, I have taken the various statements and

reports, official and otherwise, at their face value. And I have tried to show that, even on this basis, words and deeds have been only distantly related. The contradictions, confusions and camouflages manufactured in Washington and in Santo Domingo for the past month have been so unconvincing that they forced me to come to the conclusion that, as John MacCartney put it, most of them were merely "cover stories." As I have indicated, the available evidence led me to suspect that the decision of Wednesday, April 28, was essentially made against Juan Bosch rather than against the Communists, or that it could be interpreted as directed against the latter only if Bosch could be equated with Communism, as in the mummery of 1963.

But it may be worse.

In the *New York Times* of May 15, Tad Szulc conscientiously tried to reconstruct the first few days of the present crisis. According to him, the crucial anti-Bosch decision was made in the State Department on April 25, the second day of the outbreak, not April 28. On the 25th, it seemed that the pro-Bosch revolt had triumphed and that Bosch was about to return to Santo Domingo from Puerto Rico. On that day, Szulc goes on, "the State Department was said to have decided that such an event would pose a threat of Communism in the Dominican Republic 'within six months.'" U.S. sources in Santo Domingo told Szulc that the man primarily responsible for this judgment was Under Secretary of State Mann. It was for this reason that the United States "made no move to express interest in the pro-Bosch movement or sympathy for it" (at a stage to which, as I must again point out, President Johnson later paid lip service as "a popular democratic revolution committed to democracy and social justice"). When other Embassy officials, in Ambassador Bennett's absence, recommended that official U.S. representatives should make contact with Bosch in Puerto Rico, the State Department is said to have "vetoed the idea."

I do not know how much truth there is in Tad Szulc's account. I do know that Szulc is a thoughtful, serious, hard-working correspondent. His informants may be the same "top United States officials" who told Barnard Collier that they were not happy with the precipitancy of U.S. policy and that they were "being ham-strung in trying to present a picture of what is going on in Santo Domingo militarily and diplomatically because of the possible effect of that information contradicting views coming out of Washington" (*New York Herald Tribune*, May 8, 1965). In my judgment, Szulc's time-table accords with the facts, as we know them, but it does not change anything fundamentally whether the basic decision against Bosch's restoration was made on April 25 or April 28 or somewhere in between.

I HAVE CHOSEN to focus my attention on the decision to support Wessin y Wessin's junta and then Imbert's junta against the popular movement to restore Juan Bosch to the Dominican Presidency because I believe that it was the decisive moment of the present crisis. Everything else—the build-up of a Communist “takeover,” the doubletalk and deviousness, the cease-fire that proved to be merely another cover for regrouping the military junta's remaining forces for an all-out attack—flowed from it. Above all, the incalculable consequences of this adventure for years to come and in countries near and far will flow from it.

In those first days, it was not unreasonable for the policy-makers in Washington to be concerned about the opportunities which the outbreak would give the Communists for extending their influence and doing their mischief. But, if this was the overriding consideration, the crucial moral and political question still was: with Bosch or with Wessin y Wessin, with the man who had represented the first constitutional democracy in over three decades or the man who had been chiefly responsible for overthrowing him, a man who had suffered from Trujillo's tyranny or a living military symbol of Trujilloism?

If the United States had acted quickly and firmly enough, Bosch would have returned to Santo Domingo

with a minimum of bloodshed, Wessin y Wessin's junta would not have been formed, and the Communists would not have had time, even if we credit the official story, to take advantage of the temporary setback to the pro-Bosch cause on the fourth day, Tuesday, April 27. It was as if, after Adolf Hitler had committed suicide in 1945, the Allies had decided to back Air Force Marshall Hermann Goering as the man to save Germany from Communism. The analogy is not too inappropriate. Whether Wessin y Wessin was as big a crook as the other generals is beside the point. To the vast majority of Dominicans, he was the product and protagonist of the old system of torture, despotism and corruption. In effect, the decision against Bosch was a decision against democracy and decency as the bulwarks against Communism. The worst that could have happened under Bosch would have been a return to the conditions that had prevailed in 1963. The logic of the present decision is that the military conspirators had been right in 1963 and, therefore, it has again become necessary to defame him.

I venture to make a prediction: In the end we will need Juan Bosch far more than he ever needed us. When we betray the Juan Bosches of the world we must, in the final reckoning, betray ourselves.

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