

*The following articles on the struggle in the Dominican Republic represent fine coverage of the critical events, history and background. Since we have by no means exhausted the entire spectrum of radical and socialist views on this subject, comments and articles are invited.*

# **Revolution and Counter Revolution In the Dominican Republic**

## **1. THE CHESSBOARD**

**Julio Cesar Martinez**

EVERY TYRANNY GIVES BIRTH to an explosive situation which terror may be able to paralyze for a time but which cannot be restrained indefinitely. Before Trujillo was assassinated in 1961, a revolutionary fever was developing under the social epidermis. The contradictions of the Trujillo regime stimulated middle class discontent. In 1960, after years of ardent support to the tyranny, the Catholic Church did an almost complete about face. Trujillo was confronted with a frightening internal enemy whose nearly five centuries of power were deeply impressed on the consciousness of the people. Another blow at Trujillo was the sanctions imposed by the San José ministers' conference. It was the conspiracy against President Betancourt organized by the dictator's international espionage service which finally sealed Trujillo's fate.

When Trujillo was eliminated, those responsible for the assassination—among whom were some Americans—thought that the latent force for revolution would be immobilized or stopped. That they were wrong is now obvious.

Castro's triumph over Batista's troops made an enormous impression in both Americas; certainly in Santo Domingo. The majority of the Dominican population is less than 17 years of age and a great number lean toward Castroism in which they see the elements of liberation, the new and the young taking power over the ruins of the past untouched by older liberators.

There was a great desire for change among all groups in the country

except for that stratified class which in the native jargon is called the *tutumportes*. The Trujillo autocracy had impeded the development of a modern commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, but the existence of a predatory landowning oligarchy on the political scene was very much a fact. This was a sector whose interests involved real estate investments, mortgages and unproductive accumulation. They had no interest or incentive for investment in any field which could transform the economic and social structure. These people resisted any attempt toward a fairer distribution of the national income. Progressive Dominicans called this influential but reactionary class the "*tutumpocracy*." As a group, it was very closely aligned with the so-called Unión Cívica Nacional (UCN) which was formed immediately following the dictator's death. Four thousand members of this privileged class who had previously belonged to the Partido Dominicano (the only party permitted by Trujillo) formed the UCN. It was this massive group, part of the dictator's totalitarian apparatus, which provided the initial cadres of the UCN.

Presenting itself as non-partisan, the UCN attracted those who most favored structural changes in the country. A number of pro-Marxists and Castroites were included. While the United States was aware of what was happening, it did not seem affected in any way. A pro-Castro leader accompanied by Dr. Viriate Fiallo, the leader of the UCN, to Washington and San Juan in December 1961, for discussions with U.S. policy makers. Such "peaceful coexistence" was designed to frustrate the revolution—the structural changes which almost all Dominicans were demanding. Calvin Hill, Jr., the U.S. commercial attaché, had an important role to play. It was he who announced, during a meeting, that the establishment of a revolutionary regime in Santo Domingo must be avoided at all cost. He maintained that the new regime must be rightist, "not necessarily reactionary, but conservative." At the time this statement was made, the UCN was already battling with General Pedro Rafael Rodríguez Echavarría, Minister of the Armed Forces.

Echavarría was the man who led the air force revolt of November 19, 1961, responsible for driving the remnants of the Trujillo regime out of the country. Ramfis Trujillo, the dictator's son, who had taken over the military fled to Europe. Two of Trujillo's brothers, Héctor B. and Arismondi "Petán", had returned from the Bahamas and were reorganizing their men of action for a "Saint Bartholomew's Night" against the democratic leaders, aimed at forcing out Balaguer. Some of the rightist political leaders begged Balaguer to call for help from U.S. warships which were off the shore. Balaguer refused. Calvin Hill managed to arrive at an agreement with the two Trujillo brothers through which, in exchange for a million dollars in cash and the guarantee to the Trujillo heirs of their property in Dominican territory,

they would leave the country. It was at precisely this moment that Rodríguez Echavarría appeared as the "saviour."

The American military attachés were aware of his plans. In fact, they encouraged him, but his attraction soon faded as he became an *enfant terrible*. He refused to overthrow Balaguer and put Dr. Fiallo, Calvin Hill's "man" in the presidency. He refused any concessions whatsoever to the Trujillos—not to mention those proposed by Calvin Hill. Echavarría earned Fiallo's enmity by refusing his demand that Balaguer be dropped in favor of himself. Motivated by vengeance, Fiallo brought his grievances to Calvin Hill. Three weeks after Fiallo had proclaimed Echavarría a "national hero," in December 1961, a political strike was organized aimed at the overthrow of Echavarría and Balaguer. Both of these men had refused to permit the transfer of the Trujillo family properties and enterprises. "Free enterprise" at home and abroad coveted these holdings which were to become an integral part of agrarian reform. Echavarría began to be called a dangerous "Nasserist" neophyte. An American magazine stated that Echavarría was issuing berets, helmets, olive green uniforms and red and black armbands—all symbols of Castroism—to the feverish youth of Santo Domingo. On the contrary, the Castroites and pro-Communists were actually conspiring with the extreme right against Echavarría. They were united only by their anti-Trujilloism, with no perspective on the structural changes being demanded by the country.

Rodríguez Echavarría, unable to overcome the pressure of these reactionary forces, sat at his base at San Isidro waiting for things to happen. From the moment his movement limited itself to waiting for events instead of influencing them, it ceased to be revolutionary. This attitude frustrated the revolution. If, in December 1961, Echavarría had called on the people to struggle for the necessary changes, and had given them arms to crush the reaction, the Dominican revolution would have advanced by four years and the present state of affairs would probably have been avoided. (Well aware of this, the leaders of this year's 24th of April—Majors Hernando Ramírez and Caamaño Deño—distributed arms to the people the very afternoon of the uprising. However, the general circumstances were not as favorable in 1965 as they were in 1961.)

Weary and harassed, Echavarría wrote a message to President Kennedy which he delivered to Calvin Hill. Hill never sent it to Washington. He simply accelerated the plans for the coup. He prepared the trap into which Echavarría fell. Hill assigned the role of arresting Echavarría to Colonel Wessin y Wessin who, from that moment on, became Washington's puppet.

WITH BALAGUER AND ECHAVARRIA defeated and deported, the UCN broke

with the 14th of June movement which it labelled "pro-Castro". The UCN held power through the Council of State whose seven members responded to its needs. The Council governed for 13 months—January 1962 to February 1963. The United States had handed control to the group of its choice. At the end of January 1962, the UCN announced that the country was faced with "the danger of Communist infiltration." This pretext was used to promulgate a law under which enemies of the Council of State were threatened with deportation or actually deported. Among those threatened was Juan Bosch who, while Hill and Fiallo were stopping the revolution and taking power, was winning followers and educating them to social and economic democracy.

Bosch's Partido Revolucionaria Dominicana (PRD) was treated like a poor relation by the Embassy people because it placed too much emphasis on the impoverished mass of workers and peasants. The Americans failed to see the signs of the times despite the Cuban experience. Instead of building lines of communication with the revolutionary sectors of the middle class which identified themselves with the urban and rural poor, the Americans seemed to be irresistibly attracted to the reactionary groups and the worst strata of the military.

By August 1962, Washington was convinced that it was ill oriented in Santo Domingo and its interests were poorly represented. President Kennedy appointed John Bartlow Martin ambassador. Calvin Hill was transferred to Venezuela. Advisors whom Hill would not heed now convinced Martin of Hill's tactical errors. A change of directions was undertaken. Kennedy discouraged those investors who were trying to recapture the national wealth. He stimulated them to make new investments to diversify production and make possible a more equitable distribution of income. He offered Bosch full support for a thorough-going agrarian reform.

After this change in the American attitude, the Communists of the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) decided to cut their ties with the UCN. (When the UCN earlier had severed relations with the pro-Castroites of the 14th of June, the PSP people remained in the U.S.-backed conservative organization.) In their document of separation, the Communists disclosed many of the details of Hill's political influence over the UCN, the way his suggestions were carried out to the letter. They also revealed that the trade union fraction of the UCN received its instructions directly from the Embassy.

In 1963, the same forces which had opposed structural changes in 1961, reappeared with renewed vigor. They began to conspire against Bosch and since it was impossible to make the same accusations against him that were used against Balaguer, they invented new ones. The pro-Communists and pro-Castroites once more began courting the far right. In duet they sang that the Bosch people were "agents of

Yankee imperialism." From Havana, Fidel Castro jeered at Bosch and his government. The groups of the extreme left had abstained from the December 1962 elections, mimicking Havana's slogan: "Elections for what?" They proclaimed the elections a bourgeois ruse to stop the social revolution.

Before his inauguration, Bosch called for the formation of a government on a broad national base. His electoral victory had been most impressive—628,000 votes. (Dr. Fiallo, the UCN candidate, had received 317,327.) The defeated groups refused to join the broadly based government; instead, they attempted to undermine it. Military chiefs were encouraged to attempt a coup. They did not dare. It would have been too dangerous against a people still vibrating with emotion. But conspiracy was relatively easy since these military leaders had been selected and maintained in their privileged position by the Council of State.

JUAN BOSCH TOOK OFFICE FEBRUARY 27, 1963. The Council of State which had left a debt of more than 50 million dollars was not invited to the official reception. (Fully aware of this manipulation of funds, the American officials continued to support the Council of State and the UCN.) While Bosch felt that the appropriate place for them was in jail, he did not imprison them.

Bosch decreed a regime of austerity. He reduced the high salaries of the military, suspended many military positions abroad and took away their sources of graft. He initiated the work of moral and economic reconstruction in an atmosphere of foreign and domestic distrust. Pressure groups harried him from all sides. He went out of his way to win them over to the view that a more equitable distribution of the national wealth was in everyone's interest. These were people who failed to understand the nature of social and economic change. At the same time, the old reactionary forces were at work in the United States. The Chancellor of the Council of State, Bonilla Atilas, had bought a house in Washington which served as a sort of consulate of Dominican reaction. He commissioned himself to influence American public opinion and spent thousands on "public relations" and intrigues.

The U.S. Treasury had kept 22.7 million dollars as the surplus for the Dominican sugar harvests of 1960-61. President Kennedy offered this money to President Bosch for social services and agricultural-industrial diversification. Nine million belonged to two private sugar firms; the other 13 million to the state sugar trust. The American firm, Central Romana, demanded a voice in the investment. Kennedy maintained that these millions had been provided by the American consumer to aid the Dominican people, not "to make the rich richer." Nevertheless, the 22.7 million remained in the U.S. Treasury.

Bosch denounced the Council for authorizing contracts with an American oil company harmful to the national interest. President Kennedy saw the justice of his complaint, called in the executives of the company and the contracts were rescinded. The Dominican position, of course, displeased the powerful lords of international oil. (The Triumvirate which replaced Bosch later reestablished the concession and, thereafter, never had any difficulty with those gentlemen.)

In search of credit and investments, Bosch visited the United States. He extended his trip to Europe where the offers were three times as large, according to *The Financial Times*. The European prospects offered the country the opportunity of recovering the important British market for basic imports such as sugar, coffee, cacao, salt, lime, gold, nickel, and other minerals at good prices. In return for these products, the British would send over capital goods, especially in the field of electric power. An English firm started to invest 150 million dollars in the construction of two dams and aqueducts. This prospect of European competitors gaining a foothold in Santo Domingo bothered certain American interests which decided that the regime was suspect and participated in the conspiracy. Bosch's two month long absence after such a heated election campaign made it easy for the reaction to strengthen its ties with the military and sow discord. Since the PRD masses failed to act, the conspirators felt that they would not act to prevent Bosch's overthrow. Some priests were the umbilical cord of the conspiracy. Most of them were pro-Franco Spaniards thrown out of Cuba by Castro.

FOUR MONTHS AFTER BOSCH HAD TAKEN OFFICE, the International Monetary Fund had said that his monetary and fiscal policy had contributed to the stabilization of the economy which he had inherited. As a consequence, there was a surplus in the balance of payments. The international reserves doubled, reaching 3 million dollars at the end of May. The IMF also reported that the arrears in commercial debts had been paid in the sum of 20 million dollars. Budgetary equilibrium had been attained and investments in the work of recovery had increased. During this constitutional democratic interval, the regime did not have to resort to any loans. The help it received came from the Alliance for Progress and the Inter-American Development Bank, though it did not come in the quantity or in the time necessary to resolve the grave social and economic plight of the masses. Twenty-five days before Bosch was overthrown, the Inter-American Development Bank granted a loan equivalent to 6 million dollars to finance a recovery program in live-stock and poultry. Thousands of head of cattle belonging to Trujillo's family had disappeared after his death and the subsequent departure of his cohorts. Their pastures remained vacant since the military chiefs

and many privileged citizens had seized this wealth on the hoof. Hundreds of head were transported to the estates of Generals Wessin, Antonio Imbert, Luis Amiama, Atilia Luna, Belisario Peguero, Viñas Román, etc. And a good deal was exported. In many army camps, prize cattle were slaughtered in order to sell the meat to the public at over 75 cents a pound.

The ADI plan was to send 13 experts in livestock and poultry to the country as part of an 11 million dollar program, of which ADI would finance 54.5%. Ten months after reaching this agreement with Bosch, the experts received orders to leave the country. The military, who are also cattle and poultry raisers, and the most reactionary civilians, brought pressure to bear against the program which was to provide credit and technical assistance to more than 60,000 small farmers.

THE MILITARY COUP OF SEPTEMBER 25, 1963, stopped the economic and social development of the country. According to the *Informe Económico* of the Central Bank, the commercial balance of the Dominican Republic in 1963 (after 7 months of the constitutional democratic regime) showed a surplus of 23.8 million dollars. The country's international reserve for the end of that year reached 40.1 millions, a figure almost four times as large as that of 1962 (Council of State) which was only 11.5 millions. The improvement in salaries and increased demand in the labor market caused a considerable increase in imports in 1963 to 150.4 millions, while exports reached 174.2 millions.

A pro-coup newspaper (*El Caribe*) recognized that at the end of February 1963, the net monetary reserve was some 7 million. Seven months later, according to the same paper, it had reached \$28,439,890.45. In those seven months there was an increase of almost 22 million dollars. But in the first two months of the Triumvirate, there was an unexplained drainage of 14 million dollars, provoking commercial circles to demand the publication of accounts as had been done under the constitutional regime. Even the economically privileged sectors began to yearn for constitutionality. Seven months later, the reserves fell to \$7,771,428.20. The situation had deteriorated to such an extent under the Triumvirate that in August 1964, the IMF made a loan of 25 millions to be devoted exclusively to the payment of bills for foreign imports—bills which had not been paid for eight months, a situation which was threatening to shut off all credit to the Dominicans.

In 1963, Bosch had returned 9 million dollars to the IMF in "stand-by" money which had been at the disposition of the Council of State. The Triumvirate was to follow the same irresponsible policy as the Council of State, a policy which resulted in increasing the public debt on October 15, 1964 to more than 428 million. Two years earlier, in 1962, the external debt was only 60.2 million (8% of the gross national

product). To guarantee the repayment of the 25 million in twelve months, the IMF required that the Triumvirate impose new taxes, reduce government spending and freeze the salaries and wages of government and autonomous institute employees. The IMF also required that bank loans be granted only in accord with its pre-established guidelines. These measures, naturally, provoked public displeasure. Chauffeurs and truckers rejected the increases in the price of gasoline, automobiles, replacement parts, etc. They went on strike and were violently crushed by the Triumvirate's troops. Reid Cabral, President of the Republic, before decreeing the price increases, had introduced thousands of cars and parts into the country from companies which he represented in Santo Domingo. On December 30, the Triumvirate (this curious government was actually composed of two, not three, members) announced that "the financial report for 1964 would show a deficit of approximately 20 million pesos." The budget for the year was increased to 189.1 millions, but the civilian Triumvirate and the military of San Isidro spent 210 millions. Of course, this extra "expenditure" was of no benefit whatsoever to the people of Santo Domingo. But there was neither congress, nor controller, nor free press to call the Triumvirate to account.

ON JUNE 26, 1964 the Chief of the National Police published Circular No. 67 in which he announced the incorporation of the 'Cantina Policia Nacional C. por A.' (The National Police Canteen, Inc.) with an authorized capital of a half a million dollars. This police "enterprise" provoked a scandal in the very circles which had worked to overthrow Bosch. The chambers of commerce of the principal cities threatened to close down all business unless the question of the disloyal competition of the military canteens and smuggled goods was immediately resolved. The canteens were identified with smuggling. Reid Cabral's answer was that the enterprise was a *cooperative*, but the articles of incorporation said that a private stock company had been organized whose object was to buy, sell, import, at wholesale and retail, a broad range of products from thread to jewelery to refrigerators. The same document went on to say that the company would open branches at home and abroad. It was, in fact, a kind of commercial international of the police and army. Dominican warships and warplanes were daily bringing in cargoes of "legalized" contraband from the surrounding islands and from the United States. The bulk of the stock was in the hands of the top officers, President Reid Cabral and other privileged elements. A U.S. military mission sent from Panama demanded the dissolution of the canteens, but the contraband continued, as did the traffic in drugs and white slaves, and the export of cash by the military with whom some prominent Cuban exiles were associated. In view of these circumstances, the American mission suggested the retirement of some of the officers implicated.

Obsessed with the idea of being reelected in the September elections, Reid Cabral declared that neither Juan Bosch nor Joaquín Balaguer would be permitted to participate because their return to the country would provoke public disorder. Hundreds of political deportees would watch events from the barricades. He would be the single candidate. The officers in his shadow were in agreement. Others could temporarily be assigned to diplomatic posts abroad to please the "yanquis." Such an assignment was given to the Minister of Armed Forces, Elby Viñas Román, who found himself participating in the Inter-American Defense Council in Washington. Reid Cabral held three offices at the same time: President of the Triumvirate, Foreign Minister and Minister of the Armed Forces. He was virtually a new dictator.

On March 31 (26 days before the constitutionalist revolution), Reid Cabral published a Circular in which he admitted that his men were "inexplicably" assassinating Dominican citizens. It said: "It has come to the attention of this office that members of the armed forces using issue arms have been cutting down the lives of peaceful citizens with inexplicable frequency. In the majority of these cases, always tragic, the consequent loss of prestige to the men in uniform is magnified by their scandalous manner and by the sensationalism which necessarily awakens the national conscience." On April 7 (18 days before the revolution), the following hair-raising dispatch appeared in *El Caribe*: "Juan Hernández was brought to Fort San Francisco de Macoría on March 25, where he died as a result of shock and esquimosis caused by Private Eusebio Disla. An autopsy revealed a needle approximately one and a quarter inches long lodged in the victim's heart."

All this must be kept in mind when evaluating the fundamental causes of the revolutionary explosion of April 24, when the Dominican people, with understandable and justified heroism, demanded the return of the constitutional democratic system which, for seven months, had erased the hateful, chilling image of torture and crime from the country. Santo Domingo is the chess board on which, at the moment, the forces of evil are holding democracy in check.

Caracas, June 20, 1965

*Translated from the Spanish by Richard Schoen*

*JULIO CÉSAR MARTÍNEZ has been active in Dominican political life since the age of 18 when he founded the journal, Renovación. Persecuted by the Trujillo regime, he was forced to leave the Dominican Republic in 1945. He fled to Cuba where he was hounded by Batista's police, then to Costa Rica and in 1958, to Caracas, Venezuela. After 17 years of exile, he returned to Santo Domingo in 1961, and renewed publication of Renovación. President Bosch appointed him Director of Santo Domingo Radio and Television. After the military coup against Bosch, he was deported to Puerto Rico. He now lives in Caracas where he publishes Renovación en Exilio.*

## 2. Lessons of An Absurd Situation

THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS which American journalists have neglected to report out of considerations of tact, let us say. There are other things which the Latin American reporters have failed to say out of nationalist vanity.

I think they ought to be said.

The responsibility for the absurd situation in the Dominican Republic, and for whatever policy may resolve it, can be laid to the men who frame the "new" U.S. Latin-American policy and to certain other elements. These are:

1. President Juan Bosch of the Dominican Republic for failing to go to Santo Domingo within 48 hours after the revolt began. At that time, when there was not yet talk of the Marines landing, his presence, alongside those who were fighting and dying for the constitutional cause, could have given events a clearer direction and made the landing impossible. Further confirmation (as in Spain with Azarna and in Venezuela with Gallegos) that intellectuals make bad politicians.

2. The governments of the Latin-American countries, which failed to send a peace commission or whatever they might want to call it, to the Dominican Republic, immediately, not to seek a truce, but to quickly find out what was happening and to advise the only thing that could in decency be advised: the immediate recognition of the constitutionalist government and the sending of means to support it. This action, too, would have made it impossible to land the Marines.

3. The Latin-American popular movements, which were unable to do anything except sign manifestoes. (That the Castroists, the Communists and the intellectual pseudo-"left" content themselves with this is natural and habitual, but for the parties of action it is unbelievably tragic.) Undoubtedly, the popular movements and the free trade unions would have had to bring heavy pressure to bear on their governments to force them to adopt measures that would make the U.S. government stop and think, that would make the American people realize that public opinion in Latin-America was reacting with deeds and not with words only. The passivity displayed in Latin America appeared to support those in Washington who contend that one has only to bang his fist on the table and everybody shuts up. This proves that Latin-American popular democratic movements must be rejuvenated and that these movements must again become true action movements. Only thus can they be a shield for Latin America, and at the same time for the United States against the excesses of its leaders.

Some facts should be mentioned here:

a) In the OAS, the United States had to resort to sophisms to create a facade of legality for its actions; this facade actually demonstrates the weakness of the actions, as for example having the Dominican "representative" vote, and the fiction of the inter-American force with a Brazilian commander