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The Nervous Caribbean--No. 2

Democracy in Danger In Dominican Republic

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The newly-won democracy in the Dominican Republic is in danger of disintegrating. The government of President Juan Bosch, inaugurated only eight months ago may not survive the year.

U.S. officials deny any reappraisal of U.S.-Dominican policies, but it is known Washington is taking a close look at the Bosch programs and actions.

There is particular preoccupation, with increasing comments from Western diplomats and responsible Dominicans, with developing Communist activity there.

OF EQUAL INTEREST are mounting reliable reports of apparently unmanageable incompetence which has riddled the Bosch administration from the palace through small provincial offices.

But a major contributing factor to the growing unrest is President Bosch himself. Dominican sources point to the now clearly evident characteristics of stubbornness, vanity and lack of administrative talent.

The uncertainty and apprehension around the country are underscored by the fact that nearly every Dominican male today carries a concealed weapon: a pistol, revolver or knife. Enforcement of laws requiring permits to carry weapons has been ignored. General respect or authority has evaporated in the last few months.

On the economic level, the Dominican picture, viewed as bright at the time of Bosch's inauguration, is dimming rapidly.

Sugar production, backbone of the economy, is down sharply from last year and is falling steadily below estimates at the beginning of this year's harvest.

CONSEQUENTLY DOLLAR earnings this year will drop sharply.



Hendrix

Economic analysts point to labor unrest—some Communist-inspired—and mismanagement at the huge government-owned sugar complex as the main reasons for the production plunge.

Also, political unrest has scared away all potential foreign investment of any consequence. There has been none for more than a year.

Some financial experts have predicted an economic crisis approaching disaster this fall.

From the political viewpoint, Washington, which as recently as three months ago publicly reiterated its full support of the Bosch government, now is concerned because the president's own Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) is no longer fully behind him.

Some U.S. officials have begun to concede a misjudgment in Bosch's landslide victory over the National Civic Union (UCN) in last December's election. It now is recognized that Bosch actually won the election by a strong anti-UCN vote instead of an overwhelming pro-PDR or pro-Bosch expression.

RESPONSIBLE Dominicans have pointed out that the PDR and the UCN each could count on about a third of the vote in the closing phase of the election campaign. The so-called independent third swung to the PRD when the ultra-conservative UCN leadership hammered on the theme of punishing all former associates of dictator Trujillo's regime.

This independent bloc apparently viewed a Bosch vote as the lesser of two evils at the time.

Now, the Bosch government has proposed legislation providing for stringent confiscation measures against all who might have benefited in any way from the Trujillo rule. Observers in Santo Domingo believe the legislation, if enacted, could trigger President Bosch's ouster overnight.

Disenchantment with Bosch inside his own party causes concern, inasmuch as a rising number of younger PRD followers are aligning themselves with parties and movements of the extreme left, principally Castro-type.

ON THE QUESTION of incompetence within the administration, pressures late last month

forced Bosch to replace one highly controversial cabinet member, minister of Justice Luis Lomber Peguero. Other similar changes are reported under study.

The matter of Communist infiltration in the government still is being publicly ignored by President Bosch.

He has given the known Communist organizations and individuals complete freedom of action, arguing that he can observe them better if they are out in the open.

The U.S. last month quietly warned Bosch about freedom of travel to and from Communist Cuba by Dominicans, including some recognized Communist leaders.

A GROUP OF 30 Dominicans went to Havana for Castro's July 26th celebration. Most of them returned in August unmolested by Dominican authorities, but some stayed on for "study" and a few are known to have gone since to Iron Curtain countries.

Meanwhile the U.S. is keeping an eye on the Dominican armed forces. Washington would not relish a military coup against the constitutionally elected government of President Bosch, but it could happen.

Whatever develops in the next few months, the U.S. has made it plain 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.

NEXT: Fear-ridden Haiti.

Marshal Reports For Duty Here

Jim Johnson, former city detective captain at Odessa whose appointment as U.S. deputy marshal was announced two weeks ago, reported for duty yesterday at the marshal's office in the U.S. Court House.

Mr. Johnson was introduced to numerous federal officials, including U.S. District Judge R. E. Thomason, and then went on duty immediately, observing proceedings in today's session of U.S. District Court.