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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

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THE COMMUNIST ROLE IN THE DOMINICAN REBEL MOVEMENT, 16-27 MAY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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SC No. 04961/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
27 May 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Communist Role in the
Dominican Rebel Movement, 16-27 May

Introduction and Conclusions

1. Communists continue to play an important role in the rebel movement, although since 4 May their part has not been an obvious or a dominant one. Their importance in the rebel camp at present comes in part from the fact that they are still in command of most of the paramilitary units defending the rebel stronghold in downtown Santo Domingo. But their greatest strength comes from their real or potential influence on the non-Communists who are currently holding office in the Caamano government.

2. It is also apparent that the Communists are looking toward the future and to a time when they might not have as great a leverage on a Dominican government as they now have on Caamano's. They have been exfiltrating men out of the rebel stronghold in downtown Santo Domingo since early in the month. They have also been moving into the countryside, taking small quantities of weapons with them, reconnoitering for suitable guerrilla bases and, in general, lying low and waiting. In short, they are making sure that they do not have all their eggs in the Caamano basket.

3. The militant, disciplined Communists in this situation remain relatively few in number. Their importance and their strength comes from the fact that they have convinced many Dominicans, particularly the very young, to make common cause with them. "Adolescents with guns" do, in fact, predominate among the armed commando groups guarding the rebel stronghold. But these youths are being led--willingly at present--by mature Communist and pro-Communist agitators.

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Background

4. Communists did, in fact, clearly dominate the rebel movement between 28 April and 2 or 3 May. They were in obvious control after having filled the vacuum created when moderate non-Communist political leaders who had been in control lost heart for the fight and abandoned it. The moderate-led rebel government of Rafael Molina Urena collapsed on 27 April and most members of Juan Bosch's Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) went into hiding or took asylum in Latin American embassies. Most of the rebel military officers who had initially sparked the revolt also went into hiding. Even Colonel Caamano was briefly in asylum. The collapse was brought on largely by the movement of loyalist army troops toward the rebel strongholds and recognition on the part of the non-Communist rebel leaders that their forces could not have prevailed over the superior military power then moving toward them under General Wessin y Wessin and other loyalist commanders.

5. The Communists and their extremist allies had no place to hide and they prepared on 27 and 28 April to defend the rebel stronghold to the last ditch. The Communists, in short, upheld rebel resistance when it otherwise would have completely collapsed. This is what they are unlikely to permit the non-Communist rebel leaders to forget. This is an important source of their present strength and their influence in the Caamano government.

6. Actually, the Communists were not brought to the ultimate test. The expected loyalist onslaught on the city did not come during the crucial days of 27 and 28 April. The "gutless generals" on the loyalist side were unable or unwilling to bring their well-equipped forces into action against the rebel stronghold. The much-vaunted Dominican military establishment was, in fact, on the point of utter disintegration by the evening of 28 April when the first US Marines landed. It was not until 13 May that loyalist forces became sufficiently stiffened to take the military offensive. By that time, US troops were interposed between them and the main rebel stronghold.

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

7. Between 28 April and the first two days of May the Communists and their extremist allies were the only effective rebel holdouts--together with the naive youths manning the barricades under Communist leadership. By 3 May, however, various of the moderate PRD leaders had come out of hiding and asylum, returned to rebel headquarters, and began resuming at least nominal control. The presence of US troops and the continuing impotence of the loyalist military gave them at least some confidence that there would be no all-out loyalist onslaught on the city. On 4 May, the non-Communists of the rebel movement formed a government under Colonel Caamano and composed of non-Communists, including some highly respected moderate leftists. Thus, the rebels were able to re-establish the picture of a moderate leftist regime dedicated to the fulfillment of a popular revolution. Communists were not obvious in the rebel camp by the time the bulk of US and other foreign newsmen arrived on the scene. The Caamano government proceeded to try to establish a respectable front and to try to enhance its bargaining position for the political discussions and the negotiations with the UN and the OAS that were to follow. This is, in general, the situation as it has prevailed since that date, including the period of the past ten days.

Communist Presence in the Rebel Movement, 16-27 May

8. There is voluminous testimony as to the Communists' important role in the rebel movement during the ten days preceding 27 May. This has been acknowledged even by Antonio Guzman, who has been under consideration as a new president of a PRD-weighted anti-Communist government. Guzman repeatedly stressed in his conversations with high-level US officials that he could not afford to act against the Communists in the rebel movement in a precipitous manner. He seemed to be honestly convinced that he would be unable to lead the kind of government that would have the support of a significant portion of the non-Communist rebel movement if he were required first to deport or take other strong action against Communists and other extremists who were with the rebels. Such action, he said, would only have the effect of creating more Communists.

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

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[redacted] EYES ONLY

9. The basis for Guzman's opinion comes through clearly in a conversation [redacted]

[redacted] with [redacted] an old friend [redacted]

[redacted] Reluctantly and under pressure, Guzman acknowledged to his friend that the Communists do, in fact plan an important role in the "constitutionalist" (i.e., rebel) camp. "The Communists," he conceded, "are the only ones who are really fighting...and some of them are capable and must be listened to." By this, Guzman again seemed to be saying that the Communists are such an integral part of the rebel movement that they cannot be ignored and cannot be gotten rid of in any short period of time.

10. Guido D'Alessandro, leader of the moderate wing of the Social Christian Revolutionary Party (PRSC), who has privately acknowledged that many PRSC members have been fighting with the rebels, stated succinctly [redacted] that the Communists had outmaneuvered the non-Communists in the rebel movement. D'Alessandro [redacted] Latin American Social Christians who had come to the Dominican Republic predisposed to sympathize with the rebel side, stated flatly that extremists presently dominate both sides of the Dominican civil war. (He considers Imbert an extremist of a different sort from the Communists but stated that Imbert had originally offered to lead the rebels--which could be true.) D'Alessandro told [redacted] that while there are PRSC and PRD members in the rebel camp, they are without influence; the Communists are dominant.

11. A special emissary sent by Venezuelan President Leoni on a fact-finding mission to Santo Domingo told [redacted] that he is now convinced that the Communists had, in fact, gained an active role in the rebel movement, although this is not the official Venezuelan view. The Venezuelan, who had served as ambassador in Santo Domingo during the Bosch administration, added that he felt Caamano probably would be willing to agree on a political settlement of the crisis, but that "strong" elements in the rebel camp were prepared to fight to the last ditch.

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[redacted] EYES ONLY

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

12. [REDACTED] a former Dominican Army captain [REDACTED] told [REDACTED] about the nature of the Communist control in the rebel camp as he had observed it. Each rebel "commando" unit-- militia group defending the rebel stronghold in downtown Santo Domingo--is now grouped around the leadership of two or three hard-core Communist leaders who are committed to fight to the finish, he said. He added that each commando is autonomous of the others, but that all are under the leadership of Communist militants. He feels that the commandos are not completely loyal to Caamano. He pointed out, as have other sources, that the Communists are using the opportunity to indoctrinate the youths serving the commando units and that the rank and file is being ordered to listed to Radio Havana.

13. Leaders of the PRSC who have talked with workers in the rebel-held area of the city have been told that there are 20 commando units operating in rebel-controlled areas. As of mid-May, one of these was led by the PRSC and the 19 others were controlled by the pro-Castro 14th of June Political Group (APCJ), the Marxist-Leninist Dominican Popular Movement (MPD), and the Dominican Popular Socialist Party (PSPD)--the three Communist-led groups actively supporting the rebel cause. Other sources have reported that during the 13-20 May loyalist military offensive in the northern part of the city, the MPD was charged with the defense of the north, while the APCJ and the PSPD were concentrating on the defense of the main rebel stronghold in the southern part of the city.

14. An estimate of the strength of the Communist-led commandos in Santo Domingo relative to the strength of former Dominican military officers now in rebel ranks [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] estimates come close to estimates made by other sources. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] rebel strength was eleven former Dominican military officers, 120 regulars soldiers, 80 navy frogmen, and about 1,000 "guerrillas averaging between 15 and 20 years old." The young "guerrillas" are the ones organized into commandos and led by the Communists.

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

15. The Communist leaders, however, do not always stay in the background permitting their young followers to do all the fighting. The 19 May rebel attack on the presidential palace is a good case in point. Four prominent members of the APCJ were killed in that abortive attack--along with the presumably non-Communist rebel interior minister Colonel Rafael Fernandez Domingues (who may actually have been "executed" by the Communists). Among the APCJ leaders killed in the attack was Juan Miguel Roman Diaz, a member of the APCJ central committee and one of the top rebel leaders. The others killed were Miguel Lopez, Ramon Tavarez, and Jose Jimenez Rosario--all of the APCJ. Another ranking APCJ leader who died later of wounds received in the attack was Ramon Euclides Morillo Martinez, who had traveled in Cuba and Czechoslovakia prior to his clandestine reentry into the Dominican Republic before the insurrection.

16. Other prominent Communists who have been [REDACTED] actively involved with the rebel commandos during the past ten days include Jaime Duran Hernando, a prominent APCJ leader; Ana Maria Ducoudray Mansfield, sister of two prominent PSPD leaders; Justino Jose del Orbe, another ranking PSPD leader; Franklin Franco Pichardo, another PSPD member; Abelardo "Papo" Vicioso Gonzalez, another high-level PSPD member; Rafael Estevez Weber, member of a Communist-dominated professional organization; Fidelio Despradel Roque, a leading APCJ member; Manuel Gonzalez y Gonzalez, a veteran of the Spanish civil war who is a high-level member of the PSPD; Emma Tavarez Justo, a ranking APCJ leader; and many others.

17. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

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[REDACTED] EYES ONLY

18. Some Communists in the rebel movement are evidently afraid that Caamano might be pressed into a political compromise that might adversely affect Communist interests. At a meeting on [REDACTED] May among [REDACTED] prominent Communists in the rebel movement [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] it was agreed that Caamano might be "falling prey to an imperialist tactic" designed to weaken his resolve and soften him up for almost any kind of agreement. [REDACTED] this report added that the Communists at the meeting decided to step up their propaganda among the "people" to develop sufficient pressure to discourage any "weakening" by Caamano.

19. In addition to the reports of continuing Communist activity among the rebels in their stronghold in Santo Domingo, there are a number of reports from [REDACTED] indicating that the Communists are taking weapons and sending men into the countryside to establish positions there which may later be useful in developing new bases of strength. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] reports that the Marxist-Leninist Dominican Popular Movement (MPD) has sent one of its ranking leaders to the city of San Francisco de Macoris, where he is to prepare for the development of a guerrilla movement patterned on the Venezuelan Communists' Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). US Government officials who visited San Francisco de Macoris on 26 May were told of reports of a rebel band moving in the mountains north of the city. A group of about 50 armed men was reportedly seen there and loyalist Dominican military units are said to be currently searching for the band. This could be the same band of rebels that attacked the police in the nearby town of Villa Tanares one night earlier in the week.

20. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] reported on [REDACTED] May that rebels had already by that date succeeded in smuggling "many" weapons into the countryside in the bottoms of trucks loaded with sacks of charcoal and rice. On [REDACTED] May [REDACTED]

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[redacted] EYES ONLY

that even with all the loyalist roadblocks and searches on the roads into the interior the rebels had succeeded in taking a truckload of guns and ammunition to the cities of La Vega and Bonao. [redacted] the arms are now in the hands of partisans who are waiting for orders to begin attacking the police. [redacted]

[redacted] that MPD members had dug up at least one arms cache of weapons and had sent its contents to Santiago and La Romana sometime prior to 18 May. [redacted] added that the cache contained 16 weapons--rifles and San Cristobal automatic weapons.

21. A particularly revealing report of [redacted] May from [redacted] states that leaders of the MPD had expressed gratification when they learned that a well-known APCJ member had been appointed director general of the land tax department of the Caamano government. They are said to feel that it is significant that the Caamano government, which they consider a government made up of non-Communists, should appoint an APCJ leader to such a post. They reportedly feel confident that any rewards given to the APCJ will have a beneficial effect on the MPD.

22. [redacted]

[redacted] reported on [redacted] May his views of what the Communist strategy in the Dominican Republic is. [redacted]

[redacted] are that the Dominican rebels intend to take advantage of the "clumsy Yankee intervention" in order to keep their arms and prepare to fight again against whatever government is in power once the present crisis is over. This time, the former Communist leader predicted, they would be able to take power before there could be any international reaction. "This is not a crisis to be settled in a day," the former Communist warned, "but rather a problem of the future."

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[redacted] EYES ONLY

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