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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Abraham F. Lowenthal. *The Dominican Intervention.* Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. xvi + 246 pp. $13.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8018-4755-4.

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Published on H-LatAm (December, 1995)

Since its initial publication by Harvard University Press in 1972, Abraham F. Lowenthal's *The Dominican Intervention* has been the standard work on United States policy during the first days of the 1965 crisis. Lowenthal bases his analysis on off-the-record interviews with nearly every major actor in the drama, supplemented by privileged access to then-classified U.S. government documents and a thorough use of the public record.

Drawing on these sources, Lowenthal briefly traces the history of Dominican-United States relations. He contends that Washington's policies always focused on threats to security, not on a search for markets nor on imperial dreams. The aim, before and during the Cold War, was "to assure local political stability in order to exclude possible opportunities for the introduction of extracontinental power" (p. 21).

Dominican affairs in the 1960s, however, were anything but stable. Following the 1961 assassination of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, the country's politics plunged into chaos. The election of Juan Bosch to the presidency in 1962 did not bring order. Seven months after Bosch's inauguration, a military coup ousted the erratic democratic leftist and installed a nominally independent civilian regime. By early 1965, U.S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett Jr. stood as President Donald Reid Cabral's lone powerful ally.

On April 24, 1965, junior army officers rebelled and a scramble for power began. The U.S. Embassy soon supported the formation of a military junta to replace President Reid, fearing that chaos both could lead to communist gains and could endanger American citizens. When it appeared that pro-Bosch forces would triumph, rival anti-Bosch generals united to launch an air attack on the rebels. Lowenthal concludes that U.S. officials probably did not propose the assault, as Bosch and others have alleged. Yet Lowenthal suggests "that the general U.S. approval of their course encouraged [the anti-Bosch forces] to undertake that specific tactic at this particular juncture" (p. 78).

Rather than resolving matters, the anti-rebel offensive fanned the flames of civil war. U.S. policy-makers, who opposed Bosch more due to his poor performance as president than because of his leftish ideology, quietly backed the anti-rebel side. Boschists interpreted this as proof of their suspicions about Washington. A "self-reinforcing cycle of mutual distrust… set in," making a compromise less likely and making U.S. military intervention more likely. [88] Bureaucratic imperatives also pulled Washington further into the crisis. The embassy, for instance, distorted Dominican reality by devoting as many operatives to watching a handful of communists as it did to studying all other political groups.

When the attack on pro-Bosch forces stalled, U.S. worries about chaos and communists in Santo Domingo magnified. On April 28 the anti-rebel leaders asked for U.S. troops. Marines began to land even before President Johnson approved the action that evening. The White House first insisted these troops had been deployed to protect American lives, and later claimed to have struck against communist expansion. Regardless of the rationale, U.S. policy during the first days of the intervention was anti-rebel. By the morning of May 3, an overwhelming U.S. military presence permitted Washington to chart a more neutral course. The Johnson administration continued to be divided over the proper attitude toward the Dominican combatants, but official decisions became less explicitly anti-Bosch. Lowenthal's analysis of the crisis ends with the conclusion that as political negotiations to settle the civil war dragged through the summer, "It would prove to be more difficult… to get the troops out than it had been to send them in" (p. 131).

Lowenthal completes the book with a chapter critiquing the U.S. literature on the intervention. He identifies, and finds lacking, three "fundamentally distinct approaches" (p. 132). The "official line" praises the goals and results of White House policies, but "is obviously wrong" because the administration was never neutral, as its supporters claim (p. 139). The "radical view" con-

demns the intervention as a classic example of flawed U.S. foreign policy. Lowenthal admits that Washington's awkward attempts to justify its actions makes the radical framework believable. Yet he asserts that the radicals mistakenly portray U.S. moves as the result of a "unified actor's will," an impossibility in the chaotic policy-making environment of the crisis (p. 142). Finally, the "liberal view" approves of U.S. aims but frowns on the means to these ends and the results of the intervention. Liberals, according to Lowenthal, attribute American failures to individual errors, ignoring "a more basic syndrome which makes such 'accidents' predictable" (p. 145). In place of these inadequate interpretations, Lowenthal suggests that multiple factors produce policy. The order to land marines, Lowenthal insists, was not a simple presidential choice, as most analysts contend: "The Dominican intervention resulted, rather, from a complex of decisions and actions on lesser matters by various American officials up and down the line, none of whom seems to have expected or wished his decisions to lead to military intervention" (p. 150).

In the 1995 Johns Hopkins University Press edition of his work, Lowenthal attaches a brief preface to the original text. He begins with a lament that he cannot reconsider the intervention in light of recent developments. Lowenthal then offers a series of hunches about where a thorough re-evaluation might have led. Although the basic story would remain the same, what at the time appeared to be an aberration from the Good Neighbor policy now seems to be part of a larger trend of U.S. military intervention including Grenada, Panama and Haiti. Lowenthal also admits that he would give more emphasis to the Cold War mentality of Washington policy-makers. Finally, he would expand his analysis of patterns in bureaucratic decision-making such as "the dubious use of analogies… and the uncritical acceptance of conceptual frameworks" (p. ix).

Because the new edition leaves the original untouched, old or predictable problems plague Lowenthal's work. He concentrates too intently on U.S. actors, minimizing Dominican influence during the crisis. For example, anti-Bosch generals and politicians deliberately encouraged U.S. intervention, but Lowenthal gives their provocative behavior little attention. Additionally, Lowenthal's useful 1972 literature review and "Guide to Published Sources" have become dated.

Ironically, the passage of time has resolved in part one of the most serious flaws in *The Dominican Intervention*, Lowenthal's use of privileged and uncited sources. Most of the relevant U.S. documents now have been declassified. Scholars familiar with these materials can provide their own footnotes. Indeed, Lowenthal nearly quotes many embassy cables. In one representative case, Ambassador Bennett's comment that rebel leaders lingered after a meeting "as though they were trying to avoid going out again into the cruel world" becomes in Lowenthal's version "as if trying to avoid having to reenter the cruel world."[1]

Lowenthal's reliance on select diplomatic records, however, obscures the domestic politics of Johnson's decision to intervene. Perhaps more than any other modern U.S. president, Lyndon Johnson viewed his foreign policy as feeding his political needs at home. White House documents now available underscore the pressures the president felt. For example, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., later a critic of the intervention, told a top Johnson aide that "not to avert a Communist takeover would be intolerable, leading to a serious wrench domestically (and probably losing the House to Republicans next year) and possibly affecting our situation in Vietnam."[2] Receiving such advice even from liberal skeptics, Johnson sent in troops although he recognized "that no one on earth knew if this was a pro-Castro or Communist affair."[3] Lowenthal's multicausal understanding of the intervention allows for domestic considerations, but he fails to give politics the necessary weight.

Despite its minor flaws, *The Dominican Intervention* remains the best published study of the 1965 decision to land U.S. troops in Santo Domingo. The re-release of Lowenthal's book ought to provoke new interest in this significant event in recent Dominican, United States, and inter-American history.

Notes

[1]. Embtel 1128, 4/28/65 (12:26 A.M.), "Incoming State Cables," box 4, National Security Council Histories, LBJ Library; Lowenthal, 94.

[2]. Moyers to the President, n.d. [before 5/1/65], "Vol. 3, Memos and misc.," box 39, Country File, National Security File, LBJ Library.

[3]. Memo of chat with Johnson, 4/29/65, 2, box 1, Arthur Krock Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University Archives. Krock is paraphrasing Johnson.

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Citation: Peter G. Felten. Review of Lowenthal, Abraham F., *The Dominican Intervention.* H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. December, 1995.
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