

Dominic Republic to Haiti, 28-4-1963

Following a failed attack on his family, Haiti's leader Duvalier ordered a crackdown on opposition parties. Dozens of members of the opposition sought asylum in the embassies of Brasil, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti's Capital. On 27 April Haitian government forces entered the Dominican embassy and arrested twenty-two alleged perpetrators.¹ With relations between the Haiti and the Dominican Republic already tense, President Bosch of the Dominican Republic called the invasion of the embassy 'equivalent to an invasion of our country' and denounced it as 'an unpardonable offense.'² He ordered the full military mobilisation of the Dominican forces and their deployment at strategic locations along the borders and off the coast of Haiti. Bosch called for a meeting of the Organisation of American States (OAS) about Haitian 'threats to the peace and security of the Continent'.³ On 28 April Dominican Foreign Minister Andres Freites presented the following ultimatum to his Haitian counterpart René Chalmer:

My Government has been informed that the chancery of the Dominican Embassy in that capital [Port-au-Prince] was violated yesterday by members of the Haitian public force and that members of that force remain there, having also broken into the embassy residence, grossly interfering in the freedom of movement there. [...] [I]t is lamentable to recognize that these gross and indescribable aggressions are not in any way isolated and sporadic facts, but that, on the contrary, they constitute the culmination of a series of provocations with which the Government of Your Excellency intends to insult the dignity of the Dominican nation and threaten its sovereignty. [...] Consequently, my Government demands from your Excellency the immediate withdrawal of the police forces that are violating the seat of the Dominican diplomatic mission in Port-au-Prince and furthermore, makes it responsible for the personal safety of those who have taken diplomatic asylum at the above-mentioned mission. I must warn Your Excellency that if an immediate end is not put to the insulting behavior that has been followed by the Haitian Government, and that if reparations and assurances, required by the offenses and the risks to which the Dominican representation in Haiti has been subjected, are not offered, my Government will adopt, with all decision and at any price, the necessary measures to force the respect for the dignity and sovereignty of the Dominican nation. Considering the seriousness of the events and the circumstances that are being denounced in this communication, my Government expects that within an irrevocable period of 24 hours after the dispatch of this message, the Government of Your Excellency will proceed to offer unequivocal proof of radical rectification of its behavior toward the Dominican Republic.⁴

The Council of the OAS convened in an emergency session that same day after a request by the government of the Dominican Republic. Here the latter repeated the charges contained in the ultimatum. It also accused Duvalier of conspiring with family members of the late Dominican leader Rafael Trujillo to assassinate president Bosch. Haiti in turn accused the Dominican Republic of being

¹ R. St. J. MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 15, no. 2 (1 January 1964): 417, <https://doi.org/10.2307/825288>. See also the account by US diplomat and eye witness, John Bartlow Martin, *Overtaken by Events: The Dominican Crisis from the Fall of Trujillo to the Civil War* (Doubleday, 1966), 416–47.

² 'Dominican Leader Assails "Outrage"', *The New York Times*, 29 April 1963, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9902EEDE1430EF3BBC4151DFB2668388679EDE>.

³ Jerome Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy* (Ohio State University Press, 1967), 218.

⁴ 'Text of Dominican Note', *The New York Times*, 29 April 1963, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9802EEDE1430EF3BBC4151DFB2668388679EDE>. See also Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy*, 219.

'megalomaniac' and looking for an excuse to carry out its 'aggressive attitudes'.⁵ Its representative said that 'military action long has been prepared in the Dominican Republic against Haiti'.⁶ The OAS called on both parties to abstain from anything that might further aggravate the situation. It asked for a twelve-hour extension of the deadline, which the Dominican Republic granted, and dispatched a fact finding mission to examine the case. On Monday 29 April Haiti promised to withdraw its forces from the premises of the Dominican embassy and to protect the safety of the three diplomats and twenty one persons who had fled there. After the fact finding mission had inspected the Dominican Embassy in Haiti on 30 April, it received promises on 1 May from the Haitian government that fifteen refugees would receive immediate safe passage followed later by another approximately hundred refugees at embassies of Latin American countries. Seven individuals, however, were not released. On 2 May the mission travelled on to the Dominican Republic. The threat of war did not dissipate. The Dominican Government was not only dissatisfied with the outcome, but now also demanded that Haiti extradite family members of the assassinated former president Trujillo.⁷ Dominican forces meanwhile remained fully mobilised. Amidst massive social unrest in Haiti, and repeated exchanges of fire across the border, Duvalier declared martial law. The United States anchored a carrier task force off the coast of Haiti to support its warning against Duvalier not to hurt US diplomatic service men with a show of force.⁸ Regional leaders also expressed support for the Dominican Republic. On 3 May the OAS commission expressed its concern about the safety of the refugees in the embassies as Haiti had still not lived up to its promise. President Bosch threatened to invade Haiti if it did not release all 22 refugees, on 3 May and again on 4 May. The ratio of forces between the Dominican Republic and Haiti was said to be 16,000 to 4,000.⁹ At the same time, the Dominican military high command objected to Bosch his proposed course of action, although they did so behind closed doors.¹⁰ On May 6, following the first preliminary report of the fact finding mission (which again called for a peaceful solution to the crisis), the Dominican Republic again assented to postponing military action until the publication of the second report.¹¹ Haiti meanwhile sought to bypass the OAS and requested a meeting of the UNSC. The UNSC discussed the request in session but decided to leave it in the hands of the OAS – with only the Soviet Union protesting this decision alongside Haiti.¹² The OAS Council voted for the return of the fact finding mission on 8 May which was to render 'whatever service is necessary' to find a peaceful solution.¹³ The US supported the return of the mission. Following its return to Haiti, the government of Haiti pledged to guarantee the safety of refugees. On 13 May President Bosch ordered the demobilisation of the Dominican forces.¹⁴ The OAS fact finding mission published its report in early June where it put blame on both parties. It recommended that the OAS council oncemore called on the parties to settle their disputes peacefully, to encourage to grant safe passage to the remaining refugees, and to 'express concern' about the presence of Trujillo family members in Haiti.¹⁵ Argentina, Brasil, Chili and Mexico opposed further sanctions and after deliberations in the OAS council it was decided to leave it at that.¹⁶ Duvalier's regime survived. The following months saw two more confrontations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. A small group of Haitian

⁵ MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', 417.

⁶ Facts On File, 'Haitian-Dominican Dispute: Haiti Yields to DR Threat.' (Facts On File. World News Digest, 5 January 1963), <http://wnd.infobaselearning.com/recordurl.aspx?wid=257192&nid=45962&umbtype=0>.

⁷ MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', 418.

⁸ MacDonald, 419.

⁹ 'Haitian-Dominican Dispute: OAS Action.' (Facts on File. World News Digest, 5 August 1963), <http://wnd.infobaselearning.com/recordurl.aspx?wid=257192&nid=46019&umbtype=0>.

¹⁰ Martin, *Overtaken by Events*, 434–37.

¹¹ MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', 419.

¹² 'Security Council', *International Organization* 17, no. 3 (1 July 1963): 816–18.

¹³ 'Haitian-Dominican Dispute: OAS Action.'

¹⁴ MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', 419–20.

¹⁵ Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy*, 226.

¹⁶ Slater, 229–30. MacDonald, 'The Organization of American States in Action', 422–23.

exiles occupied a small strip of territory in the Dominican Republic and Haiti accused the government of the Dominican Republic of complicity. Another investigative commission of the OAS did not assign any blame. The situation de-escalated and relations improved after president Bosch was removed from power following a military coup in September 1963.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jacob Bercovitch and Judith Fretter, *Regional Guide to International Conflict and Management from 1945 to 2003* (CQ Press, 2004), 137–38; Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, ‘Dominican Republic, 1-100’, accessed 14 August 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxxii/44733.htm>.