

EMILIO RODRIGUEZ DEMORIZI

UNITED STATES MILITARY INTERVENTION

1 9 5 8



Proyecto de Digitalización
Academia Dominicana de la Historia



UNITED STATES MILITARY INTERVENTION

By **EMILIO RODRIGUEZ DEMORIZI**



**(Translation of speech delivered to the Military
Academy "Batalla de las Carreras")**





**With the permission of the Chief of Staff,
General Trujillo Jr;
Mr. Director of the Academy;
Young Cadets:**

My return to these beloved classrooms to speak to you as I used to in the daily lessons, is an intense emotion which causes my spirit to rejoice, and at the same time, it is a high honor, I am here at the highly flattering request of General Trujillo Jr., the man who has given life to this splendid Academy.

I am here, therefore, to teach a simple lesson; one of great bitterness, as it deals with the period of the United States Military Intervention, but at the same time highly instructive and alluring because, in that fateful period of history, we can examine closely not only the virtues of the long-suffering Dominican people of the past, but also contemplate, in the diaphonous mirror of truth, one almost unknown aspect of the exalted life of the most outstanding Dominican of our times.

With the same passionate enthusiasm displayed by the baseballers of to-day, whose healthy favoritism forms part of the necessary physical culture of a people, so the Dominicans of yesterday dedicated themselves locally to the dramatic sport of revolution. And it was not a case of intelligence coupled to skill and muscle triumphing, but rather the



triumph of barbarity and death; civil chaos which in the end, like a muddy stream, had to overflow and lead to the disgraceful foreign military intervention of 1916, one of the gravest attempts against liberty ever to be perpetrated in America, a heinous event which, in short, came about as follows:

On the tragic death of President Cáceres in 1911, there commenced in the country, the most intense revolutionary period, one which was to have the gravest consequences ever suffered by the Republic. The Government of Victoria was followed by the Governments of Monseñor Nouel, of Bordas, of Báez, of Jiménez and of Enriquez y Carvajal, all in the short space of three years; and such was the confusion that there was none to invoke or give effect to the statement of Montesquieu to the effect that "the saintliest of revolutions is not worth as much as the worst despotism"; nor was there any firm hand to curb the running wild of the Republic in a blood bath in face of the threat from abroad, already controlling the finances of the country by virtue of the fact that the Dominican Customs were already in the hands of the Yankees since the days of the subordinating Convention of 1907.

Political vertigo

In 1915, in the course of the period of government of Jiménez, the political vertigo carried the country to the brink of the precipice, without a halt, and the demands of the Americans commenced to strangle the Dominican government, just as if it had been one of their colonies.

To our national shame, they insisted no less than on the appointment of an American financial expert to intervene in the implementation of our budget; the creation of a Civil Guard commanded by United States Army Officers; and the prohibiting of increasing our national debt without the consent of the Government of Washington.



Against these demands, which go to show the measure of our political situation at that time, the Nation's Government rose up proudly, although this attitude, worthy of the backing of all political parties, was unable to stem the insane activities of the political busybodies: it was at this sad moment that Desiderio Arias, despite being a Secretary of State, threw himself into one of the most inopportune of revolutions, giving rise to the first surprise landing of United States troops, under the pretext of preventing a clash between Government troops and those of the ungovernable Arias, and to the appearance of United States warships at Puerto Plata, Sánchez and Macoris.

Such a conflicting situation in which, on the one hand, there was the foreign power to be considered, and on the other, the rebellion of his own followers, caused President Jiménez to resign from his high office, leaving the Nation in a state of anarchy and at the mercy of the demands of Admiral Caperton, while Arias' troops took up positions at La Victoria only to disperse later without so much as a gesture of sanity or heroism, and the United States troops took over the city on the accursed 15th May, 1916.

In view of the threat that if a new President were not elected, a simple United States Officer, Captain White, would be appointed Military Governor of Santo Domingo, after long and difficult debates, Dr. Francisco Henriquez y Carvajal was elected Head of the State. Nevertheless, despite what might be expected, the short period of accord did nothing to stop the Washington Government from its efforts to annul our sovereignty, no less abusive despite whatever necessity there may have been for it to insist on imposing some order upon us. Then it was that there reappeared, even in a stronger form, the demands already rejected by the Government of Jiménez.

An Unjust Measure

The Yankee, having been vanquished on the plane of diplomatic discussions, took refuge in force, ordering that



the General Office of Collections of the Customs, already in its hands, cease paying money to the Dominican Government, a drastic and unjust measure which left the employed without their daily bread, the Republic without an Army or a Police Force and the Government without credit, the noble offer made by many gentlemen to serve in public offices without payment, being completely useless.

Despite the serious situation of the Government, overwhelmed by the demands of the United States, professional politicians once again commenced their blind onslaughts. In a bloody fight in Villa Duarte, General Ramón Batista, Captain Lowe and a number of United States soldiers lost their lives. Then finally, on the accursed 29th November, 1916, as the culminating point of Dominican confusion and of the abusive Yankee interference, from the Cruiser Olympia, anchored at the entrance to the River Ozama, Captain Knapp, as Head of the United States Armed Forces in Santo Domingo, gave out his Proclamation by which he declared the Republic to be in a state of Military Occupation by orders of the Government of Washington. As in the times of Núñez de Cáceres, the Dominican flag was sadly lowered, signifying once again the decline of our liberty, and the foreign flag flew from our towers like black crepe on the inert body of our Nation.

Nevertheless, no matter how inert the people in the face of the overwhelming strength of the invader, it did not hinder the raising of a protest on the part of the people, or the useless, although glorious, protest of arms: in San Pedro de Macorís, Gregorio Gilbert of Puerto Plata, shot down an American officer when he stepped ashore on our soil; in La Barraquita, Máximo Cabral sacrificed himself before superior Yankee forces, both in numbers and in arms: at Puerto Plata and Montecristi, the landing of the foreign troops was resisted; in San Francisco de Macorís, Nico Ventura opposed the invader and was shot down in the street. Others fell as well, in the noble but heroic tradition of the Quisqueyan people.



Thus, to the great sorrow of Dominicans, the interventionist Government came into being, under the pretext of "maintaining internal order in the Republic", but hiding other designs: that of taking up a position in the Caribbean in the event that, in the world war then raging, Germany might convert the island into a supply station for its alarming submarine offensive.

A True Dictatorship

So it was that Captain Knapp, unexpectedly converted into the Military Governor of Santo Domingo, took over fully all executive and legislative functions, and in a way, even judiaciary, charged with reorganizing the country and imposing upon it the norms of Washington, in the same way as had been done in Haiti. From him emanated the socalled Executive Orders, placed above the Constitution and the Laws of the Country; it was a true military dictatorship, with all its characteristics, imposed by an officer of low rank who could badly, being unused to the civilian way of life, reorganize a country mined by political excesses and revolutions, grave evils which could not be cured by means of an arbitrary occupier. In order to characterise this regime, it is enough to state that one of the first orders given by Knapp, was to prohibit "any comments about the attitude of the Government of the United States and of anything connected with the occupation," without previous consent of the Censor, as this meant the closing down of any newspaper publishing an uncensored article.

With regard to the political reorganization, it is sufficient to state that several Secretariats of State were occupied at the outset by only three United States officials, all of them highly inexpert and ignorant of the language and of the idiosyncracies of the country they were supposed to reorganize, to which should be added the closing down of the Legislative Chambers, and the doing away with the



Dominican Diplomatic Corps, although some Civil Governorships were entrusted to nationals who were not hostile to the invaders.

Peace reigned in the country, maintained by terror, and then, with the almost imperceptible advantages of that peace, and the abundant economic resources refused by the Customs Collections Office to the late Government, Captain Knapp was able to make that degree of progress which is always possible under stable governments.

But this progress, and that obtained by Knapp's successors, were not only achieved by the reduction of the sovereignty of our Nation, but also at the cost of our future economy, because the Military Governors of Santo Domingo had recourse to the same easy systems employed by past Dominican Governments: the floating of new loans, the increasing of the public debt, all of which were to make even more onerous the chains of our slavery. And the most serious part of that renewal of our national debt, was that the funds were not to be employed with the indispensable pulchritude expected from those who were supposed to be the reformers of the country they had invaded. For example, Lieutenant Mayo, who was carrying out the functions of Secretary of State for Finance and Industry, carried out frauds never before seen in the country. The sale of Bonds to the value of \$4,292,343.00 and the loans of \$2,500,000.00, \$450,000.00 and \$6,700,000.00 which followed were no more than a part of the high price paid for the few works carried out by the military government, the failure of which was evident then and even more evident to-day when compared with our present situation.

A Great Truth

A great truth, one which has already been recognized, is that those inexperienced soldiers and sailors, having no preparation for running a country, were unable to offer an appreciable example of United States efficiency, and the



majority of the success they had, such as in the fields of education, health and the army, were due in great part, if not wholly, to the fact that Dominican collaborators of the Government offered everything they could, their own pride, their own capabilities, to achieve those reforms which had been impossible in the revolutionary period which reopened on the fall of President Cáceres.

The measures of force and the acts of cruelty against unfortunate citizens; the insults to the dignity of the oppressed people, carried out by the invaders, have no parallel in our history. In the East, the sinister Bucklaw, a type of Yankee Brigadier Buceta, is remembered with horror; in the Cibao district, Cayo Báez remains even to-day as a symbol of our martyrdom, Cayo Báez in whose breast American bayonets, heated until they were red hot, left their cruel marks without being able to subdue him; our Treasury felt, even until yesterday, the black claws of the foreign brigands, masters in the art of the misapplication of funds; and in our Dominican hearts there still echoes, when remembering those cruel days, the shaking voice of Archbishop Monseigneur Nouel, always alive, in the famous letter of December 1920 to the American minister Russell, setting forth pathetically, the acts of the invader Government, and which should be known, even if only in part, by the youth of the present generation:

“You wish to know my impressions concerning the general state of the nation. I do not think I am wrong in assuring you that it is generally prosperous. . . Nature has responded bountifully to cultivation of the land and has provided fine harvests. . . Peace reigns throughout the country. The people want to keep that peace and take advantage of it. But the people are beginning to believe that it will not be possible for them to continue indefinitely in a state of affairs in which they cannot freely guide their own efforts. Therefore they fear they will eventually fall into a state of real slavery.



“The people have endured —if not willingly at least with resignation— the shame and the burden of intervention. They have suffered the sentences of provost courts in entirely civil matters. . .

“The people have patiently tolerated for a number of years the fact that a part of the six million dollars that they were forced to contract. . . allegedly for development of resources has been used to provide lush salaries for employees and executives. The Office of Public Works is considered by the people to be a veritable rat hole through which has gone and is going a large portion of the people’s money... As I understand it that Office was established because it was thought that there were no professionals in Santo Domingo who were capable of directing work nor honest men for the administration of funds. In practice, however, the present scientific management of Public Works has less technical ability than any of our construction men, and the administration of funds runs as much or more danger as it would if it were in the hands of some of our speculators. And this state of affairs continues, according to reports, because the spoils system for services rendered in U. S. internal politics allegedly demands it.

“The people have for three years endured a press censorship which is not only humiliating and arrogant but also ridiculous and childish. . . A Spanish priest of model conduct who ministered to the people of Sánchez was jailed, held incommunicado and imprisoned in Samaná in a filthy dungeon where he remained almost six months —this for the sole act of having praised in an afterdinner discussion at the hotel where he was staying, and long before the United States entered the war, the bravery and organization of the German army.

“It is true that more than once in the course of their political upheavals the Dominican people have witnessed unjust persecution, trampling of individual rights, summary executions, etc. . . but never did they hear of the water



torture, the cremation of women and children, the torture of the noose, of the hunting of men on the plains as if they were wild animals, nor of tying an old man in his seventies to the tail of a horse in full daylight in the plaza of Hato Mayor.

“I shall not deny that we were familiar with corruption in business and the petty thievery of public funds. But with the help and instruction of various foreigners we polished our knowledge of the art of cheating and of making deprivations on a grand scale.

“Marauding and cattle rustling were formerly alien in our midst. They have taken root only recently and have been sponsored on various occasions by some foreigners who could prosper more easily in their business under our former domestic system. . . I have known many American officers and men who by their good behaviour and education do honor to their country. But you will understand that in the minds of the people there will linger longer the consequences of one injustice and one trampling of rights than will the results of a thousand acts of good faith and legality”.

Monseigneur concludes with words which are applicable even to-day, because the truth is that the United States Government, even within the new international order of things, maintains in a permanent state of uncertainty, not only our own country, but all those Latin American countries which have placed themselves beside her in the present fight against Marxism.

“If the American government”, said the Archbishop, “wrest our people from the uncertainty in which they now live regarding their future and speaks to them clearly regarding their present condition; if it succeeds in keeping within rational limits the aspirations of the Capitalists and moderates the unfair appetite of unscrupulous, conscienceless speculators; and if the people are convinced that their sacrifices and heroism, 75 years ago, to attain liberty and the right to govern themselves independently. . . shall not have been in vain. . . then this people will come to be a



sincere and grateful friend of the great people of Lincoln and Washington.”

The famous letter of the beloved Dominican Archbishop, does not reveal the anguish and the longing for liberty of our people, for which they had fought without let-up since the start of the invasion; thus it was that, what had not been possible to accomplish by force of arms, was finally achieved by the patriotic fervor of the citizenry, despite the insolent statement made by Rear Admiral Snowdon, in the agricultural test station at Haina, that the next Dominican ruler was still at school.

Convinced of his failure and of his own injustices, but in search of new advantages, the Invader finally decided to abandon the captive nation, nevertheless, leaving her under the yoke of her increased public debt and with her hands tied by the Customs Collections Office which still relieved her of her most vital prerogative, that of her sovereignty; freedom to do what she liked with her revenues.

The military occupation was, therefore, a school, a fateful school, in which Dominican professional politicians learned new vices, and in which they forgot that in the work of achieving our liberty, achieved at so much cost, political liberty was incomplete without economic liberty.

For this reason, the Government which came into being in 1924, when the invaders left our shores, remained under the evident influence of Washington, still further increased by the contraction of a new loan of \$10,000,000.00 on which avidly fell the resurrected bossism and the “palace moth”, thereby losing one of the most brilliant opportunities the Republic ever had to achieve a regime of peace, of order and of work, looked forward to for so many years.

A Happy Year

It can be said in conclusion that the work of the United States Military Government—which can better be called a Police Government—shows, on examining its successes



and failures, a completely negative result. And similarly, it can be said without twisting the truth, and much though it may pain our Dominican consciences, that the foreign intervention, although fatally wounded in 1930, still remained with us until the first year of our true sovereignty, the happy year of the signing of the Trujillo-Hull Agreement, the first really happy event in our unhappy economic history.

Fortunately for our people, Generalissimo Trujillo has not only surpassed without limit the work of our previous national governments, but more particularly that of the United States Military Government, as this was the most committed of all, and which could act in the most favorable of circumstances. None can possibly deny that there is no comparison between that Government and the Government of Trujillo, whose Cyclopean work of amending and repairing the moral and economic damage of the unjust United States Occupation, is notorious and evident.

Among the very few works carried out during the period of the Occupation, there is the Duarte Road, commenced by Cáceres, and alongside it, remembering what it was and what it is to-day, and what the whole country is to-day, Trujillo might well echo the words of Augustus: "I found a Rome built of bricks, and I leave it of marble".

However, if that was the sad balance left by the Military Government, how can one explain the position of the young Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina in the ranks of the Army which, despite being called the National Guard, was commanded by the invaders? How could he have covered the first stages of a highly difficult promotion without giving up one iota of his indomitable love of the Dominican Republic?

It is possible to answer our question with one single and resounding declaration: the passage of Trujillo through the ranks of that Army was the first great proof of his invincible patriotism.



It was not the adventure of a man just emerging from the adolescent stage, but rather a reflective act of conscience; it was not a treasonable renunciation of national feeling, but rather a most decided reaffirmation, because, even before entering the Army, he had shown signs of great patriotic fervor, and that in his brain, there were already signs of the greatness which commences to show itself in those predestined to become great, even in their infancy.

Two highly eloquent events confirm this statement: on the 1st April 1911, before he was twenty years of age, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo sent to his uncle, Teódulo Pina Chevalier, who was then in Barahona, the following telegram which is true proof of his early interest in the progress of the nation: "At three o'clock this afternoon takes place the inauguration of the Farm School. San Cristóbal jubilant". In his reply, Pina Chevalier speaks of the "good of the Nation and the remembrance of the future", as if, moved by some presentiment or other, he could not find for his young nephew, more proper or more significant words than *Nation* and *Future*.

The Ideas of Trujillo

Two years later, in January, 1913, the predestined young man of San Cristóbal publishes in the *Listín Diario*, his first political-literary page, dedicated to the great General Ramón Marcelino. Everything he says is surprising because all the praise given to another shows in he who gives it, his own merits, or those to which he aspires. For this reason, his eulogy of the gallant Jimaquén, would to-day appear to be a eulogy of himself.

"Renowned soldier of right" —he calls him— "life of strife", "a principled politician", "a punctilious soldier", "a strong thinker and a loyal friend who has always shown the highest principles, establishing himself well above the common level of the palace marauders."



“To speak of a politician of these times in such a manner —he says— is to be either right or wrong in the course of events, but I am so aware of the moral, intellectual and social integrity of General Marcelino, that I feel proud to be able to confirm the concepts I have expressed, sure as I am that he will never serve other interests than those of the Nation. . . He is be glorious advance guard of Santiago Guzmán Espaillat.”

In his revealing article there is another paragraph which alludes to the birth of Jimaquén, in Samaná, in the fateful days of the project of cession to the United States, which is of surprising significance: “The flag with the stripes of fire and the shining stars, flew, then, all over the territory of the lovely Peninsular, while the flag of the cross became musty in old and forgotten chests.”

Not even retrospectively, was the young Trujillo indifferent to the sad fate of his flag, a live image in his mind, which was shortly to appear before his eyes. But when that should happen, he could well repeat for himself his eulogy of Jimaquén: “I shall never serve any other interests than those sacred interests of my Country.”

This was the position and thought of Trujillo at twenty years of age, three years before the United States occupation.

The enlistment of Trujillo in the ranks of the Army was without any doubt, premeditated. In his application, in 1918, he carefully chose his sponsors, men who could testify to his conduct. He chose the Examining Magistrate, Rafael A. Perdomo, the Clerk of the Court, the well-known Eugenio A. Alvarez and lawyer Cayetano Armando Rodríguez, at that time Legal Counsel to the Secretariat of State for Justice and Public Education, one of the most outstanding citizens of his times.

With this honorable background, Trujillo commences his military career —as if it were a simple requirement to lead to higher things— and in this career, he remains faithful to his innate altruism, to his sense of order and discipline



and to his deeply ingrained nationalist feelings. He was not the soldier without ideals or principles who was to learn these things in his career, and who would later owe all to his military training. Rather was he the young man who was putting much more into his career than he would receive from it. His honor and his integrity, his organizing ability, his power of command and above all, his love of the Republic so that our Nation should not feel the shame that in that Army, in great part Dominican, the people should not see a defender of their sovereignty.

One single gesture of Trujillo sufficed to save the honor of those Dominicans who obeyed the orders of the North Americans.

In the village of El Seibo, in 1920, at the height of the Military Intervention, a Patriotic Week was being celebrated for the purpose of collecting funds to further our civil fight for our liberty. El Seibo society had, from early morning, decided to hoist the national flag at a daring ceremony, when everyone present, fearing a possible act of force on the part of the Occupiers, froze before the appearance on the scene of a company of the Guard, commanded by a young officer, of grave mien, slender and neatly dressed, who stopped alongside the flagpole, in the center of the startled onlookers. Then was heard the penetrating voice of the officer; the soldiers presented arms; the band played the strains of the National Anthem and the flag was hoisted to the top of the pole at the same time as the shining sword of Trujillo, like an arrow across his manly chest, "testified to his loyalty to his Nation and his Flag."

If Trujillo learnt anything from the United States troops which so respected, so distinguished and so praised him, he returned it without stint, and now, the debt is not his, but that of the powerful nation to the North. No other Spanish American politician is in a position to pride himself upon the fact that his position and his illuminating political ideas have been so superior, as his have been in many



solemn occasions, to the position and political ideas emanating from the margins of the Potomac.

This is what we should repeat before the statue of Cordell Hull, as if it was this same illustrious friend of Trujillo who was saying these words, words which can be repeated by every United States citizen who is a lover of truth and justice.

Supremacy of Genius.

This homage which your people pay me will gravitate on my spirit, as something incomplete, while my people do not pay you the homage you deserve: while they ignore the fact that all the bitter resentment of your people against mine, due to the sad United States Militar Intervention, was converted by you into brotherly feeling and sympathy: while they do not see in you the historically most outstanding rebuilder of the American people; while my people do not understand that you superseded them in the most bitter and worrying fight of all the centuries; while they do not realise that it was you who showed them the way of Spain, which is their greatest safety in the face of Marxism; while they do not realise that the good neighbour policy would not have passed from simple words had you not, from the very first, contributed to converting it from an ideal into a reality; while useless rivers of ink continue to flow tortuously, due to incomprehension, scandal or Communist conspiracy, pointing in this direction as a dictatorship, a fleeting democracy, because what there is here is something which is above all this; something which beggars all insane descriptions; something which a country has only once in centuries; the supremacy of a political genius.

Like we Dominicans, so should Washington's countrymen accept these solemn truths of Cordell Hull as realities; and we should all declare that the Dominican who surpassed the North American in the government of our Nation, and who on so many extraordinary occasions has been above the



Yankee in relation to his own problems, such as in his provisions and services in the war days, and such as at the present time in face of the wave of Communism, should merit throughout the whole of America, and particularly in the United States, all the prerogatives, all the privileges, all the respect and love due to him as an outstanding Mentor and Actor in the international politics of our Continent.

If it has already been said that the gods die if the enthusiasm for them wanes; that it is not worth while to live a common life; that everything is tasteless outside moments of enthusiasm, no man would appear to us to be living a more intense life than he who, going further afield than the sublimation of his enthusiasm, has received the greatest number of emotions.

No other Dominican has felt, in the bottom of his heart, so many strong emotions, the result of his eagerness and triumphs, as Generalissimo Trujillo has felt inside him. What an extraordinary sensation he must feel at the memory of his great emotions, from the time of his days of trial under the Military Government, and from the time of the terrible hurricane of 1930, when he created a constructive peace which the powerful invaders were unable to create, and on the solid base of which he founded the New Nation through an inexhaustable series of prodigious deeds.

Each one of these deeds was a renewal of an emotion which was linked with another, even more powerful, and which in turn led to still others. But none of these emotions can compare with that which he would feel at this instant, because this noble Institution in which are reaffirmed the definitive bases of our future preservation, is something more than another of his works. It is his own spirit, transmuted to the soul, the spirit and the blood of the eldest of his sons, the invigorator of this Academy, which now and here, solemnly places itself at the service of the Republic.



