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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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TO : Department of State

INFO : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 15 8 57 AM '67

FROM : Amconsulate SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS
DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1967

RS/AN ANALYSIS BRANCH

SUBJECT : Observations from the Provinces IX: Villa Vásquez, Guayubin, and Bisonó, November 30, 1967

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

REF :

DEC 18 1967

SUMMARY

1. There is some organizational activity, and quite a bit of interest in politics in this area, but most people are saving their efforts for the official municipal election campaign which begins February 16, 1968.
2. Public works are the Partido Reformista's (PR) hope for success in the municipal elections. Construction of an aqueduct and repair of city streets have provided jobs and money, and demonstrated the government party's presence.
3. The Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) has functioning committees in all three towns, but activity is minimal pending the decision of the party to participate in the elections or not.
4. The Unión Cívica Nacional (UCN) is also represented in all three towns. The "cívicos" intend to work hard as soon as they get some money, and the campaign officially begins.
5. The Partido Quisqueyano Demócrata (PQD) has visited each of the towns, but have a functioning committee only in Villa Vásquez.
6. Lack of water, always scarce but aggravated by this year's drought, and unemployment are serious problems. Agricultural production is down, and business is "bad."

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

Drafted by: LKert:gf 12/11/67

Contents and Classification Approved by:

JAP:Ch

Clearances:

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General Description

7. The western third of the Cibao belies the oft-applied adjective of lush. This part of the valley is a desert, and where it is not irrigated, several varieties of cactus and a mesquite-like bush are the dominant vegetation. Dry stream beds and distant mountains complete a picture reminiscent of the American Southwest.

8. Bisonó (the official name -- the town is more frequently called by its old name: Navarrete) is about 25 minutes' drive down the main road connecting Santiago with Monte Cristi, which itself is an extension of the country's main highway, the Autopista Duarte from Santo Domingo to Santiago. This portion of the road, although currently in poor repair and narrow, will form part of the AID-financed highway from Santiago to Puerto Plata now under construction, and thus will soon be much improved. Bisonó/Navarrete is a town of 5,000, serving a municipality of 18,000. Dominated by a very large rice mill, the town also boasts a new tomato processing plant. Not particularly attractive, Bisonó is indistinguishable from dozens like it: wood frame buildings, some cement or cinder block, and a cluster of public buildings around a dusty square.

9. Villa Vásquez is another hour's drive down the main highway to Monte Cristi, and is entered through a pretentious triumphal arch which straddles the road and leads into a divided main street -- only half of which is in use! A group of "Trujillo-heroic" style buildings surround the main square (two are now schools, and the other municipal offices), and the rest of the town is -- in a word -- grubby. The population of Villa Vásquez is 9,000; the municipality 14,000.

10. Guayubin, a village of 1,000 inhabitants, is about four miles off the main (Santiago-Monte Cristi) road on the bank of the Yaque del Norte river (the big, well-constructed bridge that spans the river is the principal architectural feature of the town). Its proximity to water produces some greenery and lends the town a more pleasant aspect than the other two. Buildings are almost exclusively wood frame -- one exception is the attractive, cement municipal office building. Guayubin is the seat of a municipality which numbers 36,000.

Political Activity

11. There is some organizational activity, and quite a bit of interest in politics in this area, but a number of people are saving their efforts for the official municipal election campaign period (which begins February 16, 1968).

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12. The Partido Reformista (PR) has all three mayoralties, and they are reasonably confident of holding them. Public works are extensive and in progress (potable water aqueduct in Guayubin and Villa Vásquez; complete rehabilitation and surfacing of city streets in Bisonó). On the other hand, Party offices (usually a center of activity) were closed in Villa Vásquez and Guayubin on the day of the reporting officer's visit. (There are no regular hours, but it was said they are open "from time to time.") In Guayubin the current mayor will not run again and consequently invited the "next" mayor (an elderly gentleman who previously held the post during a ten-year period) to participate in the discussions.

13. The Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) has functioning committees in all three towns. In Guayubin, a place frequently cited by the PRD as the scene of alleged atropellos and general intimidation of party workers, the police commander was replaced about three weeks ago. This change, according to the President of the PRD municipal committee, has considerably improved the climate for organization, and he will be ready if the party decides to participate in the elections. In the other towns too, the PRD is "awaiting instructions."

14. The Unión Cívica Nacional (UCN) is also represented in all three towns. In Villa Vásquez the various political parties appear to be on quite friendly terms: the PR mayor accompanied the reporting officer to the dentist's office of the UCN man, where we were joined by the municipal committee president of the PRD. While the UCN dentist proceeded to drill away on patients, an amicable discussion of municipal problems ensued. The "Cívicos" intend to work hard as soon as they get some money, and the campaign is officially underway.

15. The Partido Quisqueyano Demócrata (PQD) has visited each of the towns, but reportedly only has a functioning committee in Villa Vásquez.

Economic Activity

16. Lack of water is always a problem in this area, and this year's drought has aggravated that problem. In much of the region potable water is delivered by truck, but the aqueduct currently under construction will bring piped water to Villa Vásquez, Guayubin and four other nearby towns.

17. Reportedly more people are employed now in this area due to public works (the aqueduct and repair of city streets in Bisonó) than previously. Nevertheless unemployment remains a severe problem.

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18. Tobacco, rice, peanuts, coffee, corn and tomatoes are principal crops of the region. Due to the drought, tobacco planting is late and many of the plants are dying. Campesinos, it is said, are "living off their goats and chickens, and waiting for water." In Guayubin they say the peanut and corn crops were "lost" and that cattle are dying of hunger.

19. All of this, of course, is reflected in reduced commercial activity. Merchants agree that business is "bad," but feel that the drought is the primary cause, and that as soon as there is water, sales will improve.

20. In Bisonó the 7-month-old tomato processing plant is an important element of the local economy. Salaries from this organization, and a large rice mill, produce most of the ready cash in circulation.

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FERCH

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Enclosure:

1. List of People Interviewed

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Visit to Villa Vásquez, Guayubin and Bisonó, November 30, 1967

List of People Interviewed:

Villa Vásquez

Luis Felipe PAULINO, Mayor, PR
Teofilo POZO Sosa, Secretary to the Mayor
Victor LOPEZ, hijo, President Municipal Committee PRD
Dr. Luis Priamo VERAS Porrata, Dentist, UCN activist
2nd Lt. Mario Antonio ESPINAL Ruiz, National Police Commander

Guayubin

Juan Isidro MOLINA Gonell, Mayor, PR
Juan TATIS Nuñez, ex-mayor, "next" mayor, PR
Juan Pablo Perillo, MD, UCN candidate for deputy in '66 elections
Ulises LAVASSEUR (and wife), President Municipal Committee, PRD
Rafael PEREZ, PRD activist.
Faulsto SIMON Gomez, butcher, President municipal committee, PR
2nd Lt. Diogenes ARIAS Mota, National Police Commander

Bisonó

Ernesto VARGAS, Mayor, PR
Persio de Jesús LUNA Collado, City Treasurer
Elpidio PEREZ Vargas, Municipal Secretary General, PR
Antonio Manuel GUZMAN, Public Health Inspector
Antonio DURAN, President Municipal Committee, PRD
Julio VARGAS Veras, grocer, farmer, President Municipal Committee UCN

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