
The year 1930 was a threshold in the Dominican Republic. The personal rule of General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, directly and through surrogates, from 1930 until his assassination in 1961, changed the course of history for that Caribbean nation. The imprint of those 30 years is poignantly reflected in this two-volume collection of documents by Bernardo Vega.

As if to purge a generation of the years of despair by making history the witness, Bernardo Vega, the founder and president of the collection's publisher, has compiled more than 50 series of documents, including photographs, archives, diplomatic papers, and U.S. and Dominican government documents on the years of Trujillo’s rise to power and his first year in power. The work includes hard-to-find U.S. Army and State Department files and Dominican palace papers which discuss U.S. policymakers, including President Herbert Hoover, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, Latin American Affairs Director Francis White, and, on the Dominican side, President Horacio Vásquez—who preceded Trujillo into office—Foreign Minister Francisco Peynado, and Ambassador (to the United States) Ángel Murales.

A significant aspect of this compelling and excellent compilation of documents is the raison d’être. The dedication makes that purpose clear: It is dedicated to four women, “who were born after the ‘Era’ and to Dominican youth in general, with the hope that with the reading of these documents, it will help to avoid a repetition of the loss of liberty that we did not have for 31 years. To the generation lost,” Vega continues, “the one that for these 31 years could not express itself.”

The documents presented in the two volumes are well chosen and unique, making the edited work a valuable resource for all research on the antecedents of the current U.S.-Dominican relationship. Fascinating and compelling reading may be found in documents such as the chapter on the fall of Horacio Vásquez and the rise of Rafael Trujillo (including historical photographs and copies of original documents), the section on the strategy followed by the opposition to the continued rule of Vásquez, and the section on the role of the United States in the rise of Trujillo.

Vega’s two-volume collection supplies an essential link of scholarship on the Dominican Republic. Los Estados Unidos y Trujillo, 1930 is must reading for all policymakers and scholars interested in Latin America because of the vital history that these documents reveal.

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