

46 While the organization of Dominican baseball in some ways resembles strongly the way baseball is organized in the United States, there are important differences. Some of these are due to the general dependence of Dominican baseball teams on their corporate parents, and others to the presence of strong, uniquely Dominican cultural structures (see chapters 5 and 6).

*The Political
Economy of
Dominican
Baseball*

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The Determinators

The Underdevelopment of Dominican Baseball



In the long run, to mine the baseball riches of the Dominican Republic will impoverish the Dominican game, for the country's supply of baseball talent is not inexhaustible. Not only is amateur baseball being eviscerated by the academies, but the professional winter league teams are increasingly dependent on American major league teams. At the same time successful players returning from play in the United States are increasingly reluctant to play in the winter league—this strikes a devastating blow to the integrity and health of Dominican baseball. The effects of these trends are already being felt, as attendance is falling off at parks around the country.

The Impact of the Academy

The physical and organizational presence of baseball academies run by major league franchises in the Dominican Republic has fundamentally undermined the long-standing sovereignty of Dominican baseball. First, the academies have undercut the traditional role of professional Dominican teams in locating talent (especially so because the academies are always present), and the Dominican teams are unable to protect their prospects from incursions by American teams. Second, the academies blur the boundary between professionals and amateurs by allowing them to coexist during the monthlong periods when signed and unsigned live and play side by side. Third and most important, the

academics contribute to the cannibalization of the Dominican amateur leagues. By signing players at the age of seventeen and courting them even earlier, the academics are weakening the upper echelons of amateur baseball.¹ The academics have direct access to unsigned talent and can bypass the amateur leagues entirely.

But the amateur leagues may not be the helpless though honorable victims of American expansionism that they seem to be. Pragmatists point to the desperate poverty of so many prospects as the main reason why talent circumvents amateur baseball wherever it can: "Yes, the problem is that we are a poor country, and we need the dollars. You can't say to a boy whose father is poor, 'Hey, don't sign so quickly.' You can't do that because you are killing that boy. He doesn't have any other chance like this."² Increasingly, there have been charges of massive corruption and commercialism at all levels of amateur baseball.³ One former director of an amateur baseball club who asked to remain anonymous believes that amateur baseball is a victim of its own greed: it abrogated many of its responsibilities, and the academics assumed them.

Twenty years ago television was zero in this country. You got Colgate, Marlboro, big companies. They got money to spend on publicity and promotion. The best way to get publicity every Monday morning was to have an amateur team . . . At that time the company spent that money because they can't spend the money on T.V. ads. For example, we got a company named Maprica fifteen years ago. [It] was a furniture company. They start[ed] with a very poor club. They wanna be involved in amateur level because the only thing you see is not that Maprica got beat, but Maprica's name was there.

Now all the big companies don't spend a penny on amateur baseball because to receive good publicity now you have to have a good ball club. No one wants to sponsor a poor club. Why should they spend \$3,000 to sponsor a poor club when they can put it into T.V. ads? They want winning clubs only. In the past they don't care whether it was positive or negative. Now they want only good players and they pay. Now they got only four or five good clubs where they used to have twenty. Where [docs] the kid coming from the class A program [eighteen years old and younger] go to? [Now] they don't have the chance to play in AA 'cause [the sponsors] want experienced amateur players to win a pennant and receive good publicity. Thousands of kids coming from the class A program don't have any place to play. They got three choices: come to the academy, go to another sport, or go to the Malecón and sell drugs.⁴

This is only one interpretation of the cause; there is no disputing the effect, which is a significant weakening by the academics of the amateur leagues. If one believes that local control over the development of Dominican talent is preferable to foreign control, this erosion is a problem.

The Increasing Dependency of Dominican Baseball

While the relationship between Dominican and American professional baseball has been recognized for more than thirty years, the tendency of American baseball to hinder the Dominican game is comparatively recent. American baseball teams have exerted their control chiefly by designating which players should go to the Dominican Republic, and by providing instructional and managerial staff. A team can of course assist the cross-cultural transmission of baseball rather than hamper it. The Los Angeles Dodgers have been exceptionally sensitive to Latin American operations and culture: they have urged their staff to get bilingual training,⁵ and each spring at their camp in Vero Beach they offer Spanish classes for English speakers and English classes for Spanish speakers. Their manager, Tom Lasorda, gained extensive experience managing local teams in the 1960s in the Caribbean.

Not all organizations are so enlightened, however. One American manager, assigned by his parent club to manage a Dominican team, ran afoul of the cultural sensitivities of his Dominican players. For instance, rather than ease up on his American notions of punctuality he insisted on disciplining players who showed up late for practice; he had failed to learn that punctuality is a culturally variable concept. Although he has the most talented ball club in the league, his players performed very poorly. One long-time baseball administrator in Santo Domingo has likened Dominican players in their own country not to people at work but to people who have come home from work. At work one has to be punctual and live by restrictive rules, but at home one can relax and be somewhat looser. Dominican players insist on having things a bit more lax than in the United States, and expect to be treated more leniently. An organization that is culturally invested in the Dominican Republic will seek to have its people fit the Dominican system rather than try to make the system fit its people.

Another way American teams have hurt professional Dominican baseball is by pressuring well-paid Dominican players under contract to them to forgo playing in the Dominican Republic. Because of the multiyear contracts and high salaries that so many major leaguers have, their teams do not want them to risk injury. An American team can make life so difficult for a player that he will leave the Dominican team

prematurely. There are many cases of Dominican and American players who have left their team before the championship series or even after only a few games. The press will of course play up these situations in the hopes of incensing the fans, as the Santo Domingo daily paper *Listin diario* did when it ran the screaming headline "Cincinnati Prohibits Rijo from Pitching" before a championship series.⁶ Because of the increasing power of American teams and the rapidly escalating salaries of players, the fans are easily provoked.

The reason for the diminishing interest of Dominican stars in winter ball is simple: the risk of an injury that would end their career is too great and the pay too low. Dominican players like Tony Fernández, George Bell, Pedro Guerrero, and others earn in the vicinity of two million dollars a year. An article in *Listin diario* on 4 April 1988 boasted that the thirty-four Dominicans who played on opening day of 1988 collectively earned \$15,484,000 for the season.⁷ These figures have surged since then, making the salaries paid by owners of Dominican teams amount to nothing by comparison.

Almost everyone I interviewed in the Dominican Republic agreed that players are reluctant to risk future earnings in the light of the salaries that free agency has brought them:

[The big salaried players] don't care. Cesarín [Gerónimo], Mari-chal and them, they used to play *alla time*. Now it's big money and the guys don't wanna [play].⁸

It's not a lotta competition like there was before. Then, there was a lotta big league players, natives. I keep playing 'cause I wanna be a better pitcher. Another guy makes decent money in the States; you know, guaranteed contract. And here, I don't think the owners gonna pay that kinda money.⁹

The big money is a big part of it too, but most of us are afraid of getting hurt. You taking every risk and losing all the money.¹⁰

Well, we're working on a big one-year deal. It will be my last year here 'cause I'm headin' for the thirties you know. I'm twenty-nine now and pitchin' so much . . . but its not gonna help me with spring training in the States.¹¹

Not only do most of the "big money" players no longer play because of covert pressure from their clubs, but those who do play often do so in a token way. In the words of one retired player, now a scout: "I don't care to manage [one of the Dominican professional teams] here. The players make too much money, so you can't get them to do anything.

A—— would never pitch when I needed him. [He would say,] 'Mario, I'm sick!' They would go drinking all night and couldn't play for us. American players too."¹²

Dominican fans and the press view this attitude as a betrayal, a lack of respect on the part of their more talented and fortunate countrymen. Retired Dominican players who played through the lean years of the reserve system also resent the reluctance of Dominican major leaguers to play winter ball: "Everybody recognized us then because we were in the papers every day. A lotta people don't like G—— [a current player] because he doesn't play here. They are baseball fans. That's why they don't like these guys that come here and don't play ball. They used to like me because I came and played. Sometimes they see G—— don't go to the park, but they see him in a discothèque dancing and they get angry."¹³

Intensified International Competition

The intensified presence of the United States has brought international attention to the Dominican Republic. Other nations where baseball is being played have begun to look at Latin America as a source of talent. Now that baseball is an Olympic sport the Soviet Union has called on its socialist partner, Cuba, to teach it to its young athletes. In the Dominican Republic the Japanese have recently entered the fray; surely this means that baseball prospects in the Dominican Republic will take part in international competition. The Hiroshima Carp of Japan have bought land outside San Pedro de Macorís and are preparing to invest a substantial sum in the development of an academy (several million dollars, according to rumor). The director of the Los Angeles Dodgers' Latin American operations, Ralph Avila, has pointed out that the Japanese have been attending spring training in Florida for years, so he was not surprised to see them at Campo Las Palmas. Nevertheless, their rumored attempt to buy a rather large share in the Dominican professional team the Estrellas Orientales is a different and more significant matter.

The Hiroshima team is undoubtedly the first of many, and the mining of Dominican players will only intensify in such a climate. A senior sportswriter in Santo Domingo felt certain that "in five years the Japanese will compete with the United States in this country."¹⁴ When I asked Dominican players in the winter league what their perceptions were of these developments, they were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and hopeful for greater opportunity:

I think its a good idea if the Japanese come. It's a lotta guys with a lotta talent. They get fired from the States, they still can play and make a living.¹⁵

Yeah, I think it's great. It brings more work for the people, and dollars for the Dominican Republic.¹⁶

Salaries go up, but its gonna mean more people [are] enthusiastic for the game, and the fans will come back.¹⁷

At least one reputable source said the Japanese would not make serious inroads into Dominican baseball: "Well, they need ballplayers. But the Latin players, they don't like Japan very much. The language, the customs, and they have to practice [too hard]. I have been talking to Dominicans that went there. If they have a choice, they choose the U.S. [The Japanese] can have some boys, maybe the ones that we can't sell to the U.S., they go to Japan."¹⁸

During one field trip to Santo Domingo in early 1989 I had ample opportunity to watch a Japanese film crew (from NHK, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation) working on what was to be a one-hour special for Japanese television. For six straight weeks, eight to ten hours a day, they filmed young prospects in every phase of life at the academy: getting medical examinations, signing contracts, taking part in practice and instruction, and living in the dormitories. When I spoke with members of the crew they had shot more than eighty cans of film and countless hours of videotape—far more than would be needed for a one-hour special. In response to my question the producer denied that the amount of footage was excessive: he wanted to be sure of everything. But when I asked what would be done with the footage not used the producer admitted that it would be available for "other uses." He was vague about whether these included uses by Japanese teams, but he seemed not to reject the possibility.

To Americans long used to having free rein in the Dominican Republic, the presence of a Japanese company interested in baseball but unaffiliated with any team anywhere is more ominous. Such a presence became a possibility when representatives of a Japanese firm approached the director of the Los Angeles Dodgers' camp to see if he would help them start an academy.¹⁹ When asked why a firm unaffiliated with professional baseball would want to do such a thing, they replied that they wanted to produce players for sale on the world market. The Dominican Republic, so rich in baseball talent, seemed a logical place to set up this operation, a sort of ballplayer factory. Korea, Taiwan, Australia, and other countries have already developed their own brands of profes-

sional baseball and will step up their programs, especially now that baseball is a worldwide sport. Should these countries hatch plans similar to those of the Japanese, there could be grave implications for American teams and Dominican players.

Scouting and Signing Irregularities

The presence in the Dominican Republic of roughly thirteen academies and scouts from all the franchises in the country heightens the competition for talent. Presidential decrees and rulings from the commissioner notwithstanding, overzealous scouts and perfunctory academies continue to commit occasional improprieties. The prevailing attitude is that the ends justify the means: to put the entire baseball system in jeopardy by engaging in dubious practices may be unfortunate, but warranted because it provides a few young men with the fame and riches the entire country seems to be after.

The competition to sign players often leads scouts to exaggerate and at times to lie outright. Stories of scouts signing players right under the noses of other scouts are part of the baseball folklore of the Dominican Republic. The stories provoke laughter, but the practice prompts guard-
edness and resentment:

We'll continue to sign players without a camp [academy]. We signed a player out of the Yankees camp in November. The Yankees raised hell about it. But what could they do? They still hadn't signed the boy.²⁰

Scouts are involved in stealing each other's players. A—— wanted me to take him to Campo Las Palmas the next time I went. I asked him about stealing other players [I suspected his motives]. He told me that a guy will pull the young men over to the side and ask, "How long you been here?" Whatever the reply, he will continue, "What? And they haven't signed you? We'll do it right now."²¹

I had to chase two scouts away from my camp last month. They came to my camp during our lunch break and took two of my players to the other side of the stadium. I caught those guys and told them to leave.²²

To protect themselves against these abuses, many academies often hide their prospects, bringing forth charges of kidnaping. Papi Bisono, former commissioner of Dominican baseball, recalls one mother who

looked for her missing son: "She'd heard that her son had been taken away by a baseball scout and asked me if I could help find him. And this was one of many complaints that I received about these camps. The scouts who ran these camps had these kids hidden; that is the real truth. These camps were hideouts because the scouts didn't want their kids seen by other scouts. It almost seemed like they were concentration camps."²³

Many of these abuses have been corrected, but others have not. At the time of my interview with him, one official was investigating allegations that scouts had signed players for one amount and paid them only a fraction of it. In some instances there was no delivery at all of the money that had been promised. Cheating young hopefuls out of their due continues despite decrees against it. One scout confided that if the government blocks his signing of a young player, he will simply circumvent the ruling by saying that the boy was signed in Haiti. Some teams even get their way by threatening to leave the country if they are interfered with by the government.²⁴

All this maneuvering may have driven the fans away in the past few years. When I visited the Dominican Republic in the winter of 1988–89, everyone I spoke to suggested that attendance at the country's premier facility, Estadio Quisqueya, was down from the preceding year (this was confirmed by my own observations).

In my last field trip (January–February 1989) declining attendance had certainly become an issue for those connected to Dominican baseball. The press and owners were mulling over the possible reasons why the fans were staying away in such numbers. Monchín Pichardo, president of Licey, provoked a controversy when he suggested that because of the fans' declining interest the League needed a *descanso* (rest). A very sensitive chord had been struck, and the sports pages of the dailies were filled with editorials and statements opposing the plan. Referring to the owner of San Pedro's team, the title of one article read, "Antón Opposes League Recess."²⁵ Next to this was another article proclaiming the strength of Dominican baseball, "Griffin Thinks Dominican Baseball Ought to Recover Its Force,"²⁶ in which the writer articulated simultaneously the fear that baseball was in crisis and the hope of unlimited potential: "Those boys will be in charge of the return of the fans to the baseball parks because, with total assurance they are the future stars of Dominican baseball . . . Griffin reminds us that the fans have to back these young players because the big league figures who have multiple-year contracts continue to refuse playing in their country."²⁷

All whom I interviewed—fans, players, journalists, and administrators—acknowledged the problem but assigned different causes to it:

[Pichardo] wants a "rest" because Gerónimo [president of FENAPEPRO] is pushing for free agency. It's a lockout, pure and simple.²⁸

Used to be seventy-five centavos in the bleachers, now it's two pesos, sometimes five pesos. Who can come?²⁹

Another part of it is that they are afraid to leave their homes. Without no lights, you know, *apagones* [blackouts]. It's a big part of it. Transportation too. It's hard for them at eleven o'clock to find a bus and they don't have that much money for a cab.³⁰

Others suggested to me that the declining attendance was caused by the deteriorating facilities in the ballpark, the refusal of players to appear in the Dominican winter league, the absence of promotions, and the less than adequate press coverage. Clearly there is a genuine crisis in Dominican baseball, a direct result of the success of Dominicans in the game and of the American effort to exploit it. The background to these developments is the larger relationship between the United States and the Dominican Republic, which must be examined critically.

Dependency and Baseball: Camps, Cramps, and Visa Stamps

Andre Gunder Frank was among the first to explore the impact of colonialism in Latin America from a perspective focusing on dependency.³¹ In his view the relation between colonialist nation (core) and colony (periphery) is one of simultaneous development and underdevelopment. The core nation expropriates the colony's resources and imports them for processing and manufacture. Finished products are consumed in the home market as well as reexported to the colony. This dynamic results in the enrichment of the core and the impoverishment of the periphery. The system is often guaranteed at first by a direct military presence; in a neocolonial setting it can usually be sustained simply by the threat of force and the political and economic power of the multinational, as it is in the Dominican Republic. The same principles can be seen operating in the world of baseball.

More recent studies of neocolonialism have focused on the means by which manufacturing (and hence labor) moves away from the core and toward the periphery. Lured by a cheap and docile labor force, corporations based in industrial countries move their manufacturing plants offshore. This process, which has been called the international division of

labor,³² is bringing about a major change in contemporary capitalism. A fitting example of the process in the Dominican Republic is provided by the many *zonas francas* (free zones) that are springing up all over the country. Begun as part of President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative, the *zonas francas* are manufacturing enclaves built by the Dominican government. Foreign manufacturers (usually small to medium-sized) are lured there with the promise of cheap and plentiful labor. The political economy of Dominican baseball is to some extent comparable, since young Dominican ballplayers do provide cheap labor. But although Dominican ballplayers may be signed cheaply, once they go to the United States they become highly skilled and incredibly well paid. Rather than suffer exploitation, Dominican ballplayers frequently retire as very rich men.

The competition among American teams to sign as many players as possible is intense and often wasteful. There are fifty Dominicans out of 170 players in the minor league operations of the Oakland Athletics; the team signed thirty Dominicans between December 1987 and March 1988 alone. In the United States this northward movement of Latino ballplayers is periodically construed as a flooding of the baseball market with cheap foreign talent. Traditionally the government has come to the aid of threatened industries by imposing tariffs or outright limits on foreign products and labor. On occasion limits have been applied to Dominican ballplayers.

In 1986 there were 956 major league players, of whom 102 were foreign. Almost all the foreigners were Hispanic (ninety-nine), and forty-five of them were Dominican. Although the U.S. Department of Labor does not impose quotas on foreign players in the major leagues, the quota that it does impose on the minor leagues affects the majors indirectly. Only 10 percent of minor league players can be foreign, which translates into roughly 520 visas for foreign players. Teams do all they can to get around the quotas: "If some teams had their way they'd [each] be signing 50 or 60 Latins."³³ The Montreal Expos and the Toronto Blue Jays, which are among the most active teams in the Dominican Republic, have most of their minor league teams in Canada and until recently were not subject to the quotas. All major league teams have recourse to a Dominican rookie league that is affiliated with the American minor league system and that is also exempt; they scout and sign players in this league and bring to the United States only those ballplayers who are qualified.

Until 1989 the total number of visas allowed by the U.S. Department of Labor for minor league players was allocated to each major league parent club by the commissioner of baseball. The allocation was some-

what uneven: teams that were more active in recruiting Latin players were given more visas, and teams that were less active could trade their visas to other teams in return for favors. In 1989 the rules were changed: each club is now allotted twenty-four visas, which are not transferable.

The quota system is a response by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the baseball commissioner's office to the competition between clubs for foreign talent and the potential inundation of the United States by Latino players.³⁴ The rules governing the granting of work visas to foreign nationals stipulate that the work must be of a kind that cannot be performed by Americans. This restriction derives from the protectionist impulse of the market and from fears of national vulnerability. These feelings are heightened as baseballs are stitched in Haiti, aluminum bats are produced in Japan, mitts are made in Taiwan, and players are increasingly coming from Latin America. The internationalization of baseball contributes to the perception that the American pastime is moving offshore.

The response of each American club to these protectionist measures depends on how heavily the club is invested in the Dominican Republic (and other Latin American countries). Teams that have a substantial head start in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere and have mined most of the talent are at odds with the government's restrictive visa policies; less active franchises in Latin America favor the policies because they curb the competition. In looking at multinational corporations, Barnett and Müller have demonstrated that nationalist considerations are superseded by the internationalism of contemporary production;³⁵ protectionist measures impede or serve a firm depending on whether they help maximize its profits. A major league franchise is not a multinational firm in the strict sense of the term, but it does resemble one in some respects. Because of the international nature of modern baseball, a team finds itself periodically bridling under the constraints imposed by the governments of the United States and the Dominican Republic. Each government seeks to protect what it perceives as a national treasure—baseball—against a system of production that is increasingly international.

Underdeveloping Dominican Baseball

In assessing the impact of the United States on Dominican baseball, it is essential to distinguish the various levels: individual, institutional, and cultural. A failure to do so causes a good deal of confusion over whether

Dominican players are exploited and whether the presence and growing interference of the United States in Dominican baseball and culture helps or hinders the game and society as a whole.

At the individual level the strongest force in the Dominican Republic is a pervasive poverty, which ensnares most Dominicans and deprives them of economic opportunity. The prospects for improving the lot of the Dominicans seem even bleaker when one realizes how few children attend school: at just about any time of day one can find school-age children playing baseball instead. Education and occupational preparation have nothing to offer those who need it, so there is no correlation between education and employment.³⁶ Many Dominican boys see baseball as their only escape, and the inordinate pull of the sport over them is strengthened by the astounding success that the best Dominican players have achieved in North American professional baseball.

Most Dominicans see their alternatives as sugar cane and baseball, and the choice is obvious: there are no cultural heroes with a machete in their hand. This was made clear in a tragicomic way in the early 1980s, when the Dominican government closed its border with Haiti (as it does periodically when nationalist sentiment and hatred of the Haitians grow strong enough). This had immediate implications for the Dominican economy, since more than 70 percent of the agricultural work force is Haitian—a sad but telling fact. The sugar cane had to be harvested, and a group of famous baseball players led by a retired major leaguer formed a movement to mobilize people by appealing to their patriotism. The plan was for all Dominicans to roll up their sleeves and harvest the cane themselves, led by the baseball notables and aided by generous press coverage. When it came time to begin the “people’s cane harvest,” television cameras were ready and thousands of people gathered at the scene. The crowd parted as the ballplayers arrived in work clothes, ready for their Sisyphian task. The cameras rolled as they hacked away at the cane, which soon formed a string of piles. But no one made a move to help the players: instead the crowd stood incredulous, laughing because men so rich and talented were performing such a task. After a few hours the players surrendered to the cane field, emerging thirsty, sweaty, and bloodied. Cane, as they all knew, is really no alternative to baseball. This episode was a pungent reminder of how true this is, one that could not escape the youth of the Dominican Republic—just as the mansions and expensive cars of Dominican star athletes are tangible reminders of what most Dominican boys feel can be theirs if they work hard and get a break.

The dream of success at baseball is elemental, and success is broadly defined. Even Dominican players who fail to reach the major leagues

and play instead in American minor league cities are considered financially successful, and those who remain in the baseball academies for two years and do not play in North America at all still earn more money than they would in a decade on the streets or in the cane fields—a sad commentary on the Dominican economy. It has often been said that the academies exploit their young charges,³⁷ but this is an ethnocentric argument that is only occasionally true and that overlooks a fundamental reality of Dominican life: the young man who signs with an academy will receive a bonus and a first-year salary that together are roughly seven times his father’s annual income (assuming the father is not one of the 30 percent of Dominicans who are unemployed). If the boy plays for only four seasons (two years) he will outdistance all his friends at home. For a time he will eat well, receive medical attention, and perhaps be a hero and a hope to all his less fortunate peers in sandlots and ballfields throughout the Dominican Republic. Disappointing and frustrating his experience may be, but one cannot say that he will be exploited—not if one takes into account the current state of the Dominican Republic. He will have had a reprieve from the streets and from unrewarding labor.

The dream of baseball shines radiantly for the individual, but it blinds society. Baseball absorbs the energies of youth, energies better spent in pursuit of other things. The dangers inherent in the dream of escaping poverty through sport are manifest throughout the third world, but they are especially so in the Dominican Republic because many people know someone well who has succeeded in baseball. In a small random sample that I surveyed around San Pedro de Macoris, ninety-eight of a hundred respondents had a close friend or relative who had signed a contract with an American club. The perception is that succeeding as a professional athlete is within everyone’s reach; this is of course an illusion, for there are not many job opportunities for Dominicans in baseball.

There are roughly forty-nine Dominicans in the major leagues, 325 in the minor leagues, and four hundred in Dominican baseball academies. Perhaps 250 play in the Dominican Professional League and are unsigned by American clubs; another 250 are scouts, instructors, and staff members affiliated with academies. Thus around thirteen hundred Dominicans earn a living through professional baseball. The amount of energy people expend in pursuit of a career in baseball appears grotesquely out of proportion to the number of opportunities actually available.

It can be argued, however, that Dominicans simply do not have other options, and that this makes valid their investment in baseball. Edwards

counters this argument by saying that American blacks should focus on education rather than become involved in the "slave trade," as he refers to collegiate sport.³⁸ While educational opportunities for African-Americans in the United States are not as forthcoming as they are for whites, they are real and bountiful compared with what is available to the Dominicans. In my own view the impact of professional sport on individuals, which is salutary, must be distinguished from its impact on society, which has unfortunate consequences. What needs to be determined is the point at which the beneficial individual effects are outweighed by the detrimental societal effects. The socioeconomic conditions in the Dominican Republic are so distressing that one could argue that the point has already been reached: for all the success that the Dominicans have enjoyed at baseball, 80 percent of the people are unemployed or underemployed, and the economic benefits of baseball must be negligible. On the other hand there is no disputing the enormous success that some Dominican players have enjoyed. At least as far as baseball is concerned, it seems that the Dominicans' economic and political dependence on industrialized nations is both their best hope for the future and a leading cause of their underdevelopment.

And Dominican (and Latin American) dependence is growing. Perhaps the most distressing sign of this dependence is that the hallowed Caribbean Series has been transplanted to the United States.³⁹ This twelve-game round robin pits against one another the champions of the four winter leagues—those of Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela—and in the past was held alternately in the four countries. The cost to the governments of sponsoring the series was not negligible, but it was borne because the series helped to build national pride. Now the sports promoter Rick Horrow (of the Senior Professional Baseball League) has agreed to pay the Caribbean Baseball Confederation \$60,000 annually to hold the series, as well as all expenses (to be divided among the teams). From 1990 to 1992 it will be played at the Orange Bowl in Miami. When rumors first circulated in 1988 of the possible move to the United States, a reporter from the *New York Times* wrote that the economic benefits of such a shift were certain.⁴⁰ The president of the confederation, Horacio López-Díaz of Mexico, feared however that the series would lose its importance and following if it were held outside the Caribbean.

The opening of the series was disastrous. The Orange Bowl proved to be a poor facility for baseball, with a short left field fence and an uneven playing field. Officials from the host city did little to publicize or support the event, and the attendance for twelve games totaled only fifty thousand, despite the large Latino population in Miami. Cultural prob-

lems between Dominican fans and the local police almost led to a riot during one game. The affair was so disappointing that López swore the series would not be held in Miami when it was his country's turn to be the host.⁴¹

More recently there has been another sign of foreign domination of the game. A rumor is circulating that the North American baseball draft will soon include the Dominican Republic and Venezuela (it already includes Puerto Rico). This seems plausible in the light of the declining presence of African Americans in the game and the growing presence and importance of Latinos.

If the draft is extended to Dominican players, the immediate effect will be to drive up the cost of signing all players. (Puerto Rican players commonly sign for bonuses of \$100,000, which is comparable to what other players get.) Another effect will be to diminish the power of the academies that are the principal threat to amateur baseball, and for this reason it may reinforce the control that the Dominicans have over the game. But at the same time a draft would allow North American interests to dictate further the structure of amateur baseball in the Dominican Republic.

But the logistical problems of implementing a draft in the Dominican Republic may outweigh the advantages of expanding the pool of available talent. The Puerto Rican draft is not strictly analogous, for in Puerto Rico ages and names can easily be verified, whereas in the Dominican Republic record keeping is far more haphazard.⁴² It is also likely that teams with academies in the Dominican Republic would resist a draft because of the damage it would do to their position; teams with little or no presence in the country, on the other hand, would welcome it as an opportunity to sign players who would not otherwise be available to them.

I argue that all this further diminishes the autonomy and vitality of what was once a national sport. The best players are no longer playing at home or contributing much culturally to their less fortunate compatriots, and the game as a whole has been weakened. With the removal to the core countries of precious resources—talent and the Caribbean Series—neocolonialist underdevelopment is sure to continue.

5

Yo soy dominicano

Hegemony and Resistance through Baseball



It is a widely received tenet of cultural imperialism that the cultural exports of the United States and the industrialized West to the rest of the world are uncritically accepted.¹ The baseball institutions and practices of the United States indeed have a powerful influence in the Dominican Republic and other developing countries, as do its other sports and its films, fashions, and television. But it is wrong to assume that the less powerful nations do not possess cultures capable of resisting these influences. In Dominican baseball there are various unique forms of resistance to hegemony and a constant tension between the two forces, either of which will dominate at a given moment depending on the political, economic, and cultural currents.

Hegemony and Cultural Colonialism

“Dominican York” is a slightly derisive term for Dominicans who have moved to New York, become better off economically, and taken to flaunting their newly acquired wealth before their countrymen. They exemplify not only conspicuous consumption and status differentiation among Dominicans, but also the domination of the Dominican Republic by American culture, particularly popular culture. It is characteristic of intercultural relations in the third world that Dominicans should be drawn toward Americans at the same time as they express deep resentment of them. This is in large part due to the control that the United States has over the ideology and consciousness of everyday life

in the Dominican Republic—a control as critical as that of the economic and political kind in maintaining power relations in society and protecting the position of the United States, as well as that of the dominant Dominican class.

Culture, ideology, and art, once dismissed as a simple reflex of economic systems (that is, as a superstructure bearing a mechanical relation to its base), have been seen to play a more active role by Antonio Gramsci² and Raymond Williams³ and their followers. Not only coercion (the use of force) but consent (obtained by controlling culture and consciousness) helps maintain class relations within society and prevents colonies from becoming unstable or even revolutionary. The term most often applied to cultural and ideological control is hegemony. In the third world the desire for American culture is often a receding mirage. Many scholars in the rapidly growing field of culture studies have made this term the cornerstone of their paradigms.⁴

A good deal of confusion surrounds the terms hegemony, resistance, and economic and political domination. Building on Gramsci, and on the earlier writings by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* that the class controlling the material means of production also controls the “mental” means of production,⁵ James Scott offers a working definition of hegemony as “the extent to which dominant classes are able to impose their own vision of a just social order, not only on the behavior of the subordinate classes, but on their consciousness as well.”⁶ According to this definition the dominated class or society accepts the ideology and cultural institutions of the dominant class or society. Both colony and colonizer are convinced of the legitimacy of their relationship, the superiority and right of one to dominate the other through a sharing of a “vision of a just social order.” An example is provided by the Dominican Republic, a dominated nation that embraces much of the ideology and culture of an industrial giant.

The relation between political and economic domination and hegemony is cloudy, especially in a complex society. In both Scott’s analysis of a Malaysian village⁷ and Genovese’s look at slave relations in the antebellum South,⁸ the authors found only a partial or incomplete hegemony. In modern neocolonial relations the nature of hegemony can be even more elusive, because of the greater number of strata and cultures. Hegemony may work among certain classes more than among others: for instance, among the affluent class in a third world country it may be more pronounced than among the poor. Even functioning partially, hegemony nevertheless continues to exert a strong influence.

In partial hegemony the system of domination is flawed: consent by the dominated is to some extent lacking, and there is a potential for resistance. In discussing why hegemonic control is less perfect among the

Malaysian peasantry than in the industrialized West, Scott points out that the "institutional bases of hegemony—for example schools and media—are simply thicker on the ground in late capitalism, and hence presumably more effective."⁹ In Malaysia the cultural distance of the peasants from the news media and other forms of popular culture allows more room for their native culture, which they use to resist domination. But cultural resistance can also occur in the middle of fairly complete foreign domination in the third world.

Overvaluing the Foreign and Social Self-Loathing

A cause of hegemony that many overlook is ethnic and racial self-loathing. It is the flip side of the desire for the culture of the colonizers. The dominated party is at least partly convinced of the superiority of the dominating party, and simultaneously convinced of its own inferiority. In Scott's otherwise compelling arguments against hegemony, he gives short shrift to this dimension of hegemony, presumably because its role in Malaysian class relations is not as great as elsewhere. In most relations between the industrial nations and the third world, however, cultural self-devaluation plays a powerful role.¹⁰

For people in a nation subject to neocolonialism, the cultural institutions of a country as powerful and wealthy as the United States hold a special allure, the promise to the colonized of an escape from their dependent status. The colonized consume a wide range of the products of the colonizers; they subscribe to the ideology of upward mobility and have the illusion that they can change their status. Thus culture can promote domination, by offering the promise of empowerment without change. The desire for the culture and institutions of the foreign elite (in this case the American elite) rests on two pillars of the social psychology of the dominated: veneration for the foreigner (colonizer, ruling elite, or multinational corporation) and cultural self-loathing, or what Fanon referred to as colonial self-hatred.¹¹ Of course the willingness of a colonized and subordinate class to take on the ideology and culture of the ruling class leads to the impoverishment of their own culture.

In writing about his lifelong relationship with the sport of cricket, the famous black historian C. L. R. James describes how he was often torn by conflicting loyalties: to the British ideology so embedded in the game on the one hand, and to Trinidadian values on the other. More effectively and earlier than any other writer, James epitomized the conflicting role of sport in colonialism: "It was only long years after that I understood the limitation on spirit, vision and self-respect which was imposed on us by the fact that our master, our curriculum, our code of

morals, everything began from the basis that Britain was the source of all light and leading, and our business was to admire, wonder, imitate, learn; our criterion of success was to have succeeded in approaching that distant ideal—to attain it was of course impossible."¹²

As the Dominicans emulate and consume the culture of the colonizers, they sense they can distance themselves from the feeling of being colonized—it is a balm to them to be able to mimic their oppressors, even if somewhat ineffectively. Not all segments of Dominican society are equally enamored with American culture: its influence is more marked among those with some capacity for upward mobility—the upper and middle classes.

One need look no further than Trujillo for a particularly poignant example of racial and class self-loathing among Dominicans. Trujillo's promotion of Jewish emigration to the Dominican Republic in the 1940s was in part prompted by his hopes that the Jews would "whiten" the Dominican population. Despite having the power of life and death over his people and unbelievable wealth, Trujillo remained very insecure about his darkness, going so far as to lighten his face with powders.

In his political history of the Dominican Republic, Spitzer often notes the Dominican tendency toward simultaneous overvaluation of the foreign and cultural self-devaluation: "It often happened that a Dominican of the upper or middle class would purchase a foreign manufactured good for the prestige value, no doubt to some degree a psychological manifestation of being under [foreign] military rule."¹³ Foreign culture gives Dominicans the illusion of upward mobility. The Dominican York weighted down with gold-plated jewelry and the local Dominican wearing a college jersey from an institution in the United States of which he has never heard are giving the same symbolic message: I am becoming less Dominican and more American. The nightly scene at the airport in Santo Domingo bears this out as well. There Dominicans watch their compatriots returning from the United States, who parade the latest in fashion and consumer goods as they leave customs. Even as the locals deride Dominican Yorks for their pretensions, their comments at the airport reveal a desire for the American goods being previewed. Six months later, when these fashions find their way to the Dominican Republic, shoppers will be eager to purchase them.

Political and Economic Domination by the United States

A century of foreign intervention in Dominican economics has done little to improve the country's well-being. While the \$735 million in exports that the Dominican Republic made in 1985 represents a signifi-

cant increase over the levels of the 1970s, it pales by comparison to the \$1.5 billion in imports made in the same year. No other country dominates the Dominican Republic as much as the United States does (see chapter 1). Black makes this point in *The Dominican Republic: Politics and Development in an Unsovereign State*, the subtitle of which underscores it: "Because of the overwhelming role of the U.S.-based Gulf and Western Corporation in the Dominican economy since the mid 1960s, the republic has sometimes been called a company state. All major private sectors of the economy—agro-business, mining, tourism, and light manufacturing—are controlled by foreign, mainly U.S., companies."¹⁴

This represents only the latest phase of an American economic presence dating back to the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ American companies benefited from tax exemptions, and the Dominican government did its part to prevent local competition, assuring American investors that they could get whatever they needed. Trujillo further contributed to the underdevelopment of his country's economy by promoting a single-crop agriculture. The picture was completed by the displacement of peasants and the breakup of communal lands so that American sugar companies (and later Trujillo himself) could expand sugar production.

From the beginning American economic penetration into the Dominican Republic bespoke a corresponding political and cultural domination. As early as the 1870s there was a strong movement to annex the Dominican Republic to the United States, much as Puerto Rico was annexed later.¹⁶ The bid failed to pass in the U.S. Senate by only one vote. Certainly by the beginning of the twentieth century the Dominican government was unable to move in any direction without the approval of the United States.¹⁷

In the twentieth century the Dominican Republic was twice invaded by the U.S. Marines, and each time the United States had to negotiate an end to armed Dominican resistance, which was particularly fierce during the first invasion (1916–24). Clearly the United States would go to extraordinary lengths to prop up American sugar companies. In the Dominican Republic, as in other third world countries, American companies are largely responsible for the continued underdevelopment.¹⁸ This impoverishment continues to grow despite such schemes as the Caribbean Basin Initiative, allegedly aimed at promoting development. The number of industrial jobs for every hundred urban dwellers actually declined from seven in 1970 to five in 1980.¹⁹ Combined unemployment and underemployment remains around 80 percent, high even by Latin American standards. A century of American presence, planning, and aid has only driven the average Dominican further into despair, as witnessed by the rash of current protests against inflation. The

few wealthy families and those who have grown rich and powerful by commandeering wealth that belongs to others have worked hard to keep the interests of the United States in place. Hence: "A revolving door at the upper levels of company and government administration allowed former company managers to serve in important government posts and former government officials to move into company management."²⁰

In response to the deprivation in large areas of their country, great numbers of Dominicans seek work and life elsewhere. About one million Dominicans have emigrated to the continental United States and Puerto Rico (the total population of the Dominican Republic is about seven million), most settling in New York and San Juan.

Popular Culture in the Dominican Republic

Dominican popular culture is both indigenous and foreign. Merengue, for instance, a traditional dance and musical form that was formed locally but ultimately stems from African cultural roots, is the dominant form of musical expression and the most widely known indigenous cultural product outside the country. But merengue is not uniform: in response to foreign musical influences, particularly contemporary American music (but also other Latin American music), merengue has become fractured into a number of types, two of which are *típico* (traditional) and *nuevo* (more updated).

Carnival and cockfights are also mass cultural forms in the Dominican Republic, as they are throughout Latin America. While closely tied to religious festivals, the main appeal of Carnival lies in its profaning of the sacred. Throughout Latin America popular festivals such as Carnival have become a rich source of symbols that bond disparate classes and regions into a national whole. Cockfights, on the other hand, appeal almost exclusively to men. In the Dominican Republic attitudes about cockfighting are split. While many see the sport as back-alley barbarism fit only for the common elements, there is a government-sponsored and sanitized version of the sport carried out in a large, well-appointed arena in Santo Domingo. There one finds affluent Dominicans from all walks of society, who are as filled with blood lust as the peasants in the outback and bet as passionately. Cockfighting is intimately linked to the machismo so prevalent in the country and in Latin America, and its appeal cuts across racial and class lines. Because of its peasant roots and its excessive bloodletting the sport has not been picked up by North American interests, and the cockfighting arenas are definitely not among the stops suggested for tourists.

Foreign popular culture, especially from the United States, is as desired as any local form. Almost all film, fashion, and sport is American in origin. All but three movie theaters in Santo Domingo show English-language films exclusively (typically six months after their release in the United States). The genres range from drama and action to comedy and musicals; and whether or not the people understand the premises or subtle points, they attend with alacrity and in large numbers.

Basketball, and of course baseball, are also popular American products,²¹ which in the course of being assimilated by Dominicans are often altered. Dominicans can bring their values to bear on the way a game is played, whereas there is little they can do to make foreign television, film, and music distinctly Dominican. For most Dominicans rock music is memorized (even if those who sing it do not know what the words mean), American dance steps are aped, and fashion is slavishly followed.

North American baseball has dominated Dominican versions of the sport. But baseball has also furthered cultural hegemony since early in the twentieth century. In a dispatch sent in 1913 to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan by James Sullivan, the American minister to the Dominican Republic, the hegemonic potential of the game was openly and seriously suggested:

I deem it worthy of the Department's notice that the American national game of base-ball is being played and supported here with great enthusiasm. The remarkable effect of this outlet for the animal spirits of the young men, is that they are leaving the plazas where they were in the habit of congregating and talking revolution and are resorting to the ball fields where they become wildly partizan each for his favorite team. The importance of this new interest to the young men in a little country like the Dominican Republic should not be minimized. It satisfies a craving in the nature of the people for exciting conflict, and is a real substitute for the contest in the hill-sides with rifles, if it could be fostered and made important by a league of teams . . . I trust that the Department will not believe that this suggestion is a trivial one, but will see that it well might be one factor in the salvation of the nation.²²

In contemporary professional baseball, Dominicans experience yet another form of culture that is dominated by the United States. North American major league teams are always in the news, and Dominicans playing in the United States are followed with particular interest by their compatriots. Neighbors and fans hang on every word these successful

Dominicans utter. When they return home Dominican players are often inadvertent spokesmen for American culture. The press reports on everything they say, and players commonly sit in the plazas in the evening and chat about life in the United States as the throngs sit in rapt attention. Each time a Dominican ballplayer succeeds it encourages the efforts of thousands back home to make the supreme effort—to give up education and work toward becoming a baseball player. That successful Dominican ballplayers are so numerous seems to justify any effort to achieve the goal.

Since American baseball teams intensified their involvement with the game at every level in the mid-1970s, Dominican baseball has come to represent a particularly good example of an institution subject to hegemonic control, for the criteria of external domination and consent are both present and the sport is pervasive.

North American popular culture receives much positive attention, and it helps to mediate the more harsh and oppressive forms of domination, both corporate and military. Still, American hegemony is not complete: it is one thing to say that hegemonic influences are at work, and quite another to say that they are overriding. Nations that depend on the industrialized West are entirely capable of stemming foreign cultural domination.

Cultural Resistance

Hegemony and resistance in the Dominican Republic coexist in an unstable, dynamic tension. Culture is the contested terrain, and the Dominican Republic struggles constantly with the United States to control it.

The insights that anthropology provided into culture were its first contribution to the social sciences, and they are still its greatest contribution. Whether materialist or ideological, qualitative or quantitative, oriented toward conflict or toward consensus, anthropological analyses have put cultural factors at the center. Studies of resistance, which have become more widespread in the social sciences, therefore have venerable precursors in cultural anthropology.

Resistance to Western culture can be remarkably persistent, and the form that it takes is varied. It can be religious,²³ psychological,²⁴ or social.²⁵ It can be active or passive, overt or covert:

	Active	Passive
Overt	peasant wars slave uprisings	religious sermons that stir up feelings expressions of nationalism

Covert sabotage
pilfering
feigned inability to work
songs with hidden meanings

Events and institutions that promote national pride foster cultural resistance by promoting the integrity and cohesiveness of native culture at the expense of foreigners. Since third world culture is often devalued by both foreigners and locals (because of social self-loathing), an act or symbol that promotes local pride is an act or symbol that resists. This theme emerges in Eckstein's anthology on Latin American popular protest.²⁶ Studies by social scientists of resistance have shown an increased sophistication and subtlety, evidenced in examinations by Scott of ideology and morality as resistance among Malaysian peasants,²⁷ by Dick Hebdige of the punk subculture in England,²⁸ and by June Nash of resistance and religion among Bolivian tin miners.²⁹ (The difference between these works and mine is that they deal with hegemony and resistance within a nation—between classes—whereas my attention is focused on the cultural tension between an industrial power and a developing nation.) In Dominican baseball, resistance is manifested among other ways in the symbolic preferences of the fans, in the way baseball is covered by the press, and in various actions by Dominicans.

About "Culture" in Cultural Resistance

Proponents of the hegemony perspective (such as Williams) sometimes acknowledge that there is resistance to the dominant class ideology and culture (see chapter 7); for this they often use the term "counter hegemony."³⁰ Their use of the concept is well taken, but the term muddles the issue somewhat, among other things because it suggests that the subordinate group may be achieving dominance over the dominators. A more apt term for the phenomenon of countering hegemony is "cultural resistance."

In some circles there is resistance to the idea of cultural resistance, a skepticism that the contribution of culture to resistance is of much importance. Certainly behavior is the most widely accepted index of overt resistance, especially revolts and acts of sabotage.³¹ When acts of resistance shade off into the more subtle realms, it is more difficult to prove the intent of the act. For instance, incompetence on the job may be real, or it may be feigned as part of an organized effort to resist. Similarly, such cultural elements as song, game, film, literature, and folklore have multiple and contradictory levels of meaning. At the manifest level they may appear to uphold the system being resisted, while at the latent level they may be attacking it. Much good work on this subject has been done on the slavery of the antebellum South. Eugene

Genovese sums up the unique capacities of cultural resistance: "Accommodation itself breathed a critical spirit and disguised subversive actions and often embraced its apparent opposite—resistance."³²

The work done by historians like Genovese goes far in revealing how servility can be a cover for a host of actions that resist domination. It is culture that is the ammunition in this war. The dominant group uses its culture as an ideological bludgeon, to beat the subordinate class into submission, and sometimes to denigrate the subordinate culture. The subordinate group can appear to be taking on the culture of the dominant group but may in fact be altering it to fit its needs. Hence the struggle is around cultural form and essence: if a subordinate group cannot take on the form while changing the essence, it may simply be acquiescing in its own domination. In any event it should not be assumed that culture is static or exclusively in the hands of the ruling class or society, or that culture is simply a reflection of economic and political forces. It can and does exert its own influence.

In the late 1960s the British social anthropologist Max Gluckman developed a brand of functionalism according to which some acts and symbols that are apparently rebellious will actually defuse socially harmful energy and strengthen society when they are expressed.³³ His term for the expression of these acts and symbols is "ritualized rebellion." Gluckman's formulation represents an advance over earlier functionalism by seeking to explain phenomena that apparently lack function or have conflicting functions. One of the most eloquent adherents of this view, Terry Eagleton, describes the ritualized rebellion of Carnival as "a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blowoff as disturbing and as relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art. As Shakespeare's Olivia remarks, "There is no slander in an allowed fool."³⁴

Eagleton and Gluckman read resistance to mean something legitimate and overt, and it is true that "allowed fools" may be limited to propping up the status quo. However, as we know from works by historians on slavery in the antebellum South, slaves too made much of their roles of allowed fools, in the context of the black church³⁵ and daily life.³⁶ In their use of the socially sanctioned religious forms of their masters, blacks fashioned a most subtle and powerful form of resistance. This resistance had the potential at times to transform them from allowed fools to practitioners of more threatening forms of resistance. Looked at in this way, all forms of resistance, allowed and illicit, can carry a message that threatens the established order—if not at the moment, then momentarily.

Social scientists have begun to assess the impact of American film and television on ethnic minorities in the United States and abroad.³⁷

Their analyses address the issue of hegemony and resistance, at times quite directly. More than twenty-five years ago, however, Herbert Gans argued that the Italian-Americans he studied rejected television that did not reflect their values, while validating television programming that did.³⁸ His findings implied that the intended messages were comprehended, and that the community shared enough of the dominant culture to determine the acceptability of these messages. Most recently, the anthropologist Christine Gailey has shown that natives of the Pacific island of Tonga interpret American films in terms of their own culture, regardless of the filmmakers' intent.³⁹ Gailey discusses the novel way in which Tongans interpret the character Rambo as anti-imperialist.

I made several observations along these lines during my stay in the Dominican Republic, and although my evidence is purely anecdotal it supports Gailey's conclusions. At showings of the films *Robocop* and *Platoon*, the reactions of the Dominican audiences were the opposite of what the filmmakers had intended them to be. The message of *Robocop* is clearly one of opposition to corporate strongmen and sympathy for the common folk.⁴⁰ But the scenes and dialogue that made North American audiences hiss or laugh at corporate villains only made Dominican audiences applaud. Likewise, scenes from *Platoon*, Oliver Stone's film about American soldiers being killed in Vietnam, were predictably troubling to audiences in the United States, but they were taken lightly by Dominican viewers, some of whom even found them laughable. The response to *Robocop* may reflect in part the Dominicans' ambivalence toward Trujillo. While Dominicans were relieved to be rid of him, they also took to his message of the country's need for strong, centralized leadership. Indeed there are echoes of fascism in the Dominican ideal of The Leader, an all-powerful figure who embodies the national character and plays on the people's hopes and fears.⁴¹ As for the Dominicans' unsympathetic reaction to the dying soldiers of *Platoon*, perhaps in part it reflected their resentment toward the American military. In opposition to works that study the hegemonic potential of American popular culture abroad,⁴² Gailey's work shows that cultures have their own agenda and their own issues, and that they can project their values on foreign cultural products. To do this they must have a critical capacity—which some students of hegemony (though by no means all) deny that third world peoples have.

Dominican Resistance: Historical Precedents

The Dominican Republic gives the appearance of complete accommodation to the United States: the government seems compliant, Do-

minican commerce responds to the dictates of American enterprises both within and outside the country, and people act friendly. But accommodation is not societally uniform: what is subordination at the political and economic level is not necessarily subordination at the cultural level. As Wiarda and Kryzanek point out and as my own observations confirm, there is a resentful and subversive side to Dominicans, which has been borne out in the course of Dominican history.⁴³

The depth and extent of the intense Dominican resistance to the occupation by the U.S. Marines in 1916–24 has been painstakingly documented by Bruce Calder, in one of the most impressive pieces of social science research yet written on the Caribbean.⁴⁴ In 1920 alone there were 116 incidents of combat reported between guerrillas and U.S. Marines in the eastern part of the country.⁴⁵ Hobsbawm's notion of social banditry is particularly appropriate to a discussion of Dominican resistance (social bandits are outlaws according to those in power, marginally organized and politically oriented), since it was as "bandits" (*gavilleros*) that these displaced peasants were referred to by the American administrators in the area. The military resistance waged by the insurgents lasted five and a half years (1917–22), during which there were roughly 370 military contacts between guerrillas and American troops. Although there were relatively few casualties, the Dominican peasants succeeded in tying up the Marines. At first the American military governor wrote off the insurgents, but the organized caudillos received so much support from other peasants that their military effectiveness as well as the organized structure of their resistance had to be acknowledged.

The eastern guerrilla campaign dovetailed with the rise of nationalism in the urban centers, but there was virtually no formal link between the insurgents in the east and the intellectual and political leaders in Santo Domingo and other cities. Calder cites as explanations the traditionalism of the elite class and regional disdain in the west for the feudalistic caudillos and their ragtag peasant retainers.⁴⁶ But by making use of the bandstand and of the press, which at the time was heavily censored, the nationalists mobilized national opinion against the outrages committed almost daily by the Americans. They strove to make contacts with other Caribbean leaders and eventually with influential American politicians and the American Federation of Labor.

It is important that culture was the currency of the nationalists' campaign, and that the Dominican elite debated furiously over the role of North American culture (as they continue to do periodically). Some felt that taking on the cultural traits of the foreign power was justified if it led to progress; others felt that doing so was tantamount to "yanquization" and servility, that those who slavishly imitated the culture of the United States and sought to consume their way to being American were

"more imperialistic than the imperialists."⁴⁷ As the nationalists worked to heighten the outrage of their countrymen over the increasing racism and oppressiveness of the United States, they promoted native culture in all areas of life. It was during this period that the merengue became the national dance and musical form, the boy scouts were formed, and baseball became the national game.⁴⁸ It was also during the American military occupation that nationalists brought literary works and poetry to the national consciousness.⁴⁹ Whereas the guerrillas met the Americans with force, the nationalists confronted them with legal, political, and ideological maneuvering. Their ideological and cultural campaign was always punctuated by large rallies and protests when some outrage perpetrated by the United States was made known.⁵⁰

Four decades later a military coup deposed President Juan Bosch (1963), rival political parties took to the streets, and the U.S. Marines again intervened in the Dominican Republic (1965-66). Several thousand Dominicans lost their lives in the turmoil that followed. With the memories of the earlier occupation still fresh in the minds of older Dominicans and a part of national folklore, it took little time for Dominicans to resist both physically and emotionally. Another wave of poets, artists, and authors villainized the gringos and lionized the Dominican nationalists. The effects of this second invasion continue to be felt by many middle-aged and older Dominicans.

Dominican Baseball as Resistance

Cultural resistance has been documented in sport. The ethnographic film *Trobriand Cricket* dramatically depicts how inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands in Papua New Guinea mold the sport of the colonizers, cricket, to reflect their cultural needs. Other studies (discussed below) show how baseball has been similarly used in other cultures.

On the surface the case for Dominican resistance in baseball seems weak, given the degree of domination by the United States and the stifling presence of American major league franchises and scouts. The dark years of the occupation by the U.S. Marines of their country gave the Dominicans little to be happy about. Baseball was one of the bright spots, however. There were games played between U.S. Marines and Dominican clubs, and while young Fellicita Guerra refused to be on the same diamond with these foreign invaders, others preferred to fight the marines by any means available. American periodicals published in Santo Domingo for the forces but read by Dominicans declared that in the games between North Americans and Dominicans "the Marines

have to be champions by virtue of their ethnic and intellectual superiority and because Dominicans can be champions of nothing."⁵¹ This infuriated Dominicans but also filled the city with interest in the forthcoming match between Licey and the Marines. Francisco Rodríguez, nineteen years old, became immortalized when he hit a home run with the bases empty as his team was losing 2 to 1 in the ninth inning with two men out. The Licey club was so filled with pride and resentment that it held the yanquis scoreless in the tenth inning before scoring the winning run. Such victories were like a balm for battered Dominicans and were by no means treated as entertaining and meaningless. They provided hope and vindication, as well as cherished memories to be passed on to succeeding generations.

Dominicans have been so successful at the game that they sense they are in charge of it, that they are at least the equals of the North Americans. The Dominicans have shown how a form of foreign popular culture can be used to resist hegemonic influences; and, at least symbolically, they have contradicted the notion that economic domination automatically results in cultural domination and cultural inferiority.

During the season of 1987-88 I attended games at Estadio Quisqueya, an impressive stadium with almost sixteen thousand seats that is home to both professional teams in Santo Domingo. Apart from some Spanish billboards, the stadium is indistinguishable from a minor league stadium in North America. The great difference lies in the spectators and their cultural behavior (see chapter 6).

At the ballpark one night I concentrated on people wearing T-shirts and hats bearing the insignia not only of Dominican professional teams but of American major league teams. People are symbolic animals who assign meaning to most things. A symbol can be sacred, like a clan totem or crucifix, or charged with great secular meaning, like the Congressional Medal of Honor, or mundane, like the paintings in the teepees of the Plains Indians, the safety pins of punks, or the colors that people wear on the street. Because Dominican fans use color not only to identify with a team but also as a sign of their political affiliation, I thought that by examining the insignia worn at ballgames I could compile a rough but valid index of identification with national resistance on the one hand and American hegemony on the other. I decided to ask those who chose Dominican symbols why they did so. I designed a questionnaire with seven items (see Appendix) and conducted a survey during three night games at Estadio Quisqueya, and at two sites one afternoon outside the stadium (one in a poor neighborhood, the other in an affluent one). My assistant and I interviewed 190 people chosen at random, which yielded 164 responses that were complete and usable

(n = 164). While the sample is small, the results are highly patterned and suggest conclusions that are worthy of further exploration.

My initial working assumption was that hegemony rather than resistance would prevail, that Dominicans would follow their general patterns of cultural consumption and choose an American baseball cap rather than one of a local Dominican team (cost, availability, and quality being equal). The results were surprising: only 22 percent (36 of 164) chose an American cap, 78 percent (128 of 164) a Dominican one.

The reasons the fans gave for their selections quickly explained these unexpected results. These reasons were unambiguously and strongly nationalist and moreover were overwhelmingly framed in positive rather than anti-American terms. Among heavily colonized people nationalism is usually weak, and where it is pronounced it tends to be accompanied by hostility toward foreigners. The following were typical of the fans' statements about their selections and their feelings of national pride:

[Respondent 4:] Yo soy dominicano! I'm Dominican! This is my country, so I go for the Licey [name of local team].

[Respondent 32:] Tradition! The best thing in the world is to be a Liceyista!

[Respondent 42:] Escogido is the team of my country.

[Respondent 12:] I'm a nationalist. Of course I go for Licey!

For some fans the choice was more difficult. They would name as their favorite American teams those with a record of having signed Dominican players (Toronto, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh), but would have trouble deciding between an American symbol and a Dominican one. When pressed they generally opted for the cap of a local team:

[Respondent 99:] I'm a Cibaeño [from the Cibao region of the country]. Toronto has a lot of Dominicans but I'm a Cibaeño first.

[Respondent 122:] I like L.A. because they help Licey, but the team of my birthplace is Licey. I'm a Liceyista.

[Respondent 63:] Even though some Dominicans are [in the United States] and we follow the game in the U.S., it's not the same. It's our baseball here.

It is noteworthy that many of the respondents who chose a Dominican symbol (perhaps most) made clear that they interpreted the hat as a symbol of their nation. Those who favored an American cap, however, typically gave a reason related to baseball:

[Respondent 19:] Escogido is the team of my country, but the Dodgers are a higher-quality team.

[Respondent 144:] [The Toronto Blue Jays] play the real baseball. Here we just follow them.

It was surprising that only four of the 164 respondents adopted an anti-American tone, particularly because at the time of the survey Dominican demonstrators were accusing the Americans of having wrecked their economy. These were some typical negative statements:

[Respondent 77:] I'm Dominican! I'm not *some gringo* who wears a Dodger hat!

[Respondent 100:] Everybody likes foreign things. But if we follow that we'll be in a big hole in the sea.

Although my working assumption was disproved, there was a second hypothesis that would be consistent with the results I obtained: upper-class Dominicans might associate more strongly than poorer Dominicans with things American. This would be consistent with my observations and with most hegemonic analyses of imperialism.

At first I separated Dominicans by class, by assuming that those sitting in box seats were more affluent than those sitting in reserved seats and bleachers.⁵² This assumption turned out to be misleading, since for various reasons many affluent people sit in the cheaper seats (for one thing they are closer to the bookies who congregate in the upper reaches of the stadium). I then decided to distinguish class according to occupation, a technique employed by Weil, Black, and Blutstein⁵³ and by Wiarda and Kryzanek,⁵⁴ and found that class was a predictor of whether a Dominican or an American cap would be chosen: the 83 respondents who held professional, entrepreneurial, middle-management, and civil service jobs chose the Dominican cap by a margin of 58 to 25 (70 percent to 30 percent), while the 81 respondents who were clerks, laborers, and shopkeepers chose the Dominican cap by a margin of 70 to 11 (86 percent to 14 percent).

The preferences of fans provide evidence of both resistance and hegemony. What is unique and surprising is that the pattern of Dominican preference for North American cultural artifacts should be broken in the realm of baseball, the prototypical sport of the North Americans. Baseball is in effect the Dominican vehicle for resistance to American cultural domination, and this is no accident (see below). It is also noteworthy that class is an important variable in the preferences of fans: the upper class identifies far more readily with the symbols of the North

Americans, just as the lower class is more apt to support left-leaning candidates like Juan Bosch.

Resistance in the Press

The print media offer a more kaleidoscopic view of passive and active Dominican resistance than do the electronic media, the impact of which is limited by poverty and nationwide power blackouts. Dominican print journalists are also more sophisticated and better informed than local television journalists.

Reporters admit that they try to sell newspapers by appealing to public emotion, but they also try to retain respectability. As I followed the coverage of baseball between 1987 and 1989 in Santo Domingo's leading daily paper, *Listin diario*, I noted among other things this tendency to emphasize emotionally loaded subjects and play to popularly held views. This ulterior motive notwithstanding, the Dominican baseball press has also developed a reporting style that fosters nationalism as cultural resistance—though it has not done so altogether consciously.

One of the first things that struck me about the way the Dominican press covered general news was that there was little outrage directed against North America in the front pages, even though the country was battered by a serious economic crisis that was caused at least in part by the policies of the United States. Headlines and stories noted the difficult conditions, but fingers rarely pointed north.

When covering baseball, on the other hand, the papers were willing to blame problems on North American major league teams. Again one is moved to ask why this is true of baseball but not of politics and economics.

Whether the Dominican press is covering baseball, tennis, or basketball, North American domination is made very clear. The United States has the biggest contests, the most money, and the most glamour. This is surely the way baseball is covered by the North American press, which is markedly ethnocentric.⁵⁵ "Foreign" baseball is treated by the North American press as unusual, even quaint. Japanese baseball, for instance, is usually the object of polite condescension.⁵⁶ American players in Japan are reported on only occasionally, in general when they are doing so well that they may attempt to reenter the American major leagues. For example, on 16 April 1988 the *New York Times* relegated the news that the former Yankee pitcher Bill Gullickson was playing in Japan to a short paragraph buried in the back of the sports section. An article in *Sports Illustrated* on Bob Horner commented: "American import Bob Horner made a smashing debut in Japan: six games, six hom-

ers."⁵⁷ This was followed by an article on Randy Bass, another American playing brilliantly in Japan and harboring a desire to return home. The implication was that if a ballplayer were any good at all he would be playing in the United States. Cecil Fielder's impressive reentry into the major leagues in 1990 after playing in Japan may mark a change in direction, since Japan seems more able than ever before to tap into the free-agent market; but it is more likely that Fielder is the exception that proves the rule. By contrast, the Dominican press sees the possibility that a Dominican might play in Japan as much more important, and gives the news more prominence.⁵⁸ Baseball coverage in the Dominican Republic reflects the mixed feelings of the Dominican people: pride in the accomplishments of Dominican players from the 1960s onward and a growing acknowledgement that the country has won a special place in the world of baseball are tempered by the view that Dominican baseball is still an adjunct to the American game. Dominican baseball writers bow to American domination, yet at the same time they are defiant and nationalistic, touting the accomplishments of Dominicans and sniping at the United States.

The biggest story in baseball in early 1988 was the record set by the Baltimore Orioles when they lost their first twenty-one games. Newspapers in all countries interested in baseball covered the streak, and on the day the Orioles finally won *Listin diario* declared in bold headlines: "Baltimore Breaks Losing Chain." In the preceding weeks the paper had painted daily pictures of dejection and hope, and noted among other things that some residents of Baltimore had sought the help of sorcerers to break the spell (this aroused a lot of interest in the Dominican Republic, where voodoo remains influential). But the story of the Orioles was the exception: all the other headlines and stories in the Dominican press in April 1988 were of Dominican baseball exploits. Were one to judge major league baseball from the press coverage in Santo Domingo, one would assume that most baseball players were Dominican, or at least that most of the best players were. Whether covering the North American major leagues in the summer or the Dominican league in the winter, the Dominican press is highly nationalistic.

One is immediately struck by the sheer number of lead stories about Dominican players, especially during the season of the Dominican Professional Baseball League. The stories can recount the outcome of league games ("[Lacey] Tigers Beat Eastern Stars, Pass to Finals"), or the latest turn of events in the contract negotiations of Dominicans playing in the major leagues ("Pirates Contract for Rafael Belliard"), or some Dominican crisis ("Griffin Thinks That D.R. Baseball Will Recover Its Force"). Articles on North Americans and North American subjects are scarce during the winter season. They tend to focus on the unusual and

outstanding (such as the record salary Orel Hershiser got from the Los Angeles Dodgers), on non-Dominican Hispanic players (from other Latin American countries such as Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Venezuela), and on North American players of Hispanic origin (such as Jose Canseco and Keith Hernandez).

Summer Reporting: Dominicans Abroad

During the summer the focus is on the United States, where Dominican players are closely followed. The lead story in a paper published in Santo Domingo may be about a Dominican scheduled to pitch ("De León and Pérez Scheduled to Pitch Games Today," or "Today Pascual Pérez Looks for Expo Victory Record"), or about the games played the previous day ("Bell, Guerrero and Liriano Homer; Rijo Wins"). Only when there is a major breakthrough or record does the lead story have a non-Dominican topic (such as the losing streak of the Baltimore Orioles).

Summer box scores and game reports are usually on the second page of the sports section. A headline the width of the page will have accounts of all of the day's action beneath it, and each article about a game has its own, smaller headline in boldface. These headlines prove very revealing. One issue of *Listin diario* included the following primary and secondary headlines:

Main headline: Bell, Guerrero and Liriano Homer; Rijo Wins

Smaller headlines: 1. [Story without headline, on game between Toronto Blue Jays and Minnesota Twins]

2. Tigers 11, Royals 4
3. Samuel 0 for 4
4. Seattle Wins
5. Franco 3 for 6
6. Guante Pitches
7. Guerrero 3 for 4; Griffin 3 for 4
8. Uribe 2 for 3
9. Rijo Wins; Ramírez 2 for 4; Garcia 0 for 1⁵⁹

The main headline is notable in that it mentions three players, each from a different team, who have in common only their Dominican nationality. Some of the smaller headlines summarize the outcome of a game; others summarize the performance of an individual player (in all cases a Dominican), and the outcome of the game is secondary. Between 5 April and 2 May 1988 I recorded the main headline on the second page of twenty-two issues of *Listin diario*, and counted the num-

ber of secondary headlines that referred to the performance of an individual player (as well as the total number of secondary headlines):

5 April Uribe 2 for 3; Soto No Decision	1 of 5
8 April Peña Wins First; Guerrero Decides It	3 of 6
10 April Bell, Guerrero, and Liriano Homer	7 of 9
12 April Samuel Strokes Two Hits	4 of 4
13 April José De León Wins First Game	4 of 6
14 April Fernández Hits 2 for 4; Samuel Gets a Hit	6 of 7
15 April Camposano Slaps First Home Run	2 of 8
16 April José Rijo Wins; Samuel Tows Two	3 of 6
17 April Pedro Guerrero 3 for 4, 4 RBIs	6 of 9
18 April García Decides for Atlanta; Pérez Wins	5 of 9
19 April Santana Connects for H.R., Double, Single	3 of 5
20 April Bell, Lee, and Peña All Strike 2 Singles	5 of 8
21 April Baltimore Breaks Record for Most Losses	4 of 7
22 April Tony Peña Strokes Two Home Runs	3 of 5
23 April Belliard Triple; Cuta and De León Lose	6 of 8
24 April Alfredo Griffin Slaps Triple and Single	3 of 4
25 April Fernández Connects HR; Belliard a Triple	8 of 13
27 April Baltimore Loses 19th in Row	3 of 6
28 April Cuta Wins over Soto; Balt. Loses 20th	3 of 6
30 April Baltimore Breaks Losing Streak	0 of 4
1 May Samuel Smashes Triple; Drives In 3	3 of 3
2 May Melido Pérez Wins 2d; Javier 3 for 5	6 of 10
Total	88 of 148

Nineteen of the twenty-two main headlines dealt with the accomplishments of an individual player rather than the outcome of a game, as did 64 percent of the secondary headlines. If the outcome of a game was the subject of a headline it was usually because there were no Dominicans or Latinos playing, a fact noted in the story. For instance, on 1 May *Listin diario* printed the headline "Brewers Win" above a story that noted: "Latinos did not participate in this encounter." In the same issue it was noted that "no Latinos play for Boston."

In contrast to accounts of games in North American papers, which seldom make any mention of a player's nationality, those in Dominican papers prominently note the nationalities of key Hispanic players and stars, as in the following description in *Listin diario* of a game between Toronto and Minnesota: "For Minnesota the Panamanian Juan Benguer pitched one and two-thirds innings, permitted two hits, struck out four, and walked one. For Toronto the Dominican Tony Fernandez was 1 for 5, his countryman George Bell was 2 for 4, the Puerto Rican Juan Beniquez added a run in two turns at bat, the other Quisqueyena

[a colloquialism for Dominican] Manny Lee hit a single in three trips and scored a run while his compatriot Nelson Liriano went 1 for 4."⁶⁰

The highly favorable comparison of Latinos to non-Latinos is for the most part implicit but constant. In its report of a game played on 20 April between the Toronto Blue Jays and the Kansas City Royals, in which the Blue Jay players Ernie Whitt, Fred McGriff, and Jesse Barfield (all Americans) combined for six hits and ten runs batted in, *Listin diario* focused instead on the performance of Bell (one run batted in) and Lee (two singles). In general the press treated Bell's performance as the key to the win, and used it as a pretext for citing his impressive showing on opening day (which it had already played up incessantly): "Dominican George Bell, who pegged three home runs against Saberhagen in the opening day of the season, pushed across one run with a single."⁶¹

In a game on 25 April Tony Fernández hit a home run for Toronto; *Listin diario* made this the subject of its main headline ("Fernández Connects for Home Run"), while the *Toronto Globe and Mail* put it in the context of the game results and the *New York Times* mentioned it only in passing ("and Kelly Gruber and Tony Fernández each hitting one [home run] in the third"). Dominicans have taken it on themselves to make heroes of their players one and all, and to a lesser extent of other Latinos. Clearly, the trumpeting of Dominican accomplishments comes at the expense of North Americans, who are the victims of invidious comparisons.

The special slant it gives to daily coverage is only one tool that the press has in fostering cultural resistance. In addition to the routine daily coverage and box scores there are special summer stories devoted to specific players and issues. There seem to be four types: special interest stories on individual players, and stories about honors won and standards set by Dominican players, wealth gained by Dominicans (usually in contract negotiations), and crises in baseball.

Except perhaps in Cuba, where the cult of personality is ideologically disdained as a product of bourgeois society, stories that highlight individual athletes are integral to sports journalism. Sportswriters make athletes into folk heroes by putting them at the center of their stories and exaggerating their accomplishments. The treatment is the same whether the player is a legitimate star like Roger Clemens, a local favorite like José Rijo, or a mere journeyman. But the more mediocre the athlete, the more likely it is that the journalist will focus on some aspect of the athlete's private life or personality (this sort of reporting has become known as "up close and personal"). American culture is strongly individualistic, and the American fascination with celebrity and popular psychology has reached gargantuan proportions. This has had both bad and

good results: the triviality of magazines like *People* and television shows like "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" on the one hand, and a surprisingly strong interest in serious books like Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* on the other.⁶² Sportswriters also reflect this polarity. There is no shortage of unimaginative and incompetent baseball writers, but there are also those like Roger Angell of the *New Yorker* and Thomas Boswell of the *Washington Post* who transcend convention.

Athletes who are larger than life, like Hershiser and Bell, pose their own problems. Once stories of their heroic accomplishments on the field have been written and rewritten, the journalist must satisfy the rapidly growing demands of their fans by finding something else to write about. This is where Dominican baseball writers part company with North American writers, for they lack the tradition of writing about athletes' life off the field. Dominican journalists are also less well trained than their American counterparts (there are no schools of journalism in the Dominican Republic), and they tend to repeat the same information again and again. They often get their stories secondhand. A typical article makes one point from which the writer deviates little, and is extremely short (even by comparison with the shorter articles in North American papers). It is rare for a Dominican sports story to be more than five hundred words long; most are about two to three hundred words long. But what the writers lack in depth they make up for in the frequency with which they write similar stories about their baseball heroes. Perhaps this is because they limit their range and write almost exclusively about Dominican professional players in the United States, in contrast to reporters in the United States, who generally cover a variety of sports in their own metropolitan area, in addition to providing personal angles on the players. The result is the same: both types of reporting have the effect of building legends and making baseball omnipresent. Hence any single first page of a sports section is likely to include (in addition to other sports stories) bold headlines about Bell, Guerrero, and Pascual Pérez, each of whom plays for a different team. These are at times supplemented by three-color sketches or photographs of the players. The effect of this coverage is the same as in the United States: to elevate the player to heroic proportions.

Kudos and Honors

During the winter of 1987-88 the Dominican press (like the North American press) was full of stories about Bell, the outfielder for the Toronto Blue Jays who had been voted the American League's Most Valuable Player for 1987. (This award is the most coveted in baseball,

but there are many smaller awards and honors that fuel the Dominican nationalist train. For instance, *Listin diario* once declared in bold headlines: "Pedro Guerrero Is Elected the Latin Player of the Week."⁶³ Bell's performance in the first week of the season in 1988 set the tone for the press for the entire summer. On 10 April *Listin diario* ran a huge headline that read: "Uncontainable George Bell Is Elected A.L. Best of the Week." The appetite of all Dominican fans was whetted by the article beneath, which treated three North American players as also-rans: "George Bell of the Toronto Blue Jays, who introduced a major league record with three home runs in the opening game, was named American League player of the week in the first week of the season. Bell, the Most Valuable Player of the American League last year, batted .455 and had four round-trippers for the week. Others named were Pete O'Brien of Texas, Dave Winfield of New York, and Cory Snyder of Cleveland."

Many Dominican fans are beginning to expect their players to perform consistently at this high level. They get a feeling of superiority as they read about Dominican players winning awards and piling up impressive statistics. One page-long article in *Ultima hora* was fairly typical of what they read: "With the first two months of the 1987 season coming to a conclusion this weekend, the acts of more or less twelve Latin American players were listed among the top one hundred with the best statistics in the twenty-four teams [of major league baseball]. In this group the likelihood of the Dominicans Pedro Guerrero of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and George Bell of the Toronto Blue Jays, and of the Venezuelan Andrés Galarraga to predominate from the first eight weeks to the end of the season seems certain."⁶⁴

These kinds of predictions and statistical comparisons are as regular a feature in the Dominican press as they are in the American press. What is distinctive about Dominican coverage is its nationalistic bent, which feeds cultural and national pride and reduces the need felt by the readers to prove themselves against *los blancos* (the whites), to gain the approval of the North Americans.

The Dominican papers not only list the major league leaders in all the usual categories but keep a separate set of statistics for Latinos:

The Latin American Department of United Press International today elected Dominican Pedro Guerrero of the Los Angeles Dodgers as the most outstanding Latino in major league baseball for the week of April 11 to 17.⁶⁵

The Dominican Republic has newly demonstrated its reputation of being a quarry of baseball players in the production of the most players nominated for the all-Hispanic major league team . . . Of

the nineteen players selected by six baseball writers that were interviewed by phone, eight are Dominican. Seven of the Dominicans live in the city of San Pedro de Macorís. The rest are composed of six Puerto Ricans, two Mexicans, one Venezuelan, and one Nicaraguan . . . Norm Clark, baseball writer of the paper the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver Colorado, said that the all-star list of Hispanic outfielders "ends with Bell . . . I feel that he could be the newly named Most Valuable Player this year," said Clark.⁶⁶

Having set apart the athletic accomplishments of Latinos from those of North Americans, the Dominican writers often compare one Latino with another. One headline asked: "Guerrero or Bell; Who Is Better?" The article seemed to take for granted that the two were better than everyone else: "With the rise to the big leagues of José Joaquín Bautista, the total is 111 Dominican players since Osvaldo Virgil arrived in 1956. Actually we have around thirty-five players in the big leagues, among them George Bell and Pedro Guerrero. There are no doubts that thousands of fans ask, 'Who is better, Bell or Guerrero?' Bell and Guerrero are of the players that since they arrived home all the world waits for their home runs."⁶⁷ Having defined categories of Latino baseball statistics and honors, the press has inadvertently created a Latino universe of discourse, one in which North Americans are conspicuously absent.

Reporting Player Salaries

Reports of contract negotiations generally center on the large sums involved rather than the details. Read over a period of time, the headlines seem as regular as the tide. They inspire thousands of young players who hope for a similar offer someday:

Rufino Receives Offers from Various Countries
Fernández Signs for Five Million Dollars
Guzmán Signs with the Texas Rangers

At times the salaries of all Dominican players in the major leagues are added up, and the total is treated as if it were a major cultural achievement. The headline on the front page of *Listin diario* on 4 April 1988 read: "Dominicans in the Big Leagues Earn \$15,454,880 U.S." The article beneath the headline gave the salary of each of the thirty-five Dominican major leaguers. The message has a meaning in the Dominican Republic that is different from what it would be in the United

States: to the Dominicans baseball is less a game than a way of escaping poverty and building national pride. The salaries of the players stimulate national interest in the game, as does the accessibility of the players (some go to the ballparks to help the amateurs). As one fan put it, the enormous salaries are "a cultural treasure. It is proof that we are great." Much as archeological treasures attest to a rich Dominican past, salaries attest to the present.

Winter Baseball Coverage: Crises in Dominican Baseball

The uncertain health of Dominican baseball is of paramount concern in the Dominican Republic. The most pressing issues in the past few years have been a decline in the number of Dominican players who return home, the concomitant weakening of the league, a decline in attendance, the premature departure from the Dominican league of North American players, and the tendency of major league teams to dictate to Dominican players whether and how much they can play in their native country. In all these areas the press has attributed the problem to interference by American interests.

Falling attendance was without any doubt the big issue of the Dominican baseball season of 1988–89. Many explanations were given in the press, of which the most frequently cited was the economic bind the country was in. Inflation was raising the price of everything: tickets for the games, transportation to and from the games, and even food at the ballparks. The owner of the *Aguilas* of the Cibao, one of the oldest and most well established clubs in the Dominican Republic, became exasperated when he took a huge loss at the end of the season: "It was a true disaster," Ricardo Tito Hernández, president of the *Aguilas Cibaeñas*, said yesterday . . . He understands that winter baseball is going very badly because the fans have been keeping their distance from the stadiums. Hernández is pessimistic about the future of paid baseball if they don't find some economic stability in the country."⁶⁸

Another reason given for the flagging attendance was the refusal of Dominican athletes to play in their homeland once they had earned large salaries in the United States. But the Dominican press did not blame the players; it was rather the owners and indirectly the Americans who were taken to task for the high salaries paid to imported North American players: "On the other hand, as for the number of native big league ballplayers that do not want to play here because of the lack of an adequate salary and security, I have the solution: give it all to them, and don't bring 'importados.'"⁶⁹ By scapegoating the North Americans the

Dominican press can heighten the emotions of its readers, claim credit for fixing blame, and keep North America at a distance. This distancing is perhaps the most potent form of cultural resistance.

At no time is the distance greater than when North American teams tamper with Dominican professional teams. While major league franchises have been enmeshed in the internal affairs of Dominican teams for many decades, tampering is a more recent development. Several instances of tampering came to the attention of the press and fans in the winter season of 1988–89. The first involved Rafael Ramírez, who allegedly was prevented by the Houston Astros, to whom he was under contract, from playing for his Dominican team, the *Estrellas Orientales*. At least one well-placed official argued that Ramírez did not really want to play and was only being urged on by the people of San Pedro de Macorís. The official also said that after a few games with the *Estrellas Orientales*, Ramírez became involved in negotiations with the Astros—and that Ramírez used the Astros' purported desire that he not play with the *Estrellas Orientales* as a pretext for quitting. According to this source Ramírez's decision was motivated by a reluctance to jeopardize a lucrative new contract. The press, on the other hand, fanned the flames by interpreting the issue in nationalist terms: "The general manager of the *Estrellas Orientales* yesterday asked for the expulsion of the Houston Astros representatives in this country for the attitude assumed by that organization to prevent the Dominican Rafael Ramírez from playing with the Macorís club . . . 'We can never, under any criteria, accept an organization affecting our national sport in such a way as to impede a title to the people [of San Pedro de Macorís].'"⁷⁰ Whether or not the general manager was being completely frank, it was revealing that he chose to come out so aggressively against the American club, and that he did so on nationalist grounds.

A second case of tampering involved José Rijo, who plays for the Cincinnati Reds in the United States and the Lincey team at home. His allegations against the Reds, similar to those that Ramírez had made against the Astros, came as he was embroiled in a contract dispute with the Reds and as Lincey was playing in the Championship Series. The incident surrounding Rijo provoked even more controversy than that surrounding Ramírez: "The Cincinnati Reds yesterday prohibited the Dominican pitcher José Rijo, currently a reliever from pitching in the final series that began last night . . . The same pitcher offered the information and explained that the manager of the Reds expressed to him that he could pitch one or two times, but not daily and not hard . . . 'I want to pitch but it's not my decision. They want me to remain healthy for spring training' he said."⁷¹

To me Rijo reiterated his relative powerlessness in the face of the dictates of his American employers. When I asked him whether the Reds could really stop him from playing he replied: "They do! . . . they told me not to pitch two days in a row. I came here and pitched four days in a row. Now they call me back and they're mad at me. They cannot stop me, but I don't want them mad at me. They are a priority for me. Here, you get ready, work on some pitch, for going back there."⁷²

By declaring his powerlessness and placing the blame on the Cincinnati Reds, Rijo confirmed that the American major leagues are dominant and the Dominican league subordinate, that Dominican baseball is a training ground for the Americans. This inequality is however denied by the Dominican press, which engages in an overt form of cultural resistance by viewing the Dominican league not as a subordinate but as a sovereign entity that has been slighted.

Another way American teams interfere with Dominican baseball is by having North Americans who play in the Dominican Republic leave before the season is over. This too causes outrage, because while the Dominicans do not always feel positively toward the importados the Dominican owners do depend on them, especially in the stretch drive toward the championship. This was dramatically portrayed as the Escogido Lions began the Championship Series in 1988. With his contract valid only until 23 January, the Detroit Tigers refused to extend the stay of their player Mark Huisman for another week, saying that he had to get ready for spring training in the United States. The article that appeared that same day, which spoke of Huisman as a "gentleman and an athlete," was belied by the headline, which screamed, "Bomber Huisman Abandons the Lions." In the body of the article the Detroit Tigers were implicated by Daniel Aquino, the president of the Escogido Lions: "Aquino, in his declarations, revealed that the directive of the Detroit Tigers, with whom the standout reliever is affiliated, asked him to report three weeks before Spring Training."⁷³

Some of the Americans stayed for the Championship Series, contributing to the victory of Escogido. But as the team prepared to go to Mexico for the Caribbean Series, the Americans, who accounted for most of the pitching staff, announced that they would not be going along. This desertion was especially painful in the light of Huisman's recent departure, and it prompted a steady stream of anti-American invective in the press. For all their grudging acceptance of foreigners on Dominican teams, the papers bellowed the following morning, "Lions Importados Will Not Go to Series." The articles noted the presumed need of the players to "rush" back to the United States for spring training, yet the accompanying photographs showed the Americans lounging about, half

dressed, in the offices of the Escogido Lions. This gave the impression that there was really no hurry to return after all and implied that the Dominicans were being deceived.

Next to an article about Huisman was another taking to task the American manager of a Dominican team for having lost so badly in the championship series. Cultural differences were cited as the major stumbling block: "not knowing how to handle Latin players" was the way both the paper and various people phrased it. Another American manager a rival team with much better results, and the press treated him more favorably because he knew how to handle the players. This manager, like Lasorda, has the respect of the Dominicans because of his willingness to return regularly to the Dominican Republic. Few North Americans realize that their attitudes toward the Dominicans are a subject that the Dominicans are very sensitive about, and few are aware of the acrimonious history between the two cultures.

Summer reporting of baseball and winter reporting are different on the surface but similar beneath it. In the summer Dominicans are depicted as stellar athletes capable of competing at the highest level. This brand of reporting exemplifies positive cultural resistance; its subtext is that the North Americans are not invincible and that the Dominicans have a way of dominating them in the United States. During the winter, when the major league teams and their Dominican stars are no longer playing, cultural resistance takes a negative form: the emphasis is on the crisis in Dominican baseball, which the North Americans are seen as having brought on. Both the positive cultural resistance of the summer and the negative cultural resistance of the winter are effective in molding public opinion and in putting distance between Dominican culture and American culture.

Concrete Resistance

When I began studying Dominican baseball I expected to find more acts of resistance among players in the academies, who are novices, and fewer among more experienced players who had been socialized into the culture of professional North American baseball. My thinking was that resistance would be inversely correlated to dependency.

For two years I agonized over my inability to find what I considered acts of cultural resistance: organized patterns of behavior, subtle or not, that held foreign influences at bay. At the academies I would see boys whose behavior posed problems, but these were *not* patterned responses (see chapter 4). My frustration ended one day when I watched a group

of young men trying out for the academy and suddenly realized why organized, patterned resistance could never occur there: these boys wanted only to comply. I had been looking for resistance in the wrong place.

It then occurred to me that resistance is born of a conflict between disparate cultural elements: it was only after they had tasted the bitter-sweet fruit of success in North America and returned to their homeland that the boys could begin to resist, that someone like Fellicita Guerra could refuse a rare chance to play in North America because of his opposition to the occupation by the U.S. Marines of his homeland in 1920 (see chapter 1), or that Chico Contón could abandon his pursuit of baseball in the United States because of the racism he encountered—obviously an act of refusal, though one given less attention than Guerra's (see chapter 3). Once I had realized this I decided to look anew at the Dominican winter league.

The Fight for Free Agency and FENAPEPRO

The move toward greater assertiveness by FENAPEPRO in 1988–89 was prompted by the unpopular proposal of Monchín Pichardo at the beginning of the season that the Dominican league should take a “rest” (see chapter 3). Under its current president the organization has waged an uphill battle for free agency that recalls the one that was played out in the United States in the 1970s. To succeed FENAPEPRO needs better organization than it has. The owners may try to oppose FENAPEPRO by breaking their weak nationalist alignment with the players and seeking the assistance of their American senior partners, thus realigning Dominican baseball along class lines rather than national ones.

When free agency took hold in the United States the economic consequences were far-reaching and inadvertently contributed to the present crisis in Dominican baseball, for the astounding leap in players' salaries that free agency brought about contributed mightily to the refusal of Dominican major leaguers to play in their homeland. But Dominican baseball lacks the lucrative television contracts that the North American major leagues have and that underwrite the players' large salaries. Therefore if free agency comes to the Dominican Republic the likely beneficiaries will be the rank and file: those who play in the Dominican league and the American minor leagues and have spent little or no time in the major leagues. This could seriously disrupt the working relationship between major league teams and their Dominican counterparts, all of which depend on the ability of the owners of Dominican teams to

control their players. By strengthening the ranks of the journeymen players, free agency might aid the Dominicans in their efforts to retain control of their brand of baseball. On the other hand, it might further weaken the structure of the Dominican professional league.

Whether free agency comes about will depend not on the number of players who side with FENAPEPRO but rather on the caliber of players who do. Until now few of the most successful Dominican players have lent their support to FENAPEPRO; more will have to if the organization is to succeed. Outside the Dominican Republic forces are at work that might indirectly facilitate free agency. Expansion of the National League, planned for 1992, will put pressure on the major league draft system to enlarge its pool of prospects. Puerto Rico is part of the baseball draft, and there are those who would like Dominican players to be included as well. To the degree that FENAPEPRO can cultivate good relations with other strata of Dominican baseball it could forge a stronger position for itself and free agency. By working to systematize Dominican baseball, making it more like North American baseball, FENAPEPRO can emerge as the leader in the fight to modernize the game.

The struggle for free agency is taking place against a complex and ever-changing background. On the surface the issue of free agency pits players against owners, but in Dominican baseball class, culture, and nationality are intricately interwoven: the Dominicans have tried to organize their game according to the guidelines laid down by the North Americans but have succeeded only in part; the loyalties of the fans are determined partly by their class but can also be swayed by press coverage; and the journalists are in turn professionals who might not be expected to aid the cause of resistance but who see themselves as subordinates vis-à-vis the North Americans. It can be argued that nationalism takes precedence over class on at least some ideological levels.

Just before the opening of the major league season in 1989, Epy Guerrero caused a minor stir in the baseball world, and in Toronto in particular, by publicly denouncing the Blue Jays for having treated Latino players unfairly. His charge that the Blue Jays denied Dominican players the same opportunities for advancement, playing, and money that they gave North Americans was surprising, in that Toronto has a reputation for treating Dominicans better than any other team in baseball does: there are five Dominicans on the parent club and around forty in the minor league system. Guerrero however maintained that some sort of ceiling was now being imposed, that perhaps the Blue Jays had become saturated with Latinos: “A serious problem has developed especially in the minor league system. I think its reached a point where the organization can't handle so many Latin players. There's about forty

Latins in the organization. I think the managers, coaches, and trainers are tired of hearing so much Spanish."⁷⁴ More surprising still was that Guerrero went public so quickly. His aggressiveness shows not only that he understood how to use the news media but that he was unintimidated by so powerful a presence as the Blue Jays. When members of the Blue Jays' organization expressed surprise at his having gone to the press so quickly, he replied, "Sometimes you have to go to the press to bring the government down."⁷⁵

Guerrero alleged that the organization had begun to brand Dominicans as "difficult,"⁷⁶ and in an attempt to control them had alienated many of them: "Everyday now, it seems like there's some kind of problem with one of our Latin players. And I feel like I'm the bad guy because I'm the one who's been sending these players here . . . It's getting worse everyday. It started three years ago when Dámaso García was fighting with [Jimmy] Williams [manager of the Blue Jays]. Then, last year there were problems between George Bell and Williams. In the minor leagues there were problems with Santiago García, and last year they sent Junior Felix home. Now, they're having a big problem with Jimmy Kelly [Dominican shortstop] at the minor league complex here. They say he has a bad attitude and can't get along with managers."⁷⁷

The incident involving Kelly prompted charges that the Blue Jays were anti-Dominican, as well as overt resistance on the part of the Dominicans. It was rumored that during spring training Kelly threw a baseball toward Toronto's vice president Bob Mattick, in apparent disgust at having been cut early from the Blue Jays' major league camp. The rumor so typified the mood at the time that whether it had any basis in fact is almost immaterial.

Guerrero's charges were backed by such successful Dominican players as Tony Fernández and George Bell. Bell's comments in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* showed that Dominicans as well as other Latinos were willing to confront the problem: "Latin players have been jumping all over me since I've been here because they feel they're not being treated fairly. And it's time for me to say something. Maybe the organization can start to realize the seriousness of the problem."⁷⁸

Guerrero resorted to the same incendiary phrasing that American ballplayers use in their more acrimonious dealings with their clubs: "I'm gonna be a free agent [after this season]. Maybe I can find a club that appreciates me and my players."⁷⁹ That Guerrero sees himself both as a Dominican who has been wronged and as one who is able to stand up for himself is a sign of real resistance, his personal motives notwithstanding.

The self-destructive play of the Dominican team during post-season

play in 1988–89 was reminiscent of the passive acts of sabotage by slaves in the antebellum South. After a stellar season the team was easily defeated in the championship series. There are many sports stories such as this: recall the Oakland A's in 1988 and the Los Angeles Lakers in 1989. But this time the relations between players and manager were unusually acrimonious, the manager was lacking in cultural sensitivity, and there were rumors in the press and occasional statements by the players to the effect that there was sabotage on the diamond. This made the story of the collapse of the Dominican team sadly atypical.