

## ABSTRACT

COLEMAN, ADAM. *The Devil You Know: US-Haitian Relations, 1957-1968*. (Under the direction of Nancy Mitchell.)

This thesis studies the relationship between the United States and Haiti during the dictatorship of Dr. Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier. In the wake of the Cuban revolution, the United States attempted to change its foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to prevent social upheavals that increased the probability of communist revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States tried to move away from its policy of supporting dictatorships and toward an anti-dictatorship policy that encouraged US-backed economic development and mutual hemispheric cooperation. Nevertheless, the primary goal of US foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean remained preventing the spread of communism. Because the United States so doggedly pursued its anticommunist policy over its anti-dictatorship policy, it found it extremely difficult to exert influence on countries with harsh dictatorial governments.

In Papa Doc’s Haiti, the United States consistently failed in its efforts to operate an economic development program, peacefully push Duvalier from power, or influence him to reform his dictatorial policies. Because Duvalier efficiently and brutally suppressed all political opposition to his regime, there existed no one in or out of Haiti whom the United States trusted to replace him. As such, fearing that removing Duvalier from power would lead to anarchy (and possibly communist revolution) in Haiti, the United States felt it had no choice but to maintain relations with him. The United States’ relationship with Duvalier exposed the flaws of its Latin American policy. Namely, that

economic assistance did not grant the United States a significant degree of political influence in countries receiving aid, and that economic development projects were useless if the money never reached the people for whom it was meant. Moreover, so long as the United States treated the Caribbean as a Cold War battlefield, its anxiety about the spread of communism through the region made it virtually impossible to pursue an anti-dictatorship foreign policy.

**THE DEVIL YOU KNOW: US-HAITIAN RELATIONS, 1957-1968**

by  
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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Adam Coleman was born in Killeen, Texas in 1978. He has since lived in: Schweinfurt, Germany; Security, Colorado; Salt Lake City, Utah; Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Ithaca, New York; and Raleigh, North Carolina. His interest in history is multifold and hardly any period or subject fails to interest him. He is also a gourmet, a satirist, and an amateur film critic. He received his Associate of Arts in Social Studies from Harrisburg Area Community College in 1999, his Bachelor of Arts in History from Ithaca College in 2001, and will receive his Master of Arts in History from North Carolina State University in 2004. He belongs to the Phi Theta Kappa international honor society and Phi Alpha Theta international history honor society. He finds the human race infinitely fascinating and endlessly amusing.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	Page
List of Figures.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: High Hopes for Haiti.....	11
Chapter 2: The Cesspool of the Western Hemisphere.....	45
Chapter 3: Don't Rock the Boat.....	86
Conclusion.....	129
Bibliography.....	133

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Political Map of Haiti.....136

## INTRODUCTION

“You will find that nothing has changed for the better. Only for the worse.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus in his novel *The Comedians* does Graham Greene describe the nation of Haiti under the rule of Dr. Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier. A virtual poster child for Caribbean dictators, Papa Doc ruled Haiti with an iron fist from 1957 to 1971. The United States looked favorably upon Duvalier when he won a democratic election in Haiti in 1957, little imagining how despotic his rule would become. At first content to support Duvalier regardless of his swing from democracy to totalitarianism, the United States found itself in a political quandary when American foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean underwent a marked shift in response to the Cuban revolution. Events in Cuba prompted the United States to reconsider its pro-dictator policy in Latin America. Implementing an anti-dictatorship policy proved virtually impossible as the United States overestimated its ability to influence events in Latin. The problems the United States faced in pursuing an anti-dictatorship policy can be clearly seen in Haiti, where the United States found it difficult to institute either an anti- or a pro-Duvalier policy.

In large part, the failure of US policy in Haiti stems from its misreading of the problems facing Haiti. Washington treated its efforts in Haiti as part of the larger Cold War arena. However, US intelligence analyses determined repeatedly that the possibility of a communist insurgency in Haiti was highly unlikely. The biggest threat to Haiti was not communism but Dr. Duvalier and the terror tactics he used to silence his opponents and enforce his will. Because the United States placed anticommunism before its anti-dictatorship policy, it crippled its own ability to combat the Duvalier regime. Denying

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, Graham. *The Comedians*. England: Penguin Books, 1965.

Latin America to the communists took precedent over helping the region rid itself of tyranny.

Duvalier's rule lasted through three American presidencies. This paper will examine US-Haitian relations during the administrations of Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson. The Nixon administration will be touched on only briefly, as it had little interaction with the twilight years of Papa Doc's reign, and also because few relevant declassified government documents are yet available for study. As for the other three administrations, each dealt with Papa Doc differently. Lacking any real economic or strategic importance for the United States, Haiti only really became important to the United States following the Cuban revolution. Because of its geographic proximity to Cuba, Washington felt it important to begin keeping a closer eye on and fostering a closer relationship with Haiti. Upon Duvalier's election as president, (two years before the Cuban revolution,) the Eisenhower administration welcomed the opportunity to support a democratic government in Haiti. However, when Duvalier rapidly turned out to be a brutal dictator driving his country toward ruin, the Eisenhower administration learned the hard way that it had made a bad investment and been saddled with a political relationship it could neither abandon nor pursue.

The Kennedy administration felt the pressure of this problem more acutely, and made Haiti a target of its attempt to pursue a more aggressive anti-dictatorship policy. Kennedy took a special interest in Haiti, hoping to bring positive change to the nation and felt particular frustration with the failure of the United States to influence Duvalier or force him from power by peaceful means. After Johnson assumed the presidency, the United States shifted its policy to one of not "rocking the boat," so to speak. Johnson did



not let up the pressure the Kennedy administration put on Duvalier, but did not actively attempt to influence events in Haiti either. Besides his own unwillingness to involve the United States in Latin American any more than absolutely necessary, Johnson had to face the inevitable racial problems associated with a large, predominantly white nation attempting to exert its will on a smaller, weaker black republic. However, in spite of the advantages the United States enjoyed over Haiti, it failed in its effort to use those advantages to any effect in Haiti. Francois Duvalier led a nation with a horrible economy, little infrastructure, and barely any defenses. Yet, he wielded enough power to survive every attempt to unseat him. Not internal coups, foreign revolutionaries, exiled rebels, or even a hostile United States could force Duvalier from power.

This paper will examine in detail the ways in which the United States attempted to influence events in Haiti between 1957 and 1968. It will analyze the US relationship with the Duvalier government and with opponents of the regime. I hope that it will provide an example of the failure of American Cold War politics in Latin America.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, I hope to fill a gap in the historical record. The relationship between Papa Doc and the United States is fascinating, but rarely given much shrift in historical analyses. As a rule, histories of Haiti pass over Francois Duvalier quickly, focusing more on his son and successor, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier. This is unfortunate, for in doing so, they skip over a period of US foreign relations in which the United States’ power failed to equal influence and the only winner was the dictator Washington wanted to see removed from power.

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<sup>2</sup> Properly, Haiti is a Caribbean nation, not Latin American. Moreover, Haiti is certainly not a Latin, but an Afro-French nation. However, given that US foreign policy often lumps the regions together, for the purposes of this paper it is useful and convenient to follow suit.

Because so little has been written about Papa Doc, it is worth briefly examining what materials are in fact available. One of the only books that truly focus on Francois Duvalier is Bernard Diedrich and Al Burt's *Papa Doc: Haiti and its Dictator*.<sup>3</sup> Diedrich and Burt were journalists who reported on Haiti during Duvalier's presidency. In their introduction, they admit that the book is not a true history, and indeed, it lacks documentation of any kind and its condemnatory tone is anything but subtle. Yet, the historical record sufficiently corroborates what Diedrich and Burt write that it serves as a trustworthy source and an essential part of any study of its subject.

Robert and Nancy Heintz's *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995* is a thorough survey of Haitian history and a relatively useful reference tool; relative in that it has no English language competition.<sup>4</sup> For so vast an undertaking, the book is under-documented. In spite of a good bibliography, most of the footnotes list extraneous information, not clear citations. One historian described it as "no improvement over the sensationalistic literature of the nineteenth century."<sup>5</sup> The book is not quite that bad, but there are enough problems that historians should avoid relying on it without exercising caution.

Outside of these two books, however, one will be hard pressed to find much of substance on Papa Doc. Most books that deal with Duvalier do so in a single chapter. For example, James Ferguson's *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* examines Papa Doc's reign in a single, thirty-page chapter, devoting the rest of the study to his son,

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<sup>3</sup> Diedrich, Bernard and Al Burt. *Papa Doc: Haiti and its Dictator*. Maplewood, NJ: Waterfront Press, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Heintz, Robert Debs Jr. and Nancy Gordon Heintz. Revised and Expanded by Michael Heintz. *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*. New York University Press of America, Inc., 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Plummer, Gayle. *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, pg 293.

Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier.<sup>6</sup> Even when one can find materials on Papa Doc, such materials rarely explore his reign in the context of United States foreign relations. A useful exception is Stephen Rabe’s *The Most Dangerous Place in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*.<sup>7</sup> Although Rabe devotes only a few pages to Haiti, this is far more than one finds in most books and it succinctly addresses US-Haitian relations under Duvalier. Rabe is one of the few historians of Latin America to include Haiti in an analysis of US foreign policy during the Kennedy administration and put it in its proper historical context of US-Caribbean politics. Moreover, his analysis draws on a greater breadth of documentary material than most studies of Haiti.

Another reliable source is Brenda Gayle Plummer’s *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment*. Again, Papa Doc is not the focus of her book, but her section on his reign is clear and accurate, providing a good, brief study of the Duvalier regime and its relationship with the United States. The only drawback to Plummer’s account is that she draws more on secondary than primary sources. Nevertheless, as part of a larger study of Haiti, her analysis is sound and a good source to turn to for information on US-Haitian relations during the Papa Doc period. Robert I. Rotberg and Christopher K. Clague’s *Haiti: Politics of Squalor* is also useful.<sup>8</sup> Rotberg briefly covers Haitian history up to Duvalier, then gives readers a very good account Papa Doc’s life, but having written it in 1971, his book suffers from his not having access to non-public

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<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, James. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers*. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Rabe, Stephen G. *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communism in Latin America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Rotberg, Robert I. with Christopher K. Clague. *Haiti: Politics of Squalor*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.

documents. However, Rotberg enjoyed the cooperation of the Duvalier government in his research. Not surprisingly, Rotberg is less condemnatory of the regime than other authors are, but in spite of his reticence, he nevertheless manages to give a good summary of life in Haiti during Duvalier's rule. Finally, one of the few histories completely devoted to this period of US-Haitian relations is Charles T. Williamson's titular study of *The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti, 1959-1963*.<sup>9</sup> Williamson's book focuses solely on the naval mission and is very thorough, authoritative, and a good case study for the difficulties the United States experienced in its relations with the Duvalier government. His book does not quite capture the bigger picture of US-Haitian relations, but because other books do not examine the naval mission in as much depth, Williamson's is worth examining.

Ultimately, one has to turn to what primary sources are available to gain an understanding of US-Haitian relations under Papa Doc. With only a few exceptions the materials used in this paper come from declassified US government documentary sources. A large number of government documents, (most of them from the Department of State,) are printed in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series. I have been able to significantly supplement the materials in the FRUS collection with documents from various government agencies collected online using the Declassified Documents Reference System. Although there is little topical organization of the documents available, this online subscription service provides electronic facsimiles of tens of thousands of documents otherwise either not available or requiring significant travel.

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<sup>9</sup> Williamson, Charles T. *The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti, 1959-1963*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1999.

More documents are available at the National Archives and the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson libraries, but there are a sufficient quantity in the FRUS and DDRS to reconstruct and evaluate US-Haitian relations during the period in question.

The only major limitation to these sources is that of security classification. As of this writing, most documents from the last three years of Papa Doc's reign remain classified. Moreover, there are periods in the narrative when the journalistic account suggests a very busy period for the US mission in Haiti, but few declassified documents exist for the period, suggesting a fair amount remains classified. Therefore, in this paper, I have supplemented my reading of the documents with a careful study of the day-to-day reporting in the New York Times. A significant amount of material is available in the New York Times, and is highly useful for filling in narrative gaps left by the raw documents.

Haiti is the great anomaly of the Western Hemisphere. A small, overpopulated country in the Caribbean, Haiti takes up about one third of the island of Hispaniola, sharing the rest of the island with the Dominican Republic. With a total land area of just over 27,000 square kilometers, with much of it covered in mountains and harsh, arid expanses, Haiti has hardly any natural resources worth exploiting. For the past two hundred years, the Haitian economy has depended on coffee exports, tourism and little else. Established in the 17th century by French colonists, the country retains a uniquely Afro-French culture to this day, making it a culturally isolated pocket in an otherwise Latin and Anglo-dominated region.

The French settlers established their colony, Saint Domingue, on the eastern part of Hispaniola, importing African slaves to run vast, enormously prosperous sugar cane

plantations.<sup>10</sup> The sugar plantations produced significant wealth for the white colonists, all of it earned on the backs of African slaves who endured some of the most horrendous living conditions in the world. “On no other portion of the globe,” wrote historian C.L.R. James, did human misery “yield so much wealth” for slaveholders as in Saint Domingue.<sup>11</sup> By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the colony had developed an unstable racial hierarchy, with free whites at the top, black slaves at the bottom, and free mulattos in the middle.<sup>12</sup> Following the republican revolution in France in 1789, the impulse for liberty spread to St. Domingue. In 1791, the slaves rose up en masse, declaring their freedom and resisting attempts to drive them back into bondage. In 1804, the revolutionaries won their bid for freedom, establishing the free, black republic of Haiti.

It was one of the most singular moments in history – the only successful mass slave revolt ever. In an age of great revolutions, that of Haiti should have been a glorious moment for democracy, liberty, and independence. Reality, however, proved bitter. Though they had driven out the whites, the tensions between blacks and the mulatto elite remained and never fully ended. Instead of serving as a bastion of black independence, Haiti stood alone, steeped in poverty, and friendless. Leadership of the nation passed from one dictatorship to another. To other nations, Haiti seemed to validate racist theories about the inability of non-whites to successfully self-govern. Slave-holding nations like the United States were particularly apprehensive of the black republic.

Fearing that the Haitian example might inspire revolts among American slaves, the

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the establishment of Spanish and French colonies in Hispaniola, see: Pons, Frank Moya. The Dominican Republic: A National History Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> James, C.L.R. The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Overture and the San Domingo Revolution New York: Vintage Books, 1963. pg 46.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of race in St. Domingue, see: King, Steward R. Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

United States did not formally recognize a Haitian government until 1862. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haiti remained largely politically isolated. The world seemed content to allow Haiti to slide into misery and self-destruction.

Even after the United States formally recognized Haiti, the American government remained largely aloof of Haitian matters. American businessmen, however, made a number of investments in the country, encouraging coffee and sugar production. Haitian politics remained unstable, marked by periods of violence, which prompted the United States to periodically land Marines on Haitian soil to restore order, or rather, protect American interests. In 1915, this policy of “gunboat diplomacy” reached a climax in Haiti. Deeming the Haitian government too weak and unstable to protect American interests, President Woodrow Wilson authorized a full-scale military occupation of Haiti by United States Marines. The Marines established order, arranged elections, built roads, and trained a local police force, but their presence proved highly unpopular. Popular opposition remained a constant challenge to American control of Haiti. The administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, committed to a “good neighbor policy” in Latin America, found the American occupation of Haiti an embarrassment in its efforts to convince Latin American nations that the United States wished to end its long-standing policy of interventionism in the region.<sup>13</sup>

Eager to extricate itself from Haiti, the Roosevelt administration finally withdrew the occupation force in 1934 and handed control of the nation to elected Haitian

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<sup>13</sup> Schmidt, Hans. The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971. pp 228-232.

officials. The United States maintained control over the Haitian economy until 1942.<sup>14</sup> Haiti did not fare well after the Americans left. The world depression of the 1930s hit Haiti as hard as any other country, forestalling any chance of economic development. Politically, the government elected after the US withdrawal became a dictatorship. The major legacies of American occupation, the good roads and a well-trained police force loyal to the government, actually made it easier for new dictatorships to exert control over the country. In 1946, Haitians elected Dumarsais Estime president, who briefly experimented with social reform. In 1950, a military junta overthrew Estime and held an election for president. Winning an overwhelming majority, junta member Paul Magloire assumed the presidency in November 1950. However, Magloire proved unable to improve living conditions in Haiti and set the stage for a new dictatorship.

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the US occupation of Haiti, see: Hans Schmidt's The United States Occupation of Haiti and Renda, Mary A. Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2001.



## CHAPTER 1 – HIGH HOPES FOR HAITI

In spite its once close involvement in Haiti, the United States took little notice of the changes in the island nation's government after the end of the US occupation. During World War II, Haiti joined the Allied cause against the Axis powers, but played a minor role in the war effort. After World War II, Haiti slipped even further off the American political map. For the United States, the post-war priority lay in rebuilding Western Europe. To that end, Latin American only really mattered to the United States as a source of raw materials.

The situation began to change as the Cold War became the driving force of American foreign policy. However, the focus of American Cold War policy remained Europe. That is, until the victory of communist forces in China in 1949. Suddenly, global venues other than Europe took on a new significance to Washington. Nevertheless, the United States remained convinced that its special relationship with Latin America virtually ensured that the region was protected from communist infiltration. Through the 1950s, however, the rise of pro-socialist and communist forces throughout Latin America repeatedly challenged this assumption, forcing the United States to begin to pay attention to what was happening on its doorstep, particularly in the Caribbean. When communist revolutionaries began winning victories in Latin America, even small, otherwise insignificant countries like Haiti became important to the United States.

Haiti, under the presidency of Paul Magloire, continued to sink into economic decay. However, he did try to alleviate the decay by seeking loans from the United States and United Nations totaling \$40 million for construction of a massive irrigation and

hydroelectric facility in Haiti's central Artibonite Valley.<sup>15</sup> In October 1954, Hurricane Hazel struck Haiti, devastating the vital coffee crop. Estimates suggest that the hurricane destroyed upwards of twenty to forty percent of the crop, with a projected loss for Haiti of upwards of \$9 million. In response, Magloire slashed the national budget from \$28 million to \$26 million, but faced total bankruptcy at the beginning of 1955.<sup>16</sup>

In February 1955, Magloire requested that the United States increase the amount of aid allocated to Haiti for both disaster relief and completing the Artibonite dam project. The financial difficulties facing Haiti made it imperative that Magloire secure the funds. Because Haiti already owed over five million dollars to US firms, if the United States cut off aid to Haiti, it could have left the Artibonite project unfinished for an indefinite period and Haiti with no means of using it to generate the income necessary to pay off the money it already owed. Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs Robert Newbegin reported that without a reinvigorated coffee crop, Haiti's recovery "would be so slow that its ability to make payments on loans which might be granted would be seriously jeopardized." In order to forestall an economic disaster, the Eisenhower administration prepared to send a loan to Haiti totaling approximately \$16 million, in addition to disaster relief funds.<sup>17</sup>

The loans helped salvage the coffee crop but failed to encourage progress on the Artibonite project. Magloire pointed out that the United States government had

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<sup>15</sup> Heintz and Heintz, 532.

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Henry F. Holland to the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs Frederick Ernest Nolting. Department of State, 2 Feb. 1955. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #339, pp 933-936.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs (Newbegin) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Holland). Department of State, 5 Jan. 1955. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #337, pp 931-932.

recommended the engineering firm responsible for the project delays. Washington admitted that it shared some of the blame for the inefficiency of the project, as well as for some of Haiti's other economic problems. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Henry F. Holland suggested that the United States had some obligation to Haiti for having helped create its poor economic situation. During World War II for example, the United States had encouraged Haiti to cultivate sisal and natural rubber. Both commodities failed to reinvigorate the Haitian economy and proved very poor investments. If the United States did not make good on its obligations, he argued, "the resulting criticism and distrust of American methods and techniques" could damage the US relationship with Haiti. The State Department recommended allocating \$7 million of aid to Haiti. Part of this took the form of the emergency package, with the rest covered by a forgiving of the loan taken out by Haiti during the Second World War. Above all, Holland stressed that loans granted to Haiti be specifically earmarked for the Artibonite project, stating it "is essential that the project be finished" so that funds might be freed up for Haiti's other economic development projects.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the amount of money flowing from the United States, the Haitian economy did not improve. Rather than face the public backlash resulting from instituting austerity measures, Magloire resigned as president on December 6, 1956. In the wake of his resignation, the political and economic situation further declined. By mid-May, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy Rubottom reported that the "Haitian Government is virtually without financial resources" and pegged the country's

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum on a meeting between President Eisenhower and Haitian president Magloire in Panama City, July 23, 1956. Department of State, 23 Jul. 1956. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #344, pp 345-346.

total debt at nearly \$30 million.<sup>19</sup> Political control of Haiti passed through five short-lived provisional governments before power finally settled into the hands of a three-member military junta. The State Department debated whether to extend formal recognition to the junta. The only reason to support the junta lay in the fact that it promised to hold and respect democratic elections in September.

The possibility of a democratic election in Haiti sparked renewed interest in the United States for granting financial assistance. If the junta was serious about holding elections, Washington was eager to increase its political investment in Haiti. The United States largely just wanted Haiti to repay what money it already owed and to protect private American investments in Haiti. To that end, the United States wanted a politically and economically stable Haiti and was willing to ensure it with economic and diplomatic support. Political stability required a sound economy, which entailed yet more aid. On July 18, United States Ambassador to Haiti Gerald A. Drew expressed little optimism concerning the junta's intentions to hold elections. Drew, a career diplomat, was assigned to the US embassy in Port-au-Prince in March, during the post-Magloire period when several interim governments came and went with rapidity.

After meeting with the junta, he reported their argument for official American recognition:

Boiled down to something along the line that 'We want you to recognize us; therefore you have to recognize us because everything is wonderful.'... Their clinching argument was that, on their word as gentlemen and soldiers that they would hold elections, everything was settled and we had no recourse but to

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<sup>19</sup> Memorandum on Financial Assistance to Haiti; From Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy Rubottom to the Under Secretary of State Christian A. Herter. Department of State, 15 May, 1957. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #350, pg 953-954.

recognize. ...It is a fact that they desperately want our recognition to put the seal of respectability on the regime.

Drew added that “Haiti might at least threaten to turn to the Soviets for help or...the Communists ...might try to make propaganda out of our protracted non-recognition.”<sup>20</sup> Washington was already highly sensitive to the threat of communist expansion into Latin America and determined to prevent communism from gaining even the slightest toehold in the region. For example, in 1954, the United States had already used the Central Intelligence Agency to facilitate the overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz for engaging in what the US government considered socialist policies. Since then, the United States had remained no less committed to aggressive anticommunism in Latin America. As such, taking action in countries such as Haiti to prevent them from going communist was a priority for the United States. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles recommended to President Eisenhower on July 25 that formal recognition be granted to the junta, stressing that the “present Government is without Communist taint and is friendly to the United States.”<sup>21</sup> In the end, this assurance was enough to ensure US support. After all, as historian Stephen Rabe has pointed out, “Communists, not dictators, were the enemies of the United States.”<sup>22</sup>

When the junta announced that it would hold a democratic election on September 22, 1957, hopes ran high in Washington that the election might usher in a period of stability and economic recovery in Haiti. Four men made a bid for the presidency. Daniel

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<sup>20</sup> Letter from Ambassador Drew to Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs William Weiland. Department of State, 18 Jul. 1957. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #355, pp 959-961.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to President Eisenhower on recognizing the Haitian government. Department of State, 25 Jul. 1957. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #357, pp962-963.

<sup>22</sup> Rabe, Stephen. Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism. Chapel Hill: The North Carolina University Press, 1988, pg. 39.

Fignole had briefly been president after Magloire's resignation and before the assumption of power by the junta. Fignole lived in New York in exile and the junta had strongly suggested that he stay there until after the election.<sup>23</sup> Clement Jumelle, former Finance Minister under Magloire, had the most political experience, and as a result seemed the heir-apparent to the former president's political legacy. Unfortunately, he was also heir-apparent to the negative memory among Haitians of the fiscal irresponsibility of the Magloire administration. Louis Dejoie, a mulatto private businessman, enjoyed the support of the mulatto elite.<sup>24</sup> The last candidate was a physician-turned-politician, Dr. Francois Duvalier.

Francois Duvalier earned his medical credentials in 1934, after which he practiced medicine in the Haitian countryside, devoting considerable time to treating and stopping the spread of the skin disease, yaws. Despite a long-standing antipathy toward the United States for its occupation of Haiti, Duvalier participated in US-backed public health projects in Haiti and briefly studied public health at the University of Michigan in 1944.<sup>25</sup> Upon his return to Haiti, Duvalier went into politics and became director of the National Public Health Service in 1946. Duvalier later served as Secretary of Labor during the Estime administration, but was driven from office after Magloire's election, and joined an underground anti-Magloire opposition group between 1954 and 1956.<sup>26</sup> When Washington supported the Magloire government, Duvalier's distrust of the United States grew more acute.

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<sup>23</sup> "Fignole Says Army 'Stages' Haiti Vote," The New York Times, 14 Aug. 1957, pg 5.

<sup>24</sup> Heint and Heint, 542.

<sup>25</sup> "Iron Hand in Haiti – Dr. Francois Duvalier," The New York Times, 4 Aug. 1967, pg 6.

<sup>26</sup> "The 'Renovator of Haiti' – Francois Duvalier," The New York Times, 30 Apr. 1963, pg 8.

Duvalier, or “Papa Doc” as he liked being called, certainly did not look the part of a dictator. He appeared slight and frail, and often spoke so softly that others could not understand him. He dressed conservatively, and his white hair and thick, horn-rimmed glasses all combined to give more of a grandfatherly appearance. Yet he was more complicated than he appeared. Duvalier was a black politician in a country where mulattos generally held the most political power, a fact of life Duvalier despised. Duvalier embraced his African ancestry and encouraged all Haitians to do the same, and in so doing reject the French elements of their culture.<sup>27</sup> A student of Machiavelli, Duvalier often referred to *The Prince* for political guidance.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Duvalier, unlike his opponents, embraced the study of voodoo, Haiti’s unique religion that combines Catholicism and African mysticism. More than just a mystic, Duvalier was a voodoo priest and believed he had special powers and otherworldly protection.<sup>29</sup> Because voodoo is a religion of the masses, Duvalier’s understanding of and participation in its practice afforded him a cultural link to the common Haitian. To the peasantry Duvalier appeared a Haitian for Haitians, rather than a member of the cultural elite. Moreover, being a voodoo priest only raised his esteem with the faithful, who shared Duvalier’s belief in his supernatural powers.

Perhaps most importantly though, Duvalier enjoyed the support of the military and the junta, with whom he had made contact during his self-imposed political exile during the Magloire years. United by their anti-Magloire bond, the junta, like most of his

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<sup>27</sup> Heintz and Heintz, 562.

<sup>28</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 71.

<sup>29</sup> This particular facet of Duvalier’s personality is usually downplayed in historical analyses. For more see: Laguerre, Michael S. “The Voodization of Politics in Haiti.” In Torres, Arlene and Normal E. Whitten Jr., eds. Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. pp 495-539.

political supporters, viewed Duvalier as rather simple, easily controlled, and thus a potentially excellent puppet through whom they could rule Haiti.<sup>30</sup> On August 14, Fignole charged that the military intended to rig the election to put Dr. Duvalier into power.<sup>31</sup> A month later, on September 17, Dejoie and Jumelle joined Fignole's protest, claiming that not only the presidential, but also the legislative elections had been rigged to put Duvalier supporters into office.<sup>32</sup> The junta denied the claim, and insisted that it intended to hold an honest election.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, Duvalier raised no objections to the election procedure. Convinced of election shenanigans, Jumelle told his supporters that as "there won't be any fair election," they might as well boycott the whole affair.<sup>34</sup> Held under heavy armed guard, the voting proved quiet, orderly, and decisively in favor of Duvalier.

Francois Duvalier won the 1957 presidential election by a margin of five to one, winning 679,884 votes. Dejoie won 266,992, and Jumelle, despite ordering his boycott of the election, won 9,980 votes.<sup>35</sup> As expected, Duvalierists won all but a handful of seats in the legislature.<sup>36</sup> Duvalier won his greatest margins in the countryside, but in Port-au-Prince lost to Dejoie. Dejoie claimed that voting in Port-au-Prince had been fair, but had been rigged in Duvalier's favor in the countryside.<sup>37</sup> The ruling junta maintained that the election had been free of irregularities and invited foreign journalists to investigate for themselves. The correspondent from the New York Times took them up

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<sup>30</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pg 80.

<sup>31</sup> "Fignole Says Army 'Stages' Haiti Vote," The New York Times, 14 Aug. 1957, pg 5.

<sup>32</sup> "2 Haitian Nominees Charge Voting Plot," The New York Times, 18 Sep. 1957, pg 3.

<sup>33</sup> Kihss, Peter. "Haiti's Vote Plan Irks 2 Candidates," The New York Times, 20 Sep. 1957, pg 10.

<sup>34</sup> Kihss, Peter. "Haiti Sets Guard for Today's Vote," The New York Times, 22 Sep. 1957, pg 19.

<sup>35</sup> Kihss, Peter. "10 Haiti Officers Ousted by Junta," The New York Times, 29 Sep. 1957, pg 25.

<sup>36</sup> Kihss, Peter. "Haiti Subjected to Martial Law," The New York Times, 18 Sep. 1957, pg 6.

<sup>37</sup> Kihss, Peter. "Duvalier Claims Victory in Haiti," The New York Times, 24 Sep. 1957, pg 13.



on this offer and reported he was convinced that Duvalier had a great deal of popular support, enough for him to have won the without having to fix the election.<sup>38</sup> Papa Doc had capitalized on his familiarity with the countryside from his days as a rural doctor during the campaign. As he had campaigned on a platform promising to address the needs of the peasantry, which Duvalier claimed to be touch with, it is definitely possible that he did have genuine support in the countryside.

A month after the election, Francois Duvalier was sworn into office. The junta transferred control of the nation to the newly elected government without incident. Duvalier announced his devotion to democracy and freedom, promising to protect “the exercise of liberty to all Haitians,” and his intention to frame a new constitution to protect those rights. Finally, he made special note of his desire to maintain unity and friendship between Haiti and the United States.<sup>39</sup> Beyond some quickly forgotten irregularities at the polls, it had been a quiet election. From the perspective of the outside world, Dr. Duvalier seemed like a decent, honest choice for president of a country that desperately needed good, fair leadership. After his inauguration, Duvalier made a show of demonstrating his dedication to democracy in Haiti, granting a general amnesty for political prisoners in Haiti, and denying rumors of election fraud.<sup>40</sup>

Duvalier began facing difficulties almost immediately after taking office. One of the most serious involved a diplomatic confrontation with the United States concerning the suspicious death of an American citizen while detained by the Haitian police. The United States viewed the matter as an affront to American lives and property not only in

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<sup>38</sup> Kihss, Peter. “Haiti Subjected to Martial Law,” The New York Times, 18 Sep. 1957, pg 6.

<sup>39</sup> “Duvalier sworn in as Head of Haiti,” The New York Times, 23, Oct. 1957, pg 10.

<sup>40</sup> “Amnesty in Haiti Cited by Duvalier,” The New York Times, 25 Oct. 1957 pg 3.

Haiti, but also throughout Latin America and made the resolution of the case a priority for the US embassy staff in Port-au-Prince. To an extent, the American response to the incident served as a warning to the rest of Latin America to respect American interests in the region and despite the preoccupation of the United States with matters in Europe and Asia, it did not intend to ignore its interests in Latin America. Moreover, the United States had virtually ignored Haiti for years, allowing the country to destabilize to the point that an American citizen could be killed, ostensibly while under state protection. More so than the US economic interests, the Talamas Case marked the true beginning of a renewed American political interest in Haiti and a sort of test of the new political administration.

Shibley Talamas, an American citizen of Haitian descent, resided in Port-au-Prince. On September 28, 1957, just days after the presidential election, the local police raided Talamas' home while he was taking his pregnant wife to a hospital to deliver their baby. The police had been looking for evidence that could connect Talamas to incidents of violence during the election. They found two firearms and some ammunition in Talamas' home and ordered a warrant for his arrest for questioning.

Upon learning of the warrant, Talamas immediately contacted US Ambassador Gerald A. Drew for advice.<sup>41</sup> The embassy suggested that as he had nothing to hide, Talamas should turn himself in to the authorities. In order to protect Talamas, Drew had two US consular officers accompany him to the police station, where they received

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<sup>41</sup> Remarks by Congressman David Short Dennison of Ohio. Congressional Record 3 Feb. 1958, pp 1565-1570. Congressman Dennison's report on the Talamas Case is the most thorough explication of the events of the night of September 28, 1957, and the immediate aftermath. The greatest value is that he shared the Haitian and American coroner's reports on Talamas's body with the Congress.

assurances that the police would not mistreat him. By morning, Talamas was dead. It took the consular team and an American doctor most of the day to arrange to see the body. When they finally did, they discovered the body covered with bruises and incisions.

The official Haitian coroner's report stated that Talamas died of a heart attack, likely due to a combination of stress and poor physical condition.<sup>42</sup> As for the bruises and lacerations, police representatives admitted that Talamas sustained the injuries while in custody. However, the police claimed that during his interrogation Talamas had attempted to attack his questioners and seize a machine gun and that the police had had to subdue him with force and place him in bonds.<sup>43</sup> Unsatisfied with this explanation, Drew demanded a second autopsy be performed, this time by an American physician. The results of this second examination determined that the cause of Shibley Talamas's death was due to:

Severe soft tissue injury with secondary hemorrhage and resulting shock...These findings are entirely compatible with the results of severe trauma to the described area by means of blunt force...There was no evidence of significant heart disease.<sup>44</sup>

Based on these findings, the coroner and embassy staff concluded that Talamas had been beaten to death in jail.<sup>45</sup>

On October 1, Drew issued an official protest with the provisional Haitian Government that continued to govern pending Dr. Duvalier's inauguration. Drew's note

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<sup>42</sup> Haitian Coroner's report received by the US embassy. Quoted in Congressman Dennison's remarks to Congress on 3 Feb, 1958, pg 1566.

<sup>43</sup> Khiss, Peter. "U.S. Citizen Dies in Haitian Prison," *The New York Times*, 1 Oct. 1957, pg 15.

<sup>44</sup> American Coroner's report received by the US embassy. Quoted in Congressman Dennison's remarks to Congress on 3 Feb, 1958, pp 1566-1577.

<sup>45</sup> Remarks by Congressman David Short Dennison of Ohio. Congressional Record 3 Feb. 1958, pg 1566, 1567.

called the murder an “assassination” and demanded both a formal investigation of the officers responsible and assurances that the Haitian government respect the rights of American citizens and property in Haiti.<sup>46</sup> On October 2, the Haitian Government responded by denying responsibility, claiming that Talamas’s death was an accident and that “no crime exists in the absence of any criminal intent.” If blame existed, the junta claimed, it belonged to Talamas himself for being a “meddling” American who should have minded his own business.<sup>47</sup>

The United States government was unimpressed by the Haitian answer and suspended all financial aid to Haiti until its government provided satisfaction and restitution to Talamas’s widow. A number of US members of Congress, most notably David Short Dennison of Ohio, considered the resolution of the case a matter of the utmost importance to the United States. Duvalier inherited this diplomatic mess when he took office on October 22. On November 30, Drew met with Duvalier, who told the ambassador he intended to take the Talamas Case into his own hands and bring it to an “early and satisfactory conclusion.”<sup>48</sup> However, a conclusion still seemed distant at the end of December when Drew returned to Washington for consultation on the American position on the case.

Drew returned to Port-au-Prince on January 14, 1958. Washington authorized Drew to make Duvalier aware of the benefits of satisfying American demands for justice and respect, most notably a million dollar assistance grant and US recommendations for

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Also: Khiss, Peter. “Haiti Authorizes Killing ‘Outlaws,’” New York Times, 2 Oct. 1957 pg 13.

<sup>47</sup> Remarks by Congressman David Short Dennison of Ohio. Congressional Record 3 Feb. 1958, pg 1567.

<sup>48</sup> Dispatch from Ambassador Drew to the Department of State. 30 Nov. 1957 Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #247, pg 967.

loans to Haiti from the US Development Loan Fund, ExImBank, and the International Monetary Fund. Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs William Wieland stressed that these benefits did not suggest a “quid pro quo” with the government of Haiti, but that seems to have been the intent nonetheless.<sup>49</sup> Finally, on February 6, the Haitian Government formally apologized for the death of Shibley Talamas, censured the officers responsible for his death, and granted his widow a \$100,000 indemnity.<sup>50</sup>

The settlement of the Talamas Case removed the barrier to American aid to Haiti, aid that Duvalier claimed Haiti desperately needed. Its resolution also suggested that Duvalier might be a man of his word and someone with whom the United States could work to improve life in Haiti. Because of the temporary US freeze on aid, the only assistance coming into Haiti since Duvalier’s election consisted of a four million dollar loan from Batista’s Cuba, which Duvalier told Drew was not really a loan at all, but funds accumulated in Cuban banks by migrant sugar cane workers.<sup>51</sup> By May, with the Talamas case resolved, US assistance to Haiti resumed and even increased, including a \$2 million loan from the International Cooperation Administration, US support for \$5 million from the International Monetary Fund, and the arrival of a US Marine Corps survey team charged with modernizing the Haitian army.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Memorandum from Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs (Wieland) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom). 9 Jan. 1958, Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VII, Microfilm Supplement, #HA-1.

<sup>50</sup> Khiss, Peter. “Haiti Indemnifies U.S. Victim’s Kin,” The New York Times, 7 Feb. 1958, pg 9.

<sup>51</sup> Dispatch from Ambassador Drew to the Department of State. 30 Nov. 1957 Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VI, #247, pg 968.

<sup>52</sup> International Cooperation Administration staff summary: assistance to Haiti. White House 8 May, 1958, Declassified Documents Reference System, #CK3100256002; Kihss, Peter. “Haiti Plans to Ask U.S. Envoy’s Recal,l” The New York Times, 29 Jul. 1958, pg 1, 12; “Ex-Haiti Candidate is Accused in Plot,” The New York Times, 20 May, 1958, pg 19.

In spite of these improvements in US-Haitian relations, May marked the beginning of another tumultuous trial for Duvalier and the beginning of his slide into dictatorship. The political atmosphere in Haiti had remained tense since the election, with only a brief respite of normalcy during the winter season. In March, Papa Doc forcefully announced that he and he alone was the head of the government as well as of the military, removing any lingering doubts as to whether he was a pawn of the military or not. At the same time, plainclothes secret police became a common sight on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Holding regular jobs during the day, and spreading terror by night, they earned the nom de plume, “Ton Tons Macoutes” by the local population, which translates roughly to “bogeymen.” The TTMs were Duvalier’s eyes and ears, and often his iron fist as well. An ever-present part of his regime, they collected information on suspected political enemies, and bullied them into submission with the regime at night. When needed, the Ton Tons Macoutes arranged for political opponents of Papa Doc to simply disappear. The very presence of the TTMs gave the Haitian government a sinister air. “In return for a gun, occasional payment and an aura of fear,” says historian James Ferguson, “they upheld Duvalierism in towns and countryside alike.”<sup>53</sup>

On April 30, the Haitian Government claimed it had uncovered a bomb plot and responded by declaring a state of siege. The Duvalier government charged former presidential candidates Louis Dejoie and Clement Jumelle as the parties behind the plot.<sup>54</sup> Jumelle and his brother went into hiding, while Dejoie fled to exile in the United States. Around the beginning of July, the government ordered the arrest of known political

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<sup>53</sup> Ferguson, James. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers*. Oxford: TJ Press, Ltd., 1987. Pg. 40.

<sup>54</sup> “Haitians Impose a State of Siege,” *The New York Times*, 3 May 1958, pg 8; “Ex-Haiti Candidate is Accused in Plot,” *The New York Times*, 20 May, 1958, pg 19.

supporters of Dejoie, Jumelle, and former Haitian president Magloire, who lived in exile in New York.<sup>55</sup> The United States denied a Haitian extradition request from the Haitian Government for Dejoie and Magloire.<sup>56</sup>

Ambassador Drew lamented this shift away from democracy, stating that the situation in Haiti had rapidly transformed from a “semblance of democracy” to a “‘Police State’ clothed in the trappings of democracy.”<sup>57</sup> In spite of Drew’s misgivings, the United States did not make any changes in its Haitian policies and seems to have been content to let the situation play itself out. After all, Duvalier was not doing anything unprecedented in Caribbean politics by arresting his political opponents and increasing the presence of his secret police force. Indeed, Drew’s letter on the rise of a police state in Haiti reflects not surprise at Duvalier’s actions, but disappointment. The United States had hoped for better.

Without warning, in the midst of Haiti’s other troubles, a dramatic coup attempt took place on July 28, 1958. A trio of Haitian expatriates hired five American mercenaries to join them in a midnight invasion of the island. Three of the Americans were former Dade County sheriff’s deputies; hence, the event became known as the Sheriff’s Deputy Invasion. Their actual invasion started with amazingly few difficulties. They left Miami on schedule, landed in Haiti without incident, and seized control of the army headquarters with a minimum of violence. Their plan involved arming themselves

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<sup>55</sup> “Political Unrest Rampant in Haiti,” *The New York Times*, 8 Jul. 1958, pg 12.

<sup>56</sup> “Haiti Plans to Ask U.S. Envoy’s Recall,” *The New York Times*, 29 Jul. 1958, pg 1, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Drew to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Rubottom. Department of State, 11 June 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. VII, Microfilm Supplement #HA-4

and any followers they could round up using weapons and munitions stored in the army headquarters.<sup>58</sup>

Fortunately for Duvalier, despite claims of loyalty by his army commanders, he had remained suspicious of the military.<sup>59</sup> He had seen first hand how quickly the military could change the course of politics in Haiti when it overthrew the Estime administration ten years earlier. To forestall any such military action against his own presidency, he had already moved its ammunition stores out of the armory and into the presidential palace. His anxiety proved fortuitous, for he prevented the Miami invaders from acquiring the arms they needed to complete their take-over. The invaders' luck continued to run out when one of them, growing increasingly anxious, sent one of the captured soldiers out of the compound to purchase some cigarettes for him. Not surprisingly, the soldier immediately met up with pro-Duvalier forces outside the compound and shared with them the startling news that the invasion force consisted of only eight men, as opposed to the army's estimate of 100-150. Meanwhile, as word of the coup spread, Duvalier packed his bags full of cash siphoned from the national coffers and booked a flight off the island. When his military advisers informed him how limited the actual threat was, he "unpacked and sat down to deal with the annoyance."<sup>60</sup> He showed no mercy, ordering the barracks machine gunned and shelled with hand grenades. All eight men died in the attack.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 115-122.

<sup>59</sup> Kihss, Peter. "Duvalier Keeps Support of Army," The New York Times, 9 Feb. 1958, pg 22.

<sup>60</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 118.

<sup>61</sup> "Haiti's President Quells Revolt; Leads Counter-Attack on Foes," The New York Times, 30 Jul. 1958, pg 1, 13.



Afterward, Duvalier posed next to the bodies for photographers, eschewing his conservative suit for a khaki uniform and steel helmet with a pair of pistols for ensemble. In their book on Papa Doc, journalists Bernard Diedrich and Al Burt correctly state that the Sheriff's Deputy Invasion taught Duvalier one important lesson – that he needed a “personal army to stay in power.”<sup>62</sup> The army had been taken unawares by only eight poorly armed men and had responded to the invasion essentially by running around willy-nilly with hardly any coordination. The only reason Duvalier survived is that the enemy force had been even less competent than was the army. Now thoroughly disgusted with his army, Duvalier augmented it with a paramilitary civil militia loyal only to him, and he increased the role and power of the Ton Tons Macoutes.

The effects of the invasion were not all bad for Papa Doc. He had caught five Americans trying to take over his country, and used this fact to excoriate the United States. A throng of 800 Haitians demonstrated outside the US embassy on July 31, denouncing the role of Americans in the plot against Duvalier.<sup>63</sup> The United States formally apologized to the Haitian Government on July 31.<sup>64</sup> Duvalier had the upper hand and used it to his advantage. On August 1, he accused the US Embassy of having had knowledge of the plot and not acting, and then turned around and announced that the plot would not affect what he described as good relations between the US and Haiti.<sup>65</sup> This incident demonstrates a common Papa Doc tactic in his relationship with the United States. When he felt he enjoyed the moral upper ground, he would often harshly criticize

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<sup>62</sup> Diedrich, Bernard and Al Burt. Papa Doc: Haiti and its Dictator. Waterfront Press, Maplewood NJ: 1969.

<sup>63</sup> “Haitians Score U.S.; Rule by Decree Set,” The New York Times, 1 Aug. 1958, pg 1, 8.

<sup>64</sup> “Washington Apologizes,” The New York Times, 1 Aug. 1958, pg 8.

<sup>65</sup> Kennedy, Paul P. “Duvalier Assures U.S. on Relations,” The New York Times, 2 Aug. 1958, pg 1, 2.

the United States, but in the same breath assure his audience that relations between the two nations could not be better. Duvalier still needed American political support to legitimize his increasingly non-democratic government, and American economic aid to run the country. Through such criticism, Duvalier attempted to coerce Washington into increasing its support for his regime in order to keep it from looking as if the United States did not care enough about Haiti. He remained careful though, to not antagonize the United States to the point that it might decide to decrease or limit its support of his regime – a distinct possibility given the still limited interest of the United States in Haiti at the time.

Haitian Foreign Minister Louis Mars visited Washington in August and met with President Eisenhower on the eighth. Eisenhower again apologized for the role of Americans in the plot, whereupon Mars claimed that Haiti faced other threats, including invasion by the Dominican Republic and that he hoped the United States would grant Haiti more military support in the future.<sup>66</sup> At this point, the US military mission amounted to little more than a few Marine observers and surveyors. Mars' appeal seems to have fallen on receptive ears. Relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic had never been amicable. In 1937, for example, Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina had ordered a massacre of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. The number of dead has been estimated as anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000.<sup>67</sup>

By 1958, in spite of decades of staunch support, Washington had grown wary of Trujillo, whose excesses had become an international embarrassment for his supporters in

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<sup>66</sup> Haitian Foreign Minister Mars asks U.S. for help against anti-government forces in Haiti. Department of State memorandum, 7 Aug. 1958. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100460835.

<sup>67</sup> Heintz and Heintz, pp 498-500.

the United States. Already exploring ways to disassociate itself from Trujillo, the United States saw little problem in helping Haiti improve its defenses against an attack from the Dominican Republic. The United States still embraced a policy of supporting anti-communist dictators, and if the United States had to sever its friendship with a dictator on one side of Hispaniola, there was no reason to not gain a replacement friend on the other side of the island. The Haitian army, even if trained by the United States, was unlikely to actually stop a Dominican invasion, but training it offered other advantages. Like other nations in Latin America, the military is the key to power in Haiti, making it advantageous for the United States to make friends within that organization. An expanded US Marine mission arrived in Haiti at the end of October to train a small corps of soldiers distinct from the police and the civil militia.<sup>68</sup>

While Papa Doc both wooed and castigated the United States on the international front, he reinforced his domestic position. In response to the external threat posed by the Sheriff's Deputy Coup, the Haitian legislature granted Duvalier a six-month period of "rule by decree," making him a dictator in all but name.<sup>69</sup> Duvalier accused Dejoie and Magloire of being behind the plot to oust him and again demanded that the United States extradite them back to Haiti. An unnamed Haitian government source told the New York Times that the Haitian Government would be satisfied if the United States merely expelled the two exiles, thus severing their contact with other exile elements hostile to Duvalier.<sup>70</sup> While Magloire remained relatively untouchable, having no assets or significant ties in Haiti, Duvalier was able to strike at Dejoie. On November 22, a

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<sup>68</sup> "Marines in Haiti to Realign Army," The New York Times, 1 Nov. 1958, pg 6.

<sup>69</sup> "Haitians Score U.S.; Rule by Decree Set," The New York Times, 1 Aug, pg 1, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Kennedy, Paul F. "Haiti to Press U.S. to Oust 2 Exiles," The New York Times, 3 Aug. 1958, pg 30.

Haitian military court tried him in absentia, found him guilty of attempting to overthrow the Duvalier government and sentenced him to death. Knowledge of his death sentence did not surprise Dejoie, who had long suspected he had a price on his head anyway. He explained that the trial was an attempt by Duvalier “to make his persecution of me legitimate. My only crime has been that I ran for president. A price was put on my head after I lost.”<sup>71</sup>

After a year of facing internal and external opposition, Duvalier ushered in 1959 with a series of pro-democratic actions. On January 10, he granted full pardons to numerous political prisoners and clemency to Dejoie.<sup>72</sup> On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Duvalier announced his intention to allow the term of his dictatorial powers to expire on schedule at the end of January, stating that he no longer needed such powers. He added that opposition leaders were once again free to hold meetings and publish newspapers.<sup>73</sup> There seems to be no clear motivation for Duvalier’s sudden shift from dictatorship to democracy. He may have been just putting on a show for the benefit of international observers; alternatively, by encouraging political opposition, Duvalier might have simply been laying a trap to bring his opponents out of hiding. As unlikely as it seems, we cannot wholly dismiss the possibility that his actions may have been sincere. Regardless, Haiti’s return to democracy did not last long.

In spite of Duvalier’s apparently conciliatory gestures toward his political opponents, Louis Dejoie did not return to Haiti and predicted that Duvalier’s regime was

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<sup>71</sup> “Dejoie Sentenced to Death in Haiti,” The New York Times, 22 Nov. 1958, pg 44.

<sup>72</sup> “Haiti’s President Frees Many Foes,” New York Times, 11 Jan. 1959. pg 30 .

<sup>73</sup> Khiss, Peter. “Haiti Chief Vows Democratic Rule,” New York Times, 16 Jan. 1959. pg 3.

months, if not weeks, away from collapse.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, in spite of Duvalier's plan to relinquish his dictatorial powers, the situation in Haiti began rapidly destabilizing due to economic decline and rumors of external threats. By the end of January, the State Department reported that Duvalier's position was "deteriorating rapidly" with little chance of his "stemming the tide."<sup>75</sup> The Haitian economy rested on even shakier ground than the political peace. On January 21, the Haitian government announced that it required a \$6 million loan to support its national budget and an immediate influx of \$500,000 to stabilize its currency. The International Cooperation Administration transferred the \$500,000 to Haiti and put the loan under consideration.<sup>76</sup>

The external threat came from Cuba, where revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro had only recently declared victory, overthrowing the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Haitian exile leader Louis Dejoie left the United States and traveled to Havana in late January to make a radio speech to Haitians living in Cuba. In his address, Dejoie claimed that the Cuban revolution had struck a "mortal blow" to dictatorships like Duvalier's.<sup>77</sup> The Haitian Government claimed that by traveling to Cuba to spread dissent against the Duvalier government, Dejoie was in violation of his political asylum in the United States, and it protested the fact that the US allowed him to leave.<sup>78</sup> Fearing

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<sup>74</sup> "Ouster of Regime in Haiti Predicted," New York Times, 12 Jan. 1959, pg 4.

<sup>75</sup> Summary of intelligence and DOS material reported to Eisenhower. White House. 28 Jan. 1959. Declassified Documents Reference System, #CK3100014935.

<sup>76</sup> ICA staff summary: Haitian financial problems. White House, 21 Jan. 1959. Declassified Documents Reference System, #CK3100256003.

<sup>77</sup> "Haitian Revolt Sought," New York Times, 1 Feb. 1959, pg 28.

<sup>78</sup> "Duvalier Asks U.S. for Help for Haiti," New York Times, 10 Feb. 1959, pg 16.

an imminent invasion of Haiti by Cuban-backed Haitian exiles commanded by Dejoie, Duvalier requested US assistance in fending off such an attack.<sup>79</sup>

In his appeal, Duvalier charged that Haitian exiles in Cuba were receiving military training by the Cuban military. Given that some Haitians exiles did assist the Cuban revolutionaries, the United States considered it credible that Castro may well have promised aid to the exiles in a bid to launch a revolution in Haiti as a reward.<sup>80</sup> The feeling in Washington was that the actual threat to Haiti was minimal. American analysts considered Cuban action against Haiti as merely one step in a larger plan by Fidel Castro to launch revolutionary action against the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic.<sup>81</sup> This conclusion was consistent with a marked change in Latin American policy that followed in the wake of the Cuban revolution. Castro's revolution forced the Eisenhower administration to re-evaluate its bipolar view of politics in Latin America as a Cold War arena in which nations were either pro-United States or pro-Soviet Union. In order to prevent the spread of communism to Latin America the United States had been content to support regional dictatorships so long as they remained anti-communist. The Cuban revolution made Washington realize that such political myopia came at a cost.

This change in policy did not happen overnight. To an extent, it had begun earlier, as seen in the increasing disapproval of the Trujillo regime. Likewise, as Castro did not launch his revolution against Batista on a communist platform, the United States was initially willing to forge a working relationship with his government. By April however, Castro had already begun to embrace socialism, forcing a more rapid evolution

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<sup>79</sup> "Haiti Charges Cuban Role," New York Times, 15 Feb. 1959 pg 4.

<sup>80</sup> "US Fears Chaos in a Haiti Revolt," New York Times, 28 Feb. 1959 pg 1, 2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

of US Latin American policy. By late 1959, the new US view of Latin America recognized that as social conditions in countries like Cuba deteriorated, any kind of social change gained appeal among the populace. When Castro launched his revolution, he did so in a country full of people eager for an alternative form of government. When he eventually embraced communism in late 1959, early 1960, he had already defeated the US-backed dictatorship and gained the military and political strength and social support to command control of the entire country.

Washington had to face the fact that its policy of supporting dictators, no questions asked, had backfired in Cuba and was not looking promising in the Dominican Republic. Instead of providing stability, Batista had created a situation perfect for revolution, and that revolution had rapidly evolved into a communist government. The situation in Haiti seemed to confirm not only the United States' conclusion that dictatorships encouraged revolutionary opposition, but also its fear that a single communist victory could lead to communist expansion throughout an entire region. Haiti lay right in between the two powder kegs of the Caribbean. The United States could not afford to ignore Haiti, lest it become the third major problem of the Caribbean.<sup>82</sup>

Duvalier exacerbated the already tenuous Caribbean situation when in late February he paid three Haitians \$10,000 apiece to assassinate Dejoie and three other exile leaders living in Cuba. Cuban police apprehended the would-be assassins, who promptly

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<sup>82</sup> For more on the Eisenhower Administration's response to the Cuban revolution, see Rabe, Stephen G. Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988, pp 117-133.

confessed.<sup>83</sup> This could have turned a bad situation into an explosive one, but the event somehow failed to inflame the Cuban government. Dejoie later offered his own interpretation of what happened to American journalists Bernard Diedrich and Al Burt. He told them Duvalier and Castro had made a deal: Duvalier had agreed to permit communist infiltration into Haiti and Castro had agreed to not support exile invasions of Haiti.<sup>84</sup> Lacking any corroborating evidence it is probably best to take Dejoie's account with a healthy dose of skepticism. If Castro and Papa Doc did make a deal, they did not make it public knowledge, and the United States certainly did not seem to know about it.

From the perspective of the United States, Cuban intervention in Haiti loomed on the horizon throughout 1959, prompting Washington to increase its support for Duvalier.<sup>85</sup> The United States had already lost prestige following the communist revolution in Cuba and did not need a repeat situation. Haiti, only fifteen miles from Cuba, seemed dangerously unstable in the opinion of the US government. While the State Department noted that Duvalier seemed willing to tolerate the existence of communist groups in Haiti, it concluded that the Haitian communist movement constituted the "smallest and least effective of any in Latin America." Coupled with the

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<sup>83</sup> Phillips, R Hart. "A Revolt in Haiti Urged From Cuba," New York Times, 1 March 1959 pg 1, 9. Also see Diedrich and Burt, pg 136. None of the sources I have seen state when Duvalier actually hired the would-be assassins. But Diedrich and Burt imply that it could not have been later than mid to late February, and this seems reasonable.

<sup>84</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pg 136.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum of a conversation between Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Roy Rubottom) and Haitian Ambassador to the United States (Ernest Bonhomme). Department of State, 20 Jul. 1959. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VII, microfilm supplement, #HA-17. Also: Kenworth, E.W. "U.S. Fears Chaos in a Haiti Revolt," New York Times, 28 Feb. 1959 pg 1, 2.



lack of effective opposition groups in and out of Haiti, the potential for revolutionary activity in Haiti appeared, at least temporarily, less dire than it had in Cuba.<sup>86</sup>

The State Department announced on February 28 that in spite of Duvalier's "shortcomings," he "had given more stability to the impoverished nation than any of his numerous predecessors." Stability counted a great deal to the State Department, which foresaw only disorder and chaos in the wake of a successful overthrow of Duvalier.<sup>87</sup>

Ambassador Drew reported to the State Department that:

The existence of even a brief period of chaos in the oldest independent colored country located on our doorstep would be interpreted as a failure on our part in the field of international relations and would undoubtedly be exploited by communist parties in that part of the world. In other words, we cannot afford to let Haiti 'go through the wringer.'<sup>88</sup>

Duvalier was a dictator, but at least he did not work with communists, unlike Dejoie.

In July, the State Department even described Duvalier as "personally honest and dedicated to Haiti's welfare."<sup>89</sup> Duvalier responded positively to the US statement of support, saying, "it must be understood that they are making [an] investment in the maintenance and triumph of peace."<sup>90</sup> This statement reflects an accurate reading of the Eisenhower Administration's post-Castro strategy to combat revolution in Latin America. Rather than allow Latin American dictators a free ride, the United States assumed an interventionist policy based on economic assistance. Through the expansion and, if needed, contraction of financial aid, the United States would rein in rogue dictators,

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<sup>86</sup> State Department Report on Communism in Haiti. Department of State, 28 May 1959. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100407675.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Despatch from Drew to the State Department on United States Policy Toward Haiti. Foreign Relations of the United States Vol. VII, microfilm supplement, #HA-13.

<sup>89</sup> Biography of Haiti's President, Dr. Francois Duvalier. Department of State, 20 Jul 1959. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100166232.

<sup>90</sup> "Haiti's President Extols U.S. Ties," New York Times, 8 March, 1959 pg 7.

remove them if necessary, and promote economic and social development, thus alleviating “conditions that nourished communism.”<sup>91</sup>

The next several months remained tense, but a Cuban-supported invasion of Haiti did not materialize immediately. On February 28, when invasion did seem imminent, Duvalier began curtailing civil rights, warning foreign embassies in Port-au-Prince not to grant asylum to Haitians.<sup>92</sup> Haitians were not fleeing the country in droves, but in small groups. What concerned Duvalier was that the people fleeing were the nation’s intelligentsia – the educated, skilled professionals who either could not find work in Haiti or did not wish to work under Duvalier’s administration. On one hand, Duvalier needed these individuals to form a professional core of workers around which he could rebuild the national economy. On the other, the professionals were the most likely to tell foreigners how bad living conditions had become in Haiti due to economic depravity and an atmosphere of fear in which political opposition was brutally suppressed by Duvalier’s secret police.

On April 21, the Haitian government ordered the Venezuelan embassy to expel four Haitians requesting asylum.<sup>93</sup> A month later the Haitians were granted safe passage from the Venezuelan embassy to Caracas, but the message was clear – Papa Doc was serious about stemming the flow of refugees leaving his country.<sup>94</sup> In July, Haiti took further action, instituting a new immigration regulation requiring Haitians to acquire re-

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<sup>91</sup> Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 144.

<sup>92</sup> “Haiti Curbing Asylum,” *New York Times*, 28 Feb. 1959 pg 2.

<sup>93</sup> “Haiti Warns Envoy,” *New York Times*, 22 April 1959 pg 11.

<sup>94</sup> *New York Times*, 15 May 1959, pg 6.

entry visas from consulates abroad in order to return to their point of origin.<sup>95</sup> Thus, under the new law, a Haitian in the United States would have to acquire such a re-entry visa before leaving the US in order to return to the US after traveling abroad. Because such action conflicted with US immigration law, Duvalier effectively cut off emigration to the United States.

In the midst of his crack down on civil rights, Duvalier suffered a serious heart attack. Ambassador Drew seized the opportunity to convince him that the United States wanted a better working relationship with him and made arrangements to have a US Navy doctor transferred to Port-au-Prince to oversee Duvalier's treatment and recovery. Hoping that a grateful Duvalier might be more cooperative may have been overly optimistic, but in the opinion of the State Department Papa Doc remained the best bulwark against all-out chaos in Haiti. Given that the United States lacked the means to adequately deal with such chaos, keeping Duvalier alive and healthy continued to be a viable alternative. Although he remained weak for the next six weeks, Duvalier made a full recovery and did express gratitude to the United States and to Drew in particular, for the humanitarian gesture.<sup>96</sup>

During Duvalier's recovery, the Haitian conflict with Cuba once again flared up. In June, unidentified parties made attempts on the lives of Cuban diplomats in Haiti. In Cuba, the Haitian embassy in Havana foiled an attempt to bomb the building.<sup>97</sup> Rumors of an imminent invasion of Haiti again began to circulate in Port-au-Prince, prompting

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<sup>95</sup> "Haitians' Trips Curbed," New York Times, 19 July, 1959 pg 2.

<sup>96</sup> Duvalier expresses appreciation to US for help given during his recent illness. Memorandum for President Eisenhower from Acting Secretary of State. Department of State memorandum, 23 July, 1959. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100183085.

<sup>97</sup> "Castro Condemns Blows at Cubans" New York Times, 7 June 1959 pg 1, 28.

the US State Department to advise government employees not to travel beyond the Haitian capital.<sup>98</sup> The matter finally came to a head on August 14, 1959 when an armed insurgent force landed on the Haitian coast near the town of Les Irois.

Rumors circulated through Port-au-Prince that the force was multinational and composed of Haitians, Cubans, and Venezuelans.<sup>99</sup> Although the US Marines did not assist directly in the Haitian response to the invasion, the leader of the Marine training mission, Colonel Robert Debs Heinl, Jr., personally led a helicopter reconnaissance mission, taking with him Duvalier's presidential secretary Clement Barbot and General Constant of the Haitian General Staff.<sup>100</sup> Upon landing in Les Irois, Haitian villagers told them the insurgents appeared to be Cuban.<sup>101</sup> On the August 16, the Haitian Government accused Dejoie, whom the New York Times called "Duvalier's arch-enemy," of being the ringleader of the invasion.<sup>102</sup> The rumor mill in Port-au-Prince reported that the invasion force was led by a former Haitian army captain with Louis Dejoie Jr., son of the exile leader, as second in command.<sup>103</sup>

Although the Haitian government claimed to be in control of the situation, it nevertheless appealed to the Organization of American States for multilateral intervention to stop the invasion.<sup>104</sup> In response to accusations of hostility by Cuba against Haiti,

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<sup>98</sup> "U.S. Said to Act in Haiti," New York Times, 11 July 1959, pg 4.

<sup>99</sup> "Invaders in Haiti Elude Army Units," New York Times, 16 Aug. 1959, pg 35. Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State (Dillon) to President Eisenhower on revisions to the Mutual Security Act of 1954. Department of State, 9 Jun., 1960. Foreign Relations of the United States Vol. VII. #HA-21. According to the DOS memo, the invaders were all Cuban, save for an Algerian Frenchman and a Venezuelan journalist.

<sup>100</sup> Williamson, Charles. The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti: 1959-1963. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999, pg 71.

<sup>101</sup> "Band Lands in Haiti, Vanishes into Hills," New York Times, 15 Aug. 1959, pg 4.

<sup>102</sup> "Regime Accuses Dejoie," New York Times, 16 Aug. 1959, pg 35.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> "Haiti Calls for Aid to Stop Invaders," New York Times, 27 Aug 1959, pg 1, 10.

Cuban Minister of State Raul Roa Garcia admitted in the OAS that the invasion force had indeed launched from Cuban soil, but he denied that they were operating with the blessings of the Cuban Government. Roa claimed that the invasion was part of an international “conspiracy by a foreign government” to discredit the Cuban revolutionary government.<sup>105</sup> The invaders may well have been acting independent of the Castro government, as evidenced by a statement made by Castro in a private interview with New York Times reporter Tad Szulc in Havana. According to Szulc, “With regard to Haitian matters, Castro said that he had no respect whatever for the Haitian plotters who had sought his assistance and ‘that poor old Duvalier’ has enough problems of his own.”<sup>106</sup>

OAS intervention proved unnecessary. The Haitian Government declared victory over the invasion force on August 20, with most of the force either killed or fleeing into the mountains.<sup>107</sup> Two days later, the Haitian Army unveiled four prisoners before a throng of 2,000 civilians in Port-au-Prince. Instead of the grizzled revolutionary veterans the crowd expected, the prisoners were merely terrified, “beardless teen-agers.”<sup>108</sup> The Haitian Government maintained that all the invaders had been Cuban, except for their leader, one Henry Fuertes, a major in the Cuban revolutionary army and a relative by marriage of Louis Dejoie. Nevertheless, Dejoie’s involvement remained purely speculative, though given his outspoken prediction of Duvalier’s fall his silence in the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Director of the Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs (Weiland) in Washington and Tad Szulc of The New York Times in Miami, July 15, 1959. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1961, Vol. VI, #334, pg 559. The DOS report does not say precisely when Szulc spoke with Castro, only that he had just returned to the US from Havana. With this in mind, it is probably logical to place the interview sometime in July, 1959.

<sup>107</sup> “Invaders Reported Mopped Up in Haiti,” New York Times, 21 Aug. 1959, pg 5

<sup>108</sup> Bigart, Homer. “Haitians Jeer Four As Last of Invaders,” New York Times, 23 Aug. 1959, pg 1, 22.

aftermath of the invasion is unusual.<sup>109</sup> He probably was involved in some manner, but again, that is conjecture.

Other than being a spectacular failure, the invasion had very little effect on Haiti. However, the number of US aid projects did increase slightly in the following months, most notably a resumption of work on the Artibonite Valley irrigation project.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, the International Cooperation Administration made headway in working with Haitian officials to survey regions suitable for future public works projects.<sup>111</sup> However, in spite of clear Cuban intervention in Haitian affairs, whether state-sponsored or not, the United States official reaction seems surprisingly mute. However, the invasion convinced Washington of the “geographical attractiveness” of Haiti to Cuba as a site for fomenting revolution and hammered home how vulnerable Haiti was to outside attack.<sup>112</sup>

Duvalier took advantage of American anxieties about the situation in the Caribbean. In the first half of 1960, Duvalier wrote a series of personal letters to President Eisenhower complaining about Haiti’s financial woes. Papa Doc couched his language in “superficially friendly” terms, with a “thinly veiled threat that Haiti will go Communist” unless the United States sent more aid to Haiti.<sup>113</sup> Calling Eisenhower his “Great Friend” and appealing to the historical relationship between the “two oldest republics of the New World” (a phrase often used by Duvalier when trying to be

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<sup>109</sup> “Invaders Cuban, Haiti Maintains,” *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 1959, pg 13.

<sup>110</sup> Kihss, Peter. “Haiti to Ask U.S. to Re-Equip Army,” *The New York Times*, 8 Nov. 1959, pg 27.

<sup>111</sup> Kihss, Peter. “U.S. Helping Haiti Revamp Agencies,” *The New York Times*, 15 Nov. 1959, pg 15.

<sup>112</sup> Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State (Dillon) to President Eisenhower on revisions to the Mutual Security Act of 1954. Department of State, 9 Jun., 1960. Foreign Relations of the United States Vol. VII. #HA-21.

<sup>113</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Drew) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 31 May, 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100170171.

amicable toward the United States,) he painted a not-unjustified bleak picture of Haiti to the American president.<sup>114</sup> Duvalier accompanied these letters with an offer to the United States to permit the construction and use of a submarine base in Haiti. Washington declined with the diplomatic excuse that “there is no present or anticipated requirement for a permanent military installation in Haiti.”<sup>115</sup>

When his entreaties for more aid failed produce immediate results, Papa Doc upped the ante. On June 23, 1960, Duvalier condemned the United States in a public speech, calling its aid program “lean and insufficient.” Haiti, he said,

is rotting in misery, hunger, nudity, sickness and illiteracy with a Government fighting unprecedented economic and financial difficulties... We need a massive injection of money to revive Haiti and the injection can come only from our great capable neighbor and friend, the United States.

Should this aid not be forthcoming, he warned, Haiti might be forced to choose between “two great poles of attraction in the world today to concretize her needs.”<sup>116</sup> The threat clearly implied that if the United States did not satisfy Haitian demands for more aid, the Soviet Union might.

Duvalier’s threat was probably just that – an idle threat. However, his threat gained some credence when the governments of Haiti and Cuba began seeking rapprochement in August. A CIA report on an August 12 meeting in Geneva between representatives of each nation stated that the Haitian delegate implicitly promised that Haiti was willing to cease its policy of voting against Cuba in the UN and OAS in

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<sup>114</sup> Letter from Duvalier to Eisenhower. Department of State, 12 Jul. 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100276169.

<sup>115</sup> US response to Duvalier offer to build submarine bases and training camps in Haiti. Department of State cable. 22 Sep. 1959 Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100170170168.

<sup>116</sup> “Haiti Exhausted, Duvalier Asserts,” The New York Times, 24 June, 1960, pg 6.

exchange for improved relations.<sup>117</sup> Nothing much came of this rapprochement. Castro had already decided against future Haitian adventures anyway, and both he and Duvalier seem to have been content to have nothing to do with one another.<sup>118</sup>

Whether Duvalier was bluffing or not, the United States did not call him on it. Given that the focus of United States foreign policy continued to revolve on the fight against communism, Duvalier's threats to join forces with communist Cuba in the OAS probably influenced Washington's decision to increase its aid program to Haiti. However, it is unlikely that it was the sole impetus. The Eisenhower administration had already decided that the best way to prevent future Cubas lay in promoting economic development, not supporting stable, but cruel, dictatorships.<sup>119</sup> In the meantime, however, Duvalier's Haiti remained a textbook example of a nation uncomfortably vulnerable to invasion. Deciding that an efficient, modernized, professional Haitian army was a good bulwark against communist aggression in the Caribbean, the United States decided in September, 1960 to begin sending to Haiti more military advisors to train the Haitian military and more modern equipment and arms than those in use by the Haitian army.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The CIA report identifies the Haitian representative as Haiti's Ambassador to the UN, Dorsinville, but does not identify the Cuban.

CIA Digest Supplement on Latin America. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 Aug. 1960. CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room at [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov), #CSI-1998-00005.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Director of the Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs (Weiland) in Washington and Tad Szulc of The New York Times in Miami, July 15, 1959. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1961, Vol. VI, #334, pg 559.

<sup>119</sup> Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, 144.

<sup>120</sup> Finney, John W. "U.S. to Send Arms to Haiti's Forces," The New York Times, 4 Sep. 1960, pg 2. According to this article, the Haitian army had no standard arms, and what little they had were a hodgepodge of US army surplus from as far back as the Spanish-American War.



As for the amount of aid sent to Haiti, the United States denied Duvalier's claim that the money sent was insufficient. Nevertheless, the handling of aid money by Haiti became a growing concern. Much of the problem had to do with mismanagement and conflicts between the Government of Haiti and US contractors. The Artibonite Valley irrigation project for example, remained deadlocked throughout 1960 due to disagreements over personnel policies.<sup>121</sup> Duvalier made the debate over aid more acute when he compelled the Haitian legislature to grant him full economic powers for a six-month period starting August 18.<sup>122</sup> The US State Department took a grim view of this development, worried that it might be a precursor to government seizure of private bank deposits for use in covering government debts and expenditures, or/and the nationalization of the sugar industry.<sup>123</sup>

On November 3, 1960, the State Department decided that Haiti had a genuine need for more aid and recommended to Eisenhower that the United States continue its current aid program and expand it where needed. However, Secretary of State Christian A. Herter recommended that the United States avoid the pitfalls of the past and do everything in its power to ensure that future aid be used constructively. Placing the blame for the failure of the aid program on the Haitian Government, he ordered the new US Ambassador to Haiti, Robert Newbegin, (Drew had been reassigned at the end of his

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<sup>121</sup> Schmidt, Dana Adams "Haiti's Aid Needs Declared Urgent," The New York Times, 18 Jul. 1960, pg 5.

<sup>122</sup> "President of Haiti to Rule by Decree," The New York Times, 19 Aug. 1960, pg 3; See also: State Department Staff Summary. Department of State, 23 Aug. 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100262775.

<sup>123</sup> State Department Staff Summary. Department of State, 23 Aug. 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100262775.

mission) to make clear to the Haitian Government that “assistance for FY 1961 is being offered on condition that it will be controlled and utilized effectively.”<sup>124</sup>

By the end of the Eisenhower administration, US foreign policy in Latin America had already begun to change markedly. Having been blindsided by the Cuban revolution, Washington had scrambled to find a new foreign policy for the region that could prevent future gains for communist elements. However, while the United States tried to “get tough” on Latin American dictatorships, the Duvalier government grew more dictatorial, and the United States found it very difficult to restrain Papa Doc. Despite a promising beginning, the US relationship with Duvalier was rapidly degenerating into enmity. At this point, however, a showdown between the two governments remained unlikely. Duvalier had not yet committed his worst offences against his own people, and the United States remained optimistic that it could implement an effective anti-dictatorship foreign policy that could prevent the spread of communism while simultaneously promoting democracy and economic development in Latin America.

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<sup>124</sup> Memorandum from Herter to Eisenhower on response to Haitian request for financial aid. Department of State, 3 Nov. 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100267657.

## **CHAPTER 2 – THE CESSPOOL OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

Duvalier and his tactics had begun to take their toll on US-Haitian relations. The days of amicability were fast waning. By 1961, the honeymoon period in US-Haitian relations was well and truly over. The long-deteriorating state of relations between the United States and Duvalierist Haiti reached a nadir under the Kennedy administration, which did not share the Eisenhower administration's hopes that even a working relationship with Duvalier could be achieved. Kennedy adopted the Eisenhower administration's anti-dictatorship policy and made it his own, placing heavy emphasis on Latin America, treating the region as a major front in the Cold War. During the Eisenhower years, Haiti had been an afterthought for the United States, but Haiti never became a top priority for Kennedy, he did maintain a high degree of interest in the nation. Given the major problems the United States already faced in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the Kennedy administration could ill afford to tackle a third major problem in the Caribbean in the form of Duvalier's Haiti. Kennedy nevertheless made a point of inquiring about the status of the US mission in Haiti and lamented the failure of the United States to influence events there.

John F. Kennedy entered office with a new set of priorities concerning Latin America. Kennedy wanted the United States to rebuild its relationship with Latin America in a way that clearly demonstrated that the day of "dollar diplomacy" had ended and that a new era that encouraged self-government and economic development in Latin America had begun. The Kennedy administration embraced the idea that the key to preventing communist revolution in Latin America lay in improving social conditions that made revolution seem enticing by comparison. Kennedy's goal was the

establishment of the Alliance for Progress, a long-term project designed to promote economic development in Latin America through the granting of substantial US financial aid. His hope was that economic development would encourage pro-democratic, progressive political reform in Latin America.<sup>125</sup>

Nevertheless, stopping the spread of communism in Latin America continued to take precedence over promoting democracy and economic development. Like Eisenhower, Kennedy saw Latin America as a front in the Cold War and believed that Moscow viewed the region as part of its “master plan.”<sup>126</sup> From before the beginning of his term, President Kennedy made Cuba a priority of his administration and explored options to remove Castro from power and prevent the spread of communist revolution from Cuba to the rest of Latin America. From the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy inherited a CIA-backed plan to land Cuban exiles in Cuba for the purpose of starting a counter-revolution and ousting Castro. On April 17, 1961, the exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs, where they were decisively defeated, with most either killed or captured by the end of the day. The spectacular public failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion was a humiliation for the Kennedy administration, and a victory for Castro. Eager to prevent similar disasters in the future, the Kennedy administration eschewed similar operations in Latin America in favor of less direct interventionist methods.

Thus, the United States had a new administration committed to Latin American development, stopping the spread of communism, but also determined to eschew support for clandestine interventionist operations in order to prevent another Cuban-style fiasco.

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<sup>125</sup> Rabe, Stephen. Kennedy and Latin America pg 10, 23.

<sup>126</sup> Rabe, pg 21.

For the most part, giving aid to Latin America posed few moral dilemmas for the Kennedy administration. As historian Stephen Rabe has pointed out, Kennedy and his advisors were confident that in the Alliance for Progress they had found the key to “lasting security” in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>127</sup> While the primary goal of the Alliance was to foster democracy and stability through economic development, it also gave the United States the ability to better control Latin America by giving it more control of Latin economies. In effect “good” countries received aid while “bad” ones did not. The United States knew who its friends were and who its enemies were, and could give aid accordingly. But not so in Papa Doc’s Haiti.

After three years of giving Duvalier the benefit of the doubt and aiding his administration without asking too many questions, the United States had very little to show for its efforts. Duvalier’s ability to stay in power seemed tenuous at best, and increasingly less desirable, as he grew more dictatorial and oppressive. US aid projects in Haiti had failed to pull the Haitian economy out of its mire.<sup>128</sup> After his election, Kennedy had assembled a Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems. The task force’s report described Haiti as a country that “could explode at any time,” and “infiltrated by pro-Communist groups.”<sup>129</sup> Given the failure of the United States to oust the Castro regime and the Kennedy Administration’s anxiety concerning the spread of the Castroite revolution, an unstable Haiti, right next to communist Cuba, became very undesirable.

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<sup>127</sup> Rabe, Stephen. *The Most Dangerous Area in the World*, pg 148.

<sup>128</sup> Frankel, Max. “Regime is Blamed for Haitian Ills,” *The New York Times*, 30 Jan. 1961, pg 11.

<sup>129</sup> FRUS Editorial Note. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. XII, #364, pp 749-750.

Haiti seemed like an ideal place to use Alliance for Progress aid to alleviate the social problems associated with a dictatorship. However, the Alliance for Progress was based on the principle that the United States was loaning money to Latin American nations to promote democracy. The administration found itself in the embarrassing position of, by giving aid to Haiti, supporting an increasingly brutal, anti-democratic dictatorship, thus making a mockery of the Alliance for Progress. Yet, by not giving aid to Duvalier's Haiti, the United States risked the situation in Haiti becoming so bad that the Haitian people might rise up against Papa Doc. Washington was in a no-win situation.

Meanwhile, Duvalier began 1961 dealing with problems of his own as his long-standing conflict with the Catholic Church heated up. Duvalier saw the Church as a rival for political and social control of Haiti. Moreover, Duvalier resented the fact that most of the Haitian clergy was of French origin, a situation that did not mix well with his racially charged policy of Africanism.<sup>130</sup> In November of 1960, Duvalier took advantage of a general student strike protesting his human and civil rights violations to strike a blow at the Church. In response to the strike, Duvalier had declared martial law, disbanded all student political organizations, and shut down the university in Port-au-Prince.<sup>131</sup> He then placed the blame for the protest on Archbishop Francois Poirier, claiming that Poirier had funneled \$7,000 to communist students in order to launch an overthrow of the

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<sup>130</sup> Heintz and Heintz, 582.

<sup>131</sup> "Government Closes University in Haiti," The New York Times, 24 Nov. 1960, pg 5 .

government. Despite Poirier's denial of the charges, the Haitian government expelled him from the country on November 24, 1960.<sup>132</sup>

While the Vatican mulled its response, Duvalier continued to levy charges against the clergy, expelling the auxiliary Bishop of Port-au-Prince, Remy Augustin, on January 10, 1961 and four French priests, all on charges of abetting "subversive activities."<sup>133</sup> Oddly enough, Bishop Augustin was not French, but a native, black Haitian – the first to hold so high a position in the Haitian clergy. The Vatican responded swiftly and decisively to this second round of expulsions. On January 12, the Vatican ordered the mass excommunication of anyone involved with the expulsion of the Haitian bishops, including Duvalier.<sup>134</sup>

Facing government opposition and lacking leadership, the student strike lost steam. Duvalier lifted martial law on January 14 and reopened the university. Most students returned to their classes, the only major change being that a few more sons of Ton Tons Macoutes were registered for the new semester than before, both as a reward to their fathers for loyal service to Duvalier and as means for him to keep closer tabs on student body.<sup>135</sup> As usual, the real beneficiary of the strike was Duvalier, who managed to replace university officials with Duvalierists and to strike a considerable blow at the Church.<sup>136</sup> Daily, government-sponsored radio broadcasts castigating the Church for fomenting dissent in Haiti came to a sudden stop on February 1 when the Vatican

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<sup>132</sup> Kennedy, Paul P. "Haiti Expels Catholic Prelate; Says He Gave \$7,000 to Reds," The New York Times, 25 Nov. 1960, pg 1, 19.

<sup>133</sup> Cortesi, Arnaldo and Max Frankel. "Haiti Officials Excommunicated; Fears of a Major Crisis Growing," The New York Times, 13 Jan. 1961, pg 1, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 166.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

approved the appointment of Haitian Claudius Angenoir as acting administrator of the archdiocese of Port-au-Prince.<sup>137</sup> However, the excommunications remained in force.

The student strike and Vatican affair occupied Duvalier for months, during which time he put his problems with the United States on the back burner. The only significant clash between Americans and the Haitian government involved the arrest of four US servicemen by Haitian police on February 8, 1961. Claiming they had been “manhandled” by the police, the United States filed a note of protest, to which the Haitian government promptly offered a formal apology.<sup>138</sup>

While there is certainly a sense of “calm before the storm” to this period of relative amicability, much of it can be traced to the fact that the Kennedy Administration had much bigger fish to fry in Cuba. Nevertheless, the Administration did begin to consider its options in Haiti. While the expulsion of the Catholic clergymen had no specific consequences for the United States, the action aroused some ire on the part of American Catholics toward the Haitian government for its “heavy-handed” tactics, with some of this ire directed at the United States for supposedly propping up Duvalier.<sup>139</sup>

Although Newbegin reported limited success by late March in improving the American position in Haiti, he maintained a gloomy outlook for the future, stating, “we are faced with two ‘sorry alternatives.’” The only options available to the United States, the State Department concluded, were to either work with Duvalier or arrange his removal from power. At this time, the United States opted to not oust Duvalier, afraid

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<sup>137</sup> “Action by Vatican Ends Haiti Tirades” *The New York Times* 2 Feb. 1961, pg 2.

<sup>138</sup> “U.S. Protests to Haiti” *The New York Times* 10 Feb. 1961, pg 8.

<sup>139</sup> State Department Memorandum on US-Haitian Relations. Department of State, 23 Mar. 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #365, pp 750-751.



that his removal would presage a power vacuum into which either Castro or Trujillo might be able to move.<sup>140</sup> The United States had enough problems in dealing with Cuba and the Dominican Republic without having to add a Haitian crisis into the mix as well. Additionally, in light of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion to remove Castro, the United States remained reluctant to try a similar venture in Haiti and risk another failure. Even if a clandestine operation against Duvalier succeeded the United States would have had to intervene directly in Haiti to forestall the kind of power vacuum it wished to avoid. With the Haitian economy falling apart at the seams and no clear leadership alternatives to Duvalier readily available, the only option open to the United States would have been an occupation of Haiti similar to that in 1915. Such an occupation represented a long-term obligation the United States was not prepared to make in 1961 (or indeed throughout the Kennedy administration.) Removing Duvalier from power seemed more trouble than it was worth.

Shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion, however, Kennedy advisor Arthur Schlesinger Jr. suggested to the president that an engineered political vacuum in Haiti might work to the advantage of the United States. Worried that the United States might lose face in Latin America for taking part in interventionist actions in Cuba or the Dominican Republic, Schlesinger mulled the idea that the United States could land a small force on Haiti in order to fool either Castro or Trujillo into believing an anti-Duvalier coup was taking place. Schlesinger hoped that if either dictator took the bait and deployed forces of his own to Haiti, the United States could then take action against Cuba or the Dominican Republic in the open and free of blame. This plan came to

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid

nothing. The Bay of Pigs invasion was already too far along for such a major change, and the United States government proved unwilling to risk opening a political vacuum in Haiti.<sup>141</sup> The invasion's failure effectively marked the end of serious discussions of American intervention in Duvalierist Haiti.

While the United States continued to prepare for its Cuban adventure, Duvalier made his own plans for the future. On April 7, he made a conciliatory gesture to the United States, offering the natural harbor of Mole-Saint-Nicolas to the United States for use as a naval base.<sup>142</sup> Only forty miles from Cuba, it might have been of some use for the US Navy, but the United States nevertheless declined the offer. The United States may have declined due to the confidence in Washington that the imminent exile invasion of Cuba would succeed. However, the Kennedy Administration most likely turned down the offer for the same reasons the Eisenhower Administration had to a similar offer in late 1959 – the base had limited potential and would have tied the United States too closely to Duvalier, who probably never expected the Americans to actually say yes in the first place.

At the time, Papa Doc was setting into motion events that would ensure him a second term in office. On April 8, Duvalier dissolved the Haitian legislature and announced its replacement by a new, unicameral legislature, with elections for all seats set for April 30.<sup>143</sup> The election was a stunningly beautiful example of election fraud. With political parties essentially nonexistent, as Paul P. Kennedy reported in the New

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<sup>141</sup> Memorandum from Schlesinger to Kennedy. White House, 11 Feb. 1961. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100447232.

<sup>142</sup> "Haiti Offers U.S. a Naval Base Site," The New York Times, 8 Apr. 1961, pg 2.

<sup>143</sup> "2-House Parliament Dissolved in Haiti by Duvalier Decree," The New York Times, 9 Apr. 1961, pg 11.

York Times, the only matter up for debate consisted of “which of the candidates were the strongest Duvalierists.”<sup>144</sup> After reading Mr. Kennedy’s report, the Haitian government promptly expelled him from the country.

Port-au-Prince was unusually calm compared to the hubbub of the 1957 election. Voters discovered that Duvalier’s name was at the top of every ballot. After the election ended, Papa Doc revealed that each ballot had included a vote on a second presidential term for Duvalier. By default, regardless of which member of the legislature for whom they had cast their vote, all Haitians who voted in the 1961 election cast a vote for a new Duvalier presidency.<sup>145</sup> Accurately decrying this election as “chicanery,” the New York Times ran an editorial on May 13 stating, “the Duvalier regime has forfeited all title to respect or goodwill from the American people.”<sup>146</sup>

Papa Doc had given neither notice nor reason for his running for a second term, due to begin on May 22, 1961, over two years before his legal term was due to expire. In order to avoid granting even a semblance of legality or tacit support for the election, the United States refused to have its ambassador available to attend Duvalier’s inauguration ceremony, recalling Newbegin to Washington on May 14 for consultation. On the day of Duvalier’s second inauguration, Washington sent only a low level second-tier secretary from the US embassy in Port-au-Prince – a deliberate snub, but one that avoided a formal denunciation of the election by the United States Government.<sup>147</sup> The United States remained hesitant to break relations with Haiti. The day after the inauguration ceremony,

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<sup>144</sup> “Haiti Votes Today For Legislature,” The New York Times, 30 Apr. 1961, pg 37.

<sup>145</sup> “1,320,748 Haitians Voted for Duvalier,” The New York Times, 10 May, 1961, pg 8.

<sup>146</sup> “Chicanery in Haiti,” Editorial. The New York Times, 13 May, 1961, pg 18.

<sup>147</sup> Frankel, Max. “Duvalier Begins Second Term After Claiming Election in Haiti,” The New York Times, 23 May, 1961, pg 4.

Acting Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Wymberley Coerr recommended that the United States make an effort to re-establish “effective working relations” with Duvalier and quietly effect Newbegin’s return to Haiti as soon as possible.<sup>148</sup>

While in Washington, Newbegin recommended that the United States maintain a diplomatic presence in Haiti “so as not to make our general Caribbean situation more difficult.”<sup>149</sup> Just over a month had passed since the April 17 disaster in Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and Washington officials doubtless still felt the effects of the failure. In light of the defeat in Cuba, it makes sense that the United States would wish to avoid another sticky entanglement in the Caribbean. Newbegin reassured the State Department that despite the presence of some active communist elements, there existed little likelihood of a communist insurgency in Haiti. He did warn, however, that a hard-line, anti-Duvalier policy by the United States could push Papa Doc into the communist camp. “If we become increasingly tough with [Duvalier],” he cautioned, “we may drive him toward the Castro-Communist camp.” The best course of action, he felt, involved maintaining the unhappy status quo, for “the Duvalier government is not doing the United States any harm,” even if “it is not doing any good either.”<sup>150</sup>

Papa Doc had neatly maneuvered the United States into a decidedly uncomfortable position. Maintaining diplomatic relations with Haiti following the rigged May election constituted at least implicit support, something Washington genuinely wanted to avoid. The real danger in Haiti, Newbegin concluded, was not communism but

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<sup>148</sup> Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Coerr to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Department of State, 23 May 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #366, pp 752-754.

<sup>149</sup> Memorandum on a White House conference on Haiti. Department of State, 26 May 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #367, pp 754-756.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

Duvalier himself, whose suppression of civil liberties and use of the Ton Tons Macoutes to brutally maintain order through fear of arrest, torture, and/or imprisonment made the chances of a popular uprising far more likely than any other cause. “The point of danger,” he reported, “will be reached when the people get sufficiently fed up with being ‘banged over the head’ to take action.”<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, no alternative existed. No organized opposition element existed in or out of Haiti. The United States foresaw nothing for a post-Duvalier Haiti but even greater strife and chaos. Confident that the United States would never risk anarchy in Haiti, Duvalier had essentially dared the Washington to abandon Haiti. Deeming the risks too great, the State Department decided to return Newbegin to his post in Port-au-Prince, allowing the United States to keep a foot in the diplomatic door.

Newbegin returned to Haiti on May 30, with orders to maintain a “cool but correct” relationship with the Haitian government.<sup>152</sup> With no alternative to Duvalier readily available, it made sense for the United States to avoid a clear break with Haiti. Besides, Duvalier was technically not in violation of the Haitian constitution, yet. His first term of office having not yet expired, the United States could continue to recognize his stay in office as part of his legal, elected term and not as the beginning of his second, phony term. This constituted a convenient way around a difficult problem to be sure, but one that allowed the United States to maintain its Haitian presence without losing face for

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> Szulc, Tad. “U.S. Envoy, Back in Haiti, to Be Cool but Correct,” The New York Times, 31 May, 1961, pg 10.

supporting an illegal government.<sup>153</sup> In spite of finding a short-term solution to the Haitian problem, the United States would still have to deal with the problem again when Duvalier's legal first term expired. But what to do? In June 2 telegram, Secretary of State Dean Rusk called Duvalier's Haiti the "cesspool of the Western Hemisphere," and wondered if the United States had any options open in Haiti. "Waiting for a chance to use force is no answer" he wrote, for the problem with Haiti, "is neither military nor cloak and dagger."<sup>154</sup>

The key to the Haitian situation was, in fact, economic. The United States began to seriously question the effectiveness of its aid programs in Haiti. The Artibonite Valley project for example remained perpetually stalled, social reform projects such as literacy campaigns never got beyond the planning stage, and the standard of life in Haiti remained as always the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. The United States pumped money into Haiti but made no demands for fiscal accountability or management programs.<sup>155</sup> Inefficient use of funds and poor management seemed to inevitably lead to aid workers "throw[ing] up their hands in despair." Instead of improving living conditions in Haiti, financial aid funds were embezzled by the Haitian government. The true beneficiaries of American financial aid were Duvalier and his chief supporters. As dissatisfaction with Duvalier increased in the United States, US officials and aid agencies began to demand accountability.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Memorandum on a meeting between Thurston and Kennedy. White House, 1 June, 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #371, pp 764-766.

<sup>154</sup> Telegram from Rusk to State Department. Department of State, 2 June 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #368, pp 757-758.

<sup>155</sup> Frankel, Max. "U.S. Dilemma on Haiti," The New York Times, 29 May, 1961, pg 6.

<sup>156</sup> Frankel, Max. "Regime is Blamed for Haitian Ills," The New York Times, 30 Jan. 1961, pg 11.

On August 21, Deputy Director for Operations of the International Cooperation Administration Dennis A. FitzGerald argued against granting Haiti military assistance for Fiscal Year 1962 under terms of the Mutual Security Act.<sup>157</sup> FitzGerald doubted that the Haitian armed forces “could make any effective use” of equipment and funds, and that military aid to Haiti would most likely be used by Duvalier to further secure his own position of power. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota shared this sentiment, opposing giving any aid to Haiti at all.<sup>158</sup> In spite of misgivings within the United States, the flow of aid to Haiti continued, totaling \$13.5 million in FY 1961.<sup>159</sup> However, in September, the Central Intelligence Agency prepared a series of guidelines for US policy in Haiti that recommended the United States encourage “constructive economic and social development” and limit its aid projects in Haiti to ones that demonstrated “the tangible benefits of U.S. aid.”<sup>160</sup>

This willingness to simply put up with the economic problems in Haiti extended to the political scene as well. The CIA report recommended the United States:

Continue to live with the Duvalier regime so long as there is no acceptable alternative [and] avoid actions that might precipitate Duvalier’s downfall as this would create a power vacuum which Castro-Communists could be expected to exploit.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Memorandum from the Deputy Director for Operations of the International Cooperation Administration FitzGerald to the General Counsel of that Agency, Rubin. Department of State, 21 Aug. 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #79, pg 179.

<sup>158</sup> Memorandum from Deputy Coordinator for Foreign Assistance Bell to Secretary of State Rusk. Department of State, 26 June 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #77, pp 176-177.

<sup>159</sup> CIA estimate report on short-term prospects in Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 7 June 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #369, pp 758-760.

<sup>160</sup> State Department guidelines on US policy toward Haiti. Department of State, 18 Sep. 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #370, pp 761-763.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

By the end of 1961, the United States had grown less convinced that Cuba posed an immediate threat to Latin America. Although Cuban nationals could still mount small-scale infiltrations of other nations, the United States had determined that Cuba could not mount a full-scale military invasion in Latin America, except in Haiti.<sup>162</sup> So long as Haiti remained the weak link in the chain of American anti-communism in the Western Hemisphere, the United States remained unwilling to risk breaking that link. Lacking a better option, Duvalier continued to appear the best guarantor of anti-communist stability in Haiti. The dilemma for the United States was finding a better option, and one that did not leave Haiti open to communist infiltration.

Following the end of Newbegin's assignment in Haiti in November 1961, the United States appointed a new ambassador, Raymond L. Thurston, who arrived in Haiti on January 3, 1962.<sup>163</sup> With Washington apparently willing to endure a relationship with Duvalier indefinitely, the dictator once again began pressing the United States for more financial aid. On January 3, 1962, Duvalier made an impassioned speech in which he charged that the United States had responded to his earlier pleas for help with "nice smiles and promises."<sup>164</sup> He charged that the United States ignored the Haitian plight because of racist, anti-black policies. Papa Doc even claimed that the United States had violated the spirit of the Alliance for Progress by not giving more aid to Haiti. Haitian officials claimed that this speech, in spite of its vitriol, was not an attack on the United

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<sup>162</sup> Letter from Depute Assistant Secretary of State for International Security Affairs Williams to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Woodward. Department of State, 12 Sep. 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #83, pp 183-184.

<sup>163</sup> "Haiti Chief Cordial to New U.S. Envoy," The New York Times, 5 Jan. 1962, pg 12.

<sup>164</sup> "Haiti Charges U.S. Ignores Aid Pleas," The New York Times, 4 Jan. 1962, pg 1, 7.



States, but only of its aid program.<sup>165</sup> Yet, a mere week later, Duvalier again criticized the United States for being miserly with its financial aid and suggested that Haitians might have no one to turn to but themselves for economic development.<sup>166</sup>

Duvalier's claims of American parsimony are tricky to dismiss. Haiti did indeed receive less US aid than did Mexico or most South American countries. However, it received a roughly average amount of US assistance compared to Central American and other Caribbean nations. Measuring the difference in aid received in pure dollar amounts is misleading though. Mexico, Brazil, Peru, etc. are significantly larger and more populous nations than Haiti with commensurately greater financial needs. Moreover, the Haitian economy was by far the worst in the Hemisphere, with a per capita annual income of only \$72 (US). Even in Paraguay, with the next lowest per capita income in Latin America, workers earned \$102 a year.<sup>167</sup> Haiti, though densely populated, had a small population who lived in terrible economic conditions.<sup>168</sup> Lacking a foundation upon which to build, American aid in Haiti had to start from the bottom.

Between 1953 and 1960, Haiti received a total of \$61.2 million in assorted US aid, which while certainly less than the \$320.5 million received by Mexico, was actually more than that received by most Latin American countries, and almost double that of Honduras (\$33.1 million), Nicaragua (\$37.6 million), and Paraguay (\$34.1 million). \$2.1 million of the aid received by Haiti during this period was military aid, which was

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<sup>165</sup> "Haiti Chief Cordial to New U.S. Envoy," *The New York Times*, 5 Jan. 1962, pg 12.

<sup>166</sup> "Duvalier Launches Development Drive," *The New York Times*, 11 Jan. 1962, pg 14.

<sup>167</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Latin America: 1962*. Center of Latin American Studies. University of California at Los Angeles, 1963.

<sup>168</sup> It bears mentioning that statistical data on Haiti is extremely difficult to find. Haitian governments have rarely kept good records, making reliable data rare. For more on this problem see: Lundahl, Mats. "Income and Land Distribution in Haiti: Some Remarks on Available Statistics." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 38, No 2/3 (Summer-Autumn, 1996), pp 109-126.

significantly more than that given to some Latin American nations; however, the focus of United States aid in Haiti was economic, not military development.

Much of this aid came from the United States Agency for International Development (US AID), a combination of two earlier aid agencies, the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and Development Loan Fund. Through US AID, by FY 1961, Haiti received \$38.5 million. In Latin America only Guatemala (\$69 million), Chile (\$43.7 million), and Bolivia (\$128.9 million) received more aid than Haiti. Likewise, Haiti received \$13 million in loans from the US Export-Import Bank, an average amount compared to the smaller nations of Latin America. Haiti did not receive much aid from other international aid agencies. What little it received was, as Duvalier claimed, less than that of other nations in Latin America. For example, as of FY 1960, Haiti received \$2.8 million from the World Bank. Panama, the next lowest recipient, received \$6.8 million.<sup>169</sup> The United States maintained a significant degree of control in the operation of many of the international aid agencies giving money to Latin America and in their allocation of money. As such, Duvalier could very well accuse the United States of deliberately preventing those agencies from giving more aid to Haiti. However, a more likely explanation is that international aid agencies focused more on loans than grants, and Haiti's terrible economy and poor track record on loan repayments made it an unwelcome risk to lenders.

Nevertheless, the economic situation in Haiti showed some signs of improvement in 1962. Although the hydroelectric plant remained perpetually stalled, the Artibonite

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<sup>169</sup> State Department memorandum on US assistance to Latin America, Newly-Independent Countries, and Highlights of Foreign Policy Between 1953-1960. Department of State, 15 Jan. 1960. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349267824.

Valley irrigation project progressed sufficiently to dramatically increase the rice harvest, thus increasing Haiti's ability to feed its own people. Furthermore, 1961 was not only a "good year" for the coffee harvest but a bumper crop. Combined with a government initiative to bag the harvested coffee beans in sacks made of local-grown sisal, profits from the harvest were higher than average.<sup>170</sup> On April 6, US AID slotted \$7,250,000 in aid for Haiti for FY 1962, largely unconditional save for a stipulation that Haiti use the money for developmental assistance and technical training.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, on May 22, US AID approved another \$3,400,000 loan to Haiti for road construction. However, like most US developmental projects in Haiti, the road construction project did not have a specific time table for completion, nor did it provide any means for making sure the money was used by Haiti as intended.<sup>172</sup>

From the outside, things seemed to be looking up for Dr. Duvalier. The United States appeared content to give him the money he demanded and quietly put up with his methods of governance. Within Washington, however, anti-Duvalier sentiment had grown strong. On January 17, the CIA re-evaluated US security interests in the Caribbean.<sup>173</sup> Although the report focused principally on Cuba, it concluded that the Caribbean "is the link between the US and the larger American republics in the southern continent" and key to American access to the Panama Canal.<sup>174</sup> The Department of State

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<sup>170</sup> Diedrich, Bernard. "Output of Coffee Doubled in Haiti" The New York Times 10 Jan. 1962, pg 65; It may be worth noting that coffee generally runs in a two year cycle. Each "good year" is followed by a "bad year." Because of the Haitian economic dependence on coffee, the economy likewise tends to run on a two year cycle.

<sup>171</sup> "7,250,000 U.S. Aid Allotted to Haiti," The New York Times, 7 Apr. 1962, pg 2.

<sup>172</sup> Szulc, Tad. "U.S. Shuns Fete for Haiti's Chief," The New York Times, 23 May, 1962, pg 19.

<sup>173</sup> CIA report on "The Threat to US Security Interests in the Caribbean Area." Central Intelligence Agency, 17 Jan. 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #91, pp 209-213.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

issued a report of its own on February 5, stating that the United States had the responsibility “for defense of the Western Hemisphere against external attack.”<sup>175</sup>

Duvalier’s January attacks on the United States hammered home the fact that he and his regime were a political embarrassment to the US goal of protecting its interests and those of its allies in the Caribbean. Washington had an interest in granting developmental assistance and protection to Latin America, but it did not intend to be bullied into giving an unpopular dictator whatever he wanted.

On May 22, Duvalier hosted a celebration to commemorate his “re-election” of one year earlier. Just as it had recalled Newbegin the year before, Washington recalled Ambassador Thurston for consultation during the celebration. The United States was not alone in this action; as the New York Times reported several other foreign envoys “suddenly contracted diplomatic illness,” including the Dominican ambassador and the Papal Nuncio.<sup>176</sup> While in Washington, Thurston met with President Kennedy to discuss the Haitian situation in detail. This meeting indicated concern with Haiti at the highest levels and marked the beginning of a significant shift in American policy in Haiti. Heretofore the United States could claim that while Duvalier may have been an oppressive dictator he at least had been legally elected. But his fixed second election pushed the United States into a position of, by supporting Duvalier, supporting an illegal government.

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<sup>175</sup> Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State Battle to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Bundy. Department of State, 5 Feb. 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #92, pp 214-217.

<sup>176</sup> “U.S. Recalls Aides in Haiti for Talks,” The New York Times, 22 May, 1962, pg 19.

In light of Duvalier's election fraud, Kennedy decided that the United States could no longer afford to ignore Haiti, even if this new policy caused extra problems for the United States in the Caribbean. A memorandum from his meeting with Thurston clearly outlines the US position:

Our present policy is aimed at the identification and support of a viable alternative to Duvalier and the ultimate dislodgement of the Duvalier regime in favor of such alternative. Our present target date for the completion of this operation is next May, at which time Duvalier's first "elected" term of office expires. (We have never recognized the second "election" at which he extended his term.) ... We are convinced that it is hopeless to try to work with Duvalier. ... The most promising approach would be the withdrawal of recognition at the time when his term expires.

The memorandum adds:

A US role in dislodging Duvalier would, of course, help us with other democratic forces in the Caribbean area and be another significant step in upsetting the old "friendly to dictators" picture which still prevails.

Executive Secretary of the Department of State William H. Brubeck provided a copy of the memorandum to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, telling him that President Kennedy had given his "general approval to it." The Kennedy Administration had made the decision actively to pursue a regime change in Haiti.<sup>177</sup>

The decision to push Duvalier out of power was delayed by one important fact – there was nobody to replace him, and in spite of the strong language of the June 1 memorandum, the fears of a political vacuum in Haiti persisted. "*Under no circumstances,*" reads the memo, "*would we try to dislodge Duvalier without a fairly*

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<sup>177</sup> Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State Brubeck to the President's Special Assistant for National Affairs Bundy. Department of State, 1 June 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #371, pp 764-766.

*clear idea who would replace him...We do not intend to move decisively unless and until we feel that we have reasonable control over the future course of events.*"<sup>178</sup> In spite of the lack of an obvious, acceptable successor, the United States began taking action against Duvalier at the end of July, hitting Papa Doc where it hurt the most – his pocketbook. Senator Stephen M. Young articulated the anti-Duvalier sentiment in Washington, questioning what good, if any the American assistance program had done in Haiti: "Is this foreign assistance," he asked, "or is it blackmail to a ruthless dictator and his henchmen?"<sup>179</sup>

On July 31, 1962, with little fanfare, the United States cancelled most financial aid to Haiti, thus reducing the flow to a trickle. The United States continued to fund a malaria-eradication program in Haiti, deeming it a humanitarian gesture and a program relatively immune to graft. As for the remaining American aid programs in Haiti, Washington decided that they accomplished little more than financing the Duvalier regime. The Kennedy administration did not publicize the aid suspension.<sup>180</sup> It hardly seems a stretch to connect the suspension of aid with the growing anti-Duvalier policy in Washington. However, the decision to end aid to Haiti had been a long time. The US embassy staff in Haiti, under Thurston's supervision, presented an Action Program for

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid, emphasis in original.

<sup>179</sup> Comments by Ohio Senator Stephen M. Young in the US Senate. Congressional Record, 24 May, 1962, pp 9167-9168.

<sup>180</sup> Indeed, the documentary record seems very silent on how the United States ended aid to Haiti. Government documents after the fact often make reference to the fact that aid to Haiti ended in mid-1962, but offer no clues as to what steps the United States took to effect the aid suspension. By all appearances it seems to have been a clean, sudden break of all financial aid programs. It may be, however, that documentation on the suspension either has not been declassified, or was not included in the materials used in researching this paper.

Haiti to the State Department on October 3 that explained the reasoning behind the aid suspension. The team concluded:

On the basis of almost six years experience we are convinced that Duvalier and his principle advisors are basically hostile to the United States; are deliberately fostering anti-American attitudes; are deliberately destroying the effectiveness of several significant U.S. programs and are seriously distorting or perverting the purpose of our activities.<sup>181</sup>

The US military mission in Haiti, for example, had been relatively successful in modernizing the army and steering it toward a pro-American stance.<sup>182</sup> However, because Duvalier continually purged the army officer corps and favored the Ton Tons Macoutes and civil militia over the regular army, American progress in that field was effectively stunted.<sup>183</sup> Additionally, the suspension of aid was a response to administrative and technical problems. The Haitian Government could not afford to pay local workers hired for the various aid projects. The United States Government offered to hire and pay the local workers, but insisted that it assume personnel management responsibilities. The Haitian Government refused to permit the United States to assume so much control or treat Haitian citizens as employees of the United States.<sup>184</sup>

Kennedy took a special interest in Haiti and viewed it as a place ideal for reform. As a nation with some of the worst living conditions in the hemisphere, Haiti, Kennedy hoped could become an example of what American aid could accomplish, and was

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<sup>181</sup> US Action Program for Haiti. Department of State, 3 Oct. 1962. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100481801.

<sup>182</sup> For more on the US military mission see: Williamson, Charles T. The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti, 1959-1963. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1999.

<sup>183</sup> State Department situation report on Haiti. Department of State, 8 Aug. 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #372, pp 766-769.

<sup>184</sup> "Most Aid to Haiti Suspended by U.S.," The New York Times, 1 Aug. 1962, pg 11.

reportedly unusually disappointed with results of the Alliance for Progress in Haiti.<sup>185</sup>

The goal of US aid in Haiti was to improve the quality of life for Haitians, but instead the money was either wasted or stolen by Duvalier officials. By mid 1962, the United States felt it had done all it could to improve life in Haiti and decided to simply stop funding programs that did not work, were used as a source of income for Duvalierists, and often cited by Duvalier to prove to the world that he enjoyed tacit international support.

But if, by ending the aid programs, the Duvalier regime could be quickly and easily removed, so much the better according to an August 8 memorandum prepared by the State Department and CIA on the Haitian situation. The agencies concluded that Duvalier “cannot stay in power for any extended period without United States economic and military assistance.”<sup>186</sup> On August 11, however, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Martin warned Thurston that the United States remained committed to a noninterventionist policy in Latin America. Any action to unseat Duvalier, he stated, must “be indigenous and not open us to the charge of intervention.”<sup>187</sup>

Had the US sought the immediate removal from power of Duvalier, an interventionist policy would indeed have been required, particularly in the absence of a clear successor. However, the goal of the United States was not to immediately remove Duvalier, but to gradually push him out of office by the time his first legal term

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<sup>185</sup> Martin, pp 236-239.

<sup>186</sup> State Department situation report on Haiti. Department of State, 8 Aug. 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #372, pp 766-769.

<sup>187</sup> Letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Martin to Ambassador Thurston. Department of State, 11 Aug. 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #373, pp 770-773.



expired.<sup>188</sup> Until “a reasonable alternative is identified and willing to assume charge,” proposed Thurston, the United States should maintain a minimal working relationship with Duvalier. To this end, Washington focused its efforts on isolating Haiti from the rest of Latin America, first by cutting off aid, and then by encouraging Latin American nations to hold Haiti to task for human rights violations in the OAS. The United States Government hoped that if Duvalier could be isolated and put under enough pressure, he might buckle under, leave office in 1963 when his legal term ended, and permit a democratic election.<sup>189</sup>

Coercing Duvalier into voluntarily leaving office was a gamble. As turned out, the United States overestimated its ability to influence events in Haiti, or at least, it overestimated its ability to influence Duvalier. In response to the aid suspension, Duvalier assumed full economic powers for six months and announced that Haiti would persevere by self-financing a budget and economic development programs.<sup>190</sup> Determined and defiant, Papa Doc announced that Haiti would prove “a national budget can be carried out without direct foreign assistance.”<sup>191</sup>

As a palliative to prevent Duvalier against turning to the communist bloc for economic support, the United States made a peace overture on October 5, 1962, agreeing to finance a \$2.8 million jet airport in Port-au-Prince.<sup>192</sup> The project had the benefit of meeting an American military need for a jet facility in Haiti. In October, the need of the

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<sup>188</sup> State Department Action Program for Haiti. Department of State, 3 Oct. 1962. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK310048180.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Eder, Richard. “Haiti is Defiant in Face of Reduction in U.S. Aid,” The New York Times, 2 Oct. 1962, pg 17.

<sup>191</sup> “Haiti’s President Gets Wide Powers,” The New York Times, 18 Sep. 1962, pg 12.

<sup>192</sup> Eder, Richard. “U.S. Loan Dismays Haiti’s Opposition,” The New York Times, 18 Oct. 1962, pg 52.

United States for a jet airport in the Caribbean became more acute during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The missile crisis hammered home the fact that in a military crisis in the Caribbean, the United States could make good use of a jet airport for reconnaissance or for conducting military strikes anywhere in the region. Moreover, the airport construction project allowed the United States to keep a diplomatic foot in the door. Part of the October State Department Action Program called for a US AID program that could be kept on standby in case Duvalier should suddenly leave (or be removed from) office and the United States need to resume aid quickly for humanitarian or/and political purposes. Funding the jet airport provided just such an active aid program.<sup>193</sup>

The genesis of the airport deal began early in the year under shadier circumstances. In January of 1962, the Organization of American States met in Punta Del Este, Uruguay to discuss a motion by the United States for that body to condemn the Castro government of Cuba. As the vote was not certain to go in favor of the United States position, the American delegation courted waffling nations, including Haiti. Haitian representative and Foreign Minister Rene Chalmers approached US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and obliquely suggested that Haiti might be disposed to support the American position if more aid came Haiti's way. In an apparent back alley deal, Rusk committed the United States to funding the \$2.8 million jet airport in exchange for Haiti's vote against communist Cuba.<sup>194</sup> Historian Stephen Rabe, and Robert and Nancy Heintz relate an anecdote that upon his return to the United States, Rusk listed his expense account as:

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<sup>193</sup> State Department Action Program for Haiti. Department of State, 3 Oct. 1962. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100481801.

<sup>194</sup> Ferguson, 44; Heintz and Heintz, 589.

Breakfast	\$2.25
Lunch with Haitian Foreign Minister	\$2,800,000 <sup>195</sup>

Even if the origin of the airport plan was seedy, by October it very conveniently met a need of the United States in its Haitian relations. Moreover, it did not come without strings attached. The United States maintained the right to cancel the project and required that Haiti begin making interest payments on debts owed in the United States.<sup>196</sup> By the end of December, Washington's plan to weaken Duvalier seemed to be working. The Haitian economy, not healthy to begin with, was in a state of shambles. Haiti could not afford to operate public works projects, and it faced another dead tourism season as well as the "bad year" of coffee production.

Having decided to essentially abandon Papa Doc to the fates and wait for him to fall from power, the Kennedy administration took no action for or against the Duvalier government for several months. However, Duvalier did not fall quickly from power once cut off from US aid, as the administration had predicted. Nevertheless, the United States remained committed to its policy of avoiding unnecessary contact with the Duvalier regime and quietly waited for Duvalier's illegal second term to begin on May 22, 1963. The only major innovation in US policy in Haiti was a recommendation by the State Department to President Kennedy that the United States should establish closer contacts with non-government business officials and with high-ranking members of the Haitian army. Additionally, the State Department suggested that the Immigration and

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<sup>195</sup> Rabe, 51. Heintz and Heintz, 589. Unfortunately, neither Rabe nor the Heintzs can offer a source for this anecdote. Unlike the Heintzs, however, Rabe admits it may be apocryphal.

<sup>196</sup> Eder, Richard. "Haiti's Finances Worsen Steadily" The New York Times 26 Dec. 1962, pg 7.

Naturalization Service authorize re-entry visas for Haitian exile leaders in the US, so that they might better “organize a unified movement of all Haitian exiles.”<sup>197</sup>

In spite of this new urge by the State Department to take a more firmly anti-Duvalier stance, the United States continued to make limited conciliatory gestures to the Haitian government. On April 18, Duvalier had himself proclaimed “Renovator of the Nation” by the Haitian legislature.<sup>198</sup> This proclamation amounted to little more than an attempt by Duvalier to circumvent the illegality of his pending second term by changing the title of his office. Ambassador Thurston attended this session of the legislature, making no protest and through his presence suggesting US acceptance of Duvalier’s actions.

Additionally, at the behest of the government of Haiti, the United States pulled its Marine training mission out of Haiti in April.<sup>199</sup> The military mission had been the best means the United States had of maintaining contact with individuals and groups who might eventually have formed an anti-Duvalierist movement. Furthermore, unlike the developmental projects, the military mission had been the least hindered by graft and corruption. However, Duvalier constantly undid the mission’s achievements by refusing to cooperate with the Americans. He frequently purged the officer corps, keeping pro-American officers in low-ranking positions or forcing their retirement, preventing them from gaining political power. Under Duvalier the army had lost its political influence. Duvalier deliberately weakened it and transferred its powers to the Ton Tons Macoutes.

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<sup>197</sup> Haitian Plan of Action From February 15 to September 15, 1963. Prepared in the Department of State, 20 Feb. 1963. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. XII, #375.

<sup>198</sup> “Duvalier Proclaimed ‘Renovator of Nation,’” *The New York Times*, 19 April, 1963, pg 15.

<sup>199</sup> Kenworthy, E.W. “U.S. Marines Leave Haiti; Latin Truce Mission Sent,” *The New York Times*, 30 April 1963, pg 1, 9.

By the time the United States pulled the Marines out of Haiti in 1963, the mission had already been a failure.<sup>200</sup>

On April 26, months of simmering tension in Haiti finally boiled over. Three years earlier, Duvalier had ordered the arrest of Clement Barbot, one-time head of the Ton Tons Macoutes and long-time Duvalier strongman, and had him thrown into prison in the ancient fortress, Fort Dimanche – a reward for having swiftly assumed the reins of power following Duvalier’s heart attack.<sup>201</sup> Convinced that prison had cured him of any lingering ambitions, Duvalier released Barbot after eighteen months’ incarceration.<sup>202</sup> However, Barbot left prison with a taste for revenge. On the morning of April 26, 1963, he arranged an attack on Duvalier’s children, Jean-Claude and Simonne while they were en route to school. Gunmen fired on the car carrying the children, killing two bodyguards and the driver, but the children were not harmed. Witnesses described the attack as a bungled kidnapping. Barbot, meanwhile, went into hiding.<sup>203</sup>

Fearing that Duvalier might respond to the attack with a wave of terror and repression the US embassy warned Americans in Haiti to prepare for the worst, and the US Navy deployed a destroyer to Haiti to stand ready to evacuate Americans if needed. Violence certainly seemed possible. However, Duvalier’s response was limited to placing the blame on an army lieutenant whom he ordered executed. The US embassy reported that all the officer’s family disappeared on the same day as the execution and

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<sup>200</sup> For more on the US military training mission in Haiti see: Williamson, Charles T. The U.S. Naval Mission to Haiti: 1959-1963. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999.

<sup>201</sup> For the curious, Ft. Dimanche was built shortly after the Haitian revolution under order of Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines as bulwark against European invasion. Its military usefulness ebbed due to poor upkeep, though it remained an effective, if somewhat medieval, jail for political prisoners.

<sup>202</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 199.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 201.

speculated that they were probably murdered; most likely by the TTMs.<sup>204</sup> This was the extent of the violence that followed the attempt to kidnap the Duvalier children.

Instead of a violent purge, Papa Doc launched a month of celebration leading up to his second presidential term with a campaign of denunciations of the United States, accusing it of oppressing Haiti for being a black republic and threatening violent retribution against any force that might oppose him. Duvalier's long-standing antipathy toward the United States had increased since taking office, as his conflict with Washington grew more acute. So long as he had needed the United States how ever, Duvalier had restrained his vitriol. When Washington cut off aid to Haiti, Papa Doc no longer had reason to refrain from criticizing the United States. Duvalier's personal physician kicked off the ceremony with a speech promising that any invasion of Haiti would be lead to:

The greatest slaughter in history [and] a Himalaya of corpses...Blood will flow in Haiti...The land will burn from north to south, from east to west; there will be no sunrise or sunset – just one big flame licking the sky. The dead will be buried under a mountain of ashes because of slavery to the foreigner.<sup>205</sup>

Some Haitians meanwhile began seeking escape from the island nation. The day after the aforementioned celebration, a group of Haitians sought asylum at the Dominican Embassy.<sup>206</sup> The Dominican Republic had undergone great changes since the beginning of Duvalier's presidency. Long-time Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo was assassinated on May 30, 1961. His death left a power vacuum that lasted over a year and

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<sup>204</sup> Martin, Edwin McCammon. Kennedy and Latin America. New York: University Press of America, 1994. pg 245.

<sup>205</sup> "Duvalier Facing a Revolt Threat," The New York Times, 28 April, 1963 pg 14.

<sup>206</sup> "Troops Surround Embassies," The New York Times, 29 April 1963, pg 3. The New York Times reported on April 29, 1963 that Haitian troops were surrounding multiple Latin American embassies. However, future reporting by the New York Times does not mention embassies other than the Dominican, so it is logical to conclude that it was probably just a rumor circulating through Port-au-Prince.

ended with the election of Juan Bosch as president on December 20, 1962. Bosch had progressive ideas and pushed a democratic constitution through the Dominican legislature. Due to conflict within and without, however, Bosch's presidency lasted only seven months before his political opponents overthrew him.<sup>207</sup>

Whereas Duvalier had been wary enough of Trujillo to avoid conflict with the Dominican Republic, he had no such fears of Bosch. On April 28, Duvalier risked a major international incident, authorizing his police to break into the Dominican Embassy and seize the Haitians seeking refuge there. When the Dominicans refused to release the refugees Duvalier ordered the army and civil militia to surround the Dominican Embassy.<sup>208</sup> The Dominican response was swift and firm. Bosch decried the break-in as "equivalent to an invasion of our country" and "an unpardonable offense."<sup>209</sup> Before the day ended, the Dominican Republic issued a note to the Haitian Government demanding the immediate withdrawal of Haitian police from the Dominican Embassy and assurances of the inviolability of those within. The Dominicans gave the Haitian Government twenty-four hours to comply, after which time "[we] will adopt, with all decision and at any price, the necessary measures to force the respect for the dignity and sovereignty of the Dominican nation."<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> The histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic often intersect, and anyone interested in one should make a point of studying the other. For a thorough, readable general history of the Dominican Republic, see: Pons, Frank Moya. The Dominican Republic: A National History Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998. For a closer examination of events in the Dominican Republic concurrent with those of Haiti during Duvalier's dictatorship see: Gleijeses, Piero. The Dominican Crisis: The 1965 Constitutionalist Revolt and American Intervention, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

<sup>208</sup> "Troops Surround Embassies," The New York Times, 29 April 1963, pg 3.

<sup>209</sup> "Dominican Leader Assails 'Outrage'," The New York Times, 29 April, 1963, pg 3.

<sup>210</sup> Text of Dominican Note to Government of Haiti. Printed in The New York Times, 29 April, 1963, pg 3.

This very clear threat of war prompted Duvalier to remove the police the next day. However, the Dominican Republic still did not back down, shifting its position to a demand for reparations. Charging Haiti with having threatened peace in the Western Hemisphere, the Dominicans took their complaint to the Organization of American States. The OAS agreed to send a mission to Haiti to assess the situation and determine if it warranted international action against Haiti. This act placated the Bosch government, and the Dominicans agreed to extend the deadline for invasion for another twenty-four hours.<sup>211</sup>

The United States reacted to the situation with deep concern, ordering the US Embassy to stand by for evacuation.<sup>212</sup> However, the United States decided not to join the OAS investigation committee. At first glance, this decision seems incredible, as if the United States was passing up an opportunity to peacefully unseat Duvalier. However, a key element of changing the image of the United States in Latin America lay in resisting the urge to engage in unilateral, interventionist actions in the region.<sup>213</sup> Even being a member of a multilateral commission could have left the United States open to charges of having too much influence over other members. The United States did take limited action against the Haitian Government, issuing a warning to Americans to avoid travel to Haiti, describing it as “potentially explosive.”<sup>214</sup> This statement amounted to a tacit denunciation of the Haitian position in its conflict with the Dominican Republic.

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<sup>211</sup> Kenworthy, E.W. “U.S. Marines Leave Haiti; Latin Truce Mission Sent,” The New York Times, 30 April 1963, pg 1, 9.

<sup>212</sup> “U.S. Navy Ready to Act,” The New York Times, 30 April, 1963, pg 8.

<sup>213</sup> Rabe, Stephen G. The Most Dangerous Area in the World, pg 53.

<sup>214</sup> Frankel, Max. “Protest to Haiti Scores Harrying of U.S. Officials” The New York Times, 3 May, 1963, pg 1, 2.



Although Duvalier seemed unwilling to go to war with the Dominican Republic, he threatened savage reprisals against any force that invaded Haiti. He underscored his position by identifying himself with the nation of Haiti, stating that an attack on one constituted an attack on the other. At a May 1 celebration, Papa Doc said:

I am the personification of the Fatherland. Those who wish to destroy Duvalier wish to destroy the Haitian Fatherland. God and the people are the source of all power. I have twice been given the power. I have it, and I will definitely keep it. I don't take orders or dictates from anybody... Those who are uncertain about what to do had better keep themselves at my side because a steamroller will crush the opposition and this will be one of the most terrible things that has ever been seen in Haiti.<sup>215</sup>

On May 3, Duvalier placed Haiti under martial law and established a curfew in Port-au-Prince.<sup>216</sup> Papa Doc did not stand a chance against the Dominicans militarily, and diplomatically, the OAS leaned toward the Dominican Republic.<sup>217</sup> His only option lay in threatening violent reprisals against Haitian civilians if the Dominicans or anyone else invaded Haiti. If he had to go, Duvalier apparently intended to go kicking and screaming.

The OAS investigation commission arrived in Port-au-Prince on May 5, receiving a cool reception. The commission described the situation as tense but relatively stable and urged both nations to avoid war. Duvalier told the commission that if the Dominicans agreed to not invade he would agree to grant safe-conduct passes to the Haitians seeking exile. President Bosch considered the promise an empty one and continued to threaten military action, though he did tone down his rhetoric and suggested

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<sup>215</sup> Szulc, Tad. "Haiti Marks May Day," The New York Times, 2 May, 1963, pg 12.

<sup>216</sup> Eder, Richard. "Haitians Placed Under Army Rule; Curfew Imposed," The New York Times, 4 May, 1963, pg 1.

<sup>217</sup> Szulc, Tad. "Dominicans Mass Troops," The New York Times, 6 May, 1963, pg 3.

that OAS sanctions against Haiti might be an acceptable alternative to war.<sup>218</sup> He nevertheless urged OAS member nations to abandon the principle of nonintervention and take multilateral action against Duvalier in some fashion, be it an invasion, sanctions, or even just a formal denunciation of his regime. Duvalier's record on human rights was so bad that Bosch felt the OAS obligation to do something about him outweighed its desire to defend member nations from outside interventions.<sup>219</sup>

Although unwilling to take part in such direct action against Duvalier, the United States remained deeply concerned about the conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. On May 7, the US Government ordered the evacuation of all dependents of US personnel in Haiti.<sup>220</sup> US Marines practiced landing maneuvers off the Haitian coast.<sup>221</sup> However, when Haitian exile leaders Louis Dejoie and Daniel Fignole formed a government-in-exile in Puerto Rico, the United States refused to grant it recognition.<sup>222</sup> The United States did not have faith in the ability of Dejoie to improve the situation in Haiti.<sup>223</sup> Even though Duvalier's grip on power seemed tenuous, the United States remained reluctant to take action against him. Although this was a perfect opportunity for the United States to remove Duvalier from power, it would have come a high price. With the dispute so closely under OAS scrutiny, US involvement in the Haitian-Dominican dispute would have appeared to the rest of Latin America as exactly the kind

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<sup>218</sup> Kenworthy, E.W. "O.A.S. Asks Haiti and Dominicans to Avert Battle," The New York Times, 7 May 1963, pg 1, 3.

<sup>219</sup> Szulc, Tad. "Latins Seek Way for O.A.S. to Act in Haitian Crisis," The New York Times, 12 May, 1963, pg 1, 35.

<sup>220</sup> "U.S. Tells Aids in Haiti to Send Families Home," The New York Times, 8 May, 1963, pg 1, 5.

<sup>221</sup> "Marines Simulate Landing," The New York Times, 13 May, 1963, pg 10.

<sup>222</sup> "2 Haitians Form an Exile Regime," The New York Times, 13 May, 1963, pg 10.

<sup>223</sup> Memorandum of a conversation between Rusk, Martin, and Dominican Foreign Minister Freites, Department of State, 30 May, 1963, 11:32 a.m. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #385, pp 794-795.

of interventionism that the United States claimed to have sworn off. In terms of its relations with the rest of Latin America, Washington had more to gain by staying out of Haiti and letting the OAS deal with the situation than it did by becoming closely involved.

With the OAS considering its options in Haiti with slow deliberation, Duvalier seized the initiative. He accused the United States of attempting to exaggerate the seriousness of the situation through its evacuation order and flatly denied a rumor that he had plans to flee Haiti for Paris with his family. Duvalier scoffed at the idea of the OAS taking action against him, claiming that the organization lacked the mechanism for doing so. Papa Doc even turned the matter around to his benefit, suggesting that if the OAS did indeed have interventionist powers it could make better use of them by stopping the oppression of African-Americans in the United States.<sup>224</sup>

Just a month earlier, civil rights supporters in the United States had gathered in Birmingham, Alabama to protest racially biased laws and gross civil rights inequalities in the United States. Stories and images of brutal suppression of the protestors seriously damaged American prestige internationally. Papa Doc very cleverly capitalized on the increasingly public image of the United States as a racist, anti-black nation to portray his own struggle with the United States as that of a small, defenseless black republic being beaten up on by a stronger, racist nation. A student of negritude, Duvalier closely linked politics with race and championed Haiti's African ancestry above its French. US policy in Haiti does not seem to have been explicitly racist; however, it is unlikely that

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<sup>224</sup> Eder, Richard. "Duvalier Assails U.S. Role in Crisis, But Seeks Amity," The New York Times, 16 May, 1963, pg 1, 10.

American prejudices against people of African ancestry did not play a role in Washington's relations with Haiti. Anti-black prejudices did exist within the United States government and it would be unrealistic to believe that American policymakers put aside these prejudices when making foreign policy.<sup>225</sup>

Although the OAS pressed Haiti to respect human rights and provide safe conduct for exiles under foreign embassy protection, it took no formal action against Duvalier or his regime. By the end of May, Duvalier caved in to pressure and began allowing the exiles to leave unmolested, but he lost very little face in the process.<sup>226</sup> He had faced adversity on every front and survived. The real loser was Juan Bosch who, by agreeing to back down from an engagement with Haiti, lost significant face in the Dominican Republic.<sup>227</sup>

Firmly in control of his country, the way was clear for Duvalier to assume his second term in office as president. The moment had come, and the United States had not yet formed a clear policy on how to respond to this development, having anticipated that Duvalier would have been forced from power by then. The US government had no desire to recognize Duvalier's illegal second term, but it did not want to close down its embassy, considering it a valuable administrative agency. Instead of breaking relations, on May 17 the United States suspended its diplomatic ties with the Haitian government. Ambassador Thurston stayed at his post, with orders to avoid any formal contact with the

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<sup>225</sup> Explicit examples of anti-black racism do not appear in any of the documents I examined in researching this paper. However, it would naïve to expect to find such examples. Certainly there occasionally existed a comment here or there that one could construe as prejudiced. However, such comments were directed not at black Haitians, but at the lack of education of the peasantry. Assuming a priori that peasants are simple is a serious prejudice, but not one that is racist per se.

<sup>226</sup> Szulc, Tad. "Duvalier Rule Appears Strong," The New York Times, 23 May, 1963, pg 3.

<sup>227</sup> Plummer, 181.

Haitian government. However, administrative contact at low levels continued.<sup>228</sup> This curious policy allowed the United States to avoid recognizing the Haitian government without having to officially break relations. On the May 22, the United States protested Duvalier's remaining in office beyond his legally elected term by recalling Thurston to Washington for consultation.<sup>229</sup>

In the wake of the American and Dominican failure to push Duvalier from office, the United States Government needed to re-assess the situation. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edwin M. Martin met with Dominican Foreign Minister Andres A. Freites on May 30 to discuss both nations' options in Haiti. While both governments agreed that Duvalier was "a bad thing for the Hemisphere and for Haiti," they also agreed that there was very little either the United States or the Dominican Republic could do about his regime. Although Freites indicated that his government very much desired to take action against Duvalier, Rusk made clear that the United States felt there simply did not exist sufficient basis for either US or OAS intervention in Haiti.<sup>230</sup>

Rusk's comments echoed the findings of a CIA report on the Haitian situation, which reduced American options in Haiti to three:

[Duvalier's] statements (whether sincere or not) that he will not proclaim a Socialist or Communist state place the United States in the position where we cannot oppose him on political grounds except for the following reasons:

- a. Violation of Haitian constitutional process, thus extending his tenure of office;

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<sup>228</sup> Szulc, Tad. "U.S. Suspends Ties with Haiti Regime But Envoy Stays," The New York Times, 18 May, 1963, pg 1, 4.

<sup>229</sup> "Duvalier Warns of Hard Future," The New York Times, 23 May, 1963, pg 1, 3.

<sup>230</sup> Memorandum of a conversation between Rusk, Martin, and Freites, Department of State, 30 May, 1963, 11:32 a.m. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #385, pp 794-795.

- b. His administration has not been in the best interests of the Haitian people; and
- c. We don't like him and it appears he does not like us.

The United States was already barely tolerating Duvalier's further tenure in office, and had already taken significant action against him having all but severed formal relations with him. Though sympathetic to the plight of the Haitian people, Washington remained unlikely to act upon their behalf. This left only the most capricious of excuses to justify intervention in Haiti: we don't like him and he doesn't like us. None of these options satisfied criteria for intervention.<sup>231</sup>

However, Rusk indicated that if the Dominican Republic undertook a covert action against Haiti, the United States, though it would not join such an activity, would appreciate being kept informed of any developments.<sup>232</sup> On June 1, President Kennedy met with the Dominican Ambassador to the United States, Albert del Rosario, and indicated that he looked favorably on Dominican covert action in Haiti and intimated that he desired a closer working relationship with President Bosch on this matter. Kennedy stressed, however, that the Dominican Republic should not become actively involved in such action, but should use Haitians in any action against Duvalier.<sup>233</sup>

A frustrated United States resumed formal relations with the Haitian Government on June 3, 1963, although Thurston remained in Washington. This decision did not

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<sup>231</sup> CIA report on the Haitian Situation. Central Intelligence Agency, undated. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #381, pp 788-790. Although the FRUS lists the report as "undated" it suggests a likely date of June 4, 1963..

<sup>232</sup> Memorandum of a conversation between Rusk, Martin, and Freites, Department of State, 30 May, 1963, 11:32 a.m. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #385, pp 794-795.

<sup>233</sup> Memorandum of a conversation between President Kennedy, Chief of Protocol Angier Biddle Duke, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Martin, and Dominican Ambassador Albert del Rosario. Department of State, 1 June, 1963, 10:25-10:37 a.m. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #386, pg 796.

constitute recognition of the legality of Duvalier's continuance in office, the United States stressed, but rather a realistic recognition that Duvalier was not going anywhere any time soon.<sup>234</sup> Duvalier again took the offensive, politely requesting that the United States remove Thurston from his post.<sup>235</sup> Both nations stressed that this action did not constitute a break in relations, but only a change in personnel. Such action, although definitely in Duvalier's favor, was actually not such a bad idea. With relations already strained, a change in ambassadors gave both Haiti and the United States a chance to start anew. Nevertheless, Duvalier's implication was clear – the United States could remove Thurston willingly, or Duvalier would declare him *persona non grata*. Kennedy had already shown support for the idea of keeping Thurston in Washington indefinitely, so Duvalier's actions suited Washington nicely.<sup>236</sup>

Duvalier had little opportunity to pursue his battle with Washington. On July 14, Clement Barbot and his brother Henry made another strike, this time intending to assassinate Duvalier and take over the country. Duvalier learned of the plot and ordered the arrest of the Barbots and co-conspirators. The arrest turned into a shoot-out that left the Barbot brothers dead.<sup>237</sup> On August 5, Papa Doc faced another coup attempt. A force of 250 Haitian exiles in the Dominican Republic under command of former Haitian general Leon Cantave crossed the border near Cap Haitien, on the north coast of Haiti. The Haitian Government accused the Dominican Republic of supplying the rebels and

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<sup>234</sup> Szulc, Tad. "Haitian Contacts Resumed by U.S.," The New York Times, 4 June, 1963, pg 1, 6.

<sup>235</sup> Szulc, Tad. "U.S. Envoy is Out at Haiti's Behest," The New York Times, 15 June, 1963, 1, 17.

<sup>236</sup> Memorandum of meeting in the White House between Kennedy and Principals (unnamed). Central Intelligence Agency, 21 May, 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #383, pg 792

<sup>237</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 240.

assisting their crossing.<sup>238</sup> Both the Dominican and American governments knew about Cantave's plans, but considered the moment inopportune for attack.<sup>239</sup> Washington saw political promise in Cantave, who claimed he desired no power for himself, but merely wanted to free Haiti from Duvalier.<sup>240</sup> The State Department did not rate Cantave's chances of success in invading Haiti very high, and felt he could best serve Haiti by waiting for Duvalier to fall from power and then form a provisional government that could request American and OAS assistance and support.<sup>241</sup> Lacking support from the United States or the Dominican Republic, Cantave attacked of his own accord. The invasion amounted to nothing and ended in unqualified disaster almost before it had begun. Meeting stiffer resistance than they expected, the rebels scrambled back to the Dominican border before the day ended.<sup>242</sup>

The rapidity with which the rebels' coordination collapsed combined with what the US State Department called "exaggerated newspaper accounts," made Duvalier appear very much in control of the situation in Haiti.<sup>243</sup> Moreover, the fact remains that Cantave's troops had enjoyed Dominican protection, military training and equipment, which gave Duvalier diplomatic ammunition. This time, Duvalier was the one to go to OAS and accuse the Dominicans of hostile action, demanding that they cease harboring Haitian exiles. The OAS agreed to send another commission to Haiti, this time to study

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<sup>238</sup> Raymont, Henry. "Haitians, in OAS, Score Dominicans," The New York Times, 7 Aug., 1963 pg 1, 2.

<sup>239</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the US Embassy in Haiti. Department of State, 14 May, 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #380, pp 785-787.

<sup>240</sup> "Rebel Chief in Haiti: Leon Cantave," The New York Times, 7 Aug. 1963, pg 2.

<sup>241</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the US Embassy in Haiti. Department of State, 14 May, 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #380, pp 785-787.

<sup>242</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 145.

<sup>243</sup> Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) to President's Special Assistant for National Affairs (Bundy) on the Abortive Invasion of Haiti and Its Significance for US policy. Department of State, 14 Aug., 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII #390, pp 802-804.



Duvalier's claims.<sup>244</sup> Because the United States disassociated itself from Cantave beforehand by not supporting his invasion, US policy in Haiti remained relatively unaffected. However, the State Department noted that because of the invasion, any immediate action by Washington to improve its relations with Haiti would be seen as evidence that the United States had given up hope of ever being rid of Duvalier.<sup>245</sup>

Once again, an attempt to unseat Duvalier had ended in disaster and, instead of weakening his position, only made it stronger. On August 23, the Haitian legislature granted Papa Doc another six months of extraordinary power and officially suspended all constitutional civil rights guarantees.<sup>246</sup> Meanwhile, Juan Bosch paid the price for his failure against Duvalier. On September 25, 1963, a military coup unseated Bosch, and with him democratic government in the Dominican Republic. His fall should not be attributed solely to the Haitian-Dominican conflict, and the reasons are far too complex to discuss here; rather, one should be aware that the conflict severely weakened Bosch's political position.<sup>247</sup>

The United States revised its Haitian plans again in November. The new Haitian Plan of Action prepared by the State Department recommended that the United States continue to maintain the "present cool posture toward Duvalier while denying his government economic or financial assistance other than of a purely humanitarian

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<sup>244</sup> Raymont, Henry. "Haitians, in OAS, Score Dominicans," The New York Times, 7 Aug., 1963 pg 1, 2.

<sup>245</sup> Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) to President's Special Assistant for National Affairs (Bundy) on the Abortive Invasion of Haiti and Its Significance for US policy. Department of State, 14 Aug., 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII #390, pp 802-804.

<sup>246</sup> Eder, Richard. "Haiti Suspends People's Rights," The New York Times, 24 Aug., 1963, pg 1, 3

<sup>247</sup> Plummer, 181. Also see Gleijeses, pp 65-106.

nature.”<sup>248</sup> However, unlike at the beginning of the year, the State Department recommended that the United States avoid involvement with exile groups and any attempts to invade Haiti and/or assassinate Duvalier.<sup>249</sup> Most significant however, is that the United States decided that its actions in Haiti were seriously handicapped by the lack of an ambassador in Port-au-Prince, as Thurston had remained in Washington since being recalled in May. The State Department felt that any long-term plans should be delayed until a new ambassador could be selected and allowed time to settle into the situation in Port-au-Prince.<sup>250</sup> The State Department selected career diplomat Benson E. Timmons as the new ambassador to Haiti. He arrived in Haiti on December 15.

Haiti became a distant problem when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. The Haitian Government sent its official condolences to the United States, while Duvalier privately considered it yet another sign of divine providence. A devout Voodoo numerologist, Duvalier saw special significance in the number twenty-two. That President Kennedy, the American who had caused him so many troubles, was killed on the twenty-second day of November reinforced his mystical belief that nothing could stop him. A story persists that:

In early 1964, one evening toward dusk, a special emissary of Francois Duvalier drove over to Arlington Cemetery and walked alone to the tomb of President Kennedy. His errand was to secure a bit of earth from each corner of the grave, a withered flower, and, in a bottle he had brought from Port-au Prince, a breath of grave-site air. The pilgrim’s object was not sentimental but practical: by means of the ingredients obtained, Duvalier hoped to ‘capture’ the soul of Kennedy, render it subject to his will, and thus control future American policies toward Haiti.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Proposed Haitian Plan of Action. Department of State, 23 Nov., 1963. Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XII, #391, pp 804-806.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid

<sup>250</sup> Ibid

<sup>251</sup> Heintz & Heintz, 593; “Haiti: Crushing a Country” Time 27, Aug. 1965, Vol. 86, no. 9. pp 25-26.

Unfortunately, in spite of all the attempts to prove otherwise, it really did seem like Duvalier could survive all opposition. Little wonder that he believed that his status as a voodoo priest granted him otherworldly protection.

The Kennedy administration had been certain that it could use its economic aid programs as leverage to push and prod Latin American governments into doing falling into line with Washington's wishes. The administration had been equally certain that it could topple the Duvalier regime by withholding financial assistance to the country. Both of these assumptions proved hopelessly optimistic. The United States vastly underestimated the difficulties in unseating a tyrannical dictatorship solely through economic means. In large part, this can be attributed to the fact that while the United States had, as a result of the Cuban revolution, determined that *carte blanche* support for anticommunist dictatorships was counterproductive, it had also grown so deeply afraid of future revolutions, that it did not dare destabilize the dictatorships it abhorred. The Kennedy administration pursued the anti-dictatorship line more aggressively than other administrations, but learned that the economic tools at its disposal were inadequate to the task of enforcing US will in Latin America.

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The Heins treat the story as true, though they give no documentation for it. The Time article says it was a story making the rounds in Port-au-Prince.

### CHAPTER 3: DON'T ROCK THE BOAT

Duvalier's problems with the United States did not die with Kennedy. New president Lyndon Johnson maintained Kennedy's policy of encouraging democracy and economic development in Latin America, but did not expand them to any great degree. Johnson did not share Kennedy's commitment to Latin American development and felt the primary issue in Latin America remained the containment of communism and preventing a second Cuba. He made time to confront communist agitation in Latin America wherever it appeared, such as in Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic, but opted to not to dabble in the region any more than he felt was absolutely necessary. For most of this administration, however, Johnson was preoccupied with the American involvement in Vietnam, as well as an uphill domestic battle to implement civil rights legislation and the "Great Society." Haiti was under the thumb of a tyrant, one who did not seem to be leaving any time soon. However, as Haiti posed no threat and had very limited strategic and no economic value to the United States, Johnson was content to adhere to a policy of not rocking the boat. So long as communism remained off the political radar screen in Haiti, Johnson was content to focus his attention elsewhere. As the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia grew, "Latin America fell off the mental map."<sup>252</sup>

In Haiti, United States policy continued much as it had for the past two years, denying aid to Duvalier in hopes of weakening him enough to push him out of office, while simultaneously avoiding destabilizing Haiti in a manner that might make it

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<sup>252</sup> Smith, Gaddis. The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine: 1945-1993. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994. pp 113-129.

vulnerable to communist revolution. The Johnson administration did follow through with the plan to resume diplomatic relations with Haiti. Although the return to Haiti of a United States ambassador constituted a conciliatory gesture on the part of Washington, Duvalier did not make it easy for the United States to resume normal diplomatic relations. Although Benson Timmons presented his credentials to Duvalier on January 16, the latter dragged his feet for five weeks before accepting them and thus resuming US-Haitian relations.

Upon receipt of Timmons' credentials, Duvalier hinted that the success of the US mission in Haiti depended on the resolution of "some problems."<sup>253</sup> Haitian Foreign Minister Rene Chalmers explained that the problems referred to by Duvalier consisted of four US Embassy personnel whom he considered unfriendly to Haitian interests.<sup>254</sup> The State Department saw no reason to cave into Duvalier's demand, worried that it might denude the embassy of experienced personnel. Furthermore, as Duvalier had given no concrete reason for his displeasure with the officers, the State Department had no justification for removing them. Timmons denied that the embassy was in danger of losing key personnel, and he felt that if the United States held to its position, Duvalier would back down and not expel the officers. In Timmons' opinion, the status of the officers was not the issue for Duvalier; he instead saw the conflict as a test of nerves between Duvalier and the new administration. "If...he scores [an] easy victory,"

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<sup>253</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 16 Jan. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100374252.

<sup>254</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 17 Jan. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100428783.

Timmons warned, the cost to the United States “will steadily rise, and Duvalier could well conclude he can force full-scale resumption of aid before he yields anything.”<sup>255</sup>

Timmons’s analysis seems to have been correct, as Duvalier began backing down from his demand rather quickly. When Timmons met with Foreign Minister Chalmers and Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs Adrien Raymond on January 31 to discuss a resumption of American tourism in Haiti, the Haitian representatives insisted that the Duvalier government had no intention of “creating impression that [Timmons was] not fully welcome.”<sup>256</sup> Chalmers and Raymond told Timmons that the “Four Problems” remarks by Duvalier were intended as “‘friendly advice’ and not as a ‘threat,’” and that in fact Duvalier’s opinion of the new US diplomatic mission was one of “delight that you had come.”<sup>257</sup> In spite of these protestations of friendliness, the Haitian government did not drop its demand for the removal of the “Four Problems.”

Timmons again met with Chalmers and Raymond on February 9. The Haitians told Timmons that Duvalier strongly desired that the United States voluntarily remove the officers. Unlike before, however, they gave reasons for the Haitian Government’s desire for the withdrawal of each. However, these reasons still amounted to Duvalier accusing the officers of having a “bad attitude” or of having made statements or “proposals” Duvalier considered displeasing, without offering any evidence of wrongdoing. Timmons told Chalmers and Raymond that the charges had no basis in fact, expressed support for all US Embassy personnel, and reiterated that the US did not intend to remove

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<sup>255</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 23 Jan. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100374255.

<sup>256</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 31 Jan. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100374276.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid

any of its personnel.<sup>258</sup> Timmons finally met personally with Duvalier on February 13. Duvalier spoke warmly of his experiences in the United States and told Timmons he looked forward to a close relationship with the Johnson administration based on mutual respect. Throughout their discussion, Timmons reported, Duvalier avoided “exhibiting *any hostility*” and did not mention the “Four Problems” at all.<sup>259</sup>

For the first time since the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, the United States seemed to be able to exert some influence on Duvalier’s Haiti. Chalmers informally told Timmons that the Government of Haiti was disposed to “reduce obstacles” preventing American tourism in Haiti.<sup>260</sup> In an effort to reinforce to Timmons the Haitian commitment to friendly relations with the United States, Chalmers mentioned that Haiti “fully supports the United States in its ‘battle with international Communism.’” He added that, “unlike several Latin American countries, [Haiti] had taken no action to nationalize American properties.”<sup>261</sup> In response to the apparently reformed attitude of the Duvalier government, the US mulled resuming financial aid to Haiti, on at least a limited, provisional basis.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Airgram from the US Embassy to the Department of State. Department of State, 9 Feb. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100428795.

<sup>259</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Original emphasis. Department of State, 13 Feb. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100374280.

<sup>260</sup> Record of conversation between US Ambassador to Haiti (Timmons) and Counselor of US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Curtis) with Haitian Foreign Minister (Chalmers) and Haitian Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Raymond) at Haitian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 Feb. 1964. Department of State, 16 Feb. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System # CK3100428812 .

<sup>261</sup> Ibid

<sup>262</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Original emphasis. Department of State, 13 Feb. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100374280.

Duvalier had not let up on pressing the United States for financial aid, accusing the Washington in April 1964 of trying to “strangle [his] small Negro nation.”<sup>263</sup> Still self-conscious of the negative image supporting dictatorships gave the United States, Washington refused to directly give or loan money to Haiti, but rather gave its blessings to international aid agencies that did. Doing so allowed the United States to avoid supporting Duvalier without having to make the Haitian people suffer for Papa Doc’s politics. After meeting with representatives from the International Monetary Fund, Duvalier agreed to reduce and reform the Haitian budget, thus clearing the way for future IMF loans.<sup>264</sup> On March 20, the Inter-American Development Bank approved a \$2,360,000 loan to Haiti for use in a potable-water project.<sup>265</sup>

Any good will Duvalier had managed to accumulate at beginning of 1964 evaporated on April 1 when he declared himself “Chief of the Revolution” and named himself president for life.<sup>266</sup> Given that Duvalier already had complete control of the Haitian government, this declaration seemed little more than recognition of a *fait accompli*. Nevertheless, Duvalier revealed on May 6 that he was not, as foreign observers had concluded, actually president for life; rather, the April 1 declaration had simply signaled the beginning of an electoral campaign for the position.<sup>267</sup> Duvalier could have simply declared himself president for life and been done with the matter. He had no opponents left inside the country. The State Department theorized that Duvalier

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<sup>263</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 11 April, 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100172908.

<sup>264</sup> Summary of IMF representative meeting with Duvalier, as reported to US Embassy in Port-au-Prince. Department of State, 29 April, 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100505416.

<sup>265</sup> Szulc, Tad. “Bank Aid to Haiti Approved by U.S.,” *The New York Times*, 21 May, 1964, pg 1, 7.

<sup>266</sup> “Duvalier Takes Life Presidency,” *The New York Times*, 2 Apr., 1964, pg 1, 10.

<sup>267</sup> “Duvalier Pushing Campaign to Rule Haiti for Life,” *The New York Times*, 7 May, 1964, pg 10.



bothered campaigning for the position in order to lend the office a “cloak of ‘constitutionality.’”<sup>268</sup> Timmons concurred with this assessment, further suggesting that Duvalier was under the impression that a successful bid to become president for life would “so strengthen his position,” the United States would have no choice but to resume aid projects.<sup>269</sup>

The State Department’s conclusion is really the only logical one. If Duvalier merely wanted to satisfy his lust for power, he would not have bothered with the pretense of a campaign. He had nothing to gain in Haiti through his actions other than a new title for power he already wielded. Moreover, his “Duvalierist Revolution” campaign appeared to be nothing more than rhetoric. The State Department could find no evidence of a political or philosophical platform behind the Duvalierist Revolution, or any evidence of a shift in Haitian domestic or foreign policy. The only goal of the Duvalierist Revolution seemed to be success of the Duvalier For Life campaign.<sup>270</sup>

All these conclusions depend on the assumption that there existed some logic behind Duvalier’s actions, and as Timmons pointed out to the State Department on April 30, “there is [a] persistent element of danger in situation here which defies ordinary logic.” Timmons admitted that any such assumption rested “more on [the] science of abnormal psychology than on political logic,” but it certainly helped explain the

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<sup>268</sup> Telegram from State Department (Crockett) to US Embassy in Port-au-Prince. Department of State, 3 Apr. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100383603.

<sup>269</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 11 Apr. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100172908.

<sup>270</sup> Analysis of effect of Duvalier For Life campaign in Haiti. Department of State, 17 Apr. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100172910.

situation.<sup>271</sup> Particularly during high stress periods, Duvalier's state of mind came into question. His vicious side, visible in his purges of the army and government, the orders of imprisonment, torture, and execution, and the free hand he gave the TTMs to bully the population into obedience suggest that Papa Doc may not have been mentally stable individual. He seems to have suffered from bouts of paranoia and delusions of grandeur.

On April 6, addressing a large force of the civil militia, Duvalier evoked images of the revolution of 1791, comparing the Duvalierist Revolution to the Haitian slave revolt, calling on the militia to crush Haiti's opponents as the rebelling slaves defeated their masters. He went on to say:

Duvalier will always be here because he is a great mystic and an intuitive being. He knows what he is doing. ...The Duvalierist Revolution will remain, even though I disappear. ...Duvalier is only a symbol...you make of him in this moment the man of bronze, unshakable, who decided to take power in order that you, you and your children, can live a whole life, whatever they may think. ...I am Haiti and I have no enemies except those of my nation.<sup>272</sup>

The imagery used in this speech is significant. There is a clear comparison being made by Papa Doc between himself and Christ during the Last Supper – a great leader who will carry on his work after death through loyal followers.

Such declarations were not isolated incidents. Papa Doc ordered printed and distributed booklets entitled "The Catechism of the Revolution." These booklets rewrote the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, replacing the Christian elements with

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<sup>271</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 30 Apr. 1964.

<sup>272</sup> Airgram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Text of Duvalier speech. Department of State, 8 April, 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System, #CK3100383608.

Duvalierist elements.<sup>273</sup> Bernard Diedrich and Al Burt include an excerpt of the booklet in their history of Duvalier's reign:

(Q) Who are Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Petion and Estime?

(A) *Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Petion, and Estime are five founders of the nation who are found within Francois Duvalier.*

(Q) Is Dessalines for life?

(A) *Yes, Dessalines is for life in Francois Duvalier.*

(Q) Do we conclude then that there are six presidents for life?

(A) *No, Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Petion, and Estime are five distinct chiefs of state but who form only one and the same Francois Duvalier.*<sup>274</sup>

The five Haitians listed above are significant figures in Haitian history and the nation's most famous leaders.<sup>275</sup> In particular, Jean Jacques Dessalines was the general who won the Haitian Revolution in 1804 and is considered a national hero in Haiti. Dessalines is also famous for the bloody massacre of all whites living in Haiti following his crowning as emperor. Here was Duvalier not only comparing himself to Haiti's most significant figures, but claiming to *be* them in a relationship indicative of the Christian Holy Trinity!

Papa Doc's catechism even included a new version of the Lord's Prayer:

Our Doc who art in the Presidential Palace for life, hallowed be Thy name by present and future generations. Thy will be done at Port-au-Prince and in the provinces. Give us this day our new Haiti and never forgive the trespasses of the anti-patriots who spit every day on our country; let them succumb to temptation, and under the weight of their venom, deliver them not from any evil.<sup>276</sup>

In May, while Duvalier campaigned, the State Department prepared a new Plan of Action for the Haitian mission. This new Plan of Action determined that Duvalier "appears to be solidly entrenched and determined to remain in power regardless of

<sup>273</sup> The Roman Catholic Catechism is a guide that explains the basic tenants of the Catholic faith.

<sup>274</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 278. This excerpt is also found in Prince, Rod and Jean Jacques Honorat. Haiti: Family Business. London: British Latin American Bureau Special Brief, 1985, pg 28.

<sup>275</sup> See Heinl and Heinl pp 61-155, 514-530 for more on these leaders.

<sup>276</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 278. See also Ferguson, James. Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987, pg 49.

means. Organized political opposition has been eliminated inside the country [and] exile groups also appear divided and impotent.”<sup>277</sup> The State Department concluded that, being isolated diplomatically Duvalier posed a threat only to Haiti itself. His only major goal beyond securing power for himself appeared to be “obtaining stringless aid from the United States.”<sup>278</sup> The only matter of concern to the United States was the nascent Haitian communist organization, whose existence Duvalier tolerated in order that he might occasionally suppress it whenever he needed to make a show of being tough on communism to the United States.<sup>279</sup>

The State Department report expressed concern that should Duvalier fall from power, the communists, though weak, were the only political group in Haiti even remotely organized and might therefore be able to gain influence in a post-Duvalier government.<sup>280</sup> The report concluded that the United States priority in Haiti should be to maintain cool, but correct relations, improving them if possible, but without resuming financial aid. The main objective of the US mission in Haiti was to “deny Haiti to the Communists” and “assure Haiti’s support of the United States on matters of importance in the OAS, United Nations and other international organizations.”<sup>281</sup> With all other concerns secondary, the United States seemed content to continue to tolerate Duvalier’s continuation in office and his excesses, so long as he did not rock the international boat and do anything that might encourage a communist insurgency.

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<sup>277</sup> Haiti Plan of Action for Period Beginning 1 May, 1964. Department of State, 5 May, 1964, pg 1. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100383625 .

<sup>278</sup> Ibid, 22

<sup>279</sup> Ibid, pg 13

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, pg 14

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, pgs 23, 24

The United States once again began to try to reconstruct quietly its relationship with Haiti. On May 23, the United States navy lifted a ban on using Port-au-Prince as a port of call for shore leave purposes.<sup>282</sup> Perhaps most surprisingly, Ambassador Timmons attended a high mass held in honor of Duvalier to promote his president for life campaign.<sup>283</sup> Oddly, the fact that Duvalier remained officially excommunicated from the Catholic Church did not seem to impede his having a high mass held in his honor.

On June 14, 1964 the Haitian people “elected” Duvalier president for life. Technically, it was not an election, but a referendum to approve a new constitution that included a provision for Duvalier to take office as president for life. All the ballots were marked “yes” in advance and the polls placed no limit on the number of ballots a single person could cast.<sup>284</sup> Duvalier received 2.8 million votes in his favor, and 3,234 against. The Haitian legislature accepted the vote for the new constitution on the 21<sup>st</sup> and Papa Doc was sworn into office on the June 22.<sup>285</sup> Demonstrating Duvalier’s commitment to promoting Africanism in Haiti, the new constitution changed the colors of the Haitian flag from blue and red to black and red, the black symbolizing “the Negro republic’s ties with Africa.”<sup>286</sup>

Once again, though, before Duvalier could enjoy his latest triumph, he had to fend off another pair of invasions. On June 29, a small band of rebels calling themselves the

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<sup>282</sup> Raymont, Henry. “U.S. Quietly Seeks Better Haiti Ties,” *The New York Times*, 24 May, 1964, pg 30.

<sup>283</sup> Raymont, Henry. “Duvalier Militia Pledges Loyalty,” *The New York Times*, 23 May, 1964, pg 8.

<sup>284</sup> “Duvalier is Elected President for Life,” *The New York Times*, 15 June, 1964, pg 2.

<sup>285</sup> “Duvalier named to Post for Life,” *The New York Times*, 22 June, 1964, pg 12.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.* The story behind the Haitian flag is that Dessalines, expressing his hatred of the whites, took the French tricolor and ripped out the middle white field, using the remaining blue and red as his flag.

*Camoquins* landed on the western coast of Haiti near the town of Saltrou.<sup>287</sup> Made up principally of Haitian refugees living in the Dominican Republic, the *Camoquins* were not well equipped or trained. Word of their invasion spread slowly, even to Duvalier. Several sources reported to the US Embassy that Duvalier, furious over the fact that he did not learn of the invasion until June 30, went to Ft. Dimanche and personally executed twenty-one prisoners held there.<sup>288</sup> Duvalier accused the usual suspects of complicity in the invasion: Dejoie, Magloire, Cantave, the Dominican Republic, though none of these charges stuck.<sup>289</sup>

As of July 9, the rebels had made no significant progress and Duvalier remained firmly in charge.<sup>290</sup> Unlike most rebel invasions, this one managed to avoid immediate defeat and slipped into the mountains, remaining at large for two weeks by slipping back and forth across the Haitian-Dominican border. Duvalier stepped up his terror tactics, executing anyone he suspected of plotting against him, and he even reportedly ordered the arrest and execution of family members of suspected plotters.<sup>291</sup> According the CIA, Duvalier oversaw the execution of 200 people at Ft. Dimanche within a week of the rebel

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<sup>287</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pg 283. The name *Camoquin* was taken from that of an anti-malaria pill available in Haiti. The group described themselves as a cure “to the disease that was killing Haiti – Duvalierism.”

<sup>288</sup> Telegram from US Embassy to State Department. Department of State, 2 Jul. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100419328; CIA Intelligence Information Cable, “Prisoners at Fort Dimanche Killed by President Francois Duvalier Personally,” Central Intelligence Agency, 23 Jul. 1964. CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room at [www.foia.cia.com](http://www.foia.cia.com), #EO-1998-00113.

<sup>289</sup> Brewer, Sam Pope. “Invasion Charge is Made by Haiti,” The New York Times, 4 Jul. 1964, pg 1, 3.

<sup>290</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 9 Jul. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100419336.

<sup>291</sup> Szulc, Tad. “Duvalier is Said to Execute or Arrest Real and Suspected Foes Since Rebel Landing” The New York Times 16 Jul. 1964, pg 11.

landing.<sup>292</sup> Haitian military forces declared victory over the rebels on July 24 and reported that the survivors had fled across the border to the Dominican Republic.<sup>293</sup>

Despite his success against this latest invasion, Duvalier decided to attempt to improve his army by acquiring modern arms. The Haitian government purchased thirty small, T-28 trainer aircraft in the United States.<sup>294</sup> These craft could be used for low-altitude bombing missions. The United States refused to grant Haiti an export license for the aircraft or for any other military hardware on the ground that Haiti was “not participating in a regular assistance program.”<sup>295</sup> Duvalier reacted to the denial for export licenses with anger, stating, “my troubles are caused by the Americans...When I ordered arms the American dogs blocked the order. ...Everything I want to do in my country is counteracted by these pigs.” Duvalier managed to acquire two of the planes in September when the Haitian consul general in Miami, Rudolph Baboun, directed an operation to have the planes flown from the United States to Haiti.<sup>296</sup> The US Justice Department subsequently arrested Baboun, but released him in June 1965 on condition that he immediately return to Haiti.<sup>297</sup>

Angry over what he deemed US interference with his plans, Duvalier threatened that as soon as he had dealt with the invasion he would close the US Embassy and declare

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<sup>292</sup> CIA cable on Haitian President Duvalier’s efforts to retaliate against rebel activities. Central Intelligence Agency, 20 Jul. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100466869.

<sup>293</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 24 Jul. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100419347.

<sup>294</sup> Szulc, Tad. “Duvalier is Said to Execute or Arrest Real and Suspected Foes Since Rebel Landing” The New York Times 16 Jul. 1964, pg 11.

<sup>295</sup> Szulc, Tad. “Haiti Said to Seek Navy Ships in US,” The New York Times, 17 Jul. 1964, pg 4.

<sup>296</sup> Szulc, Tad. “U.S. Calls In Envoy Over Haitian Arms,” The New York Times, 31 Dec. 1964, pg 1, 3.

<sup>297</sup> Telegram from State Department (Kennedy Crockett) to US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons). Department of State 4 Jun. 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425760.

Timmons *persona non grata*.<sup>298</sup> Papa Doc did not take such action against the US Embassy or Timmons, but he did gain another eight-month grant of full powers from the Haitian legislature on August 4.<sup>299</sup> Duvalier received this latest extension just in time, as yet another invasion force landed on the coast of Haiti on August 7. This force of thirteen men, known as *Jeune Haiti* successfully fought against Duvalier's military forces for nearly two months and struck significant blows against the Duvalier government.

Unlike the *Camoquins*, *Jeune Haiti*'s members had mostly been Haitian exiles living in New York and enjoyed greater access to money and equipment. Eight of the men were former soldiers of Leon Cantave, who had briefly enjoyed Washington support before launching his ill-fated invasion of Haiti in 1963. Under his command, they had received CIA military training that served them well in *Jeune Haiti*'s invasion of Haiti in 1964.<sup>300</sup> However, *Jeune Haiti* does not itself seem to have enjoyed any similar American support. The United States did not hold the various Haitian exile groups in high esteem. Moreover, the Johnson administration was busy in late 1964 campaigning for re-election. If it failed, supporting an exile invasion of Haiti could have cost Johnson the election, as it is likely that his political opponents would have portrayed *Jeune Haiti*'s failure similar to the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

Meanwhile, Papa Doc initially reported to the US Embassy that the invaders were Castroite Cubans, possibly to garner American support for his counterattack against

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<sup>298</sup> CIA Intelligence Information Cable, "President Duvalier's Anger and Threats of Reprisals Against American Blocking of Arms Orders," Central Intelligence Agency, 22 Jul. 1964. CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room at [www.foia.cia.com](http://www.foia.cia.com), #EO-1998-00113.

<sup>299</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 5 Aug. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423011.

<sup>300</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pg 294.



them.<sup>301</sup> Duvalier likely wanted US help because his own forces fared poorly against the rebels.<sup>302</sup> A State Department assessment of the situation concluded that the rebels, though numerically inferior to the Haitian army, managed to wage a war of attrition against the Duvalierist forces that the latter could not sustain indefinitely.<sup>303</sup> *Jeune Haiti*'s successes continued well into September. However, they could not maintain the momentum of the first few weeks. Although they recruited supporters, they did not have sufficient materials with which to arm or equip them.<sup>304</sup> More importantly, the rebels lacked the manpower to seize and hold any sizable strategic position.<sup>305</sup> In light of the overall success of the invasion, the State Department decided that the United States should remain uninvolved and "avoid any action which could be exploited to strengthen Duvalier's hand at such a critical juncture." However, this same State Department report also said that if the rebels should suddenly start losing, the United States should switch tactics and support Duvalier, to gain a "useful card in [the] never-ending poker game."<sup>306</sup>

Haitian forces gradually hunted down the rebels and defeated them in an engagement on October 26, 1964. Duvalier once again exacted bloody revenge against those that had opposed him. Rumors of the number of executions ran into the

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<sup>301</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 7 Aug. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423016; Telegram from US Embassy to State Department. Department of State, 14 Aug. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423021.

<sup>302</sup> "Haiti Rebels are said to Inflict Big Losses on Duvalier Forces," The New York Times, 15 Aug. 1964, pg 5.

<sup>303</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 1 Sep. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423033.

<sup>304</sup> CIA report on Haitian rebel activities. Central Intelligence Agency, 3 Sep. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100466879.

<sup>305</sup> DOS assessment of situation in Haiti. Department of State, 8 Sept. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423039.

<sup>306</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 1 Sep. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100423035.

hundreds.<sup>307</sup> Papa Doc ordered the public execution of two rebels his forces had captured and arranged for a television crew to film and broadcast the executions “like a football game.”<sup>308</sup> In a particularly gruesome act of retribution, Duvalier had the corpse of one of the rebels put on display in Port-au-Prince. Diedrich and Burt describe the scene:

It was set up facing a giant Coca-Cola sign saying ‘Welcome to Haiti’ across from the international airport...A sign was hung on the body – ‘chief of the traitors to his country’...and the putrid display remained there three days. ...This grisly scene took place fifteen days after Duvalier ordered a new \$40,000 campaign for tourism.<sup>309</sup>

In October, the CIA learned of a gathering in Miami of members of a Haitian exile organization codenamed “COMBAT,” which it believed might be planning an invasion of Haiti.<sup>310</sup> Although composed largely of Haitians, the CIA worried that the group might be seeking to bolster its ranks with Cuban exiles. Nominally led by Father Jean-Baptist Georges, an idealistic Haitian clergyman, the group was also closely affiliated with Rolando Masferrer Rojas, a former Batista strongman who fled Cuba during the revolution. The State Department reported in early November that small groups of the exiles in Miami were “exfiltrating” the United States to various points in the Caribbean, possibly in preparation for a coordinated infiltration of Haiti.<sup>311</sup> The Masferrer exile group remained under investigation by various American agencies for the next two years.

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<sup>307</sup> Szulc, Tad. “Wave of Killings in Haiti Reported,” *The New York Times*, 24 Aug. 1964, pg 1; Telegram from US Embassy to State Department. Department of State, 26 Aug. 1964.

<sup>308</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 305

<sup>309</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 298

<sup>310</sup> CIA report on plans to recruit Cuban exiles to join the Haitian exile group “COMBAT.” Central Intelligence Agency, 16 Oct. 1964, Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100466884.

<sup>311</sup> Telegram from State Department (Crockett) to US Embassies in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo. Department of State, 4 Nov. 1964, Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100357291.

Having already faced two invasions in one year, the Duvalier government reacted with deep concern to rumors of this latest invasion. The Haitian military remained on alert for signs of a landing, expecting the invasion as early as October 26.<sup>312</sup> Foreign Minister Chalmers called on the US embassy on November 5 to demand that the United States prevent any attack on Haiti from being launched from American territory.<sup>313</sup> In spite of Haitian concerns and US intelligence, however, this latest invasion never happened. The Federal Bureau of Investigation interviewed former Chief of Staff of the Haitian Armed Forces Jean Rene Boucicaut on November 24, who provided insight into the activities of Haitian exile groups operating in the United States. Boucicaut described the invasion rumors as lacking “basis in fact” and told the FBI that such rumors “are designed as psychological warfare against Duvalier.”<sup>314</sup> The exiles, he explained, lacked the organization and resources to take decisive action against Duvalier, whom he described as a “mental case.”<sup>315</sup>

In the wake of the tumult of 1964, Haiti enjoyed a period of relative peace and quiet in 1965. Duvalier kicked off the New Year with a speech. Calling 1964 a “year of trial,” he announced, “I seek not violence, I seek not reprisals, but I do not fear to carry them out wherever called for.”<sup>316</sup> Duvalier rarely ventured into public for months, staying in the relative safety of the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince. On the rare occasion he

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<sup>312</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 25 Oct. 1964, Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100366637.

<sup>313</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk) on conversation between Timmons and Haitian Foreign Minister Rene Chalmers. Department of State, 5 Nov. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100366638.

<sup>314</sup> FBI report on interview with Haitian exile Jean Rene Boucicaut. United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 24 Nov. 1964. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100469770.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid

<sup>316</sup> “Duvalier Says 1964 Was Year of Trial,” The New York Times, 4 Jan. 1965, pg 15.

did go out in public he always traveled under guard and heavily armed.<sup>317</sup> Shades of the tyrannical Duvalier of the previous two years surfaced periodically. On March 10, a member of the Ton Tons Macoutes murdered one Antoine Piquion, a former legislator under the Magloire administration. Duvalier responded by demanding an explanation from the TTM and then let him go free.<sup>318</sup> Later that month rumors spread through Haiti that Duvalier might soon proclaim himself Emperor of Haiti in order to forge a stronger “mystic alignment” between himself and Dessalines, the first Haitian emperor.<sup>319</sup> The Haitian Department of Tourism and Propaganda denied the rumor, calling it “simply ridiculous.”<sup>320</sup>

In late May the US Embassy staff prepared a new analysis of the United States mission in Haiti. Beyond a recommendation to interfere with Creole-language radio messages broadcast into Haiti from Havana, the embassy report had little new to add to the policies already in effect.<sup>321</sup> The embassy staff reduced United States options in Haiti to three: overthrow and replace Duvalier, maintain the current state of “cool and correct” relations, or back Duvalier body and soul.<sup>322</sup> The report did not discount this last option, noting it as a last resort in case communist elements gained strength in Haiti. With the situation unusually stable, Washington carried on with its existing policy of not rocking the boat.

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<sup>317</sup> Burks, Edward C. “Duvalier Rules Haiti by the Gun and Carries One,” The New York Times, 2 Mar. 1965, pg 12.

<sup>318</sup> Burks, Edward C. “Ex-Aide’s Murder Stirs Haiti Town,” The New York Times, 11 Mar. 1965, pg 7.

<sup>319</sup> “Duvalier Bid to Be Emperor Hinted,” The New York Times, 17 Mar. 1965, pg 10.

<sup>320</sup> “Haitian Denies Emperor Plan,” The New York Times, 19 Mar. 1965, pg 12.

<sup>321</sup> US Embassy report on US mission in Haiti. Department of State, 22 May 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100478765.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid

In June, after months of inactivity, the Duvalier administration made a half-hearted show of saber rattling in Washington. On June 4, Timmons met with Duvalier at the presidential palace. Duvalier lamented about the “heavy burdens” of his position that resulted from having to “personally [direct] all internal and external affairs” of the Haitian Government. He made a point of reminding Timmons that under his administration, Haiti had actively worked to suppress communism in the Caribbean. However, Duvalier’s anticommunist activities remained poorly defined and rarely amounted to anything more than his loudly proclaiming to be an anticommunist whenever he wanted something from the United States.

Duvalier also informed Timmons that he intended to send a private letter to President Johnson and requested that the US government allow the Haitian ambassador to deliver it personally.<sup>323</sup> The letter constituted nothing more than Duvalier’s annual appeal for financial aid, but for some reason he made a production of it in 1965 and expressed aggravation over the fact that Johnson did not immediately make time for the Haitian ambassador. “He could not understand why,” reported Timmons, a “few minutes could not be spared at once by President of ‘oldest hemisphere republic’ to receive personal representative of... ‘second oldest hemisphere republic.’” In spite of Duvalier’s indignation, the matter failed to blossom into a political controversy and Duvalier accepted the fact that the letter would have to be delivered through less personal means.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 4 June 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100170185.

<sup>324</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 19 June 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425769.

Certainly, Lyndon Johnson had his hands full in early 1965. The situation in the Dominican Republic had destabilized considerably. A military junta had replaced the Bosch government. On April 24, a group of rebels launched an attack on military forces in Santo Domingo and demanded Bosch's return, setting off a civil war. Washington feared that the Dominican civil war could leave the nation wide open to communist infiltration. Johnson in particular felt that a rebel victory would lead to a second Caribbean communist regime. Acting more on instinct than evidence, Johnson decided to intervene and sent a force of five hundred marines into the country on April 28. Within ten days, Johnson increased the total number of American troops in the Dominican Republic to 23,000, a number on par with the troops then stationed in Vietnam. Initially, Johnson justified the invasion as an attempt to protect American lives in Santo Domingo, but within days revealed that the intervention was meant to prevent a communist takeover of the Dominican Republic.

Johnson paid a high price politically for the invasion. In spite of his claims that the Dominican Republic had been in real danger of a communist takeover, he had no evidence to back up such a claim. As historian Gaddis Smith has pointed out, Johnson had acted in the Dominican Republic based not on evidence but an "*a priori* conclusion."<sup>325</sup> Johnson lost credibility with the American public, and within Washington. Powerful Washington insiders such as Senator James William Fulbright, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, turned against Johnson and withdrew

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<sup>325</sup> Smith, pg 127.

their support for American intervention in Vietnam. Johnson also lost international support and barely managed to cajole the OAS into not condemning the invasion.<sup>326</sup>

At the height of the Dominican crisis, Duvalier kept quiet and out of sight. However, when things in the Dominican Republic cooled down, he tried to use the crisis to his own advantage. On July 10, Rene Chalmers reported to the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince that a force of 2,000 Haitian rebels had massed along the Haitian-Dominican border.<sup>327</sup> The US Embassy staff in Port-au-Prince did not believe Chalmers' report, as he gave them no clear information about the leadership of the rebel force or its origins. They concluded that in light of the events in the Dominican Republic, Duvalier was likely just "staging a show," hoping that if the United States thought Haiti might be in danger of communist aggression it would resume financial aid.<sup>328</sup> Washington did not take the bait.

The Organization of American States concurred with the United States' conclusion. At Haiti's behest, on July 16 the OAS called an emergency session to hear the Haitian allegations against the Dominican Republic but did not take any further action on the matter.<sup>329</sup> Although the rest of the Western Hemisphere apparently felt Duvalier was just crying wolf, Papa Doc apparently remained concerned about invasion from the Dominican Republic. Duvalier posted army and TTM troops along the Dominican

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<sup>326</sup> See Gleijeses, Piero. Trans. By Lawrence Lipson. The Dominican Crisis: The 1965 Constitutionalist Revolt and American Intervention. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1978.

<sup>327</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 10 Jul. 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425772.

<sup>328</sup> Telegram from US Embassy to State Department. Department of State, 10 Jul. 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425774.

<sup>329</sup> "Haiti Charges 2,000 Exiles Are Massing for Invasion," The New York Times, 17 Jul. 1965, pg 21.

border and set established free-fire zones along the border.<sup>330</sup> As the threat of invasion seems to have been nonexistent, it seems that Duvalier simply used it as an excuse to close off his border, thus preventing an exodus of disenchanted Haitians from fleeing the country during the annual migration of sugar harvesters.

Every year, thousands of Haitians crossed the border to earn a meager wage cutting sugar cane in the Dominican Republic, something that neither nation ever fully approved.<sup>331</sup> Duvalier's particular disapproval lay in the fact that he simply did not care for people leaving the nation without his permission, and the Dominicans despaired of an open border, fearing that the nation might be flooded with refugees.<sup>332</sup> On May 14, 1966, Dominican soldiers forced a group of 58 Haitian refugees who made it across the border to return to Haiti. The Dominican troops reported hearing shots fired on the other side of the border immediately afterward, lending credence to a rumor that Duvalier had given orders to execute anyone returning to Haiti from the Dominican sugar harvest.<sup>333</sup> Papa Doc made peace with the Dominicans in August on the sugar harvest question. He made a deal with the Dominican government in which the Dominican Sugar Company agreed to pay Duvalier \$20 a head for each Haitian he permitted to work in the harvest, and another \$400,000 in exchange for his allowing them to return to Haiti unmolested.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Hofmann, Paul. "Mood is Sinister on Haiti's Border," The New York Times, 12 Dec. 1965, pg 29.

<sup>331</sup> For more on this topic see: Martinez, Samuel. "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic." Latin American Research Review Vol. 34, No. 1 (1999) pp 57-88.

<sup>332</sup> Hofmann, Paul. "Mood is Sinister on Haiti's Border," The New York Times, 12 Dec. 1965, pg 29 .

<sup>333</sup> "Dominicans Said to Oust Haitians," The New York Times, 15 May, 1966, pg 40.

<sup>334</sup> CIA Information Report, "1. Offer of Financial Aid by Rhadmes Trujillo to President Francois Duvalier of Haiti; 2. Duvalier's Concern About the Opposition of Cuban Emigres," Central Intelligence Agency. 16 Aug, 1966. CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room at [www.foia.cia.com](http://www.foia.cia.com), #F-1982-00782.



With few exceptions, most Haitian exile activity tapered off through 1965. However, in August, Arcadio Masferrer Rojas continued to attempt to recruit Cuban exiles for a joint Cuban-Haitian invasion of Haiti. The United States maintained surveillance of Masferrer and his associates, but took made no effort to curtail his activities. The CIA reported that Masferrer had a “quantity” of arms and equipment available for such an invasion of Haiti. The Haitian exiles working with Masferrer had made a deal with him: in exchange for assistance in overthrowing Duvalier and helping them take control of the country, they would permit Masferrer to use Haiti as a base of operations from which Cuban exiles could launch an anti-Castro coup.<sup>335</sup> Masferrer continued to recruit men through January of 1966 for a strike against Haiti scheduled for mid-February.<sup>336</sup> However, just like Masferrer’s “imminent” plot of late 1964, this plan fizzled out and never amounted to anything.

At home, Duvalier announced the beginning of a new phase of the Duvalierist Revolution; namely a new focus on economic growth. The main thrust of this new phase involved encouraging tourism by changing his image – what the New York Times described as Duvalier making his “methods less obvious – compared with the naked violence of his earlier days.”<sup>337</sup> This involved ordering the Ton Tons Macoutes to be less visible, encouraging exiles with professional skills to return to Haiti, and inviting political opposition, in order to prevent what Duvalier called a political “graveyard.”<sup>338</sup> He even

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<sup>335</sup> CIA report on plans to overthrow Government of Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 20 Sep. 1965. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100274304.

<sup>336</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 7 Feb. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425777.

<sup>337</sup> “Duvalier Retains His Tight Grip But Seeks Better Image Abroad,” The New York Times, 9 May, 1966, pg 1, 8.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid

claimed to be engaging in talks with the United States to resume the flow of aid to Haiti.<sup>339</sup> But his past violence had done its damage. Tourism remained stagnant and exiles opted to remain safely in exile. The United States flatly denied that any talks concerning resuming aid to Haiti were in progress.<sup>340</sup>

The United States government remained convinced that despite Duvalier's efforts to change his international image, nothing of substance had actually changed in Haiti.

Ambassador Timmons described the situation as being as bad as ever:

Duvalier's peculiar mental and psychological...makeup, his talent for intrigue and personal manipulation, his single-minded application to the art of 'divide and rule,' and his utter disregard of the welfare of the Haitian people, combined to produce...a state of confusion and incompetence depressingly remarkable even by Haitian standards.<sup>341</sup>

The CIA echoed Timmons' sentiment, reporting, "even for a country which has seldom known honest government, Duvalier has set new records of venality and corruption."<sup>342</sup>

Likewise, a memorandum on Haiti for President Johnson explained, "the surface appearance that [Duvalier] has ameliorated the ruthlessness of his regime is misleading" – the reason Papa Doc was not actively crushing his opponents was because he had already crushed them.<sup>343</sup> In spite of any occasional attempt to "clothe his government in more civilized garb," the CIA report concluded, Duvalier "will continue to provide order and control to the Haitians – but not much else."<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> "Duvalier Says Talks on Aid are Under Way With U.S.," The New York Times, 27 June, 1966, pg 13.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Review of Haiti under Duvalier by Ambassador Timmons.

<sup>342</sup> CIA report on Situation and Prospects in Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 27 Oct. 1966, pg 4. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349409139.

<sup>343</sup> Memorandum for the President from William G. Bowdler on the situation in Haiti. White House, 5 Oct. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100317811.

<sup>344</sup> CIA report on Situation and Prospects in Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 27 Oct. 1966, pg 8. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349409139.

The State Department continued to advise against granting any aid to Haiti, lest it be seen as support for his regime; however, the State Department did recommend the United States further expand its support for aid to Haiti via international aid agencies.<sup>345</sup> Dean Rusk suggested that the United States should particularly encourage loans to Haiti from the Inter-American Development Bank. Rusk reported to President Johnson that Haiti “is the only Latin member of the IDB which has received less financial assistance from the IDB than it has contributed.”<sup>346</sup> This fact put other Latin American member nations in the embarrassing position of being greater borrowers than Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. In 1965, Haiti had an average gross national product of about \$70, compared to the average GNP of \$300 throughout the rest of Latin America.<sup>347</sup>

In November, Duvalier’s position once again faced opposition. On November 7, 1966, Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Walter Rostow reported to President Johnson that an anti-Duvalier coup was imminent in Haiti.<sup>348</sup> At some point in the following week members of the plot approached Ambassador Timmons to feel out the United States position on an anti-Duvalier coup and to inquire as to the possibility of American support for such an act. Timmons declined to commit the United States. The State Department concluded that the plotters lacked the resources and/or support for a

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<sup>345</sup> Memorandum to President Johnson from Dean Rusk. Department of State, 14 Oct. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100425778.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid

<sup>347</sup> CIA report on Situation and Prospects in Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 27 Oct. 1966, pg 7. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349409139.

<sup>348</sup> Daily security summary from Walter Rostow to President Johnson. White House, 7 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100062291.

successful coup without United States backing.<sup>349</sup> A follow-up report from Rostow to President Johnson theorized that Duvalier might well have informants on the inside of the plot.<sup>350</sup>

On November 11, Washington received word that Duvalier had dismissed twenty army officers without explanation.<sup>351</sup> Although this step seemed likely to forestall a coup, the US embassy staff remained concerned about Duvalier's future plans. In 1963 and 1964, after all, Duvalier had responded to threats against his regime with extraordinary violence. Yet, this time Duvalier acted with restraint and remarkable "coolness and confidence."<sup>352</sup> Both the embassy team and Washington concluded that Rostow's original speculation must have been correct and that Duvalier must have infiltrated the conspirators and stopped their plan before they could implement it.<sup>353</sup> As for Duvalier's unusually restrained response to the conspiracy, the State Department felt that Duvalier, having the luxuries of time and the element of surprise, took a moderate stance in order to prevent loyal officers from fearing that they might be the next victims of a bloody purge.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> This report does not say exactly when the plotters approached Timmons. Outgoing Telegram from State Department to US Embassy in Port-au-Prince. Department of State, 11 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100170187.

<sup>350</sup> Memorandum from Walter Rostow to President Johnson. White House, 11 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100511227.

<sup>351</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 11 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100446476.

<sup>352</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 12 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100446479.

<sup>353</sup> Memorandum for Walter Rostow, to be forwarded to President Johnson. White House, 12 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100309933.

<sup>354</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 12 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100446479.

This same analysis also suggested that Duvalier's unusually subdued reaction might be part of his attempt to improve his international image.<sup>355</sup> Such a conclusion is consistent with Duvalier's efforts earlier in the year to tone down the excesses of his regime.<sup>356</sup> The New York Times reported that some officials in Washington questioned whether the plot had even been real, or just a fabrication designed by Papa Doc to test the loyalty of the troops under his command.<sup>357</sup> If the plot really was fake, this would explain the restraint exercised in Duvalier's purge. However, the amount of intelligence the United States gathered before the purge suggests that the plot must have had some basis in fact.

One plot that definitely was not a fabrication involved the return to the public eye of Rolando Masferrer Rojas and his band of Cuban and Haitian exiles. Masferrer's continued attempt to recruit Cuban exiles in New York City and Miami took a turn for the strange in September when the Columbia Broadcasting System learned of the invasion plot. CBS approached Masferrer and requested permission to produce a documentary of his activities that could be "maintained by CBS in its film library until such time as the Haitian Government was overthrown, and at that time, CBS could then have a news scoop."<sup>358</sup> The FBI reported that CBS did not intend to financially or materially aid Masferrer's invasion attempt.<sup>359</sup> However, CBS cameraman Andrew St. George later reported that CBS spent some \$60,000 to \$70,000 on the project, and

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid

<sup>356</sup> "Duvalier Retains His Tight Grip But Seeks Better Image Abroad," The New York Times, 9 May, 1966, pg 1, 8.

<sup>357</sup> Eder, Richard. "Dismissal of Haitian Officers and Rumors of Plot Worry U.S.," The New York Times, 20 Nov. 1966, pg 33.

<sup>358</sup> FBI report on CBS-Masferrer relationship. United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 7 Sep. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349469762.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid

Masferrer's Haitian ally Father Jean-Baptist Georges spent another \$250,000. St. George claimed that Masferrer had embezzled some of these funds for his own use.<sup>360</sup>

CBS claimed that it had intended to make a documentary about gunrunning, not revolution.<sup>361</sup> Regardless, the Department of State convinced CBS to cancel its plans and stop working with Masferrer's group. The FBI and US Customs Agency had been investigating Masferrer for months, and the State Department worried that the CBS film could compromise the ability of these agencies to make future arrests of Masferrer and his men for illegal activities. Moreover, the State Department wanted to avoid public and international criticism for harboring revolutionaries.<sup>362</sup>

The United States had indeed kept a close eye on Masferrer and determined that with or without CBS in tow, Masferrer planned to invade Haiti, likely on November 16.<sup>363</sup> The various US agencies monitoring Masferrer did not have their work cut out for them when it came to keeping an eye on Masferrer and company. Masferrer operated largely in the open, taking the failure of the United States to hinder his efforts as a "green light."<sup>364</sup> CBS reported on November 20 that the invasion was on and that exile forces

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<sup>360</sup> Memorandum of conversation between William G. Bowdler (White House) and CBS cameraman Andrew St. George. Part of a bundle of memoranda of conversations between Bowdler and others involved in CBS documentary of activities of Masferrer. Department of State, 9 Dec. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349292988.

<sup>361</sup> Conversation between Bowdler and St. George. Part of the same bundle as above. Department of State, 6 Sep. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349292988.

<sup>362</sup> Memorandum from Bowdler to the White House. Part of the same bundle as above. Department of State, 14 Sep. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349292988.

<sup>363</sup> CIA report on Masferrer plans. Central Intelligence Agency, 13 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100274306.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. Also, Memorandum of a conversation between Bowdler and St. George. Part of a bundle of memoranda of conversations between Bowdler and others involved in CBS documentary of activities of Masferrer. Department of State, 17 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK2349292988.

had landed in Haiti.<sup>365</sup> However, Masferrer appears to have thought better of his “excessive publicity” and postponed the invasion for a month. Apparently, Masferrer had decided to resume the use of psychological warfare against Duvalier, much as he had at end of 1964.<sup>366</sup> Fr. Georges quit the plan after this latest delay.<sup>367</sup>

With Masferrer once again stalled and CBS humiliated, Duvalier continued to score victories. The exile group led by Masferrer and Fr. Georges constituted the only real external threat to Duvalier. Thanks to the incompetence of his enemies, Papa Doc managed to go an entire year without having to fend off an invasion. Meanwhile, Duvalier finally resolved his long-standing feud with the Catholic Church. In August 1966, he reached an accord with the Vatican to restore formal relations, and he accepted a new Papal Nuncio on November 27.<sup>368</sup> In exchange for accepting the new archbishop, the Church lifted Duvalier’s excommunication.<sup>369</sup> Nevertheless, the United States still refused to restart the aid packages for Haiti. Duvalier continued to condemn this refusal, once again accusing the United States of engaging in a racist, anti-black crusade against Haiti.<sup>370</sup>

On January 2, 1967, Masferrer finally took action. He gathered a force of roughly a hundred men at Marathon, Florida and started to march them to Key West, where they intended to leave the United States in small groups and eventually rendezvous in Haiti.

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<sup>365</sup> “Underground in Haiti Says an Invasion is On,” The New York Times, 21 Nov. 1966, pg 20.

<sup>366</sup> CIA report on postponement of Masferrer invasion. Central Intelligence Agency, 23 Nov. 1966. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100474423.

<sup>367</sup> Welles, Benjamin. “Hearings Are Set January 25 for Members of Haitian ‘Invasion’ Force,” [sic] The New York Times, 5 Jan. 1967, pg 10.

<sup>368</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Duvalier Scored Two Political Victories in Haiti,” The New York Times, 28 Nov. 1966, pg 19.

<sup>369</sup> “Iron Hand in Haiti: Dr. Francois Duvalier,” The New York Times, 4 Aug. 1968, pg 6.

<sup>370</sup> “Haiti’s Economy in Dismal Shape,” The New York Times, 2 Dec. 1966, pg 13.

Before they made it to Key West, however, US Customs agents broke up the march, disarmed the men, arrested Masferrer and twenty-one others, and bused the rest to Miami for detainment and questioning.<sup>371</sup> Customs agents specifically charged Masferrer with illegal export of arms and a seven-year parole violation that limited his movements to the New York area. Although he had reportedly disassociated himself from Masferrer, federal officers located and arrested Fr. Georges as well.<sup>372</sup>

On February 27, a federal grand jury indicted Masferrer and seven of his co-conspirators with attempting to invade a foreign nation from within the United States.<sup>373</sup> A year later, on February 28, a federal judge sentenced Masferrer, Georges, and five others to prison, with terms ranging from four years for Masferrer, two years for Fr. Georges (reduced to sixty days, time served) and sixty days for the others.<sup>374</sup> From beginning to end, the Masferrer invasion plot had been a farce. The New York Times called it a “foolish plot” with “a bitter-comic flavor.”<sup>375</sup> The most convoluted and publicized plot against Francois Duvalier was also the most inept.

The relative calm of the past year was rudely shaken on April 18, 1967 when a bomb exploded near the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince during a celebration being held for Duvalier.<sup>376</sup> The attack signaled the return of brutal Duvalier reprisals. On April

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<sup>371</sup> “U.S. Agents Disarm Cuban Exile Group On a Florida Beach,” The New York Times, 3 Jan. 1967, pg 1, 6.

<sup>372</sup> Welles, Benjamin. “Masferrer Faces Two Charges in Aftermath of Haiti ‘Invasion’,” The New York Times, 6 Jan. 1967, pg 10.

<sup>373</sup> “U.S. Indicts Seven in Haiti Raid Plot,” The New York Times, 28 Feb, 1967, pg 2.

<sup>374</sup> “6 Get Prison Terms as Haitian Plotters,” The New York Times, 29 Feb. 1968, pg 12.

<sup>375</sup> “A Foolish Plot,” Editorial. The New York Times, 4 Jan. 1967, pg 42.

<sup>376</sup> “Blasts Interrupt Fete for Duvalier,” The New York Times, 18 Apr. 1967, pg 18.



24, Duvalier dismissed five previously trusted guards.<sup>377</sup> Two months later, on June 10, Duvalier reportedly ordered the execution of nineteen palace guardsmen suspected of plotting against him. The new twist to this round of reprisals is that the officers killed were all friends of Lieutenant Colonel Max Dominique, Duvalier's son-in-law.<sup>378</sup>

Dominique fled Haiti for Paris, along with his wife Denise Marie and Duvalier's wife.<sup>379</sup>

In spite of the fact that half his immediate family had fled the country, Duvalier continued to focus his attack on Dominique. On June 29, Papa Doc ordered the execution of three of Dominique's bodyguards and his chauffeur.<sup>380</sup> Calm returned to Port-au-Prince following this purge, but tensions resumed when the Haitian government imposed a curfew at the end of July. The government explained that the curfew was a "preventative measure," but did not say what it was preventing.<sup>381</sup> Dominique remained in exile in Paris until the end of 1968. In December 1968, Marie-Denise, Duvalier's daughter and Dominique's wife, returned to Port-au-Prince and successfully patched things up with her father. On March 19, 1969, Marie-Denise returned to Paris and subsequently returned to Haiti with Dominique, whom Duvalier greeted warmly, having apparently had a change of heart concerning his son-in-law.<sup>382</sup>

In mid-1967, however, this happy outcome seemed unlikely. Nevertheless, with Dominique out of the country the situation in Haiti returned to a tense, but quiet, stagnation. The Haitian economy actually became worse in 1967. Unlike every other

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<sup>377</sup> White House memorandum on Latin American developments. White House, 26 Apr. 1967. Declassified Documents Reference System #Ck3100066600.

<sup>378</sup> "19 Haitians Reported Shot," *The New York Times*, 11 June, 1967, pg 84.

<sup>379</sup> "Duvalier's Wife in Geneva, Reported Bound for Paris" *The New York Times*, 5 June, 1967, pg 7.

<sup>380</sup> "4 Charged in Haiti Reported Executed," *The New York Times*, 30 Nov. 1967, pg 18.

<sup>381</sup> Giniger, Henry. "Duvalier Family in Haiti Divided," *The New York Times*, 4 Aug. 1967, pg 1, 6.

<sup>382</sup> Diedrich and Burt, 383-385.

nation in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti showed no signs of economic growth. Some estimates concluded that the economy of Haiti had degraded to the point that it was less productive as a free nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than it had been as a French colony in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>383</sup> Other governments in Latin America began to question whether something ought to be done about the situation in Haiti.<sup>384</sup>

The Venezuelan government showed particular interest both in the state of affairs in Haiti and in the United States interest in the Caribbean nation. Following the democratic election of Romulo Betancourt in 1959, Venezuela had adhered to a staunchly anti-dictatorship foreign policy. Under this Betancourt Doctrine, Venezuela refused to recognize dictatorships and withdrew its recognition of the Duvalier government in 1963 when Papa Doc began his illegal second term as president. As a major oil-producing nation, Venezuela maintained strong economic and political ties with the United States and supported Washington's anti-Castro policies. By the late 1960s, however, Caracas began to shift away from its activist, anti-dictatorship rhetoric and toward a policy of nonintervention.<sup>385</sup>

On July 15, 1967, Venezuelan ambassador Enrique Tejera-Paris met with American diplomat William G. Bowdler to discuss Haiti and the problems Duvalier posed to Latin American peace and stability. Tejera insisted that Haiti's problems were internal and that the OAS principle of non-intervention applied, thus preventing the rest of the world from interfering. When pressed, Tejera admitted that in the face of

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<sup>383</sup> Giniger, Henry. "Economy of Haiti Just Limp Along," The New York Times, 5 Aug. 1967, pg 1, 6.

<sup>384</sup> State Department report on inter-American affairs. Department of State, 28 Jul. 1967. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100146697.

<sup>385</sup> For more on Venezuelan foreign policy see: Liss, Sheldon B. Diplomacy & Dependency: Venezuela, The United States and the Americas. Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1978. pp 143-240.

widespread terror multilateral intervention might be justified, but pressed Bowdler on why “the US is so anxious” about Haiti. Bowdler pointedly avoided answering the question.<sup>386</sup> In August, Venezuelan president Raul Leoni told the US ambassador that he was “greatly concerned over the opportunities offered the Cubans by the deteriorating Haitian situation.” Leoni agreed with the US position that the Haitian exile groups provided “nothing to work with.” He also suggested that the United States and Venezuelan governments consider making plans for a multilateral Haitian operation, just in case such the situation Haiti warranted international intervention in the near future.<sup>387</sup>

The Central Intelligence Agency shared the Venezuelan sentiment that Haiti posed a tempting target to Cuban communists for expansion. On August 22, the CIA warned that Haitian communists in Cuba, supported by the Cuban government, were training for an immediate infiltration of Haiti. The CIA claimed that only black Haitians would participate in the landing, as “Latins would be unacceptable because they would be mistaken for Mulattos by the peasants.” The Haitian peasantry, the report explained, “are too ignorant to distinguish Latins from Haitians and believe all Haitian mulattos have connections with the hated Duvalier regime.”<sup>388</sup> This conclusion is surprising, as it completely ignores the mutual antipathy between Duvalier and the mulatto elite. Duvalier based his administration on a policy of “negritude”, embracing the African ancestry of Haiti, as evidenced in part by his frequent references to Haiti’s being a “black republic.” In 1961, when he began his second term, Duvalier announced his intention to

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<sup>386</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Walter Rostow and Venezuelan ambassador Enrique Tejera-Paris. White House, 15 Jul. 1967. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100156132.

<sup>387</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Caracas to State Department. Department of State, 17 Aug. 1967. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100090664.

<sup>388</sup> CIA cable on preparations in Cuba for Haitian infiltration. Central Intelligence Agency, 22 Aug. 1967. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100141422.

provide an example of democracy and liberty to Haiti's "African brothers."<sup>389</sup> Duvalier's Africanism stemmed from a deep-rooted animosity toward the mulatto elite, who traditionally enjoyed positions of power and wealth far beyond that of the black peasantry.<sup>390</sup>

Duvalier's antagonism toward the mulatto elite can be further seen in his response to an exile invasion in May 1968. On May 19, foreign news agencies reported that a rebel landing took place on the Haitian coast near the city of Cap-Haitien. At first, the US embassy dismissed such reports as rumors.<sup>391</sup> However, the reports gained credence the next day when a small, World-War II era bomber dropped a number of incendiary devices on Port-au-Prince, one of which exploded near the presidential palace.<sup>392</sup> Haitian Foreign Minister Raymond claimed that the plane had operated from within US territory and requested that the United States take action to prevent the flight of "pirate airplanes engaged in this enterprise of international brigandage." The State Department could not confirm the bomber's origin, but considered it unlikely that the plane took off from the United States.<sup>393</sup>

Like most invasions of Haiti, this one did not last long. By May 22, the Haitian government reported that it had crushed the rebels, who never progressed further into Haiti than Cap-Haitien. Haitian officials reported that the invasion had not been launched from the United States but from the Bahamas, though some of the members had been

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<sup>389</sup> Frankel, Max. "Duvalier Begins Second Term After Claiming Election in Haiti," The New York Times, 23 May, 1961, pg 4.

<sup>390</sup> Rotberg, 165.

<sup>391</sup> Cable from US Embassy to State Department. Department of State, 20 May 1968. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100509890.

<sup>392</sup> Welles, Benjamin. "Bombs Dropped on Haiti Capital," The New York Times, 21 May 1968, pg 13.

<sup>393</sup> Telegram from US Embassy in Port-au-Prince (Timmons) to Secretary of State (Rusk). Department of State, 21 May 1968. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100505418.

living in exile in the United States.<sup>394</sup> The CIA reported that, contrary to its report the previous fall, the invasion had not involved communists, or involved any Cuban support. The Agency determined that the invaders had been poorly prepared and had underestimated the lack of anti-Duvalier sentiment in Haiti. As for Duvalier, the CIA concluded that the Haitian military and government had responded to the invasion with calm efficiency, suggesting that Duvalier “is confident of his position.”<sup>395</sup>

Following the swift defeat of the invasion, Duvalier filed complaints about the threats to his country with the United Nations Security Council and the Organization of American States. Duvalier particularly condemned the United States for the May attack, claiming that the air raid on Port-au-Prince had been “carried out with the tolerance” of the United States.<sup>396</sup> Papa Doc encouraged his military troops to resist invasion, telling them the invasion was “the work of the CIA and part of President Johnson’s anti-Negro program.”<sup>397</sup> (Strangely enough, Duvalier kept a photo of Lyndon Johnson on the wall behind his desk in the presidential palace.<sup>398</sup>) However, Duvalier also shifted some of the blame onto the United Kingdom, criticizing the British government for allowing the exiles to gather in the Bahamas.<sup>399</sup> In spite of Duvalier’s claims, the UN Security

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<sup>394</sup> Welles, Benjamin. “Rebels Crushed, Haitians Report,” The New York Times, 22 May, 1968, pg 11

<sup>395</sup> CIA situation report on Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 22 May 1968. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100107877.

<sup>396</sup> “Haiti Tells U.N. Unit U.S. Tolerated Raid,” The New York Times, 27 May, 1968, pg 93

<sup>397</sup> CIA situation report on Haiti. Central Intelligence Agency, 22 May 1968. Declassified Documents Reference System #CK3100107877.

<sup>398</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Clemency Pledged By Duvalier for 10 Accused of Plot,” The New York Times, 5 Jul. 1968, pg 1, 3.

<sup>399</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Duvalier Attacks an Invasion ‘Plot’,” The New York Times, 30 June, 1968, pg 12.

Council took no action against either the United States or the United Kingdom, nor did it further investigate the matter.<sup>400</sup>

Having lost the battle on the international scene, Duvalier once again cracked down on the domestic front. He sealed off Port-au-Prince, blocking travel and communications in and out of the city, and had the legislature grant him another term of full powers.<sup>401</sup> Papa Doc then broke with tradition and, instead of executing the ten prisoners his men had taken, put them on trial. However, the prisoners were not the center attraction. Duvalier used the trial as an excuse to launch a vitriolic attack on the mulatto elite, depicting the defendants as “victims of an international conspiracy against a black republic and its black revolution,” namely mulatto businessmen and former Haitian president Paul Magloire.<sup>402</sup> Based on testimony supposedly given by the prisoners, Duvalier ordered the arrest and trial of several prominent mulatto businessmen with foreign connections.<sup>403</sup> On July 3, Duvalier pledged to grant clemency to the captive rebels, stating that he did not consider them the “real guilty parties.” Instead, he said that the force behind the May invasion was “a small, pleasure-loving, grasping and lazy elite, veritable leeches who do not want this country to progress.”<sup>404</sup> In spite of this vitriol, after granting clemency to the rebels in August, Duvalier’s persecution against the mulatto businessmen fizzled out.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> “Haiti Tells U.N. Unit U.S. Tolerated Raid,” The New York Times, 27 May, 1968, pg 93.

<sup>401</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Invaders Add to Haiti’s Problems,” The New York Times, 27 May 1968, pg 2.

<sup>402</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Duvalier Attacks an Invasion ‘Plot’,” The New York Times, 30 June, 1968, pg 12.

<sup>403</sup> “Duvalier Cracks the Whip,” The New York Times, 30 June, 1968, pg 2E.

<sup>404</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Clemency Pledged By Duvalier for 10 Accused of Plot,” The New York Times, 5 Jul. 1968, pg 1, 3.

<sup>405</sup> “Duvalier Awaits U.S. Election Before Seeking to Improve Ties,” The New York Times, 21 Aug. 1968, pg 8.

In spite of an insignificant invasion and a show trial, 1968 had been a quiet year for Papa Doc. He took the opportunity to again try to improve his international image. In July, Duvalier explained that he hoped to improve the lot of the ordinary Haitian and claimed to have begun a number of public works projects including road construction and literacy programs and said that he had hoped to restart work on the Artibonite Valley hydroelectric power plant. Duvalier once again described his relationship with the United States as friendly, but chastised the American government for not providing aid to the black republic.<sup>406</sup> In August, Duvalier held a news conference where he announced his intention to seek rapprochement with the United States, but added with a smile that, “it would be...intelligent to wait until there is a new lord in the White House.”<sup>407</sup>

Duvalier’s decision to wait until after the election proved fortuitous. The Nixon Administration took a new view on American foreign policy, one that did not make Latin America a priority. Unlike Kennedy and Johnson, Nixon did not consider the Third World in and of itself a critical arena of the Cold War. To Nixon, Third World conflicts only became an area of concern for the United States when they involved the major superpowers. Nixon felt that unless Moscow was actively supporting revolution in the Third World the United States did not need to involve itself in the local problems of what he considered insignificant countries. “There are,” Nixon once remarked, “some countries that matter in the world and certain countries that don’t matter in the world at

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<sup>406</sup> Giniger, Henry. “Clemency Pledged By Duvalier for 10 Accused of Plot,” The New York Times, 5 Jul. 1968, pg 1, 3.

<sup>407</sup> “Duvalier Awaits U.S. Election Before Seeking to Improve Ties,” The New York Times, 21 Aug. 1968, pg 8.

this time.”<sup>408</sup> Haiti did not matter to Richard Nixon. The United States had bigger problems than Haiti, such as the costly war in Vietnam. To an extent, Nixon reverted to the old Eisenhower-era doctrine of giving American countries like Haiti a wide berth so long as they remained anticommunist.<sup>409</sup>

On March 26, 1969, the only major communist uprising in Haiti during Duvalier’s presidency occurred. A small group of Haitian communists led an uprising in the village of Casale, just north of Port-au-Prince. They managed to hold the town for six hours before the Ton Tons Macoutes drove them into the mountains. Duvalier set the TTMs loose, ordering them to liquidate the communists. Not stopping with the rebels, they broke into communist meeting places and executed anyone they found. By June 2, the wave of killing was over, with the government claiming 204 communists killed.<sup>410</sup>

Washington could not have asked for a better show of anticommunism.

In early 1969 Nixon sent New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller on a goodwill mission to Latin America. An exultant crowd greeted Rockefeller upon his arrival in Port-au-Prince on July 1. The governor visited an ailing Duvalier, who had suffered a second heart attack in May. After the meeting, Duvalier and Rockefeller posed together on the balcony of the presidential palace, arm in arm, waving to the thousands-strong crowd together. When he returned to Washington, Rockefeller recommended that the United States resume sending aid to Haiti. In 1969, Nixon sent a new ambassador to Haiti, career foreign service officer Clinton E. Knox, the only African-American to hold

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<sup>408</sup> Transcript of conversation between Nixon and H.R. Haldeman. Oval office, 15 June, 1972. Cassette 2253, conversation #736-2. Online. National Security Archive website: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB95/>

<sup>409</sup> Smith, Gaddis, The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine: 1945-1993. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994, pp 129-137.

<sup>410</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pp 385-388.



the post during Duvalier's presidency. Knox suggested that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had been wrong to insist on a cool but correct policy toward Haiti and agreed with Rockefeller – the United States should resume aid to Haiti.<sup>411</sup> As historian Brenda Gayle Plummer says, based on recommendations from Rockefeller and Knox, Nixon “pulled out all the stops in rekindling friendship with Haiti.” An anti-Duvalierist foreign policy simply was not worth the bother to Nixon. Economic aid, so long denied to Haiti, began again in 1969.<sup>412</sup>

After nearly ten years, Duvalier won his fight against Washington. But Papa Doc did not have very long to celebrate. On November 12, 1970, he suffered a mild stroke, leaving him very weak. His wife Simone put an end to the long-standing question of who would succeed Papa Doc after his death. She arranged to have their son, Jean-Claude named successor on November 23. Finally, on April 21, 1971, Dr. Francois Duvalier died. Papa Doc, who felt the number twenty-two held special powers, might well have been pleased that his dictatorship survived him when Jean-Claude Duvalier, nicknamed “Baby Doc,” assumed the presidency on April 22, 1971.

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<sup>411</sup> Diedrich and Burt, pg 390.

<sup>412</sup> Plummer, pg 194.

## CONCLUSION

Over the course of four presidential administrations, despite the vast economic and military strength of the United States, it systematically failed in its efforts to use that power to influence events in Haiti in any meaningful way. US economic development projects did not measurably improve the quality of life in Haiti. In fact, even with US assistance, Haiti's was the only economy in Latin America not only to show no signs of growth between 1957 and 1968, but to worsen. The American military training program did not produce a well-trained Haitian army. Due to Haitian government interference, the Haitian army became a weak, ineffectual organization incapable of defending the nation or contributing to law and order. American efforts to unseat Duvalier by cutting off financial aid and diplomatic recognition did not drive Duvalier from power. Other periods of support for Duvalier failed to sway him to the side of the United States or convince him to change his ways. Francois Duvalier survived every attempt to remove him from power, successfully fending off invasions, crushing coups, and weathering every attempt by the United States to economically strangle his government.

The reasons the United States failed to remove or influence Duvalier can be attributed to the fact that United States approached the problem from the wrong perspective. At the beginning of the Eisenhower administration, the United States government showed little interest in Latin America, content to support dictatorships so long as they remained ardently anti-communist. As long as dictators maintained order and prevented the spread of communism, the United States considered the Cold War won in Latin America. Duvalier won his bid for the Haitian presidency during this period of American politics and enjoyed the benefits. Washington observers initially looked

favorably on Duvalier as leader of Haiti, hoping that he might be different from his many predecessors and reform Haiti for the better.

When Duvalier turned out to be yet another dictator, the Eisenhower administration did nothing to discourage him. This gave him precious time he needed to win control of the army, establish his secret police force, and wipe out his opposition. Once firmly in power, Duvalier proved a particularly brutal dictator. He gradually seized more and more power, couching each grab for power in the guise of democracy and legitimacy. Through purges, Duvalier stripped the army of its traditional power and political influence. In its place, Duvalier ruled through his Ton Tons Macoutes. Under his orders, the TTMs watched and listened for signs of opposition to Duvalier, arresting, torturing, and murdering people at the least sign of dissent. Papa Doc did not disdain of dirtying his hands in this bloody business and personally oversaw torture and murder, and sometimes joined in directly.

This kind of brutality played a role in the post-Castro Latin American policy of the United States. Washington realized that by looking the other way when dictators like Batista, Trujillo, or Duvalier terrorized their own people, the United States was tacitly allowing situations to occur in which revolution against the dictatorships was not only likely but welcomed by the local population. The new aim of United States policy of not supporting dictators did not amount to an interventionist policy throughout Latin America, but rather a policy of preventing new Cubas. The United States did not intend to go into the business of overthrowing dictatorships, but rather of reforming them in order to alleviate the conditions that encouraged revolution and political instability. Essentially, Washington concluded that Castro had won in Cuba because Batista had

made life unbearable, making it in the United States' interest to undue the damage wrought by other dictators before their subjects revolted.

Opposing dictatorships proved easier said than done. In Haiti, for example, the United States grappled with the problem that Duvalier had done a very good job of killing or cowing his opposition. Those opponents of Duvalier who survived were either too weak or incompetent to overthrow him without significant American assistance, or/and did not appear to be any better than Papa Doc. Without a clear, US-approved opposition element, the United States had little option but to continue dealing with Papa Doc. To overthrow him without a successor government readily available would have plunged a post-Duvalier Haiti into chaos as Duvalierist and anti-Duvalier elements struggled to seize control. Such anarchy would have left Haiti open to military invasion and external or internal communist infiltration. The United States refused to give communists any opportunity to gain power in Haiti.

The problem with this assessment is that a communist revolution in Haiti was not as likely as Washington believed. The communist movement in Haiti was the weakest in Latin America. If it had posed an actual threat to Duvalier he would have destroyed it immediately. He tolerated its presence specifically to ensure American support for his regime. Papa Doc kept the Haitian communist movement under close control, using their presence to blackmail the United States into giving more aid to his government, suppressing them only when he needed to make a show of his anticommunism. The threat to Haiti was never communism, but rather Duvalierism. Washington, however, was so fixated on the communist menace that it refused to address the latter.

While the United States had little option but to endure a relationship with firmly entrenched dictators like Papa Doc, it attempted to use financial aid programs to improve Latin American economies. The United States hoped that economic development might make revolution less likely or decrease the instability that tended to accompany changes in government in Latin America. Moreover, the United States hoped that supporting economic development projects might engender good will and pro-American sentiments throughout Latin America. The Kennedy administration inherited this policy in 1961 and ran with it, expanding into the Alliance for Progress, an even greater effort to use economic development to prevent revolution. The Alliance for Progress had flaws that decreased its effectiveness. Dictators like Duvalier benefited from the Alliance for Progress more than their people did. The increased financial assistance from the United States provided Duvalier and his supporters with a source of income from which to steal and embezzle. Whatever money Duvalierists did not steal outright was wasted in Haiti due to the complete lack of government organization and the absence of an infrastructure on which to build. Washington could send all the economic aid in the world into a given country, but without an honest government to use it for economic development, such money was just a source of graft for the local dictatorship.

The Kennedy administration inherited more from the Eisenhower administration than a plan for using aid to encourage reform. It also inherited a tradition of using covert, clandestine operations to unseat governments deemed unacceptable to the United States. Kennedy supported the Eisenhower administration's plan to support Cuban exiles in a planned invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. The failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion led the Kennedy team to stop pursuing intervention as a first-choice means of dealing with

dictators. Like Eisenhower, Kennedy viewed Latin America as a Cold War front; indeed, he viewed it as a far more contested region than his predecessor. The Bay of Pigs hammered home the fact that intervention in Latin America could come at a price – if they failed, the communists only gained more power.

Determined to prevent giving any ground to international communism, Kennedy treaded carefully in Latin American politics. The Bay of Pigs had been a significant embarrassment. A second such failure could have had even worse repercussions. One failed intervention could be publicly downplayed as a mistake, but two would have suggested that United States strength was not as great as was claimed. Moreover, Kennedy had committed himself to a noninterventionist policy in Latin America. Public knowledge of multiple failed interventionist missions would have invalidated his claim and he would have lost face with Latin American governments. Because Haitian exile groups were so poorly supplied and operated, their chances of success against Duvalier was slim and the likelihood of defeat and the exposure of US involvement very high. As such, pursuing intervention against Duvalier was not a palatable option to the United States.

Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations passed on the option of removing Duvalier from power. No one existed in or out of Haiti whom the United States wanted to support against Duvalier. The Haitian exile leadership remained divided, scattered, and showed no signs of wanting to work together to create a better Haiti. To Washington, supporting the various exile leaders did not seem like a worthy investment. From the American perspective, regardless of who removed Duvalier from power, only a period of violent anarchy could follow the removal from power of Duvalier. Under a

best-case scenario, the winner of the ensuing contest of power would probably be either a military junta or another dictator. At worst, either indigenous or foreign communist elements could seize power in Haiti. For the United States, dealing with Haiti was a no-win scenario.

The United States faced two evils in Haiti: support an odious dictator or risk a power shift that could permit communist infiltration in Haiti. So long as even the slightest chance existed of a communist takeover in Haiti, the United States chose to err on the side of caution and decided to support the devil it knew rather than deal with the devil it did not know. However, while the United States chose to endure the reign of Papa Doc, it did not so without taking some action against him; namely the suspension of economic aid in mid 1962. By neither supporting nor opposing Duvalier, the United States isolated Haiti and waited for Duvalier to either cave in or die.

The Kennedy administration believed that Duvalier was so dependent on American aid that by cutting it off the United States could either force him from power or coerce him into reforming. However, against all odds, Duvalier persevered and survived. By late 1963, the United States continued to deny financial aid to Duvalier, but established a minimum working relationship with his regime. Cutting off support had failed to force Duvalier from power, but it also did not lead to anarchy or communist revolution. The United States switched to a wait-and-see approach to Haiti that persisted throughout the Johnson administration.

For Kennedy, Haiti had represented a potential third Caribbean crisis, (Cuba and the Dominican Republic being the others,) which he could really have done without. As such, so long as Haiti did not become a disaster of extraordinary proportion his

administration could relegate it to the political back burner. When Johnson became president, he had even more problems to juggle than had Kennedy. To Johnson, like Kennedy, communist aggression was not theoretical but tangible – it was happening in Vietnam. The conflict in Vietnam absorbed the overwhelming amount of Johnson's attention. So long as Latin America remained a relatively quiet area he felt he could afford to ignore it. Indeed, Johnson's most dramatic interest in Latin America arose in response to the perceived threat of communist expansion in the Dominican Republic in 1965. The intervention Johnson ordered in the Dominican Republic cost him political support.

Taking a strong anti-Duvalier stand would have added to Johnson's political problems. He faced considerable domestic criticism for the US interventions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Moreover, the American civil rights movement brought racial tensions in the United States to an extremely tense moment. Johnson supported civil rights reform but had to fight hard to pass civil rights legislation. Taking a hard line stance against the black republic of Haiti could have done inestimable damage to Johnson's attempt to pass civil rights legislation. Images of violence against blacks in the United States, such as in Birmingham, Alabama only made racial tensions in the United States worse. Any aggression taken against Haiti might have exacerbated racial tensions in the United States by making it appear that the US government endorsed violence against blacks. A Dominican-style intervention in Haiti might well have cost Johnson his credibility as a supporter of civil rights for African-Americans.

As a student of negritude, Papa Doc played his hand well in this matter. No matter what justification he might have given, Americans, particularly civil rights



activists, would have severely criticized Johnson for taking action in Haiti. By making race an issue in US-Haitian relations, Duvalier managed to make Haiti more trouble than it was worth to Johnson. So long as Duvalier remained relatively quiet and anticommunist, Johnson was content to ignore Haiti. However, this policy did not work entirely in Duvalier's favor; maintaining the status quo in Haiti was effectively the "wait and see" approach the Kennedy administration had adopted in 1963. Johnson may have been content to put Haiti on the back burner, but his administration did not intend to suddenly support Duvalier through resuming US aid programs. Moreover, Washington continued to look for a successor to Duvalier and remained ready to support such a person or group.

Giving aid, taking it away, supporting Duvalier, isolating him – none of these policies worked against Papa Doc. They failed because Haiti was not the Cold War front the United States treated it as. Officials in the United States were so concerned about what *might* happen in Haiti that they failed to take action to deal with what *was* happening in Haiti. American analysts were likely correct that the sudden removal of Duvalier might have led to a violent power struggle. However, the absence of a diverse political base in Haiti and the weakness of the Haitian communist movement make it unlikely that such a political contest would have been anything but a fight between Duvalierist forces. Unfortunately, lacking a competent exile force to do it for the United States, removing Duvalier from power would have required direct American intervention and a long occupation of the country to ensure political and economic development.

Haiti did not have the resources to develop a strong economy or stable democracy without help. Reconstructing Haiti required more than a temporary fix. To do the job

right would have entailed a massive investment of money, time, and manpower – in essence a second US occupation and a strong commitment to building a strong Haiti. But that kind of commitment had never been the US goal in Haiti. Throughout Francois Duvalier's rule, the United States' primary goal remained consistent – deny Haiti to the communists. By overestimating the threat communism posed to Haiti, the United States severely weakened its ability to take any other action in Haiti, particularly any action that was anti-Duvalier. Because the United States had committed itself to a policy of anticommunism and nonintervention in Latin America, Duvalier remained inviolable.

Washington was not dealing with a nation or a government, but with one man, and that man understood how to use the American fear of communism to manipulate the United States into supporting his rule of Haiti; or, barring support, leaving him alone. Solving Haiti's problems required a far more complex solution than either throwing money at the problem and hoping for the best, or cutting off aid and hoping for the best. It required a long-term commitment that the United States was not prepared to make. Because the primary goal of US policy in Haiti was denying the nation to the communists, not saving the Haitian people from tyranny, Papa Doc was able to oppress them with impunity and win his long fight against the United States.

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FIGURE 1. Political Map of Haiti. (Source: University of Texas at Austin online map collection. Available at: [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/index.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/index.html))