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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Haiti: Duvalier's Primitive Totalitarian State

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HAITI: DUVALIER'S PRIMITIVE TOTALITARIAN STATE

For more than a decade, President Francois Duvalier has exercised life and death control over Haiti. In spite of attempts to oust him and reports that his health is declining, Duvalier at 61 is still the undisputed dictator. Within the past several months, he has given fresh evidence of his ability to retain control by repelling an attempted exile invasion and by maintaining stability while removing key individuals in the power structure.

Nevertheless, there are numerous factors of instability, which may become more evident in the next few years. The only persons still actively supporting Duvalier are those who benefit from his continuance in power. Assassination is always a possibility, and a rapid deterioration in his mental or physical powers could inspire either his henchmen or his enemies to supplant him. The extent of the turmoil that follows his eventual disappearance from the political scene will depend on whether he is removed by natural causes, coup, or assassination, and on the ability of his would-be heirs to consolidate powers.

Background

In Haiti's 164 years of independence, violence and counter-violence with intermittent periods of silent oppression have been the pattern of political life. Personalities, rather than issues, have been the focal point of politics. With few exceptions, those who have been successful in obtaining power have felt no responsibility as public servants but instead have established corrupt and dictatorial regimes, have enriched themselves at public expense, and have attempted to remain in power permanently.

The government of Francois Duvalier is no exception. Since his accession to power in 1957, he has been able to remain in office by manipulating or neutralizing existing power forces. He has minimized any potential threat from the army by creating two counterforces, the civil militia and the secret police. All incidents of internal opposition have been crushed, mostly by the secret police and a powerful group of Duvalier henchmen known as the Ton Ton Macoutes. His concentration on political security, however, has lead to a steady deterioration in the standards of living of the

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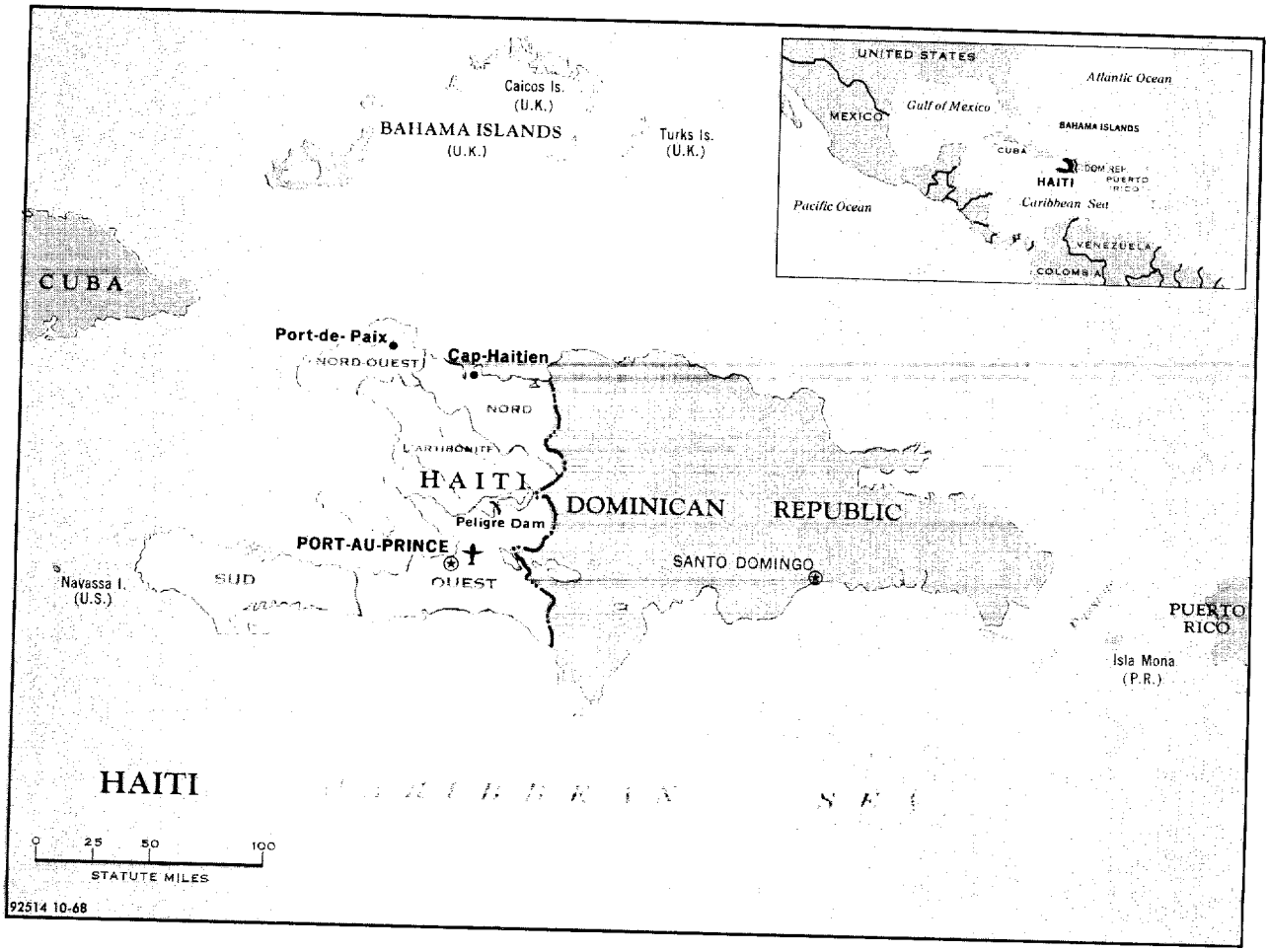

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Haitian people, most of whom are illiterate, poverty stricken, and beset by disease and malnutrition.

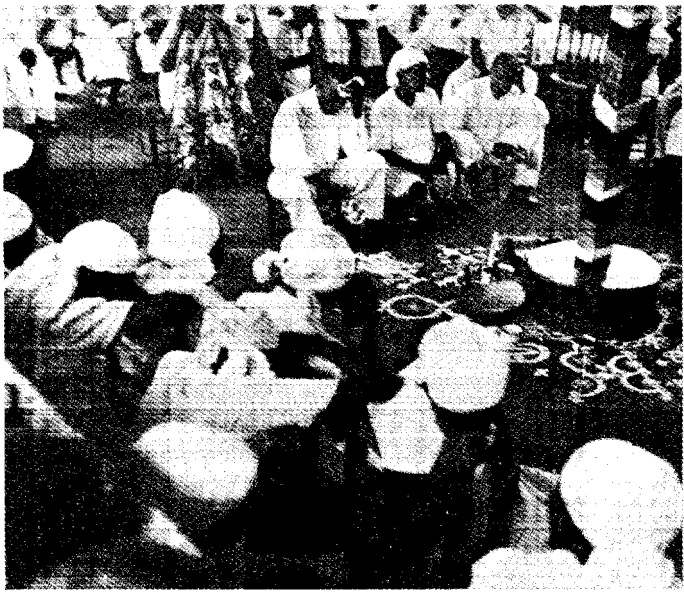
The Political Situation

From the time Haiti gained its independence from France in 1804 until Duvalier's election in 1957, a small mulatto elite tended to dominate the vast Negro majority. The mulattoes traditionally were better educated and predominated in the professions, commerce, and the important government jobs.

The emergence of Duvalier, however, brought to power a Negro who was determined to end this tradition for his own political gains. Duvalier has systematically inculcated hatred of the mulatto elite in the minds of the predominant blacks. Although many mulattoes have retained their wealth and prestige, Duvalier has effectively isolated them from the political process.

Duvalier also uses the race issue to explain the lack of economic reform. He frequently presents grandiose plans for Haiti's economic future, states that foreign aid is essential, and then claims that it is not forthcoming because foreign countries do not like Negroes.

The President capitalizes on the ignorance and superstition of the Haitians. Although he is a nominal Catholic, he includes voodoo priests among his advisers and celebrates events that happen to occur on the 22nd of any month--22 is a magic number in voodoo. He regularly compares himself to the ancient leaders of Haiti, often going so far as to imply that he is their reincarnation.



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Typical Haitian Voodoo Ceremony

Duvalier has had to use strong-arm methods, however, to retain control over the upper classes. He began his rule by taking measures to weaken the military leadership, which had figured prominently in almost every change of government since independence. By systematically removing all competent officers who might oppose him and replacing them with officers who owed him their allegiance, Duvalier soon gained control of the

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Civilian Militia Unit on Parade

army. Although military commander Gerard Constant privately maintains that there are still some conspirators within the army, it appears that they would become a subversive threat only if their lives were directly threatened by Duvalier.

Duvalier's creation of two counterforces, the civil militia and the secret police "Service Duvalier," has further undercut military authority. The 5-7,000-man militia is maintained in parallel but separate status from the regular armed forces and is directly responsive to Duvalier through his hand-picked leaders. Each of these leaders is responsible for everything in a specific geographical region and is required to report all unusual events in his area immediately to Duvalier.

Almost all of the members of the militia are Negroes. A high percentage of them are illiterate, and many have criminal backgrounds. There is no substantive difference between the backgrounds of the leadership and that of the rank and file. In fact, Duvalier frequently reorganizes sections of the militia by promoting or demoting its members. Two weeks ago he disarmed some militia units in the north and installed new leaders. This particular reorganization probably reflects Duvalier's uneasiness about the possibility of future invasion attempts and may indicate his dissatisfaction with the militia's performance during the exile invasion in May.

The "Service Duvalier" is Duvalier's small personal investigation unit, which is primarily responsible for dealing with political crimes such as threats to the President's safety. Its members are militiamen, most of whom also apparently belong to the Ton Ton Macoutes. The Ton Ton Macoutes, whose members include cabinet ministers as well as ordinary thugs, is the most feared group in Haiti and is the major factor in Duvalier's ability to retain power.

The pressure groups found in most other countries cannot exist in the politically repressive atmosphere of Haiti. Labor organizations are totally dominated by the government. The secret police network of informants has created fear and suspicion within the business community. Professional

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organizations are under the control of Duvalier, and businessmen prefer to endure the regime rather than assume the risks of actively opposing it. In fact, many Haitian businessmen owe their financial success to the government as a result of monopoly concessions they have obtained.

Duvalier has erected a facade of legality around his regime. The legislature and the judiciary, however, like all other organizations and groups, are directly subservient to the President. All political parties except Duvalier's Party of National Unity (PUN) have been suppressed since he came to power. Although PUN was declared to be the only legal party in Haiti in 1963, it is a party in name only and lacks even a paper organization.

Elois Maitre (Chief of Secret Police)
Stands Behind President Francois Duvalier

Economic Conditions

The standard of living in Haiti, long the lowest in the Western Hemisphere, has become still worse under Duvalier. Agricultural production is lower than in the mid-1950s, and the output of the small manufacturing sector has increased only slightly since 1960. Estimated per capita gross national product has declined from about $90 in 1955 to between $60 and $70, less than 20 percent of the Latin American average. Indeed, it is said that Haiti's gross national product is less now than it was 150 years ago.

The economic problems are too basic and severe for any quick solution. Yet Duvalier, instead of taking constructive measures to ameliorate them, has usually pursued policies having the opposite effect. His ineffectiveness in dealing with economic problems stems not from a lack of understanding but from his interest in instituting only programs that will have a favorable and immediate political effect.

He has consistently ignored the recommendations of international financial organizations to eliminate corruption and implement fiscal and administrative reforms. As a result, Haiti has been denied the benefits of external assistance programs large enough to halt economic and social deterioration.

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In 1963, the US suspended most forms of direct aid because funds were being siphoned off by local politicians and projects were being manipulated to further the government's political control. External assistance from several countries and international organizations for humanitarian purposes, however, has continued to increase since 1963 despite the donors' aversion to the Duvalier dictatorship. Haiti currently receives approximately $12 million in private aid, most of which comes from the US.

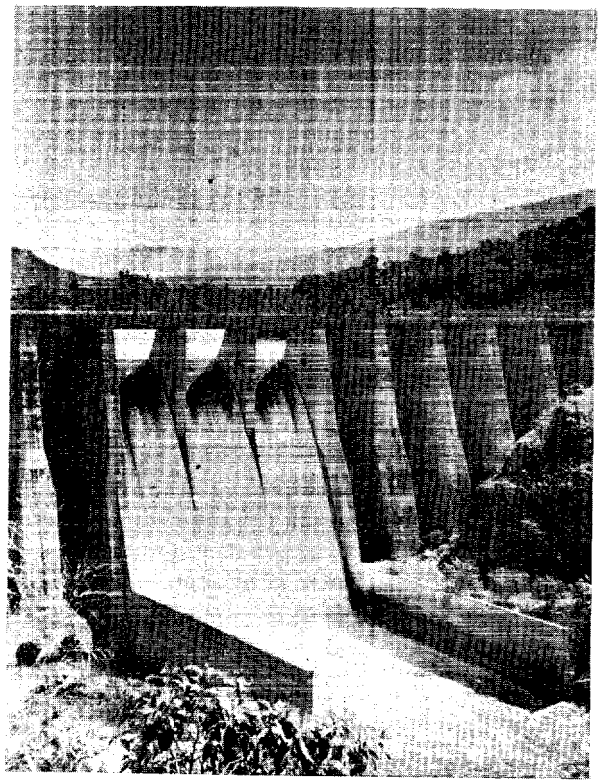
In recent years, the Haitian Government has completed a few public investment projects, which Duvalier has used as prestige items. A new jet airport was completed in 1967 and a few miles of new highway have been built. The government has contracted with an Italian firm to install hydroelectric generating equipment at the Peligre Dam, which was recently renamed the "Francois Duvalier Hydroelectric Complex." Now that the dam bears Duvalier's name, the prospects for completion are somewhat brighter than they were four years ago, when a similar contract was negotiated with the same firm.

Subversion

Duvalier's overwhelming electoral victory in 1957 was engineered by the army. Within a year, the repressive character of his regime became apparent, and political opponents began fleeing into exile. The few politically minded people still in Haiti are probably opposed to Duvalier and his methods of rule, but most of these potential opponents are intimidated, nonvocal, and disorganized. The masses, who have displayed an extraordinary capacity for suffering, will not easily be shaken out of their apathy and malleability.

The active opposition to Duvalier is centered in a number of exile groups, both Communist and non-Communist, which are located in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, and Venezeula. 25X1

Individual emigrés



Peligre Dam on Artibonite River

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enjoy almost no following within Haiti, with the possible exception of former president Paul Magloire, a financial mainstay of the Haitian Coalition, which has between 200 and 300 members in its New York headquarters. It is probably the largest and most active of the exile groups.

The exiles have undertaken several unsuccessful invasions of Haiti. The most recent occurred on 20 May 1968 when a 25-man group flew from the Bahamas to Cap Haitien on the north coast but was routed by government troops.

Inside the country, only the Communists seem to have any potential for subversion. So far, however, their two largest parties, the United Haitian Democratic Party (PUDA) and the Party of Popular Accord (PEP), together have only approximately 600 members. They are weak and disorganized, and maintain a generally passive role designed to avoid a government crackdown. The PEP is oriented toward Moscow, while the PUDA is more militantly nationalistic and tends to favor Castro. They generally do not cooperate but are loosely allied in a "united front."

Communism is outlawed, but the ban has not been strictly enforced. Communists have not been singled out for control or repression provided they do not engage in overt opposition activities. Recently, however, following reports of small-scale terrorist incidents instigated by the Party of Popular Accord, Duvalier ordered his military commanders to arrest Communists in areas where terrorist attacks occurred. This is the first time in the past few years that militant Communist activity has been reported. Although further incidents may occur, neither Communist party appears to have the capability to be a serious threat to Duvalier. 25X1

The Soviet Union and Cuba provide what little outside assistance the Haitian Communists obtain.

Radio Havana continues to broadcast in Creole 14 hours a week, but there is no evidence that the programs--which condemn Duvalier and the support he is alleged to receive from the United States--have any significant effect on the Haitian people.

Foreign Relations

Haiti's most important international ties have been with the United States, its major trading partner, the origin of most of its tourist revenues, and the traditional source of nearly

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all of its foreign loans, grants, and technical assistance. Duvalier has consistently taken US assistance for granted and has blamed the US diplomatic mission for the curtailment of US assistance in mid-1963.

Haiti's relations with the neighboring Dominican Republic are also of importance. A traditional mutual antagonism has existed between the two countries but relations between Duvalier and President Balaguer are "correct."

Since the recent invasion in May, Duvalier has attempted to restrict the travel of Haitian exiles in the Caribbean. The government has instructed its diplomatic representatives in Nassau and Miami to refuse visas and passports to exiles traveling to or from the Bahamas, which Duvalier has long accused of being a "den of Haitian opposition exiles." He also alleges that the US condones Haitian exile activity. Recently, Duvalier has claimed to have reliable information that an exile force is en route to Venezuela to train for an invasion of Haiti through the Dominican Republic, [redacted]

25X1

Haiti is a member of both the UN and the OAS, which it considers forums for attempting to extract financial assistance from the US. Its orientation is more to the UN, however, both because of its cultural ties with Africa and because it views the OAS as a puppet of the US.

After Duvalier...?

The Haitian constitution makes no provision for presidential succession, and Duvalier has not prepared anyone to follow him. Since he personally handles all major administrative matters, no one with leadership experience will be available. Indeed, any potential leader in the past ten years would have to have kept his ambitions secret in order to survive.

There is no indication that Duvalier will voluntarily leave the scene in the immediate future. He made himself President-for-life in 1964 and gives every sign of intending to serve out that term. His health is not particularly good--he is a diabetic, reportedly had a serious heart attack in 1959, and probably suffers from arteriosclerosis--but neither does it show signs of rapid deterioration. Recent rumors of cancer have not been substantiated. The possibility of assassination is always present, but Duvalier takes unusual precautions. He appears in public only on special occasions and then under extremely heavy guard.

When the time for change does come, it is possible that

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the succession will fall to the traditional opposition groups--the exiles, the mulatto elite, or the Communists--but available evidence points in another direction. The first to hear of any weakening in Duvalier's leadership, for whatever cause, will be his palace confidants. Of these, the ones in the strongest position to act will be members of one or more of the armed groups, either on their own or in concert with civilian authorities.

The actions of Luc Desir and Eloise Maitre, the two most prominent leaders of the Ton Ton Macoutes, would probably affect the outcome in the struggle for leadership.

The top military figure, Chief of the General Staff Gerard Constant, commands no troops and is generally considered ineffectual, but he could well serve as a front for some leader in the police, the secret service, or the Ton Ton Macoutes. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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