

**“False Promises”: The U.S. Occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) and the
Dominican Republic (1916-24)**

by

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Introduction

military power. Despite determined resistance from local rebels, peasants and elites, the United States occupied Haiti until 1934 and the Dominican Republic until 1924.

The United States justified the occupations using political, economic, and socio-cultural rationales, claiming that the two republics of Hispaniola were a threat to their own people, other nations' investments, and U.S. national security. Politically, the instability of the governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic worried U.S. policymakers, as they believed volatility in the region would spur European intervention and thereby imperil U.S. interests in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly following the opening of the Panama Canal and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Economically, both Caribbean nations had taken out foreign loans and owed money to European creditors. Socio-culturally, the U.S. empire was deeply racialized, which significantly impacted its imperial ventures in Latin

Therefore, the U.S. occupations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were attempts at state-building, with the intent to safeguard investments and promote political stability. Essentially, the United States sought stable pro-U.S. governments in the Caribbean, and the political turmoil within the sister-nations of Hispaniola provided opportunities for intervention. Yet the U.S. occupation failed at creating positive and sustainable political, economic and socio-cultural change on Hispaniola. For the most part, both republics' citizens rejected U.S. intervention and resisted to varying degrees throughout the occupations. The resistance was caused in large part by "concrete grievances" rather than nationalism. For the most part, local concerns were material, power-related, self-protective, or self-promoting.⁵ Furthermore, the paternalism of U.S. policymakers and racialized violence perpetrated by the U.S. Marines only fueled further distrust and resentment towards the foreign invasion.

This paper builds on a rich body of scholarship on the U.S. empire and occupations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Recent scholarship on the U.S. empire in the Caribbean situate the occupations into the broader context of imperialism.⁶ Many historians have explored the domestic and global factors that contributed to the United States' desire to spread political, cultural, and economic influence in the Americas. Significantly, racism within the United States

discussion of the occupations, this paper builds upon the work of other scholars to obtain a complex understanding of the political, social, cultural, and economic impacts.⁷ Alan McPherson provides a comprehensive account of the U.S. occupations of Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. McPherson argues that political culture was central to the U.S. occupation and domestic and transnational resistance movements. Resistance, however, was not motivated by nationalism, as much as concrete grievances such as “hatred for the brutality of the marines, fear of losing land, outrage at cultural impositions, and thirst for political power.”⁸ Mary A. Renda explores the cultural aspects of U.S. contact with Haiti during the U.S. occupation and its aftermath. Renda uses a plethora of primary source material to demonstrate what Americans thought about Haiti and the culture of U.S. imperialism. Her central theme of analysis is American paternalism in terms of intent and impact.⁹ For his part, Edward Paulino analyzes the contentious Haitian-Dominican border relations during the twentieth century, including the Haitian Massacre of 1937. Paulino argues against the notion that anti-Haitian sentiment was a part of Dominican ethos, arguing that the border region had its own cultural identity, which included Haitian-Dominican collaboration. Rather, the anti-Haitian sentiment was exacerbated by dictator Rafael Trujillo’s regime, and efforts were made to place Dominican “whiteness” in opposition to Haitian “Blackness,” which led to violence.¹⁰ While an abundance of literature exists on the individual occupations, less work has been done comparing the occupations and

⁷ See: Suzy Castor and Lynn Garafola, "The American Occupation of Haiti (1915-34) and the Dominican Republic (1916-24)," *Vj g Ocucej wugwu Tgxy* 37, no. 1/2, 1974; Alan McPherson, *Vj g Kpxcf gf <J qy Ncvp Co gtkecpu cpf Vj gkt Cnkgu Hqwi j vcpf Gpf gf WLOQeewr cvkqpu*, (Oxford University Press, 2014); Edward Paulino, *Fkxf lpi J kur cpkqr <Vj g F qo kpkcp Tgr wdike u Dqtf gt Eco rcki p ci ckpw J ckk 3; 52/3; 83*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016); Mary A. Renda, *Imperial America: A History*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁸ McPherson, *Vj g Kpxcf gf*. 1.

⁹ Mary A. Renda, *Vcnkpi J ckk<Okkct{ Qeewr cvkqp cpf vj g Ewmtg qhWLOK rgtkrkuo . 3; 37/3; 60*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Edward Paulino, *Fkxf lpi J kur cpkqr <Vj g F qo kpkcp Tgr wdike u Dqtf gt Eco rcki p ci ckpw J ckk 3; 52/3; 83*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

Chapter I: The Emergence of the U.S. Empire and the Republics of Hispaniola

The late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries marked the emergence of the United States as an overseas empire. Due to the industrial developments and growing capital accumulation following the Civil War, the United States sought new markets and areas for investment, like railroads, plantations and public utilities.¹¹ Although most of these projects were funded by private investments, these American business interests were significant, as they impacted commercial and labour patterns and brought Washington into a more active role in the region. In the early 1880s, British interests controlled much of the Latin American economy, but by the late 1890s, American capital became predominant, as Washington's efforts to promote U.S. interests became more aggressive.¹² Moreover,

of African descent could not do so successfully.¹⁴ Southern Americans worried Haiti's status would provoke slave revolts in the United States. Therefore, the United States maintained trade relations, but withheld official recognition of the new Black republic until 1862. Moreover, during the American Civil War, European powers intervened in the Caribbean, while Americans were preoccupied. In the following years, the United States recognized the strategic importance of this region and attempted to secure a military base, followed by naval expansion.¹⁵

In the late 1880s and 1890s, the combination of Europe's global expansion and domestic U.S. anxieties heightened U.S. interest in an overseas empire. The United States had previously engaged in imperial expansion at the expense of Indigenous peoples of modern-day Mexico and the United States. Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, however, the United States gained its first overseas colonies. The United States gained control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, thereby, becoming a two-ocean empire.¹⁶ Moreover, in 1903, the United States sponsored the secession of Panama from Colombia. Between 1904 and 1912, Washington asserted hegemony in the Hispanic Caribbean to protect its interests. At this point, however, U.S. influence was primarily spread through private interests, including mining and railroad enterprises and trade of sugar and bananas. These business interests enabled further political intervention, as investors pushed for protection. The U.S. government and U.S. business interests saw themselves as a part of an American effort to bring order, progress and stability to Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁷

responsible government.”¹⁸ In short, the United States saw the Black and Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean as incapable of stability, and therefore, a threat to the interests of the U.S. empire.

The United States had long asserted its right to shape the region’s future. In late 1823, President James Monroe had announced that the United States would not tolerate further European imperial expansion in the Americas. This Monroe Doctrine was a defining moment in U.S. foreign policy. By the early twentieth century, moreover, the United States had the power to begin enforcing the doctrine. Following the Venezuela Crisis of 1902-1903, President Theodore Roosevelt added his “Roosevelt Corollary” to the doctrine. The United States sought to protect its empire and access to the Panama Canal by limiting European influence. The corollary announced that the United States would intervene in Latin America in order to enforce political stability and financial responsibility, and thereby prevent European intervention.

Strategic control in the Americas became of utmost importance in the early twentieth century due to the construction of the Panama Canal.¹⁹ The interest and involvement of the United States in the Caribbean area increased substantially, as the nation sought to maintain political stability to prevent foreign intrusion, which could threaten U.S. interests. Moreover, the U.S. Navy desired to secure the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti, as it was a natural shipping route from the Atlantic to the Caribbean. In 1891 and 1913, the United States unsuccessfully tried to buy Haiti’s Môle Saint-Nicolas, which was on one side of the passage. In addition, once World War I began, Mexican oil and Chilean nitrates were essential for the allied war effort. Keeping foreign powers out of the Caribbean was seen as imperative.²⁰

¹⁸ Colby, *Vj g Dmłpguu qhGo rłk g*. 56.

¹⁹ Schmidt, *Vj g Wpłkgf Ucvgu Qeewrcvłqp qhJ cłk 9*.

²⁰ McPherson, *Vj g kłxcf gf*. 4.

Republic was home to around 21,000 to 35,000 Spanish-speaking people of mixed Indigenous, Spanish and African descent.³¹

The political systems of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic had been shaped by

plantations, technology, and infrastructural accomplishments were destroyed.³⁵ After independence, the land was distributed to high-ranking military chiefs and civil officials, creating a landholding oligarchy consolidated through political power.³⁶ There were two principal classes: elites and peasants. Historian Hans Schmidt writes that the elites sought to achieve “respect for Haiti and the Negroid race by successfully emulating French culture.”³⁷ One estimate states that between seventy-five and ninety-eight percent of the population could not read or write in the early twentieth century.³⁸

Since 1821, the Code Rural of President Jean Pierre Boyer had regulated and institutionalized production relations in the countryside and the majority of the peasantry worked on the large plantations. Many issues hindered agricultural production, which created low production volumes. Together, these practices prevented the creation of a domestic market or the development of a reasonable agricultural policy. Haiti was stagnating at the pre-capitalist stage of production.³⁹

The -ese practices prb

party and sought to defend their interests and modernize the country. Yet they were never able to consolidate their position, as a new foreign sector displaced them in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Spanish arrived and built

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Chapter II: The Early Years of Occupation (1915-1919)

On July 27, 1915, following the execution of 173 jailed opposition leaders, an anti-government mob murdered President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam. His body was torn to pieces and paraded on spikes throughout Port-au-Prince. The United States was awaiting an opportunity, and this uprising gave U.S. policymakers the pretext to intervene. The United States feared European intervention in the Caribbean, as in 1914, the Panama Canal was completed and World War I began. Secretary of State Robert Lansing viewed the murder of Sam as a convenient excuse for economic and political stabilization. Admiral William Banks Caperton and over three-hundred U.S Marines landed in Port-au-Prince on July 28, 1915. The United States formalized its occupation with the 1915 Agreement, passed at gunpoint by the Legislative Chamber.⁴⁵ The military intervention was backed by legal measures. On August 7, 1915, Lansing wrote to President Woodrow Wilson reporting that he spoke to the Haitian minister regarding the republic's affairs. The minister revealed that the Haitians were skeptical about the U.S.

army's primary motivation was to defend regional and local autonomy from a central administration strengthened by an occupation force. The fighting was disorganized and mostly ineffective. On August 6, Caperton ordered the Cacos out of the capital. In retaliation to being rounded up, the Cacos fired on the marines, prompting Caperton to declare a curfew.

Initially, some Haitians welcomed the occupation. Several elites asked the United States to supervise elections, which led Caperton and his chief of staff, Captain Edward L. Beach, to

mountainous regions, the military required roads to mobilize against them more effectively. The labourers were taken from their homes and bound together with rope to one another. The marines robbed and burned the homes of uncooperative peasants. The gendarmes and marines severely abused Haitian peasants and executed resisters.⁵¹ Renda writes that “the methods employed by Gendarmerie officers to enforce the *corvée* were fueled

violence toward the Haitians, but many Haitians resisted the occupation. Neither the Navy Department nor the State Department drew up specific plans for social-cultural change, however, and Washington neglected the occupation until the late 1930s. McPherson explains a possible factor towards the disillusionment of Haitians:

U.S. administrators called for the continuation and deepening of the occupation in a futile search for what existed nowhere in Latin America: a middle class, a bourgeoisie, and nationalism. Instead, U.S. occupiers found widespread illiteracy, tribalism, clientelism, partisanship, corruption, strict social hierarchies, nepotism, and disrespect for the rule of law and for press freedom.⁵⁵

Arguably, this is a reason why the U.S. occupation lasted for nineteen years without lasting change. Moreover, as the occupation progressed, both the occupied and the occupiers grew increasingly frustrated.

There had been rumours since the initial occupation that the white forces would return to force Haitians back into slavery. The brutality of the *corvée* only reinforced these rumours and thereby increased the popularity of the Cacos and their resistance to the occupation. In 1918 to 1919, Caco leader Charlemagne Peralte led thousands against the marines using guerrilla tactics in what was arguably the most significant resistance movement of the occupation. About 1,000 U.S. troops, along with 2,700 gendarmes, or Haitian constabularies, fought against the Cacos in 131 engagements from April to October 1919.⁵⁷ Peralte emphasized national unity among the Black and mulatto Haitians and called for an end to elite-only parties, as Peralte saw himself as a revolutionary and a leader of all Haitians against the American occupation.⁵⁸ In 1919, he wrote to the French Minister, René Delage, calling out the hypocrisy of Woodrow Wilson's promotion of national self-determination and the U.S. occupation:

⁵⁵ Mc

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

Now, during the peace conference and before the whole world, the civilized nations took an oath to respect the rights and sovereignty of small nations. We demand the liberation

Senate charged the president with misuse of funds, illegal imprisonment, and abuse of power. Jimenes took revenge by ordering the arrest of Arias's aides on April 14, 1916. The aides fought back, getting the House and Senate to impeach Jimenes in early May. Arias then took the capital.

Meanwhile, the Dominican Republic was not only facing internal strife. In late 1915 the United States had demanded that Jimenes accept U.S. control over Dominican finances and customs and a constabulary to replace the existing guard. Jimenes had declined. When Arias took Santo Domingo, the marines landed on May 4 to protect foreigners and the 1907 treaty but did not take the city. Admiral William Caperton, who was also in charge of this expedition, presented Arias with an ultimatum to surrender. But Arias swore to surrender his arms only to a duly elected president.

Arias proceeded north to Santiago with three hundred followers. Six hundred U.S. troops occupied the capital, and they took over the country for an indefinite period. The U.S. officials completely disregarded democracy and refused to recognize any president elected by the Dominican Congress because it was possible that Arias or other armed revolutionaries could impact the result.⁶⁶ This greatly angered the Dominicans.

This first year of the occupation led to a popular resistance by the Gavilleros or Dominican band members whose leaders were tied to caudillos such as Arias. The caudillos sought to defend their local autonomy from foreign centralization. Although the U.S. forces occupied the capital, violent resistance continued in the north under the leadership of local politicians and caudillos. Despite U.S. advances, the Dominican fighters persisted until Arias' forces surrendered. On July 25, 1916, the Dominican Congress elected Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal their provisional president. Yet Caperton viewed Henríquez and other Dominican

⁶⁶ McPherson, *Vj g kpxcf gf*. 36.

political leaders as reluctant to give in to U.S. wishes. Provincial governors regularly disobeyed orders from the central authority in Santo Domingo.

The resistance sparked conflict between the local authorities and marines, which became so violent that Rear Admiral Harry Knapp proclaimed martial law on November 29, 1916. Officials feared that an election would give Arias or another unfavourable candidate control over the government. Instead, the U.S. forces decided that a navy or marine officer would head the U.S. military occupation instead of a Dominican president. Similar to the Gendarmerie in Haiti, the Guardia Nacional was created in the Dominican Republic. The U.S. forces banned firearms,

reach.⁶⁹ The culture of roaming bands had been long established in the sugar-producing east of the republic, and after 1917, they shifted their rhetoric and tactics to focus on the methods of the occupation. Notably, because of the poorly occupied border region, from 1916 to 1919, the

discipline.”⁷³ This attitude of racial superiority initially existed in the Dominican Republic too, where marines beat, hung and tortured occupied peoples, walked them down country roads with ropes around their necks, and ordered them to dig graves for others.⁷⁴ The Dominican newspaper *GnEcdng* reported the case of a marine killing a man buying a cup of coffee for no apparent reason.⁷⁵

The marine behaviour was offensive and inappropriate in numerous other ways. Other grievances varied from the disrespect marines displayed by not learning local customs to extreme intoxication and the violence that likely followed it, like the cases of the Dominican Ana Julia Peña and Guzman Perez, who were both assaulted by intoxicated marines. U.S. Marines shot Peña in the leg, and beat Perez, who was blind.⁷⁶ Moreover, sexual assault became common under both occupations. The *Ej keci q F ghpf gt* reported that “[i]n one night alone in the ‘Bisquet’ section of Port-au-Prince, nine little girls from 8 to 12 years old died from the raping of American soldiers.”⁷⁷

Chapter III: U.S. Withdrawal and the Haitian Massacre (1920-1934, 1937)

Prior to 1920, the occupations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were strictly censored domestically and in the United States. As such, activism abroad was vital for anti-occupation movements. Moreover, during World War I, the U.S. government and citizens had pivoted their attention toward Europe. The *Pgy Yqt mVko gu* published an article in 1919 that began by stating, “[d]uring the Great War the American people almost forget the existence of Haiti.”⁸⁴ Following the Versailles Peace Conference, however, American public opinion was shifting from support or indifference towards the occupation, to greater skepticism toward the nation’s imperial endeavours.⁸⁵

African Americans played a prominent role in the rising domestic opposition to the occupation of Haiti. The most prominent was James Weldon Johnson, a former U.S. diplomat who was now an official for the National Association of the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP).⁸⁶ As a former U.S. diplomat, who had participated in a U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, Johnson initially believed the strategic interests of the United States justified the occupation of Haiti, but he changed his mind following implementation of the 1918 constitution. In March 1920, Johnson spent two months in Haiti, speaking to locals and documenting what he

Administration censorship to the American people, the apologists will become active.”⁸⁷

Furthermore, he criticized the justification of occupation based on the notion that the Haitians were “backward” and discussed the failure of policies the occupation implemented to “improve” this status.⁸⁸ The Eleventh Annual Report of the NAACP congratulated the efforts of activists, stating the most “outstanding achievement in 1920 was the investigation of conditions of the Republic of Haiti, the giving of nation-wide publicity to the unlawful seizure...and abuse of its people under American military occupation.”⁸⁹

Vj g Pcvkqp, Johnson and the NAACP were vital players in the anti-imperialist force and often collaborated with one another. The magazine regularly criticized U.S. intervention. By 1920, most major U.S. publications adopted an anti-occupation stance because of the efforts of Johnson and *Vj g Pcvkqp*'s editors, Oswald Garrison Villard and Ernest Gruening. Moreover, the aforementioned actors and the Union Patrioque held to establish the Haiti-Santo Domingo Independence Society.

Union Patrioque funded trips for delegates to speak on behalf of the Haitian anti-occupation movement. In the spring of 1921, Pauléus Sannon, Sténio Vincent, and Perceval Thoby were in the United States and presented the Union Patrioque's report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In August, Vincent returned to Washington to give a statement at Senate hearings. Unlike the Dominican reports, however, it advocated quick withdrawal and no U.S. supervision of a transition, emphasizing that Haitians opposed the reforms advocated by Washington.

⁸⁷ James Weldon Johnson, “Self-Determining Haiti,” *Vj g Pcvkqp*, 1920, 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13, 16.

⁸⁹ National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, *Grgxgpyj CppwcnTgrqtvlqt vj g Ygct* 3; 42. New York, January 1921, 9.

people ignore how our economic imperialism is eliminating friendships and fostering suspicions” with regard to the republics of Hispaniola, as well as European and Asian nations.⁹²

After long deliberation between Washington and Dominican politicians, the Hughes-Peynado agreement established a compromise between U.S. and Dominican interests. Washington was able to keep the loan and road-building programs, in addition to continuing the supervision over finances. Dominicans gained the ability to establish a provisional government before elections under occupation. Juan Bautista Vicini Burgos was appointed as the provisional leader on October 21, 1922. The election resulted in a victory for an alliance between two politicians who represented the national extension of regional caudillismo: Horacio Vásquez and Federico Velázquez. In September 1924, the U.S. Marines left the country. Yet Dominican political culture was arguably unchanged. The Dominican political identities did not reflect any program, ideology or loyalty, as they remained primarily concerned with personal self-interest.⁹³

The United States continued the occupation in Haiti due to political instability but was either unconcerned or unaware of the political instability that still existed in the Dominican Republic.⁹⁴

By 1930, a formerly U.S.-marine trained member of Guardia Nacional, Rafael Trujillo, would build a brutally violent personalist dictatorship.

There were a variety of oppositional political parties, organizations and petitions against Borno circulated.

On October 31, 1929, students walked out of the occupation's Central Agricultural School in Damiens.⁹⁵ They protested a revision implemented into the scholarship system by the school's administrator, George Freeman. He reallocated the scholarship fund. The Patriotic Youth League spearheaded it, and students from other disciplines and schools joined them. In November, they rejected Borno's concessions and continued the strike with the help of the National Constitutional Act League. By December, many politicians, as well as elite, educated and non-Black Haitians, were involved.⁹⁶

On December 4, the occupation reinstated martial law in the port city of Aux Cayes. Stevedores refused to unload ships, and the newspapers attempted to intimidate the remaining government workers into striking. The Haitian constabulary, now called the Garde D'Haiti, met a crowd of four hundred people, who refused to leave. A reliable source states that they fired into the crowd and killed five people, and wounded another twenty.⁹⁷ But another source claims that twelve people had been acknowledged dead and forty wounded, and there were hundreds more unaccounted for.⁹⁸

President Herbert Hoover hoped to end U.S. occupations and inventions. Even before the Aux Cayes Massacre, he proposed the creation of a commission to end the Haitian occupation.⁹⁹ Cameron Forbes was the chair of the commission, which would arrive in Port-au-Prince on February 28, 1930. Arguably, Forbes' next steps for the United States were as follows:

⁹⁸ "Hundreds Killed by Marines in H]u

⁹⁹ McPherson, *Vj g kpxcf gf*. 248.

Eugène Roy was the appointed provisional leader until the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 14, 1930. Despite the allegation that one of the parties was backed by the Cartel and committed voter fraud, the Garde D'Haiti did not intervene, and on November 18, Sténio Vincent won. By August 1931, the process of Haitianization was in place, martial law was terminated, and Haiti had authority over public works, health, and the Technical Service. On August 7, 1933, there was an executive agreement to withdraw troops.

The United States had intervened on both sides of Hispaniola for virtually the same strategic, political, and economic reasons but now decided that the strategic and financial rationales no longer applied. Political instability was used to justify the occupation of Haiti. This was due to racism and the United States' inability to recognize that political instability also continued in the Dominican Republic. After 1930, Rafael Trujillo would establish one of the most brutal and violent dictatorships in Latin America.¹⁰⁵

Consistent with the Good Neighbour Policy, Roosevelt gave in to Vincent's final demands but planned to retain financial ties.¹⁰⁶ In July 1934, he sailed to Cap Haïtien to deliver a speech commemorating Haiti's independence. In it, he declared he was "certain that when these Americans leave your shores you will think of them with the spirit of friendship and that you will be happy in the days to come remembering that they tried to help the people of Haiti" and concludes the speech with "I want to drink to the health of the President of Haiti, to the Government of Haiti, and to the people of Haiti. May our friendship ever continue."¹⁰⁷ On August 15, 1934, the last U.S. troops left Haiti after a formal transfer of authority to the Garde D'Haiti.

¹⁰⁵ McPherson, *Vj g kpxcf gf*. 191.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁰⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address of the President," Speech, Cape Haitien, Haiti, July 6, 1934.

The Good Neighbour Policy initiated a shift in U.S. foreign policy. The United States sought to improve relations with its southern neighbours without the use of military intervention. Yet what has been often left unacknowledged about the Good Neighbour Policy, as historian Jason Colby argues, are the contexts of racial and labour tensions in which it took shape.¹⁰⁸ After the collapse of global trade in the 1930s, unemployment rose. Frustration and a lack of available jobs caused racial and labour clashes, which occurred in a social landscape that the U.S. empire had influenced, and upheavals were often consequences of their own policies. Although, in 1924, the United States had withdrawn from the Dominican Republic, it kept the latter as a financial protectorate. By the early 1930s, “American officials were grooming Rafael Trujillo as a pro-American strongman.”¹⁰⁹

Economic policies during the U.S. occupation had driven thousands of Haitians to the Dominican Republic, usually in search of work. In 1926, a law was passed evicting peasants from the land in the north, creating mass dispossession.¹¹⁰ Hundreds of thousands of Haitians left for nearby countries, including the / z1926inqM

Guardia Nacional to the new “National army,” he made himself president. The Trujillo regime had tried to push out the Haitian workers, but the resistance of U.S. diplomats and employers limited their effectiveness. On Trujillo’s command, Dominican authorities lashed out at the Haitian farmers living along the border of the two nations. In October 1937, Trujillo ordered the Dominican army to massacre approximately 12,000 of these residents.¹¹³ Not all of the Haitians were temporary workers; many had lived on the vibrant border region for decades, but it did not matter. Thousands died due to racial or cultural distinctions. U.S. officials intervened to prevent a war, but the Roosevelt administration was reluctant to discard a useful ally.¹¹⁴

Roosevelt’s failure to condemn Trujillo’s actions received criticism from the *Wqtngtu Ci g* newspaper titled “Good Neighbours” With Whom?”. The article, published on March 19, 1938, criticized the visit of President Roosevelt’s son, James Roosevelt, to the home of Trujillo less than a year after the massacre of thousands of Haitians. The visit was arranged by Ambassador Joseph Davies and served the purpose of convincing the Dominican masses of Santo Domingo that Washington backed Trujillo’s dictatorship.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The arrogance and cruelty of the U.S. Marines also hindered the occupations. The Americans viewed the Haitian and Dominican people and cultures with disdain, and did not believe they were capable of self-governance. Many marines assumed a paternalistic role during the occupations, which was accompanied by brutality. The U.S. Marines inflicted extreme acts of violence which not only harmed thousands of civilians but emboldened the resistance movements against the occupation, as well as enabled Trujillo to rise to power through the Guardia Nacional and create his dictatorship. Furthermore, American racism led to a longer occupation of Haiti, and may have inspired Trujillo's anti-Black rhetoric.

Additionally, the land taken from peasants and given to sugar and fruit corporations led to dispossession and migration across the border- either in search of a home or job. The U.S. occupying forces and American business interests impacted border migration, as they simultaneously dispossessed peasants from their land and recruited workers for their plantations. Thousands of peasants migrated across the border; however, as the Dominican Republic had a smaller population, Haitians disproportionately relocated east of the border. To conclude, the U.S. occupation did not directly cause the 1937 Haitian Massacre, but due to the displacement and racialized violence during the occupation, many Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans were left vulnerable. Furthermore, due to the Good Neighbour Policy, President Roosevelt prioritized the pursuit of cooperation and harmony in the Caribbean instead of justice for the victims of the massacre or their families.

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