

“People Are Disposed to Take Care of Business”

Talks with Haitian Workers Party (PTH)

Following are slightly edited responses to a series of questions posed in talks with a member of the Parti Travayè Ayisiin (Haitian Workers Party).

—AWTW

The fundamental reason for Duvalier's overthrow February 7th 1986 was the mobilisation of the people, the masses' eagerness to be involved in the political process. This was the situation before and after February 7th and it's a very important characteristic of the political situation. The masses in Haiti are standing up. They took part in Duvalier's overthrow and they haven't sat down since.

It's not just a matter of Duvalier's being overthrown and the masses welcoming it. They played an enormous role in his overthrow and they are still struggling for their demands. This is frightening the Haitian reaction and imperialism, because the masses are remaining awake and this hurts the reac-

tionaries' ability to manoeuvre.

The people are in a mood to demonstrate in the streets. They don't want to ask the government and the armed forces to act for them; they want to act for themselves. They are not only demanding that the military junta put the criminal Tonton Macoutes on trial; they themselves are hunting down Macoutes and trying them in the streets, hunting them down, holding trials, condemning them and killing them. The fact that the masses are disposed to take care of business themselves is extremely important for understanding the current political situation.

This desire among the masses to act, to take to the streets, has in no way been exhausted since February 7th, although it may have had its ebbs and flows and not every moment is equally hot. The reaction is trying to get them to stop. The junta, the armed forces and even a good part of Church forces



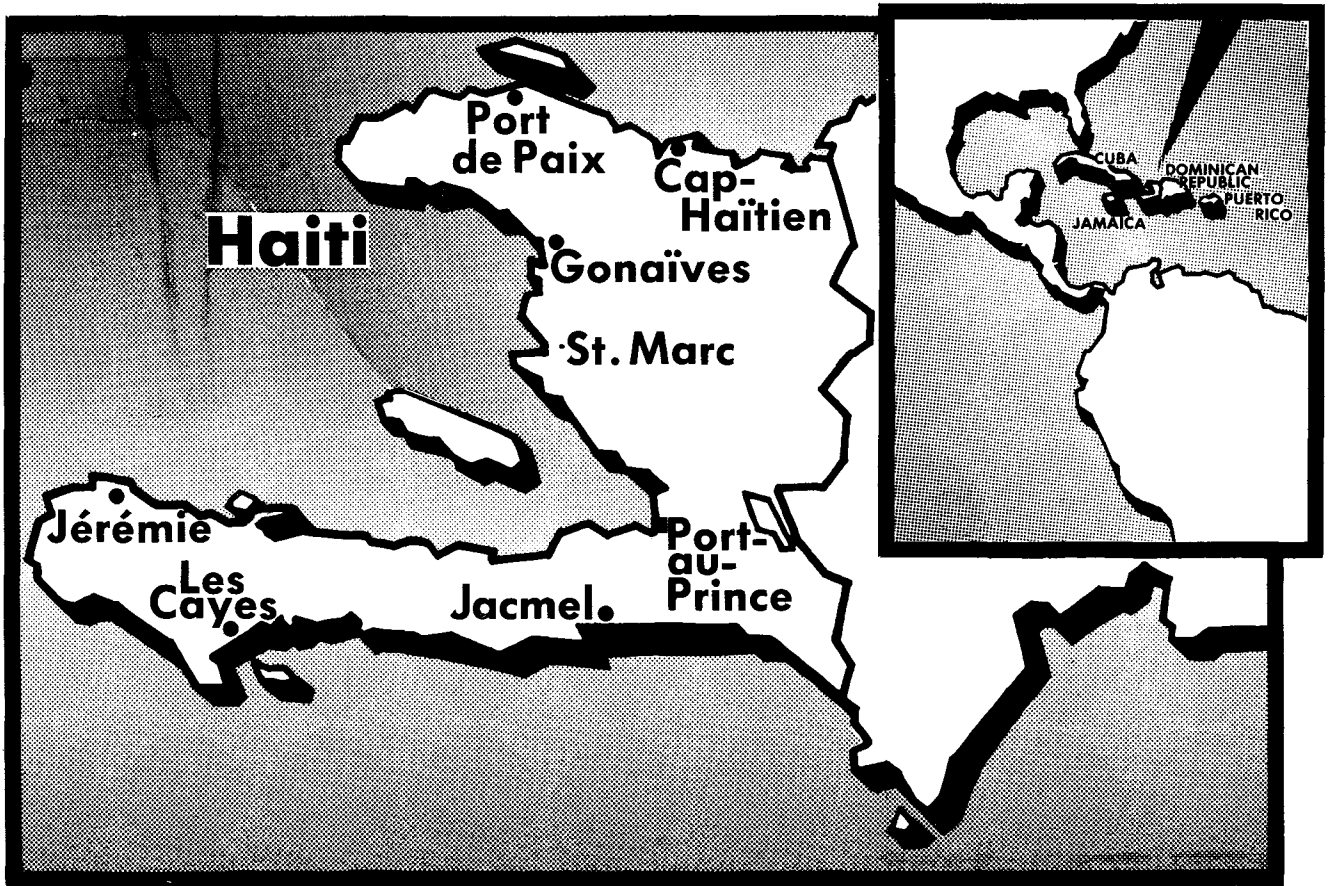
Tonton Macoute brought to justice by the people.

who took part in Duvalier's overthrow are now talking about a time for "forgiveness." The Church says instead of hunting down and killing the criminals, the people need "peace." For them, there was no crisis under Duvalier's regime, but now that Duvalier has been overthrown and the masses are in the streets, they're screaming about "crisis," as if this crisis were a bad thing. But this crisis is a good thing for the people; they're demonstrating and making their will felt — and that's a very good thing.

To a certain extent the reaction has been able to impede the further development of this crisis and this mood among the masses. As you know, the Catholic Church is very powerful. It's working very hard to keep things from developing further. The Protestant sects have done the same. The ruling classes as a whole have unleashed an extraordinarily intense anticommunist campaign right now. For

months now all the Protestant churches have been talking about is the danger of communism. Not the danger of the Tonton Macoutes and the Duvalierists who are still in power, but the danger of communism. In every church the ministers preach constantly about how bad it is under communism, about slavery in Cuba and other countries. This is an orchestrated campaign involving the churches, the mass media and so on; it's not at all spontaneous. Can it be that every church spontaneously decided to do the same thing in the same way at the same time without orders from above?

They say communism is that if you have two pairs of pants, I take one away from you. They're all repeating the same stupid lies in unison. They talk about how bad life is under communism in other countries and then warn people, "there's communists among you, working in silence — watch out because they want to take over your



movement and lead you into slavery.” So to avoid this slavery the masses are supposed to stop demonstrating and stop their movements, to stop their *dechoukage*, their campaign to tear up the very roots of the Duvalier regime.

The target of the demonstrations and the *dechoukage* is the Duvalierists, all of them, within the government, the army, the bourgeoisie or wherever they may be found. The masses want to drag them out. The masses are afraid that these forces won't be touched. In the first days after Duvalier fell, “everyone” was in agreement with the *dechoukage*, with dragging out the Tonton Macoutes — but only the little ones. When the regime saw that the *dechoukage* was continuing and that the people were dragging out the Macoutes in high places, civilian and military alike, even among the most powerful bourgeoisie, then they decided it had to stop. The army and some elements of the bourgeoisie were able to take part in the movement at first, and helped hunt down Macoutes, but only the least important ones, the neighborhood Macoutes, not their bosses. Most of the Macoutes killed in the first days weren't bigshots because the bigshots enjoyed impunity. They had money and places to hide and when the army came for them it was to take them to safety. Sometimes the Army arrested these bigshots in order to carry them to safety in the National Palace, where they're not prisoners but eat well and watch TV.

The manoeuvres of the reactionaries have impeded the development of this movement to some extent, but they have not been able to stop it, even with their provocations. The massacre at Fort Dimanche, April 26, was a major provocation.

Fort Dimanche Massacre

There had been an initiative from among the masses and the rank-and-file church members who had decided to hold a mass wake for the thousands of political prisoners who'd been killed over the Duvalier years at Fort Dimanche and in the streets and elsewhere. The people planned to hold a mass wake, get together throughout the country that Saturday night and drink coffee and play dominos and cards and talk, in memory of those killed in the jails or their homes or made to “disappear.” There are no statistics about how many people had been killed — some people say it was 30,000 or 50,000 or more.

Some were killed in their homes. The Macoutes would go to a student's home, for instance. They wouldn't arrest him on the streets. They would go to his home, take him out and shoot him in front of the whole family, then shoot everyone who lived in the house, parents, kids, grandparents, even the family dog. Then they'd burn down the house and leave the ruins to remind parents not to let their children get involved in politics. In this way the family pressures against the students were very

strong.

In the early 1960s, when some people who'd gone abroad for military training came back, they were all captured and killed. The head of the military commission of the revisionist party, the PUCH, the man who was in charge of infiltrating them into the country, was a Macoute. The regime brought *lycée* students to witness the firing squads.

Others were killed secretly, killed in jail or on the roads somewhere or simply "disappeared." Their bodies were left on the roadsides or thrown into common graves or shallow holes. So if suddenly you didn't see somebody, you wouldn't know for sure for a long time what happened to them, or you might never know. After awhile, some prisoners might be released and none of them would have seen so-and-so, so you'd figure he was dead. But you'd never know for sure. He'd just be gone, and if he was gone, people figured it was better not to talk about it because the Macoutes must have taken him.

So people wanted to have a national day of mourning for all these dead, a day that would be celebrated not just in Port-au-Prince but in every town and neighborhood in Haiti. That morning, which was on a Saturday, there was a mass celebrated in Port-au-Prince. The church was small but about 10,000 people crowded into it. Afterwards they had police permission for a demonstration that would pass by Fort Dimanche, the most famous prison in Haiti, where political prisoners were held. Fort Dimanche was run jointly by the national police and the Macoutes. It has a large prison yard overlooking the sea. Sometimes the prisoners' bodies were thrown into the sea, sometimes they were buried in the yard. It's a symbol of torture and murder in Haiti. Before this Saturday, the demand had been raised throughout the country to close down Fort Dimanche. Instead of being a jail it should be turned into a museum so that future generations could make pilgrimages and learn about the past.

So after this mass, people went to march to Fort Dimanche. There were people of all classes, from the shantytowns and the middle class neighborhoods, women and men, children, some priests and nuns. The Macoutes were waiting to ambush the crowd as it approached Fort Dimanche. Their intention was to provoke an incident, get people killed so that the government would impose a curfew and ban the national wake that was to take place that evening. And that's what happened. The Macoutes opened fire on marchers, and the police, including Duvalierists among them, started shooting at the crowd, saying that the demonstrators were about to assault Fort Dimanche and close it down themselves, since it was still a jail. The police didn't shoot above people's heads. They shot directly into the crowd to kill them. The junta used this as an excuse to ban all demonstrations and gatherings.

The government talked about provocateurs; they said that the shootings had been provoked by both

Macoutes and communists. This wasn't true. At the same time, there were rumours that Duvalierists in the army were about to launch a coup d'état against the junta. Perhaps it was true. But there's reason to believe that these rumours were spread by the junta itself, so that the people would support it instead of opposing it, as if the people had to choose between a military junta and a Macoute junta. They're still talking about the danger of a Macoute coup. That possibility can't be discarded, because there are still a lot of Duvalierists, a lot of Macoutes, in the leadership of the army. But at the same time this threat is a manoeuvre by the junta. The people say the junta's no good, that all these officers served Duvalier and that it's a Duvalierist junta, and the junta says maybe some of them were Duvalierists but at least they weren't the most extreme Duvalierists, there's others worse than them who aren't in the junta. The junta is trying to keep itself in power by frightening people with the idea of an even worse junta.

Enemy Greatly Weakened

The armed forces include 6000 police and 2000 soldiers organised into three battalions, all in the capital — one at the national palace, one in Fort Desalines, and one counterinsurgency battalion, the Leopards. The navy has one boat and 300 sailors. There's practically no air force. There were over 50,000 Macoutes, which was the main armed force, but they're mostly laid off now. Duvalier tore down the army, kept it small and put in people who were personally loyal to him. He made some guys generals who couldn't read or write because such people would be loyal to Duvalier and couldn't hope to replace him themselves. Instead he built up the Macoutes. So now the state has been very weakened.

When Papa Doc came to power, and throughout his years in power, he was a representative of the landlords. He was their open representative. In the elections of 1956-57 when he came to power, other candidates represented the bourgeoisie. Part of the bourgeoisie supported Duvalier, and part opposed him. The army had seized power in June 1957, and organised elections in September 1957, but there were divisions in the ruling classes and within the armed forces. Most of the bourgeoisie opposed Duvalier. The elections were a farce. The army guy in charge of organising the elections was a Duvalierist.

Since the time of Haiti's independence from France, there has been a struggle between the landlords and the bourgeoisie in Haiti. At times this has taken the form of a struggle between blacks and mulattos, whose skin was lighter. The bourgeoisie is mulatto and the landlords blacker. In reality this has been a struggle between two reactionary classes over which would have hegemony over state power. Duvalier was more a representative of the landlords than the bourgeoisie, and after he took power, he forced the bourgeoisie to accept him. It's said that

at that time there were 30 millionaire families in Haiti. When Duvalier fell, there were 200 such families. What happened is that the bourgeoisie as a whole became Duvalierist. There are many newly wealthy families, people loyal to Duvalier who became part of the bourgeoisie. Duvalier had a theory that he propagated, that Haiti needed a black bourgeoisie to deal with the mulatto bourgeoisie. Duvalier used the whole negritude movement that had arisen, the idea that Haiti needed a black president, black bourgeoisie, more black priests — black power, he called it, but basically it was the power of the landlords and other reactionaries. Really the bourgeoisie has had more weight in the state power than the landlords for a long time now, before and since Duvalier, no matter who was president; but what happened after Duvalier is that the bulk of the bourgeoisie became Duvalierist. After all, he had 29 years to get his people into the bourgeoisie and every aspect of the government and social life and the rest of the bourgeoisie had 29 years to come to terms with him.

At the beginning of the regime, Duvalier created the militia, the Macoutes, as a fanatical black organisation, to demagogically win popularity and take on the bourgeoisie that at that time opposed him. He took some lumpen and gave them power and used them against his bourgeois opponents. His first recruits into the militia, almost all of them in the countryside and most of them in the cities too, were thieves and robbers. Of course he didn't tell them they were being recruited to massacre the people. He'd say, here, take this rifle, and if any rich man, any bourgeois, tries to overthrow me, you have to defend me. He'd take a guy who was shining shoes in front of some big business, some guy who'd spent most of his life in and out of prison, and he'd say, here, take this rifle and you go in there and arrest the head of this company because he opposes me. In this way he created a group of fanatics who thought they were fighting the rich. Soon enough they found themselves fighting the masses, but at the beginning it had another character.

Broadening the Target

At the beginning, during the first few days of the mass uprising, the target of the spontaneous movement was the Macoutes. They hunted down the Macoutes and beat them and killed them. This is what gave the Haitian movement a particular flavour. The reaction thought they could keep it from going too far and some bourgeois elements even participated in it, but what has happened is that the *dechoukage* has weakened them, the masses have not given up the initiative, and the demand to *dechouke* the biggest Macoutes in the army and in the junta itself is becoming stronger every day. The *dechoukage* movement began in the city, but it has spread throughout the whole country, including the countryside. In the neighborhoods, after going after the local Macoutes, the movement began taking on

the big merchants as well, saying that they were bad guys and thieves too. They began removing civilian authorities. The movement began to take on certain aspects of a class struggle and a struggle for political power.

The point is that if the popular movement continues, if it cuts off the heads of not just the little Macoutes but the biggest ones as well, including the top army officers and the big bourgeoisie, it will destabilise the regime. The *dechoukage* is a danger to the whole ruling class and their system. When the *dechoukage* began, it was directed against the Macoutes and often it united with army officers to get this or that Macoute. The military didn't mind at all when the people killed some little Macoutes. But then the movement began taking on Macoutes in the army. The people knew full well that some people in military uniform, some officers, were Macoutes Duvalier had sent into the army; they'd go after some officer who'd been the top Macoute in a particular neighborhood and take him prisoner and beat him. They began hitting at the Macoutes who were army officers and the Macoutes who were Church officials — even Archbishop Ligondé himself, who was a Macoute. He was a cousin of Duvalier's wife, Michelle Bennett, and used to be in the presidential palace with the rest of Duvalier's family.

As I said, the army is very weak, and what the ruling classes fear most is that the *dechoukage* movement will weaken it more. Some of the younger officers would like to get rid of the older officers who are Macoutes so that they can advance their own careers, and the U.S. agrees that some of the most visible Macoutes within the armed forces will have to go. But not all of them and not even the majority of these Macoutes, because the U.S. needs them to reorganise the armed forces. The plan of the U.S. is first to reorganise the armed forces and then have elections so they can put in whoever they want. They don't want to hold elections now because the situation isn't sufficiently under their control. The armed forces are the heart of the state.

There have been cases where the military junta has replaced the head of a public service or an enterprise, put in their own guy, and the employees of the service or enterprise have had meetings and rejected the government's choice, saying that the guy was a Duvalierist. The minister would appoint someone and the employees would all walk out. The junta would have to retreat. In the post office, all the employees had a mass assembly and chose their own manager and forced the government to accept him. When other people saw this, they began to do the same thing. In the public television company, they began demanding not just the removal of the Duvalierists but a complete housecleaning and reorganisation. They said, some guys come in at 11 a.m. and leave at noon and get \$3000 a month, while the cleaning women who keep this place beautiful make \$25 a month. They wanted to put an end to this inequality.

Hitting Reactionary Power in the Countryside

This movement spread to the countryside. The people wanted to *dechouke* the *chefs de section*, kick them out of office and put them on trial. The countryside is divided into more than 500 *sections*. The *chefs de section* are police authorities, not civilian authorities. They're military authorities; they work out of the police barracks and wear military uniforms. They are military authorities, mayors and judges all rolled into one. They tried people right in the barracks, they'd jail them or impose fines. Very often the *chefs de section* are the biggest landlords in the section, and Macoutes, and voodoo priests too. For a very long time there's been a demand to replace these *chefs de section* with popular councils. Duvalier himself had to write a new part of the rural code which was to replace the *chefs de section* with councils, but it was never implemented. The *dechoukage* movement hit them too; in the countryside people are putting *chefs de section* on trial and sometimes killing them. Sometimes the peasant movements demand that their representative replace the old *chef de section*. Linked to this, there's the movement against the voodoo priests, who aren't all *chefs de section*.

In a certain sense, the *dechoukage* movement has hit harder at the *houngans*, the voodoo priests, than at the *chefs de section*. That's not because of spontaneous reasons, and it's very controversial. Everyone agrees that the *houngans* who were Duvalierists must be put on trial, because they're criminals. But sometimes the movement is just against the *houngans* in general. To promote a confrontation between followers of voodoo, which is the religion of the masses of people, and followers of the Catholic and Protestant churches, is very dangerous because it poses the danger of religious war in Haiti. It is the Catholic Church and above all the Protestant churches that are promoting this. The CIA is utilising this to sidetrack the mass movement, to turn it away from political struggle and into a religious war. There have long been religious conflicts in Haiti through which some people have tried to promote foreign religion against native religion and thus promote cultural dependency. Voodoo is part of the people's culture. It's a national religion, while Catholicism and especially Protestantism has come from abroad. So the bourgeoisie, in order to rob the people of their national identity, has always promoted Christianity and claimed that those who weren't Christian were nothing but primitive heathens, that conversion to Christianity was the only way Haiti could become part of Western civilisation.

Of course the whole voodoo structure was very linked to Duvalier, but that's not why the bourgeoisie and the CIA oppose it. There are plenty of Macoutes in the Catholic Church, lots of Catholic priests who murdered people, and they're still in the Church. They're not being hunted down. The Archbishop was a Macoute 100% and they're not going after him. The majority of the

Evangelical ministers were Macoutes and worked with the CIA. They had guns and went out at night to kill people. Nobody's hunting them down. So why hunt down and kill voodoo priests who weren't Duvalierists? Why kill just them? The *dechoukage* movement should go after all the clergy who were Duvalierists, the *houngans*, the priests and the preachers, but right now it should not target the *houngans* who weren't Duvalierists. Voodoo has as much right to exist in Haiti as the Western religions.

The *dechoukage* movement is creating a power vacuum in the countryside. The state power exists only in the cities; in the countryside things are more contested. The old power is being destroyed. In some places there is no power. In others people have chosen their own mayors, setting up their own local civilian governments. In a few places, power is in the hands of the people. For example, in some places no important measure gets decided unless there's a mass meeting and everyone expresses themselves and decides. This has happened especially when peasant organisations have arisen and when it's been these organisations who've overthrown the old *chefs de section*. The degree to which these peasant groups have become strong, which varies very much, is an extremely important factor in the revolutionary development of the countryside. Before Duvalier was overthrown peasant groups had already developed out of the struggle in a few places. But during and after Duvalier's fall, poor and middle peasants and agrarian labourers organised themselves very quickly.

This rapid organisation of mass organisations is an extremely important point. Among them are peasant groups, trade unions, organisations of students, youth and women. In some places, these groups have an aspect of people's power — they meet and discuss and decide everything. They knock down old chiefs and put up new ones, and continue meeting and struggling over all aspects of community life.

Right now the peasants are playing a very important role. Peasants make up 85% of Haiti's population, so you can see they have a certain weight. Haiti is basically a rural country and the Haitian national question is basically a peasant question. It's not only a matter of the peasants being the overwhelming majority. The social inequality between the peasants and the other social classes is so enormous that they might seem like two entirely separate nations. The differences between Haitian peasants and the reactionary classes is far greater than in many other countries, as are the differences even between the peasants and the factory workers. The ruling classes don't even consider these peasants as Haitians. They call them Africans, as if they were Africans who happened to be in Haiti. The living standards are extremely unequal, and this in a country where living standards overall are very low. The gap between the peasants and the other classes is enormous in every way, even in language. The upper classes speak French and most education

is in French but 85% of the people don't speak French at all.

Rural Classes and Their Demands

Sometimes it's said there was agrarian reform after Haiti won its independence, but this isn't true. For example, in Jacmel the peasants have no land. The land planted to coffee, cacao, etc., is all in the hands of the big landlords, and the peasants have nothing. If they do have a little land, it's unproductive land. The demand for land is very strong among the peasantry. In general, those who do have land can't do much with it, because it's often divided into different pieces; they have no irrigation, no seeds, nothing. The landlords and the agrarian bourgeoisie have tractors, but the peasant has nothing but a *mâchéte* and a hoe. The hoe is the main tool in Haitian agriculture.

Haiti has both big landowners and small landholders. But wherever the land is good, that's where the big landowners predominate, that's where the land is concentrated in their hands and the peasants mostly have to work for them. It's mainly where the land's no good that you have some small landholdings by the peasants. So the demand for land to the tiller is important.

In the central part of Haiti, where the peasants have a little land or where it's good land, that's where there are the strongest agrarian conflicts because the landlords and their lawyers find ways to take away the peasants' land and the peasants rise up. The peasants take up their *mâchétes* and hoes and fight the landlords. Often these uprisings are met with repression and even massacres but that doesn't prevent the peasants from rising up again and again. Now they are seizing land, especially land that the *Macoutes* had taken away from them. For example, in southeast Haiti, which is linked to the Dominican countryside, in Thiotte, for instance, the peasants haven't been waiting for the courts to give them their lands back. They just take them. Often the *chefs de section* have fled and the peasants hold mass meetings and invade the lands. In this area there were several big *Macoutes* who had a lot of land, who stole a lot of it, and who've fled. Then the peasants work this land, usually on an individual basis although sometimes they form mutual aid teams. Traditionally there have been all kinds of different forms of mutual aid teams all over the country, to carry out harvests and other aspects of production in common. But in addition to these teams, the peasants are forming new organisations, not just to carry out production but to defend themselves. Such organisations are beginning to appear in several places, and there have been some efforts to form national federations and a national organisation. At the same time the peasants are getting rid of the *chefs de sections*. The peasants are forming these organisations to make their voices heard regarding affairs on a national level and to win their demands, which mainly means land.

Now the question of pigs has become extremely important. For the peasant, having a pig or two to kill is about the only way to get some cash. Traditionally it's their form of savings. But a few years ago, there was a swine flu epidemic that killed off their pigs, and the new breed of pigs being introduced requires a special kind of feed, a feed that costs so much that some peasants would have to spend more to feed such pigs than they spend to feed themselves. Not only that, but these pigs require medicines and so on which the peasants can't possibly afford. In a country where the masses can't afford to eat meat, where they have no protein, the U.S. is developing a giant agribusiness which monopolises pigs and other livestock, which raises pigs and so on for export, to be flown to New York and sold and eaten there. The peasants want to rebel against this situation but the government doesn't want to pay any attention to their demands. It allocates resources to export-agriculture.

For example, there is an area of rice fields in Verrette where the government wants to build a dam for generating electric power. If they build this dam the rice fields will be flooded over. The peasant are struggling against this plan. They are saying, what are we supposed to do if we accept the little money the government is offering us for our land? It's not enough to buy land somewhere else. Are we supposed to go to the Dominican Republic to cut cane? There's a big peasant movement against this dam.

There are also other strata in the countryside. There are many sharecroppers, who give the landlord half of their crops in return for the right to plant on a piece of his land. Then there is a very important strata of agrarian workers. Some work their own land part of the year and for the other part travel around the country doing wage labour for various landlords. Others travel around the country all year round, working first in one crop and then in another. There's a great deal of internal migration in Haiti. These two extremely marginalised strata make up the bulk of the Haitian peasants.

To some degree you could say that the greater part of labour utilised in the Haitian countryside is wage labour, that the relations between the labourers and landlords are capitalist relations and not feudal relations, but you have to take into account the manner in which the landlords use both the feudal and the capitalist modes of production and the interrelationship between them. After the slaves rose up against the slave system and destroyed it, at the end of the eighteenth century, they thought they were going to get land, but instead the generals in the revolutionary army got it all. There arose something called *combite*, a feudal tradition, which required the sharecropper to work on the landlord's land part of the time for nothing. On a particular day the peasants would all be summoned to the landlord's land. They'd bring musical instruments and the landlord would provide a little food and sometimes a cheap rum called *clerin*. The people would work hard all day. The music would



Fort Dimanche massacre.

be to get them to work faster. Then they'd eat a little and drink and then go home. That would be it, that's all they'd get for their work. They wouldn't get paid and they'd get nothing from the harvest.

There were peasant rebellions against this system. In the mid-nineteenth century there was a massive peasant uprising, a peasant war, and this system was finally weakened. People began to stop showing up for *combite*, so that by the end of the nineteenth century the landlords had to start paying wages, even though they were very low. But *combite* still exists. All three forms of exploitation exist side by side, sharecropping, wage labour and *combite*. Above all, it's the *chefs de sections* and the *houngans* — the voodoo priests — who use the system of *combite*. They have a lot of people at their disposition whom they have come and work their land for nothing.

A Dependent Economy

In general, production in Haiti is not for consumption, it's not for the internal market, but for exportation. The principal crop is coffee. Some of this coffee is drunk in Haiti but the great bulk of it is sent to the U.S. and Europe. The same with cacao. Until recently Haiti exported sugar, but now sugar production has fallen so much that it has to import some. The interests of the ruling classes and the state lie in promoting production for export and not for internal consumption. This situation is bound up with Haiti's dependence, with the fact that Haiti's economy is completely dependent on the U.S. economy and serves the requirements of U.S. capital. So Haiti's national liberation is very linked

to agrarian reform and the satisfaction of the peasants' demands. In a sense it could be said that the problem of the Haitian peasant — and the Haitian people is mainly a peasant people — is land. Without satisfying the peasants' demand for land there can't be any development of the internal market, because now they can afford to consume hardly anything, either Haitian or imported products. It is the petit bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie that consume almost all such products.

At the same time, even the few industries aimed at domestic consumption that do exist are being edged out of the market by imports. For example, Haiti's canned tomato industry is being wiped out because the Haitian government is allowing in Dominican canned tomato imports and the Dominican tomato industry is much stronger. The whole Haitian tomato industry is in crisis. The Dominican company lowered their prices at first, broke the Haitian competition, then raised their prices. In general, Haitian industry is being displaced by imports from the Dominican Republic. This is because of agreements between the governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic which the Haitian government justifies with the excuse that the two countries are cooperating for their mutual good. This gives rise to conflict between various fractions of the Haitian bourgeoisie.

The people eat rice, and corn in every possible form, as well as sorghum, which is cheaper. They also eat some plantains. In the Dominican Republic people eat a lot of plantains and consider it poor people's food, but in Haiti it's considered expensive. In some places in the countryside people eat

sweet potatoes and something called *real trees* which is eaten a lot in the South. In the city they can afford rice but not much in the country. Beans are even more expensive for the peasants. They rarely eat meat or eggs or drink milk. So they don't eat much protein in any form, except the little bit there is in sorghum.

Infant mortality is very high. Since there's no social security, you have to have enough kids to feed you when you're old.

Generally in the countryside women do the housework, but they often work in the fields too, and they're especially active in commerce, since it's the women who usually take the farm products and so on to market to sell. So far there have not been many women's organisations formed in the countryside. Many women work in the free trade zones, in the factories where they produce for export. For example they make baseballs — Haiti produces most of the world's baseballs, including those in the U.S. — and work in electronics, radio and TV assembly, clothing manufacture, etc. This production is closely tied to production in the U.S., since often the pieces are made in the U.S. and sent to Haiti for assembly and then shipped back to the U.S. again. If any of it is ever sold in Haiti it's only after being reexported from the U.S. More than 60,000 people are said to work in the free trade zones, and most of them are women. For a long time unions were forbidden in the free trade zones, but especially since Duvalier's fall they've organised unions and demanded higher wages and started going on strike.

The Development and Path of Revolution

When Duvalier went down, the masses saw it is an opportunity to rebel; they were already rebelling, and they wanted to get out into the streets. Other classes saw all this as anarchy. They'd say if there are too many strikes the factories will shut down, that strikes cause unemployment. They'd say if people demonstrate too much the Yankees will come in. The masses say that the factory owners have plenty of money and they should share some of their profits with the workers, although it's true that some factories have shut down because the owners are scared of the masses and have fled to the U.S.

The most rebellious and in fact the first to rebel were the unemployed who live in the shantytowns of Port-au-Prince, Gonaives, Cap Haitien and other cities. For the most part, they're ex-peasants who came to the city seeking work. Others are factory workers who've lost their jobs; many of them have had experiences in strikes and so on. Afterwards the struggle spread to the countryside, because these people came from the countryside and have strong ties to the countryside. Now, in the cities, all the various sectors of the workers are active.

At the beginning of the struggle against Duvalier, some elements among the masses who were linked to the leftist movement were able to play something of a vanguard role in the midst of the spontaneous

uprising. At that point some of them carried little American flags and so on to hide themselves and to avoid repression. Others criticised this from the first. As things developed, the masses, who'd seen that the U.S., for its own reasons, had opposed Duvalier, could see the U.S.'s game, could see how the U.S. was trying to make the mass movements serve its interests and to make contacts among these mass movements. To some extent this process began even before Duvalier fell, but especially afterwards, the people could see how the U.S. was demanding "peace" and supporting the new junta. So the masses' understanding took a leap. Still, only a few more advanced elements see the U.S. as a basic target of the movement; among the broad masses that's still not generally the case. Agitation and propaganda and some time will be necessary to make this clearer.

The peasant wars that Haiti has known are examples that must be studied and followed to guide the present struggle. Now, as before in Haiti's history, the peasants have to wage war to win their demands. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, just after independence, there was the first wave of peasant wars, *les Piquets*, which lasted into the mid-nineteenth century, especially in the South. They had a base area in the South between Les Cayes and Jérémie. For several years they were able to maintain this base area in the mountains, where the enemy was not able to penetrate easily because of the terrain and the lack of roads. They defied the army and one government after another, and cultivated the land. Four-fifths of Haiti is mountainous. In the North, too, there were peasant uprisings, *les Cacos*, at the end of the nineteenth century, and they too were able to hold out against the enemy for several years. In the beginning of the twentieth century, a strong peasant guerrilla army, 15,000 peasants led by Charlemagne Peralta, fought the U.S. invaders for several years in the North and Centre of Haiti. You could compare Charlemagne Peralta to Sandino in the war against the U.S. invasion in Nicaragua. The situation in the countryside has not changed much. There are still many areas with few roads.

Because of the social crisis, there's not much room for the development of a reformist movement in Haiti. They say they're going to have elections in some form or another but we think the crisis will grow and the popular uprisings will continue and, sooner or later, grow stronger. Elections or the promise of elections won't solve anything. There's no tradition of elections in Haiti; there are no electoral cadre, nor electoral parties. There are no national identification cards — 80% of the people have no identification at all and whatever identity cards the rest have don't have photos. There's no census, hasn't been one for years, so it's not possible to know how many voters there are in any particular place or to make up voter lists. Traditionally it's always been the armed forces that have organised and carried out any elections. First they struggle out

among themselves what they want to do and then they have phony elections to legitimise whatever they decide. The masses, too, have no electoral tradition and don't want elections now. When various people come to speak before the masses and present themselves as candidates the people oppose them and say we don't want any candidates. There's an anticandidate movement. People think that sooner or later there will be an uprising against the situation. It's the duty of the revolutionaries to prepare this uprising together with the masses. Further uprisings and a peasant war, a protracted people's war, is inevitable. To make the leap from uprisings to protracted people's war, preparations have to be made to actually begin this war. There has to be study of military strategy and other clandestine preparations involving the masses.

Building a Single Marxist-Leninist Party

The process of uniting the different Marxist-Leninist forces is underway. It is a process of seeing how to unite and on what basis to unite, of discussing the question of the party, of people's war, of the united front and within that the worker-peasant alliance. These are questions that are being discussed in order to arrive at a common understanding of how to move the situation forward. Ideological questions must also be discussed, including the ideology of the party, which is Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung Thought. In general, most of those who are participating in this process of unity accept Mao Tsetung Thought in principle, although some who don't reject Mao Tsetung Thought in principle have some confusion which must be rectified.

The lines of demarcation are above all with the PUCH (Parti Unifié des Communistes Haitiens), which holds that the object of the struggle right now is elections and that the forms of struggle should be legal forms. PUCH has a radio station in Moscow which broadcasts in Creole to Haiti every day and the Soviets have given them all sorts of aid so that they can put themselves at the head of the mass movement or at least appear to be leading it. So the question of elections and legal struggle is a very big dividing line question right now, and within that there's the question of people's war.

The revolutionary Marxist-Leninist movement in Haiti has developed a bit on its own, and there's been a tendency to consider it isolated from the international movement and the world. When the existence of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and of new communist parties such as the Communist Party of Peru which are waging war became known in Haiti, the Marxist-Leninist forces in Haiti saw all this as a very favourable factor to link the struggle of the Haitian proletariat with the struggle of the world proletariat and to take part in the battle on the international level so that the Haitian proletariat could carry out its struggle as a part of the struggle of proletarians of the whole world. It's very important for the Marxist-Leninists in

Haiti to get to know this common battle and become part of it, to join it. The struggle of the Peruvian people, their people's war and how they are dealing blows to the Peruvian ruling classes, is known in Haiti, and it's also seen that this is the road that the Haitian proletariat and people must take, that they can only develop their struggle by taking the same road of protracted people's war that the Peruvian proletariat has embarked upon. So the experience of the people's war in Peru is being closely studied in Haiti and it has given hope, it gives hope to the Haitian people just as it does to the international proletariat, to see the war being led by the Communist Party of Peru.

Haiti, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic

The U.S. may intervene directly with its troops or it may get others to do so for it. The initial U.S. intervention will probably be indirect, through the army of the Dominican Republic, which may come into Haiti on the U.S.'s behalf. But this wouldn't be a positive factor for the Dominican ruling classes — quite the opposite — and it would give even further impetus to the anti-imperialist united front in Haiti and redouble the strength of the Haitian revolutionary struggle. Such a Dominican invasion would certainly change things in the Dominican Republic. On whatever half of the island it might be, a revolutionary spark from one side would catch fire on the other. The revolutionary sparks in Haiti have had a lot of influence in the Dominican Republic and any revolutionary spark there would have a lot of consequences for developments in Haiti as well.

So far, one problem is that there's a greater understanding of this in Haiti than in the Dominican Republic, where the commonality of our struggle is less well perceived among some of the masses and there's a certain problem among the Dominican masses of racism directed against Haitians. But this influence of the Dominican ruling classes among the Dominican working class can be overcome; this is an extremely important factor for the future of the common struggle of the proletariats in both countries. There can't be a revolution for the Dominican people except in relation to the Haitian revolution, and vice-versa. The hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrant workers in the Dominican Republic are an extremely important factor; an important feature of revisionism in the Dominican Republic is not considering these Haitian agrarian workers as part of the Dominican proletariat, but rather as foreigners. The division between the social position of many Dominican workers and that of the Haitian workers is an objective fact and a part of the objective basis for revisionism within the workers' movement there. The attitude one takes towards these lower sections of the proletariat in the Dominican Republic who don't happen to be Dominican is an important dividing line question for revolutionaries there and work among these sectors will be a very important part of preparing the Dominican revolution as well. □