The Golden Age of Haitian Tourism

by
Brenda Gayle Plummer
University of Minnesota

Conference Paper No. 18

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LIBRARIES

THE GOLDEN AGE OF HAITIAN TOURISM

I

The abundant literature on tourism seems to be premised on either the disciplines of anthropology, geography, and sociology; or derives from the demands of the industry itself and its investors. Thus, a second body of material based in development studies, economics, and management. While there is evidence that students of tourism in all of these fields are aware of each other, most find it difficult to unite their perspectives. Some of the trouble is caused by the difficulties inherent in attempting to bridge the gap between approaches that subject tourism itself to rigorous cultural analysis, and probe the "implicit ethnographies" of the trade, and those that rather innocently take the phenomenon at face value and proceed to examine its profitability.[1]

This study is not concerned with the impact of the tourist trade on Haitian development, or even with the history of tourism in Haiti per se. Some of this has been done by others. Rather, it addresses the official relations and the informal cultural connections between the United States and Haiti through the lens of tourism, which becomes in this instance a device for clarifying aspects of Haitian-American relations during an era which is in need of more extensive documentation than it has received.

Caribbean tourism began in the late nineteenth century as a marginal sideline of shipping companies that supplied Canadian and American consumer goods to island markets. Pickford and Black's Steamship Line, for example, operated between Halifax, N. S. and selected Caribbean ports, including Cape Haitian. While seeking outlets for Canadian fish and flour, the company also published a brochure describing the scenic attractions of its ports of call for

ABSTRACT

Until recent years, diplomatic history was narrowly construed as investigation of the formal relations among states. To strict constructionists, the full range of social, intellectual and economic exchange among peoples had no place in their sub-field, but rather, belonged to the social and cultural realm. The consequences of the narrow parameters adopted for diplomatic history led to a historiography which so confounded itself with the policy objectives of the United States, and so readily clothed itself with the cultural and ideological assumptions of the policy makers, that it too, served primarily to extend rather than to elucidate American behavior. Methodologically, this rigidity limited the sources which diplomatic historians could legitimately use, and further restricted discourse.

This study breaks with tradition in examining Haitian tourism as located partly in the cultural and ideological matrices of life in Haiti and the United States. The study's disciplinary base is historical, but it is primarily concerned with the official and informal relations between the United States and Haiti through the lens of tourism as an institution rather than with a history of tourism per se. It also subordinates conventional diplomatic history to a broader study of culture and ideology. Beginning with a general treatment of the development of Haitian tourism in Caribbean perspective, it links the emergence of the industry to trends in both Haiti and the United States and suggests how those very trends exposed the weakness of the tourist ideal placed limits on its eventual expansion.

prospective cabin passengers. The cruise liner, devoted entirely to entertainment, came in the wake of such earlier attempts by freight carriers to exploit a nascent tourism. Before World War II, wealthy, leisured people sailed to Europe between Easter and the Christmas season. The winter cruise schedule to the Caribbean then began, and terminated in April. Few sites attracted stop-over visitors, although their expenditures were substantially higher than those of cruise passengers. Those that did featured luxury hotels and resorts owned sometimes by plantation companies, and often by carriers. The Queen's Park Hotel in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, for example, belonged to Pan-American Airways, and the Panama Railroad Company operated the Hotel Tivoli in Balboa, Canal Zone.[2]

In 1938 the West Indies and Central America drew approximately $33 million or approximately 20 percent of the American tourist dollar. The possibilities offered by tourism as a source of badly needed foreign exchange for Haiti were explored in 1939 when Port-au-Prince established a National Tourist Office headed by the President of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce. The Haitian government sought information about the incorporation of Haiti into the larger regional tourist trade that was just beginning to develop. President Sténio Vincent foresaw the creation of a resort and travel industry which would attract American visitors of "the better class," and was willing to facilitate the legalization of casino gambling.[3]

The initial success of an industry would depend upon planners' ability to coordinate cruise ship movements with hotels and services on land. This would be no easy task, for shipping to Haiti had historically been dominated by the demands of freight service.[4] The black republic had enjoyed little major traffic since revolutionary times, and war in Europe had further reduced passenger traffic. U. S. Foreign Service officers charged with reporting on the feasibility of

Haitian tourism used the hotels, nightclubs, and beaches of Cuba, Panama, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands as prototypes for Haitian tourist development. They consulted American businessmen with extensive interests in Latin American travel and entertainment facilities, including Nelson Rockefeller, Juan Trippe of Pan American Airways, and officials of W. R. Grace and Company.[5]

At this early date, Washington, though no longer in military control of Haiti, still concerned itself chiefly with holding its government to accountability through financial leverage. Haiti had emerged from the occupation only to slide into the middle of a world depression. Over the objections of a militantly nationalist legislature, President Vincent had reached an agreement with the State Department in 1933 that extended U. S. control over Haitian finances in order to protect American bondholders. The National Bank of the Republic of Haiti was sold to the Haitian government by National City Bank in 1935. The terms of sale stipulated that the Bank would remain under American supervision until 1947, the date of retirement of the 1922 loan. According to J. C. White, U. S. chargé d'affaires, during the war years, a seat on the Bank's board was a position "of more importance than who is Foreign Minister." Not surprisingly, the Bank's long-time manager, the American W. H. Williams, served as one of the original directors of the National Tourist Office.[6]

The Executive Accord of 1933 also abolished the office of Financial Advisor and replaced it with a Fiscal Representative whose more restrictive powers were limited to customs collection, oversight of the Haitian internal revenue agency, budget inspection to ensure that expenditures did not exceed receipts, and control over debt-servicing accounts. Like the Financial Advisor, the Fiscal Representative would be an American, and former Advisor Sidney De la Rue, eager advocate in 1940 of tourist development, easily slipped into the new position.[7]

Official U. S. interest in Haitian tourism in the years between the end of the occupation and World War II did not, therefore signal any innovation in how Haiti was perceived, but rather, constituted a continuation of the conventional guidelines. Franklin Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy"--the pursuit of diplomatic rather than military settlement of conflicts between the United States and the Latin American republics--a program initiated by his predecessor Herbert Hoover, softened but did not alter the essentially harsh contours of Haitian-American relations. From the perspective of the White House and the State Department, these continued to be predicated on Haiti's placing debt service above allocating funds for national development, and orienting itself politically and economically toward Washington rather than toward the capitals of Europe.

This led to tacit discouragement of Haitian attempts to borrow funds in Europe, and during the depression years, to reluctance to extend additional American aid as well. The Fiscal Representative was asked to dissociate himself from any efforts to secure a European loan. Only anxiety about the effects of possible foreign subversion in Haiti prompted the U. S. government to reconsider.[8] In any case, Haitian attempts to secure French assistance failed. In the illiberal commercial climate of the 1930s, the French colonies increasingly rivalled independent producers of tropical commodities marketed in France. Haitian relations with France cooled during the occupation years, especially after Haiti, bound by most favored nation agreements with other states, and unwilling to forego needed revenues, refused to agree to the preferential terms that France desired. The Franco-Haitian commercial treaty finally collapsed in May 1935 when the French suddenly demanded payment in gold of the balance of the 1910 loan.[9] Global depression and the defaults of other Latin American states made credits generally unavailable in other capital markets.

Port-au-Prince then turned to American bankers in vain hopes of getting funds that would be free of supervision by the United States government. The devaluation of the dollar, to which the gourde was pegged, made long-term dollar loans unacceptable to financiers. Supposedly chastened, the Haitians capitulated. "It was not until they reluctantly abandoned the belief that they could get a loan without the assistance of the American government," an American official wrote, "was there any change in their attitude toward the United States, its citizens and officials. Once the Haitians understood that no foreign country would interest itself in a loan," and that no bank would touch them "except and unless the American government indicated its interest in one way or another, was there a radical change in Haitian policy."[10]

There had been, however, no radical change in U. S. policy. While the black republic was no longer occupied, the withdrawal of troops had been undertaken in the same pragmatic spirit that had marked the beginnings of the protectorate. The sources of conflict that had precipitated the Marine invasion had not been eradicated, nor had Washington lengthened the short rein on which the country was held in check. The proposal that tourism be examined as a means by which Haiti could gain needed funds did not deviate from the fundamental suppositions on which U. S. policy had been premised since 1915, for the brand of tourism that interested U. S. officials was one that would tie Haiti ever more firmly to an expanding northern corporate capitalism.[11]

Sidney De la Rue, the tireless Financial Adviser during the occupation regime, and still an indefatigable overseer as the Fiscal Representative, suggested the formation of a corporation whose directorate would include representatives of shipping lines, banks, travel agencies, advertising agencies, and hotels. These would organize subsidiaries in each of the American republics. When hotels in a particular country could be locally financed, the larger holding

company would control management only. In areas where local capital was inadequate, the company would be an investor. This plan, if fully executed, could have standardized hotel administration throughout Latin America to conform to North American tastes. It also echoed the sentiment expressed by hotel entrepreneur Conrad Hilton who clearly understood the cultural implications of the replication of Hilton Hotels throughout the world. "Each of our hotels is a little America," he once declared.[12]

Haiti would earn some foreign exchange, but would do so within the confines of a travel industry thoroughly dominated by American investors and consumers. The task of acculturation that failed at the hands of Marines with bayonets would be undertaken by tourists with cameras. The same top priority bondholders whose prerogatives edged social spending out of the official Haitian budget could presumably further perpetuate indebtedness through judicious investment in hotels, nightclubs, and resorts. Ultimately, De la Rue's proposal proved premature because major carriers would not expand their operations in Haiti, a country that offered few of the public attractions for which Cuba, for example, was noted. Little short-term improvement could be expected, moreover, until international political and economic conditions made better transport service available. The State Department therefore decided to delay any effort to press the Export-Import Bank for funds to develop tourism, and nothing was done until after World War II.[13]

During the international conflict Haiti served essentially as a supinely loyal member of the Grand Alliance and as a source of rubber for the war effort. President Elie Lescot made use of the war to consolidate extraordinary powers and to dominate by coercion groups in Haitian society that he could not rule by persuasion. After the cessation of hostilities, the resentments bottled up during the Lescot regime led to the overthrow of the mulatto bourgeoisie as a political

class and the ascendancy of middle class elements in Haiti. It was members of this group, as represented by the Dumarsais Estimé administration, who took the first initiative in reviving plans for a Haitian travel industry.

Such a project was greatly facilitated by the profound social and cultural changes of the postwar period. The increasing prosperity and leisure of the American consumer after the austerities of the Depression and World War II, and the efficiency of air travel made tourism possible, and the growing popularity of the Caribbean locale in general accompanied the debut of Haiti as a choice site. The Haitian government planned a national exposition in December 1949 that would salute Haitian art and culture. A slum was razed and its residents displaced to erect the Cité de l'Exposition. Despite criticism, the project was successfully executed and several hotels were built to accommodate anticipated visitors. Gate receipts from the national exposition were low, but the event gave Haiti an unprecedented amount of international publicity. With few exceptions, subsequent projects would also be located in and around Port-au-Prince because of the lack of roads, electrification, and modern water facilities in other parts of the country. The growth of civilian air travel accompanied the advent of Haitian tourism, as cheaper and more frequent flights enabled larger numbers of visitors to arrive. The chief beneficiary of these changes, Pan American Airways, carried 90 percent of all Port-au-Prince bound tourists. Organized crime, associated with the hotels and casinos of South Florida and Cuba, was not slow in making its appearance in Haiti during the late 1940s.[14]

II

The tourist boom could not have taken place without some infrastructure in place, including the availability of transport. It also had awaited revised policies on the part of the U. S. government. Even had tourism been workable in the late 1930s and early 1940s, some revision of Haiti's image in the United States would have been necessary. However consistent the fundamental policy objectives of the United States were during and after the occupation years, it is evident that the propaganda needs of a would-be tourist mecca are not the same as those of military protectorate. Continued occupation of Haiti had required rationalization on the grounds of present danger, as well as the putative primitiveness and incompetence of the natives, qualities hardly reassuring to fastidious vacation travelers. The removal of these ascriptions through the substitution of Haitianization for a permanent American military presence was the first prerequisite to any alteration of the Haitian image.

Before and during the American occupation, Haiti was commonly depicted in popular media as a barbarous land whose chances of redemption, possible only through the civilizing mission of the United States, were slim. In this view, whatever culture it claimed to possess was patently inferior, and mass market literature and films of the period portrayed Haitian life and culture as lurid and sensational. By the late 1930s, however, the development of Haiti as a research field by American social scientists who rejected the conventional sociobiological theories of racial and cultural inferiority, the growth of interest in the country on the part of private agencies, and most importantly, the attitude of educated Haitians themselves, had contributed to a major evolution in public perceptions of Haiti at home as well as in the United States.[15]

The attitude of urban, educated Haitians toward the indigenous culture was also undergoing gradual change, as some began to see value in folklore, the indigenous music and language, and in voodoo. J. Michael Dash suggests that this growing interest paralleled the ideological division between the mulatto elite and educated blacks, but Sténio Vincent had advocated using the peasant culture, of which many urbanites were ashamed, as a lure to tourist development well before the beginning of World War II. Vincent's interest in deriving commercial benefit from publicizing Haitian culture suggests that he knew that international opinion, outside of the areas of Nazi domination, at least, was moving away from the crude racism of the past, and that what might have repelled western visitors of a previous decade might now attract them. A renewed interest in voodoo that coincided with the parallel emergence in other Latin American republics of indigenismo, a literary and artistic movement that probed and celebrated the folk cultures of the people, was also consonant with a long-standing tradition of elite romanticization of the peasantry. In any case, the enclave nature of tourist resorts would not seriously disturb an upper class that claimed very little public space.[16]

In the early 1940s writer and critic Jacques Roumain directed the Port-au-Prince municipal government's ethnological museum. As museums are seen as the repositories of what is most cherished in a culture, the placement of voodoo artifacts in the collection defied the Roman Catholic Church's anti-superstition campaign, which in general appeared only to sharpen the fascination with the Afro-Haitian religions. In the 1940s the cults blossomed on canvas in the paintings of such artists as Hector Hyppolite, Wilson Bigaud, and Castera Bazile; while the poetry of Carl Brouard, Jean Brierre and Normil Sylvain celebrated the peasant culture in general. Voodoo became the thematic focus of entertainments in nightclubs and dramas in theaters which drew foreign audi-

ences. The Haitian government was nevertheless uncomfortable with the presentation of some elements of Haitian popular culture to outsiders, and made efforts to "sanitize" such institutions as the rara bands. These were sporadically banned in Port-au-Prince, or sometimes confined to neighborhoods where they would not be observed by visitors. Concerned about the nation's image, the government also newly enforced an old law which required peasants to wear shoes on trips to the capital.[17]

By 1942 the American Legation itself was undertaking official sponsorship of events having to do with Haitian history and traditions. Examination of the official correspondence for the 1940-44 period reveals a substantial increase over previous periods in the number of documents concerned specifically with social and cultural matters. The decade of the 1940s witnessed the establishment of the Haitian-American Institute, and nongovernmental institutions and foundations also began to show interest in Haitian society and problems. The Carnegie Endowment for Peace, for example, studied the feasibility of restoring La Ferrière, King Henri Christophe's fortress near Cape Haitian. To some degree, a new concern with cultural affairs served to soothe the friction between the two states, and to disguise the permanent outlines of policy, for the years 1934-1950 were not especially cordial ones in the relations between Haiti and the United States.[18]

The period was plagued by the disastrous rubber-growing project, U. S. endorsement of the corrupt and discriminatory Lescot regime, and the continued depredations of the neighboring Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. Many informed Haitians blamed the United States for the consequences of all of these. World War II provided the original rationale for continued American indulgence of Trujillo, and the Cold War permitted the perpetuation of rigidities in U. S. foreign policy that prolonged his acceptability in policy making circles.[19] Until

Trujillo was assassinated in 1961 the United States could use the terror exercised by the Dominican dictator as an instrument of indirect pressure on Haitian governments. The leverage that the United States could not exercise for reasons of scruple could be exerted with no qualms at all by Trujillo. All too often, however, as in the massacre of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic in 1937, it was the innocent who paid for this politique de doublure. In the early 1950s an anonymous Haitian businessman summed up the dilemma as he drove an American passenger through the rutted streets of Port-au-Prince. As his car hit a pothole--in French, a trou--he told his companion that Haitians were "caught between two trous, Truman and Trujillo."[20]

The new priority given to Haitian culture also had effects among Afro-Americans during an epoch when the first stirrings of the civil rights movement were been felt internationally. In Haiti and the United States, J. Michael Dash has written extensively of the collegial relations between Haitian and Afro-American intellectuals. Scholarly and cultural exchanges between the two groups began during the U. S. occupation and continued through the World War II era. These intellectual communities shared an interest in African cultures of the diaspora and a concern about the pernicious effects of racism in the modern world. There was also always a sense in which acts of recognition or friendship toward Afro-Americans constituted a tacit rebuke to Washington. In the eyes of some, however, the collaboration was tainted by the use to which President Elie Lescot put it--i.e., to disguise the social climate of discrimination perpetuated during his regime against black Haitians in Haiti. The work of such Afro-American writers as Rayford Logan, Langston Hughes, and Mercer Cook nevertheless helped to raise Haiti's visibility in the United States and familiarize a wider audience with Haitian literature and culture in general.[21]

Haiti's popularity with the black American intelligentsia survived the fall of Lescot, and such luminaries as Walter White, secretary of the NAACP, and Mary McLeod Bethune, president of the National Council of Negro Women found themselves being "wined and dined" at the National Palace during the presidency of Dumarsais Estimé. During Magloire's regime, the Associated for the Study of Negro Life and History organized a tour of Haiti sponsored by Langston Hughes, Rayford Logan, and others. Social news of Haitian individuals and events appeared in the black popular press with greater frequency between 1949 and 1956 than ever before or after.[22]

Race relations played another, somewhat different role in helping to revise perceptions of Haiti and create a tourist trade. Many of the visitors drawn to the country in the early 1950s were liberal whites who were troubled about the increasingly stormy racial climate in the United States. From their own perspective, their interest in Haiti was compounded with sympathy, and also illustrated their lack of racial prejudice. Selden Rodman contrasted the hospitality he, a white man, enjoyed in Haiti with the ill-treatment generally accorded blacks in the United States. Herbert Gold indicated that this hospitality even extended to the failure to hold foreigners legally accountable in automobile accidents in which Haitians were killed or injured. Liberal guilt, then, contributed another factor to the changed atmosphere.[23]

Haiti soon became the haunt of the chic international traveler, and drew an impressive list of celebrity guests from the United States and Europe. Visitors had diverse motives. Haiti appealed to the American intelligentsia because the country seemed to reinforce the group's own languid aversion to the smug materialism and deadening conformity that characterized life in the United States during the 1950s. At home, this sentiment expressed itself in the

fascination with such cultural phenomena as the expatriate artist and writer, the bohemian, and the bebop musician.

In Haiti, some visitors attempted to identify what they perceived as a raw, elemental energy. Herbert Gold wrote:

> In the rank, oily harbor of Port-au-Prince, glistening black boys dived for coins, snatching at the glint of silver, seeming to turn like playful dolphins for the pleasure of the tour ships. The smoke of charcoal fires lay over the white heap of a city built on hills like Naples, Haifa, and San Francisco. The lizards played up walls and across ceilings, darting after flies. Beyond the port, the town was sleepily insomniac, drinking coffee and rum-coca to stay awake, but to see it as a tourist was to see frantic commerce subtle sexual gaming, a struggle to stay alive and feel vivid in the heat.[24]

Gold gave voice to what would later be termed "ethnic tourism," a form of expression in which "the tourist endeavors to make contact with a different reality, manifest in undomesticated nature in relics from the past, or in the behavior of cultural distinctive strangers."[25] Selden Rodman, long an aficionado of the Black Republic, tried to capture "what it [is] that we are all seeking and that we find in Haiti." For him, it was the "basic simplicity" of life there. In lauding "the independence and spiritual stability [of] the peasant," Rodman wondered,

> In the final analysis, of what importance is economic well-being? Does specific caloric intake have anything to do with peace of mind? Do modern means of communication really contribute to the understanding of people among themselves? Are plumbing, grocery stores, bank accounts, and double-entry bookkeeping necessary for a good life? What is happiness?[26]

Rodman's view reflected that of a small coterie of artists and writers whose full stomachs allowed them to take a rather cavalier attitude toward the privation they saw around them. Their search for authenticity was nonetheless taken up by others, who were in turn followed by larger numbers of upwardly mobile strivers, lured not so much by the attractions of Haiti itself as by the need to identify with the rarified tastes of the cognoscenti, as revealed in glossy magazine advertising.

In New York, the American capital of style, a vogue for "Haitian" resort clothes simultaneously erupted on the fashion scene. Leading department stores--New York's Lord and Taylor; Carson's in Chicago, and Bullock's in Los Angeles--soon began marketing the fad in "Haitian" sportswear, perfume, millinery and jewelry. Travel magazines newly promoted the desirability of Haiti as a vacation site, and indeed, aside from Guantanamo-based U. S. Navy personnel taking shore leave, the first substantial groups of American tourists who arrived in Haiti during the 1950s represented a comparatively sophisticated big city market.[27]

Cultural change also played a role in creating the Haitian vogue. For white women, bronzed skin had once identified the bearer as an agricultural field worker. When women's sports came into vogue in the 1890s and gradually ushered in the acceptability of a somewhat darker complexion, pallor was increasingly associated with the unhealthy lot of the industrial proletariat. The wealthy, moreover, were long accustomed to take the sun on the Riviera for toning and vitamin absorption. The positive value now attached to a suntan led to the increased popularity of dark make-up. The relaxation of standards of dress after World War I and the rise of nudism and other health fads created a recreational culture based on beaches and resorts.[28]

A spate of Hollywood films set in tropical locales in the late 1940s and early 1950s, typically starring such actresses as Carmen Miranda, Rita Moreno, Delores Del Rio, and Rita Hayworth, broke with tradition in their tacit portrayal of leading ladies as mestizos or mulattoes. While the "Chiquita Banana" stereotype marked no great breakthrough on the race relations front, Latin American and Caribbean settings, because they could be detached in the viewer's mind from the simmering racial climate in the United States, offered more social space to present people of color in a favorable light. For this reason, the 1956

film Island in the Sun, for example, could treat interracial sex, a subject that could not have been broached had the setting been the United States.[29]

The island romance genre even provided some roles for actresses and dancers who actually were of African descent: Carmen De Lavallade and Dorothy Dandridge played slave girls in historical potboilers about piracy and the slave trade. On the dance stage, Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, and their troupes familiarized American audiences with basic principles and themes of African and Caribbean choreography. In the 1940s and 1950s, these developments facilitated the transformation of the Haitian image in the popular American mind from that of a dangerous, hostile land inhabited by superstitious and bestial blacks, to that of a picturesque country whose charms included the quaint and colorful customs of its good-hearted, if unschooled, citizens. The blackness of the populace, no longer seen as menacing, simply underscored the gentle exoticism of the milieu and provided one more color to its charming kaleidoscope.[30]

III

On the economic plane what the creators of the romance had done was to establish a travel industry that, as an urban enclave, did little to spread the benefits of tourist revenues but instead reinforced the cleavages between the city and the countryside. In the realm of ideas, the mystique glorified the apparent stoicism of the peasants and celebrated their abstention from politics in the name of admiring their "independence and spiritual stability." In spite of poverty, leftist insurgencies seemed distant from the consciousness of the popular masses of the period, and except to visitors already sensitized to racial antagonisms, the ongoing color conflict in Haiti seemed quaintly remote.[31]

The golden age of Haitian tourism was also was the "golden" age of American liberalism. The quotation marks indicate some sarcasm in the usage, for the liberalism of the period was one of non-commitment. In the aureate glow generated by the light of affluence and certainty, the well-heeled, urban, educated American visitor saw the impoverished Haitian in the same misty light that she or he beheld the Alabama domestic or laborer striving to come out of the same dark night. In either case, for the observer, the beauty was in the struggler, rarely in the struggle, and never in the victory.

On the surface, it appears that American writing on Haiti had turned away completely from the perspective characteristic of the occupation epoch. In some ways, however, the new approach was more insidious. An earlier generation believed that they could impose American ideas of reform on an alien population. The new generation did not believe that any change was desirable or necessary. The liberalism of the Cold War era, stripped of efficacy by the repression of activist elements, expressed itself most freely in the cultural realm and abandoned the political. Matters of taste and esthetics came to prevail over substantive issues of power because the intelligentsia had abandoned pursuit of the latter. In such a milieu the fine sensibilities that one might develop in the area of music or art, for example, could readily coexist with the greatest callousness toward the palpable suffering of those whose culture was under consideration.

Haiti's golden age of tourism, a moment that lasted for perhaps seven years, coincided with a period in American history in which liberals saw themselves as centrists rather than as progressives. As such, they were not interested in class consciousness or "redistributive social change," but rather in rule shared among a big business, big labor, and political elite. The representation of these "estates" would ensure stability, and continuing economic growth would

undermine the basis of social unrest. The globalist foreign policy that liberals accepted from Truman they continued to endorse through the first Eisenhower administration. They therefore had little real difficulty with the politics of an Estimé or a Magloire.[32] In his book The Vital Center, Arthur Schlesinger defined American liberalism as a considered appreciation of the best strains of both conservative and radical thought. As one scholar noted, "it was all too easy to move from [Schlesinger's] qualified acceptance of the conservative tradition to uncritical adulation of it....it was only a short step from the salutary perspective of the vital center to the superficialities of the 'New Conservatism in the 1950s."[33]

In foreign policy, the liberal abandonment of idealism and its instrument, internationalism, led to the embrace of the "realist" prescriptions of such savants as George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau, Jr. Supposed repugnance for totalitarianism of both the right and left, a disillusionment with ideology (widely suspected in the 1950s of having withered away), and insistence on a world order predicated on the stabilizing hegemony of armed super-powers rather than on international cooperation undermined any opposition that liberals could have made to the globalist foreign policies of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Indeed, foreign policy debate was characterized by a marked bipartisan consensus during these years.[34]

Globalism continued to shape American policies toward Haiti after 1961 when a liberal administration in Washington found François Duvalier in power in Haiti. As a result of his crimes, the image of Haiti abroad reverted to what J. Michael Dash has called the "Conradian discourse," that is, the meditation upon the dark nightmare land of terror and death.[35] In spite of the havoc that Duvalier had wreaked and would continue to wreak, his supposed importance as an anti-Communist ally during a period when the United States, and specifically

the Kennedy administration, was under pressure for failures in Cuba and the Congo, and faced Soviet intransigeance over Berlin, led to a deal in which the United States would help build a modern airport in Port-au-Prince in exchange for Haiti's vote to expel Cuba from the Organization of American States.[36]

Adversaries of Duvalier were disappointed by the American decision to go ahead with assistance for airport construction. A loan of $2.8 million dollars would make it possible for Maïs Gâté to be built under the supervision of Pan American Airways, which according to an unnamed embassy source, would not suffer substantially from the project.[37] The Kennedy White House, and subsequently, the Johnson administration, sought to use tourism as leverage against "Papa Doc's" excesses. U. S. officials could encourage or discourage investment and travel, and offer or withhold guarantees. The travel industry nevertheless was not large and lucrative enough to counter other options that remained to the dictator, and ultimately was a casualty in the war that he waged against his country.[38]

In the final analysis, the decision to help Duvalier was consonant with the liberal romanticism that had replaced the rugged ethic and stentorian rhetoric of the occupation period. Globalism rested on the essential if unspoken belief that the welfare of Haitians could remain secondary to the Cold War enterprise. This was so because Duvalier had not rocked the boat of the timeless "stability" that policy makers urged on Latin American governments. There had been no nationalizations, collectivization, or talk of class warfare. The "state trading" characteristic of socialist countries did not seem to be occurring, and American officials were content to ignore the surreptitious scams of the regime that were far more harmful to Haiti than any forays into genuine state capitalism would have been.[39] As long as the Haitian populace remained nobly immured in its poverty, it could be admired for its fortitude, commended for the beauty of its

material culture, praised for its resourcefulness and stoicism in the face of adversity, and--firmly ignored.

---

[1]Representative literature includes: E. W. Blake, "Stranger in Paradise," Caribbean Review 6 (1974): 9-12; C. Girault, "Tourisme et dépendance en Haiti," Cahiers des Amériques Latines 17 (1980): 23-56; A. B. Goldberg, "Commercial folklore and voodoo in Haiti: International tourism and the sale of culture," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana Univ, Bloomington, 1981; H. L. Hiller, "Where is tourism traveling?" Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 16 (4), 1974. pp. 508-15; J. Jafari, "The tourist system: A theoretical approach to the study of tourism," University of Minnesota, Ph.D. dissertation, 1985; Louis Perez, Jr., "Aspects of underdevelopment: Tourism in the West Indies," Science and Society (37 (1973-74): 473-80;J. M. Thurot, The impact of tourism on socio-cultural values (IBRD, 1979);J. Towner, "The grand tour: Sources and a methodology for historical study of tourism." Tourism Management 5 (3) 1984, pp. 215-22; Louis Turner and John Ash, The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery (London: Constable, 1975) Pierre Van den Berghe and Charles Keyes, "Introduction: Tourism and re-created ethnicity," Annals of Tourism Research 11 (1984): 343-52; R. C. Young, "The Structural Context of the Caribbean Tourist Industry: A comparative study," Economic Development and Cultural Change 25 (1977): 657-72

[2] Stanislaus Goutier to the Secretary of State, February 17, 1894, U. S. Department of State, Dispatches from United States Consuls in Cape Haitian, National Archives [NA]. De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940, State Department Decimal File,[DF], 838.51/3877; Blanshard, Democracy and Empire in the Caribbean (New York, 1947), 70.

[3]De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940; De la Rue to Edward J. Sparks, October 25, 1940, 838.502/40; De la Rue to Mayer, April 15, 1940, 838.502/31, DF.

[4]De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940; Ferdinand L. Mayer to the Secretary of State, February 14, 1939, 838.111/245; idem to idem, March 28, 1939, 838.111/250.

[5]De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940.

[6]Ibid; Hans Schmidt, The U. S. Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971): 224, 229; J. C. White to Willard Barber, May 22, 1943, 838.00/3645, DF.

[7] Schmidt, The U. S. Occupation of Haiti, 225-229.

[8]Selden Chapin's monograph on Haiti, pt. IV, ch. II, p. 3, collection of the United States Embassy, Port-au-Prince.

[9]Ibid, ch. III, pp. 6-7; pt. III, ch II, p. 2, 3.

[10]Ibid, ch. I, p.2, 4, 5, 7.

[11]Schmidt, The U. S. Occupation, 232.

[12]De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940; Turner and Ash, The Golden Hordes, 146.

[13]De la Rue's memorandum, January 2, 1940; Finley to Briggs, January 9, 1940, 838.51/3878.

[14]U. S. Embassy to the Secretary of State, December 9, 1949, DF, 838.00W/12-949. Montgomery, Alabama Advertiser, January 3, 1954; John H. Burns to the Secretary of State, August 11, 1949, 838.00W/8-1149; A. L. Raithal to J. B. Greeson, October 14, 1940, DF, 838.114/Narcotics/9; Paul Blanshard, Democracy and Empire in the Caribbean (New York, 1947), 68, 69; Pierre Rossel, Tourisme et Tiers Monde: un mariage blanc (Lausanne: Editions Pierre-Marcel Favre, 1984), 63-65; Time, October 17, 1949; Reporter, March 28, 1950, Schomburg Clipping File [SCF], New York Public Library; Robert D. Heinl and Nancy G. Heinl, Written in Blood, The Story of the Haitian People (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 197-), 590.

[15]Léon-François Hoffman, *Essays on Haitian Literature* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1984), 82; J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 74-75.

[16]Mayer to the Secretary of State, February 14, 1939; Dash, *Haiti and the United States.*

[17]Ute Stebich, *Haitian Art* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1978); Mayer to the Secretary of State, February 14, 1939, 838.111/245; John C. White to the Secretary of State, September 24, 1942, 838.404/85; Thomas H. Young, "Some Aspects of the Haitian Class Problem," April 13, 1943, and *Le Matin*, March 31, 1943, enclosed, 838.404/132, DF. Michael Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti, 1915-1961* (London, 1981), 141; "Justice for Judas," *Time* 61, April 6, 1953, p. 45; ibid, vol. 51, "Shod By Order," February 2, 1948, p. 26.

[18]See, for example, American legation correspondence for September-October 1942, DF 838.4061/13. Julian C. Levi to Charles O. Thomas, July 26, 1942, 838.413/2; Selden Rodman, *Haiti: The Black Republic* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1954), 55-56.

[19]Memorandum of a conversation with Secretary Dillon, Senator Smathers, et al., May 16, 1960; Dillon's memorandum for the President, May 12, 1960, Eisenhower Library.

[20]Allan Dawson to the Secretary of State, November 8, 1945, 838.00/11-845; see also J. C. White to the Secretary of State, April 12, 1941, 838.00/3594, DF; Joe Alexis Morris, "Cruel Beauty of the Caribbean," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 17, 1951, p. 173.

[21]Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, 66-72, 74-75, 91. On Lescot and black Americans, and as a "race man," see Associated Negro Press releases: March 3, 1941, April 23, 1941; Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Young, "Events Tending to Aggravate the Race Question," May 20, 1943, DF, 838.001/78; J. C. White to the Secretary of State, DF 838.001/Lescot, Elie/98.

[22]William DeCourcy to the Secretary of State, June 16, 1949, DF, 838.00W 6-1649; Katherine E. Bryan to Ellen B. Gammack, July 18, 1949, Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society Papers, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas; ASNLH brochure in Emmer Martin Lancaster Papers, Division of Negro Affairs, U. S. Department of Commerce, RG 40, NA.

[23]Selden Rodman, "U. S. Tourists in Haiti," *Americas* 6 (October 1954): 32; Herbert Gold, "Americans in the Port of Princes," *Yale Review*, (Autumn 1954) 88.

[24]Herbert Gold, *My Last Two Thousand Years* (New York: Random House, 1972), 115-116.

[25]Van den Berghe and Keyes, "Tourism and re-created ethnicity," 345.

[26]Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: The Duvaliers and Their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 59; Selden Rodman, "U. S. Tourists in Haiti," 32-3. On the American colony, see Herbert Gold, "Americans in the Port of Princes;" Herbert Gold, "Winter in Haiti," *Writer's Digest*, n. d., SCF.

[27]Poppy Cannon, "Haitian Fashions," *Ebony* 6 (April 1950), 44-47; *L'Aurore*, December 5, 1953, p. 1; Montgomery, Alabama *Advertiser*, January 3, 1954; Girault, "Tourisme et dépendance en Haïti," 30.

[28] J. C. Furnas, "The Truth About Suntan," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 31, 1948; Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 277; Pierre Aisner and Christine Plüss, *La Ruée vers le soleil: Le tourisme à destination du tiers monde* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1983), 69.

[29]Daniel J. Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 209, 211

[30]Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade*, 204; Donald Bogle, *Brown Sugar* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1980) 98-102, 130-136.

[31]Rodman, "U. S. Tourists in Haiti," 33; Tittman to the Secretary of State, February 6, 1948, and attachment, DF, 838.00/2-648; Edmund Wilson, "Christophe and Estimé," *Reporter* 2 (May 9, 1950), 24-25.

---

[32]Athan Theoharis, "The Politics of Scholarship: Liberals, Anti-Communism, and McCarthyism," in Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, eds., The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism, 267.

[33]Alonzo Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 282.

[34]Mary McAuliffe, Crisis on the Left, (Amherst, Univ. of Mass. Press, 1978).

[35]Dash, Haiti and the United States, 101-118.

[36]Hinckle and Turner, 131.

[37]New York Times,, October 13, 1962, 52:1.

[38]Memoranda of conversations with René Chalmers et al., January 31, 1964; February 10, 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.

[39]Ambassador Timmons to Dean Rusk, April 29, 1964, Johnson Library.