

Freedom Is Not Built in a Day

This year will be decisive for Haiti as mass movements struggle to limit the powers of the military government.

about Haiti, as if overthrowing a dictator was all the country needed to solve its problems. But things haven't been that simple in Haiti's first post-Duvalier year.

It's been a year now since the Haitian people managed to put an end to 29 years of dictatorship by Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier. It was front page news around the world. But when the dust died down after the last incidents related to Baby Doc's move to southern France, the whole world simply forgot

In November 1986, there were three important events involving grass-roots participation. The first was a women's demonstration against repression with some 30 to 40 thousand women marching. Right after that, there was a transport strike that paralyzed transportation, not

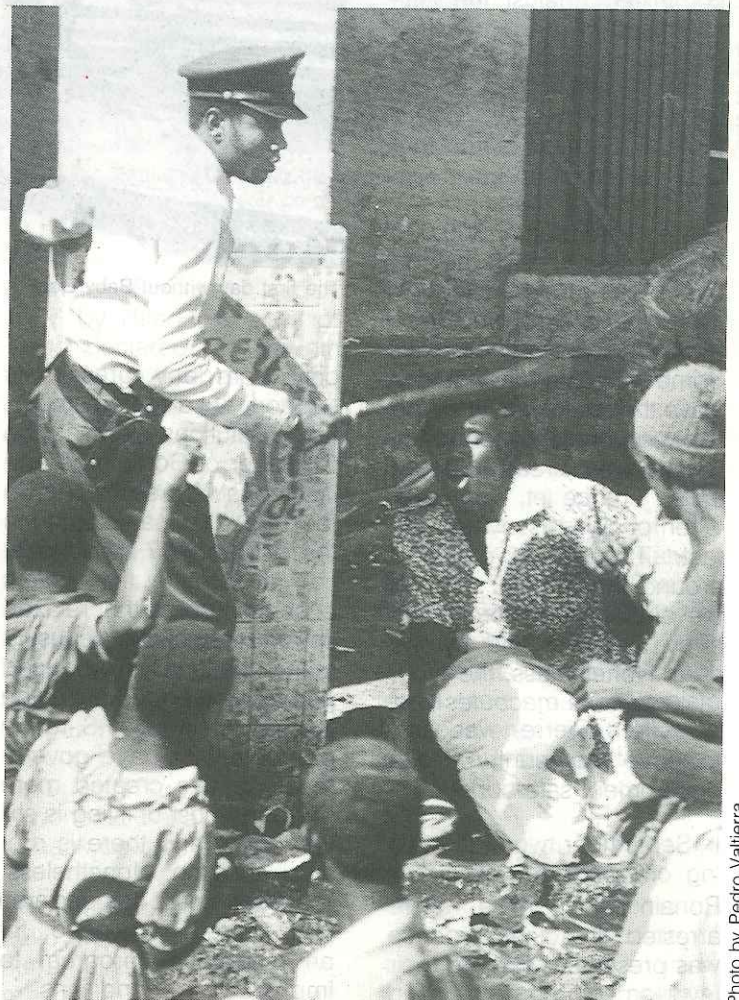


Photo by Pedro Valtierra

Even with Duvalier gone, repression continues

the popular movement. Their only proposal is to unleash another round of genocide, a large-scale killing capable of restoring "social peace" to El Salvador. This means, in effect, resorting to the method applied over half a century ago in 1932, when over 30,000 people were slaughtered following a popular uprising.

At the same time, North American strategists know that El Salvador doesn't necessarily need more people killed, and that genocide will probably not turn the situation around. There are eloquent figures pointing to this, as the repression under Duarte has been one of the most severe in the country's history.

Today the regime is face to face with a popular movement that has overcome these past bloody years at a cost of some 20,000 dead. Under certain conditions mass repression can disarticulate a movement, but under others it only adds new energy to the struggle. This poses the greatest risk to the solution proposed by the extreme right forces. But however uncertain this option may be, many seem willing to resort to it if they have no other recourse.

Washington cannot allow the Duarte government and its counterinsurgency model to collapse, for it would mean its own defeat. And for now the White House seems to have no better option than Duarte, at a time when its own political difficulties make it harder, though by no means impossible, for the U.S. to increase its own direct involvement in the conflict.

When Alexander Haig took office as Secretary of State in 1980 he chose El Salvador as the test case for the Reagan Administration's Central America policy. Now, toward the end of Mr. Reagan's second term, El Salvador may also become the test case for that same policy's failure.★

Augusto Morales

withstood eight years of near-genocidal efforts to destroy it, emerging undefeated and with many of its foundations still in place. These newly reactivated masses also constitute the main obstacle in the path of the counterinsurgency project designed by the U.S., namely, isolating the insurgency from the popular and workers' movement and building a social base in support of the dominant regime. Duarte, a sector of the Salvadoran military and North American strategists know that an irregular war cannot be won solely on the battlefield; winning requires the division of the popular forces and the construction of an alternate social base.

Duarte cannot seriously expect to build his own social base with the level of repression unleashed by his government, just as neither his economic or political policies contribute to that goal either. A U.S. journalist aptly summed up the situation in late December: "Duarte is losing control of the streets without having recovered control of the mountains."

And Duarte is also losing control of his own house. Right-wing political forces began 1987 with a destabilizing offensive against the government, a campaign supported by big business and some sectors of the military. Specifically, big business refuses to pay a new tax called, "For the Defense of National Sovereignty," that would be applied to income in order to finance the war. Businessmen refuse to pay for two reasons: first, they are pretty sure the money will end up in the pockets of government officials, and second, they believe the regime is losing the war. In order to manifest their opposition, the right wing has resorted to a parliamentary work stoppage, while large-scale private enterprise shut down their businesses.

But the right-wing forces don't have a better project to defeat the insurgency and

latin american issues

only in the capital city, but also in provincial areas. This strike was in response to the death, under "strange circumstances," of a member of the bus drivers' union, precisely when the union was involved in a labor dispute with the current government.

The third important event was a 100,000-person strong demonstration, without a doubt the country's largest protest march ever held. Its purpose was to show the strength of grassroots discontent over the continued presence of Duvalier followers in the country and in the government itself. The march was people's response to an announcement made just a few days earlier that many important figures from the Duvalier regime were going to form a political party with the hopes of taking power. The announcement provoked a strong reaction from those who resent the fact that Duvalier and his associates were never punished for the atrocities they committed against the Haitian people. And it wasn't only that; the present government has actually supported Duvalier's old secret police force, the greatly feared *tontons macoutes*.

There were some 300,000 *tontons macoutes* by the end of Duvalier's reign, although the force was dissolved just a few days before his fall. Some were gradually able to leave the country. In late April last year, one of its former directors was already aboard an Air France jet, disguised, when people discovered the fact. Thousands gathered around the airport, stopped the airplane and forced the army to arrest and try the man. Nonetheless, the other major *tontons macoutes* leader, Albert Pierre, was able to leave the country with a government safe conduct.

In September two high ranking officers, Colonels Frank Ronain and Valve, were arrested after clear evidence was presented showing their involvement in torture and other crimes. A few weeks

later, however, a military court decided in secret to release them, and they immediately left the country. The same month, disappearances began again. Charlotte Jacqueline, a monitor for the Church's literacy mission, was disappeared in one of the capital city's poor neighborhoods.

In addition, the current government is very isolated, not

Despite all this, however, it is important to emphasize that with Duvalier's fall, the Haitian people won their right to express themselves freely. Today, there is great freedom of expression; events and problems in Haiti are publicly discussed and debated on the radio and television and in the newspapers. Using this newly conquered freedom, people have been able to build a strong chal-

lenges of political prisoners had been found—into a monument to Duvalier's victims. The government refused to sanction the march and sent in the army to fire on demonstrators. Six people were killed and many more wounded. People understood this as an expression of the attempts to re-establish "Duvalierism." From that day on, people have firmly maintained their own demands



The first day without Baby Doc

only from any grassroots support, but also from important institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Association. In fact, the latter participated in the November 7 demonstration to protest the junta's economic policy that relaxed import restrictions, causing many nationally produced goods to be edged out of the market mostly by U.S.-made products. Nor have government policies created more jobs. The cost of living is still very high, and there is runaway inflation. Nonetheless, the government has declared that there's no need for an emergency program to improve living conditions.

challenge to the government that sought to establish a kind of "Duvalierism" without Duvalier. And if the government hasn't been successful in its efforts, it's only because of grassroots mobilizations, not only in the capital, but throughout the provinces as well. The entire society has been shaken by the mobilizations, a society held in the grips of terror for more than a quarter of a century.

The definitive split between the new government and the people came on April 26. All of the country's human rights organizations had called for a demonstration to convert the country's major torture center—where 10,000 skel-

and redoubled their efforts to keep the Duvalierists from achieving their goals.

The government decided to hold elections on short order, hoping to divert people's attention, dilute grassroots organizing efforts and divide the popular movement around different leaders, representing a variety of different perspectives, who might be vying for office. But the movement didn't go for the bait. To the contrary, it intensified its efforts to have grassroots demands met: demands focused on hunger, unemployment, environmental problems, health care and misery. Indifference spread, then, toward the

electoral process that was to choose members for a constituent assembly. As a result, abstentionism was the overwhelming victor in the October 19 elections. Less than ten percent of the voting age population turned out at the ballot box, handing a clear message of disapproval to the military government.

At the same time, the Reagan administration's very obvious efforts to shore up the ruling junta have begun to generate widespread anti-U.S. sentiments among people for the first time. While still a new phenomenon, it has grown to such an extent that when U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz was in the country last October, there were large demonstrations to protest his visit. In addition, people protested against the presence of 11 U.S. military advisors, as well as the \$4 million sent in direct aid to the Haitian army.

In order to provide some context for the above, it is important to note that under Duvalier, the army was not the main institution used for domestic repression. Rather that task was assigned to the *tontons macoutes*, which in addition to the 300,000-strong secret police, included a 45,000-man, active paramilitary force. The army had been relegated to a secondary position and had only 7500 men. According to the new Pentagon proposal, the Haitian army should grow to have some 25,000 troops.

The U.S. economic aid destined exclusively for the army is to be used to buy arms and to modernize its fighting capacity. That's why in the protests against Schultz' visit, people shouted, "We want bread, we want factories, we don't want arms."

The anti-U.S. demonstrations were the first of their kind in Haiti since the time when the United States occupied the country militarily from 1915 to 1934. And it is really quite symbolic that on the very same day that the largest pop-

ular protest in Haiti's history was being held, arms were being unloaded from a U.S. plane in Port-au-Prince, the country's capital.

This year there will be municipal elections in July and presidential elections at the end of the year. The new President-elect will take office in February 1988. Nonetheless, up until now, not only have people shown a marked indifference to the electoral process, but they actually regard the whole thing as "suspect" since there's no candidate with a platform addressing real grass-roots concerns. In addition, no candidate has been able to develop a political organization with the capacity to mobilize people around the elections.

There is also a widespread belief that the military government isn't really going to allow totally free elections and is actually cooking up a fraud to let the army keep its hold on power or looking for a civilian who would be willing to front for the armed forces. And many people think it's equally probable that given the strength of the popular movement, the army will simply decide not to hold elections, thus prolonging their de facto government.

At the same time, the leadership from a variety of different political movements deeply committed to democracy are thinking about joining together in a broad coalition of forces. They could, then, work more effectively toward the transition to genuine democracy in Haiti, based on meeting basic grass-roots needs and creating a new and lasting social pact.

But no matter what happens, 1987 will doubtless be a decisive year for defining the path to be taken by the Haitian state in this new period of the country's history. ★

Gerard Pierre-Charles

"Those Who Accuse Me of Hanging On to Power, Are Right"

Dictator Augusto Pinochet shows no sign of wanting to lift his military boot.

through the use of the force that brought him to power. That force is now joined by a



A burial in Santiago following the September incidents; the banner reads: "How much longer will you go on killing, fascist beasts"

Photo by Archivo Novedades

Augusto Pinochet began 1987 by lifting the state of siege declared for the nth time last September- and announcing that some 3500 exiles previously barred from returning to Chile could now do so. He justified these measures citing the strength of his government, now in its fourteenth year.

The opposition, on the other hand, claims that Pinochet has never been weaker than he was by the end of 1986, making his fall almost imminent. Both Pinochet and his opponents have arguments to back up their statements.

Pinochet doesn't claim to have grass-roots support for his administration or for the regime he heads; he doesn't have it and hopes to prolong it

new Constitution, written by and for Pinochet and approved in a rather questionable plebiscite in March 1980. He also has several other factors in his favor: a technically perfected and well-equipped repressive apparatus; the "monolithic unity" of the armed forces; the vacillations of the Catholic Church, which despite its defense of human rights in Chile, has not used its traditional capacity to exert pressure in a direct challenge to the dictatorship; and support from the United States.

The opposition is clearly in the majority, but it is still divided. It has yet to come up with a platform capable of unifying people around an alternative and truly national political project representing