

America's Record in Haiti

Extracts from Dr. Ernest Gruening's Senate Testimony on Haiti in 1925

Haiti's trouble dates from 1905 when a group of American financiers closely associated with the National City Bank of New York, secured a concession to build a railroad. Mr. Joseph P. Grace, president of W. R. Grace & Co. and a director of the National City Bank, invested two and a quarter million dollars, and the National City Bank of New York advanced a further half million, using the bonds of the railroad as collateral. The president of this railroad, a very important figure in the affairs to follow, was Mr. Roger L. Farnham, another vice-president of the National City Bank.

How influential Mr. Farnham was in our Department of State may be judged from the fact that in October 1914, Secretary of State Bryan wrote to President Wilson of "the urgent need of increasing our force" in Haitian waters "at this time when a renewal of negotiations seems probable, not only for the purpose of protecting foreign interests, but also as an evidence of the earnest intention of this Government to settle the unsatisfactory state of affairs which exists."

U. S. Wants Haitian Customs
The unsatisfactory state of affairs which Mr. Bryan alleged to exist was a state of affairs unsatisfactory to the directorate of the National City Bank. In an attempt to render these conditions more satisfactory, several commissions went from the United States to Haiti in 1914 for the purpose of obtaining economic control of that island. These negotiations had been carried on informally for some months. A tentative convention between Haiti and the United States was presented to the Haitian government on December 10, 1914, by the American minister. Its essential provision was the appointment by the United States of a receiver of customs for Haiti. In the Latin-American Republics the chief source of revenue comes from the customs. He who controls them, controls the island's revenues. In this agreement, a tentative reference was also made to a "financial advisor, should one be appointed." They not only wanted to get hold of the money, but they wanted to say how it should be spent.

On December 13, without warning to the Haitian government, American marines landed in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince from the U. S. S. gunboat Machias; they marched to the vaults of the National Bank of Haiti and carried away \$500,000 in gold, the property of the Haitian government on deposit for the redemption of paper money....

The Haitian Government protested to Washington against the violation of its sov-

erignty, but no explanation was ever given and the money was kept in the vaults of the National City Bank of New York until some years later when the transfer of the island to the National City Bank had progressed somewhat further....

Two days later (after the election to president of the American-bought Philip Rartiguenave) a draft of a treaty was presented to the newly elected Haitian president. It contained all the clauses which the Haitians had rejected during peaceable previous negotiations, clauses which the United States had subsequently and voluntarily abandoned, and further drastic conditions. It provided for complete customs control and financial receivership. It provided that an arrangement should be entered into by which all the claims of individuals and corporations against Haiti should be settled. It provided for military and police control, in the shape of a constabulary officered by Americans, which was to "have supervision and control of arms, ammunition, military supplies and traffic therein, throughout the country." This clause, as well as several others to follow, was written into the draft of the earliest convention, presented to the Haitian Government over a year previously, namely in July 1914, and rejected by it then, and was now sent by wireless from the Department of State to Admiral Caperton, on August 14. In other words, when they had the Haitians in the grip of the military machine, they were proceeding no longer to negotiate, but to dictate....

Haitian Revenues Seized

By September 2, two weeks later, the 10 principal custom houses had been taken over, thus controlling the entire revenue of the Haitian Republic. The Haitian Government protested in the strongest terms in a series of notes, but in vain....

At the end of this message Secretary Daniels has the following confidential injunction:

"Confidential: It is expected that you will be able to make this sufficiently clear to remove all opposition and to secure immediate ratification."

The admiral did as he was told. He delivered the message which said in effect: If you do not sign, you starve. If you do not sign we are going to stay right here until you do sign. After resisting over three months, they signed.

Now, in the 10 years, almost 10 years, that have intervened since that time, Haiti has been under martial law and newspapers have been suppressed for the slightest criticism of the occupation. Editors have been put in jail. I don't know whether

there are any in jail at this moment, but I know there have been some in jail the last few months.... The blame for the killing of between 2,000 and 3,000 Haitians in five years by methods that were nothing but massacre rests right here in the administrative offices in Washington.... On November 18, Admiral Caperton sent the following report: "Fort Riviere captured by forces under Major Butler. All avenues of escape had been previously closed so that none escaped. Fifty one were killed.... no casualties our forces."

That was not warfare, that was murder! A little later they began using airplanes to drop bombs on Haitian villages. They didn't to this very long, however, for this reason, as testified to by Major Turner. "We never got enough Haitians together to make it worth while to drop bombs." Think of it. How many people in this country knew during this time when we were fighting to make the world safe for democracy, we were dropping bombs on Haitian villages? Yet, subsequent to our entry into the world war over 2,000 Haitians were killed. They were killed because they opposed the invasion of their country. Because peaceable by nature though they were they rebelled against the treatment accorded them.

Slave Laws by U. S. Marines

In 1918, the American military forces resurrected the old Haitian law of Corves. This was an old law requiring Haitians to work for a few days each year on the roads in their immediate community to keep them in repair. This was precisely the same kind of a law as one might find in the form of a municipal ordinance, here in the United States, requiring one, let us say, to keep the snow shoveled off one's sidewalk. But the military occupation determined to build a military highway running from north to south through the island by forced labor. Even the moderate Haitian

law had been in disuse for some time. Now while there is a difference of opinion as to the extent of the abuses committed under the law of Corves, it is clearly proved, admitted and shown in the Senatorial report that the Haitians were taken from their homes, transported to different parts of the island, compelled to work under guard for weeks, herded in compounds at night, subjected to physical violence if they resisted, and shot if they attempted to escape. The Navy Department testimony admits that many were thus killed. The exact number is not known. It is also definitely proved that this system of violence was continued in certain sections after it had been ordered discontinued by brigade headquarters....

The bandits developed after we went down there, and they were precisely the same kind of bandits General Washington commanded at Valley Forge (continues to read from Senatorial white-washing report):

"The inhabitants are leaving the mountain forests to cultivate the central plain—less disturbed than they have been within the memory of living man. It is impossible to determine in exact figures the number of Haitians killed in this 18 months guerilla campaign. A fair estimate is about 1,500. The figure includes many reports based on guesses made during combat and not on actual count. The casualties, whatever they were, undoubtedly includes some non-combatants. The bandits were found resting in settlements where they were surrounded by their women and children, or in villages where they camped and were tolerated by the inhabitants through fear or friendship. When encountered they had to be instantly attacked. These conditions largely account for the deaths of the bystanders...."

Now you understand why women and children had to be killed in Haiti.

How Time Does Fly in the Russian Party!

"But Bucharin has committed, in comparison, only an insignificant mistake, and he has not violated a single decision of the Central Committee. How to explain that, in spite of this, they still continue to hunt Bucharin? What do you want of Bucharin? They demand Bucharin's blood! That's what Zinoviev demands, sharpening the question in his concluding speech.

You demand Bucharin's blood? We shall not give it to you, know that well!" (Applause. Cries of "Very good!") . . .

"We are against the policy of expulsion; it is an abomination to us."

—From the speech of Stalin at the 14th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, December 1925.

"This double political bookkeeping is a characteristic feature of the Right opposition; its policy constitutes, so to speak,

a permanent maneuver against the party. We have witnessed the maneuvers and duplicity of the Trotskyist opposition in its day, for example, the hypocritical renunciation of factional work. Nevertheless it must be said that the Trotskyists conducted the struggle against the general line of the party more or less openly. But the conduct of the Right opposition is already 100% duplicity. The five year plan is recognized but at the same time documents diametrically opposed to this plan are also recognized, such as "Notes of an Economist" or "The Political Heritage" (by Bucharin). It is only those who cynically disrespect the party, its politically educated cadres, as well as the whole working class supporting the general line of the Party, who that can adopt such an equivocal position."

—Stalin, in Pravda, November 10, 1923

"UNANIMOUS!" A Meeting of a Party Conference. By MICHAEL KOLZOV

"THE session will be continued," the chairman declared. "Comrade Bolotnov has the floor to report on the activity of the fraction in the provincial committee."

The Party conference becomes attentive. Someone at the door quiets the chattering delegates, for the workers were eager for the remarks of the chairman. Interesting how he'll put the thing over, they whispered in the hall. Sh-sh-sh.

The reporter: "The area of our district in its established boundaries is equal to 50,105 square kilometers or 5,010,000 hectares or 4,586,500 desjatines. According to area, our district takes second place in the province and forms 33.8 percent of the total area of the province. The temperature in winter is 5 degrees below, in summer, 16 degrees above.

(You see, his hearers whispered knowingly to each other, he begins with figures too.)

"The temperature in the vegetation period can be figured at 13 degrees on the average, its duration—135 days. On the basis of rainfall, which is reported at 400 millimeters, our district belongs to the dry belt. Considered generally, the largest part of our district belongs to the Northern latitude and is counted among the regions that lie high above sea-level."

(Now he's getting more specific—they whisper in the presidium—he's undoubtedly indicating something, only we don't know what he means by it.)

"The Southern part of our district is counted among the regions that do not lie so high above sea-level". The workers are amazed, they don't understand what all this is for . . . but the incorrigible reporter continues further: "We have 9 postal departments in the district and 5 radio stations; 486 kilometers of waterways and 1,198 kilometers of highways."

Here the reporter drinks a bit of water and immediately continues his remarks. He reports how many railroad stations, how deep the rivers were in 1909 and so forth.

The conference grows more restless. Still, it is clear to all the delegates that the chairman has worked out an elaborate report and that the geographical section is only the introduction.

"Here in the woods," bellows the reporter, "we came across various animals, as for example, ermine, fox, squirrels, and so on, not to speak of the innumerable birds."

You're a pretty bird yourself, the delegates were thinking; till you get to the actual subject we'll all kick off here. But . . . Bolotnov runs on briskly. More and more figures come flying along from the speaker's stand.

"I would like to touch briefly on the various branches of industry along the Jallade, Urkan and Olde rivers. The first were founded in 1866 on the initiative of the engineer Anosov. The receipts from the whiskey trade amounted to 319,210 rubels, which is equal to 14 per cent of the total receipts. We have 79 sheep and nanny-goats and 625 swine."

With this, Bolotnov passed over directly to tackling the Soviet administration. "The apparatus of our executive is divided into three departments: the general, which embraces the work of the presidium, political education, public education, war questions, agriculture and public health. Besides that, the taxation, financial and administrative department." Then the chairman listed the various sections and remarked that many women are active in the village Soviets.

HERE the reporter suddenly broke off his arguments, wiped the sweat from his brow and packed his papers into his thick bag. A hardly perceptible disagreement followed in the hall. Someone took the floor: "Comrades, I propose to have comrade Bolotnov continue the report without taking an adjournment for lunch. Then we'll be through with the report today so that we can begin the discussion early tomorrow morning."

From the presidium rings the answer: "Oh! You didn't understand the reporter. Comrade Bolotnov has already finished his remarks. I request the comrades to take the floor." A sigh of relief in the hall.

No one challenged the figures of the chairman on the distances between the various railroad stations, nor did anyone get indignant over the fact that only squirrels and not ostriches can live in the woods of the district. On that point they were in accord. The workers who participated in the discussion, however, only supplemented the

remarks; they added a few details, so to speak.

Detail No. 1: The district committee sold the houses inhabited by the workers to private persons, and drove the workers into the streets in winter.

Detail No. 2: The district committee received 7,000 boards for the construction of railway bridges. Since the boards were left without any supervision, they were destroyed by a violent fire.

Detail No. 3: A militiaman has a railway line of 250 kilometers to supervise. For the purpose of "supervision" he gets into the train and rides as a blind passenger, since no ticket is put at his disposal. But at the very next station he is driven off by the conductor.

Detail No. 4: Primitive conditions prevail in the public school system.

Detail No. 5: The district committee, in the last year covered by the report, took no interest in the activity of the village Soviets. The chairmen booze and whore around. The peasants don't go to the Soviets because they're afraid of being beaten up.

Detail No. 6: The most violent class struggle is being conducted on the land, wild exploitation of the land workers is taking place, and the district committee hadn't a word to say about this, either. And so forth and so on.

THE discussion is closed. The reporter gets the floor for concluding remarks. He establishes with satisfaction that the various comrades really had nothing to protest against the content of the report, and that the correctness of the line is thereby demonstrated. With regard to the details reported, it is self-understood that the work has many shortcomings to show and that is quite natural, since the work cannot produce successes only. In conclusion, he observes that he who never does anything never makes mistakes. (He was probably basing himself on Lenin.)

A two-page resolution was adopted. In it, the political and economic position of the district were approved, the active participation of the workers in the enterprises of the Party and the Soviet power was established. And so forth in the same spirit. . . .

"Are there any remarks on the resolution? No! All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? None! Adopted unanimously! I declare the conference closed and propose to the delegates to sing the International."

The workers stood up and cautiously—moving their freezing legs gingerly—at first low, then even louder they sang the International. . . .