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Guide to the

Duvalierist Government collection

1958-1989

Sc MG 733

Processed by Nathalie Pierre in 2010.

Summary

Title: Duvalierist Government collection

Date: 1958-1989

Size: 0.4 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Purchased from Franz Voltaire, 2003.

Abstract: François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier served as Presidents of Haiti from 1957 to 1986. The Duvalierist regime lasted longer than any other Haitian government. It was succeeded by a period known as "Duvalierism without Duvalier" with the assumption of General Namphy of the Haitian military following a popular uprising that ousted Jean-Claude from office. This collection primarily documents matters of Haitian governance, finance, and relations with the United States from 1959 to 1989. There is also material relating to Haiti's relations with the Dominican Republic.

Preferred citation: [Item], Duvalierist Government collection, Sc MG 733, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: Multiple languages The collection is primarily in French, with some English.

Processing note: Processed by Nathalie Pierre in 2010.

Creator History

François "Papa Doc" Duvalier was the president of Haiti from 1957 to 1971. His son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier took office in 1971 and a popular uprising ousted him in 1986. The Duvalierist regime lasted longer than any other Haitian government, which continued after Baby Doc fled the country. This period was Duvalierism without Duvalier. General Henri Namphy of the Haitian military was the first of a string of Duvalierist military leaders who led Haiti until the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990.

FRANÇOIS DUVALIER was born on April 14, 1907. His father, Duval Duvalier, was born in Martinique and worked as a schoolteacher in Haiti. Duval Duvalier's occupation placed his family firmly into the

new middle class created, partially, by the U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934). Duvalier studied under prominent Haitian nationalists such as Jean Price-Mars and Dumarsais Estime, who was president of Haiti from 1946-1950. Duvalier joined the Bureau of Ethnology founded by Jacques Romain, while under the directorship of Jean Price-Mars. Through them, he participated in the budding Negritude movement and its local Haitian variant, the Indigenist movement. He received his medical degree in 1934 and studied public health at the University of Michigan in 1943. In 1944, Duvalier became part of the Inter-American Commission's \$150,000 campaign to expand health and sanitation programs in Haiti. He worked in rural areas treating yaws and other common ailments from mobile clinics. The clients were primarily poor farmers with no other means of health care, which made Duvalier very popular and earned him the nickname "Papa Doc."

Duvalier began his political career under the tutelage of his former professors. From his work with the Bureau of Ethnology and Jean Price-Mars, Duvalier met Daniel Fignole. Fignole, the most famous 20th century populist leader before Jean-Bertrand Aristide, founded the Movement of Workers and Peasants (MOP) and appointed Duvalier his secretary-general. Duvalier's affiliation with Fignole and his work with the Inter-American Commission gradually put him closer to the National Palace. His promotion to the cabinet-level position of Minister of Public Health under Dumarsais Estime's presidency (1946-1950) put him in contact with important figures, especially from the military.

The support of the military allowed Duvalier to wrangle the presidency from his former colleague Daniel Fignole (May – June 1957). Once the military deposed Fignole in June 1957, they administered and organized elections on September 22, 1957. Duvalier, then, quickly dismissed the same military leaders who installed him in power, vanquishing their illusions that he would be their puppet president. Though he used the military to come to power, he understood from experience the military could turn against the head of state and created distance to preserve his own power. The lack of military support against a group of invaders in July 1958 solidified Duvalier's resolve to minimize their importance. He dismissed key figures and replaced them with security forces accountable only to him. By 1961, Duvalier established the semi-secret Volunteers for National Security, infamously known as the Tonton Macoutes. The Macoutes' violent repression of Haitian political opponents became symbolic of Duvalierist governance. They remained an ominous presence in Haiti for over thirty years and were responsible for the death and imprisonment of thousands.

JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER was born on July 3, 1951. He assumed the presidency at the age of nineteen after the death of François Duvalier on April 21, 1971. Ill-prepared to govern and seemingly uninterested in the presidency, Jean-Claude Duvalier delegated key decision making processes to his older sister, mother, and his father's former advisers. In efforts to reconcile Haiti's relationship with the U.S., Jean-Claude Duvalier encouraged the liberalization of the economy, which hurt the largely agricultural base of the country. The combination of Macoute oppression and fiscal decline led to mass migration out of Haiti. A popular Haitian uprising, known as Dechoukaj, ousted Jean-Claude Duvalier and ushered in the period of Duvalierist rule without the Duvaliers. GENERAL HENRI NAMPHY of the Haitian military took over the Haitian government in February 1986. Jean-Claude Duvalier died on October 4, 2014. Henri Namphy died on June 26, 2018.

Scope and Content Note

The Duvalierist Government Collection has three series: FRANÇOIS DUVALIER CORRESPONDENCE, DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE, and MISCELLANY. The collection primarily documents matters of Haitian governance, finances, and relations with the United States from 1958 to 1989.

The FRANÇOIS DUVALIER CORRESPONDENCE, 1958-1967 series contains letters between President François Duvalier, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Duvalier's ambassador to the U.S., Ernest Bonhomme. The collection primarily documents matters of Haitian governance, finances, and relations with the United States from 1958 to 1967. The letters between President Duvalier and President Eisenhower focus primarily on U.S. aid to Haiti and Duvalier's offer to provide the U.S. with land to build a military training and missiles base. Following the turn to communism by the leadership of the Cuban Revolution (1959), Duvalier secured substantial financial and political support from the United States. Despite the atrocities of his regime, Duvalier maintained the support of the U.S. because the U.S. wanted to contain the threat of communism in the Caribbean and readily financed regimes that opposed Fidel Castro. However, the reality of Duvalier defecting to communism was, at best, a slim possibility. Duvalier solicited money under the pretext of public-works projects. These projects included a new airport, a sugar mill, and an irrigation system in the Artibonite Valley.

The DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE, 1979-1989 series stores letters from Haitian diplomats in the Dominican Republic, the United States, and Canada to Jean-Claude Duvalier and General Henri Namphy. The letters discuss Haitian representation in media outlets and Haitian interests abroad. The bulk of the correspondence comes from Fritz Cinéas and Herve Denis, ambassadors to the Dominican Republic. Both ambassadors spend considerable time discussing Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic, student protests against Haitian deportation, possible business ventures, such as soap factories, and border tensions. Most of the letters are routine, detailing the dates of traveling emissaries to Haiti and their own meetings with prominent Dominican officials. They also reveal strong alliances between the Haitian government and Dominican police and military officials, who routinely interrogated Haitian political refugees. In the Denis file, we witness the seamless transition from Jean-Claude Duvalier's presidency to General Henri Namphy.

The MISCELLANY, 1958-1985 series stores documents on Haiti-U.S. relations, anti-Duvalier statements and fiscal revenue charts. A highlight of the series is a joint declaration against communism Duvalier signed with Dominican President Raphael L. Trujillo Molina in 1958. This series documents arrangements for the U.S. to temporarily train the Haitian military (1958), efforts by the Haitian government to provide the U.S. with missile bases (1958), and press releases generated in the U.S. to alert its citizens to crises in Haiti. There is a report discussing Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and some questionable solutions to the "Haitian question" (1985).

Key Terms

Subjects

Diplomatic and consular service, Haitian -- United States
Diplomats -- Haiti
Foreign workers, Haitian -- Dominican Republic
Tontons macoutes

Geographic Names

Haiti -- Economic policy -- 20th century
Haiti -- Emigration and immigration
Haiti -- Foreign relations -- United States
Haiti -- History -- 20th century
Haiti -- Politics and government -- 20th century
United States -- Foreign relations -- Haiti

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Manuscripts (documents)

Names

Bonhomme, Ernest

Castro, Fidel, 1926-2016

Cine_as, Fritz N., 1932-

Daphnis, Jean-Claude

Denis, Herve_

Duvalier, Franc_ois, 1907-1971

Duvalier, Jean-Claude, 1951-2014

Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969

Namphy, Henri

Salomon, Georges

Trujillo Molina, Rafael Leo_nidas, 1891-1961

Force armée d'Haïti

United States. Department of State

Container List

François Duvalier Correspondence 1958-1967

- b. 1 f. 1 President Duvalier to Ambassador Bonhomme 1959-1960
- b. 1 f. 2 President Duvalier to President Eisenhower 1959-1960
- b. 1 f. 3 Duvalier Speech on Jacmel Wharf 1960
- b. 1 f. 4 Ambassador Bonhomme to President Duvalier 1959-1960
- b. 1 f. 5 Ernest Bonhomme, Haitian Ambassador to the U.S 1959-1967
- b. 1 f. 6 Foreign Affairs Department to Ambassador Bonhomme 1958-1966

Diplomatic Correspondence 1979-1989

- b. 1 f. 7 Georges Salomon, Haitian Ambassador in Wash. to Jean-Claude Duvalier 1978- 1980
- b. 1 f. 8 Fritz Cinéas, Haitian Ambassador in Santo Domingo to Jean-Claude Duvalier 1979
- b. 1 f. 9 Herve Denis, Haitian Ambassador in Santo Domingo to Jean-Claude Duvalier and General Henri Namphy
- b. 1 f. 10 Jean-Dominique Daphnis, Charge d'Affair in Santo Domingo to General Henri Namphy
- b. 1 f. 11 Miscellaneous 1987-1989

Miscellany 1958-1985

- b. 1 f. 12 Duvalier and President Trujillo Joint Declaration 1958
- b. 1 f. 13 Haiti-U.S. Relations 1958-1961
- b. 1 f. 14 League of Haiti—Protest Statement Against Duvalier 1959
- b. 1 f. 15 Propaganda Service to Michelle Duvalier 1980
- b. 1 f. 16 Report, Haitian Emigration to the Dominican Republic 1985