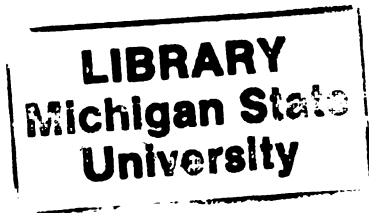


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**BIRTH OF A BOUNDARY: BLOOD, CEMENT, AND PREJUDICE AND THE
MAKING OF THE DOMINICAN-HAITIAN BORDER, 1937-1961**

By

Edward Ramon Paulino

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

BIRTH OF A BOUNDARY: BLOOD, CEMENT, AND PREJUDICE AND THE MAKING OF THE DOMINICAN-HAITIAN BORDER, 1937-1961

By

Edward Ramon Paulino

My dissertation examines the effects 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic and the subsequent nationalization of the Dominican borderlands. More than 20,000 Haitian men, women, and children were murdered by Dominican soldiers following orders of the dictator Rafael Trujillo. This genocidal and unprecedented policy eliminated most of the Haitian presence along the border and led the way for a state-building project to Dominicanize semi-autonomous this region. Following the massacre the Dominican government incorporated this region into its sphere of influence by establishing institutions such as the church and military to physically and officially demarcate its territory with Haiti. My dissertation utilizes various methodological approaches from border history, genocide, and nationalism to better understand the violent implications of state projects that attempt to eradicate a semi-autonomous and interdependent community such as the Dominican border with Haiti. Moreover, by placing this event as part of a larger historical continuum of Dominican-Haitian border relations, I show how the Dominican frontier rather than the capital of Santo Domingo shaped the existence of the nation.

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**“Birth of a Boundary: Blood, Cement, and Prejudice and the making of the
Dominican-Haitian Border, 1937-1961”**

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Introduction

In 1937, a genocidal massacre took place near the Dominican-Haitian border on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. According to estimates, nearly 20,000 Haitian and Haitian-descended men, women, and children living in Dominican Republic were systematically rounded up and murdered by the Dominican army and groups of organized civilians. Orders to exterminate as many Haitians as possible came from the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, whose rise to power in 1930 marked the initiation of a campaign to limit Haitian workers' entrance to the Dominican Republic. Through the prism of the 1937 Haitian massacre, this dissertation examines the importance of the Dominican-Haitian border region, its significance to the development of the Dominican nation, and its role in the project of state-building under the Trujillo regime. The dissertation examines Dominican history from the perspective of the border and interpolates the Haitian massacre as a means to underscore the centrality of the border in the development of Dominican history. In this sense, the main protagonists of this study are the border and its inhabitants, which served as the backdrop to the historic struggle between the state and its marginal regions. This dissertation is unique because it traces the border's influential role in the creation and development of the Dominican nation. The 1937 Haitian massacre then is examined not just as Rafael Trujillo's strategy to violently incorporate the border, but as part of the larger historical legacy that the border has wielded in the evolution of the country.

Rather than focusing on single events, this study underscores the role of border residents as catalysts in shaping Dominican history. The border region

provides an opportunity to investigate issues of state-building, national identity, race relations, and ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, this study aims to challenge and reverse an anti-Haitian post-massacre historiography that attempts to justify and defend the killings in the name of Dominican nationalism.¹ By tracing the development of Dominican history from the perspective of the border, I argue (as do other scholars: Lauren Derby and Richard Turits) that, prior to the massacre, the historic border relationship between Dominicans and Haitians at the regional and local level was more collaborative than adversarial.² Moreover, as I explore the decades after the massacre, I argue that the Dominican state, in its post-massacre Dominicanization project, failed to eradicate the economic and cultural links extant before the massacre.

Chapters

This dissertation is divided into six chronological chapters that trace the evolution of the frontier, the creation of political boundaries, attempts at imperial and state colonization, the massacre, and the post-massacre state-building project to Dominicanize the borderlands. Chapter One examines the emergence of a frontier at

¹ Some of these clearly ant-Haitian works are Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, *El sentido de una política*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora La Nación, 1943); Joaquín Balaguer, *La realidad contemporánea*. (Buenos Aires: Ferrari Hermanos, 1947); Angel S. del Rosario Pérez, *La exterminación añorada*. (SI: S.N., 1957); Carlos Cornielle, *Proceso histórico Dominico-Haitiano*. (Santo Domingo: Publicaciones América, 1980); and Luis Julián Pérez. *Santo Domingo frente al destino*. (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1990).

² Here I am building on the pioneering scholarship of Richard Turits and Lauren Derby who I most influenced by and who first suggested that the border region was much more of a collaborative space rather than an antagonistic one. My work very much corroborates their research and I am indebted to them for their suggestions. See Lauren Derby and Richard Turits', "Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia," *Estudios Sociales* (Abril-Junio 1993), No.92 Año XXVI; and especially Richard Turits' "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed" Paper given at the Latin American & Caribbean Studies Evening Seminar Series, Fall 2000: Ethnicity and Migration in the Caribbean at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Fall 2000: 1-73. (Forthcoming article to be published in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*).

the fringes of French and Spanish colonies and the process whereby European colonial powers appropriated the island of Hispaniola and simultaneously displaced Indigenous populations. The remote frontier became a convenient refuge for runaway Indian and African slaves and a safe space for French and Spanish colonists involved in the growing and unregulated trade on the fringes of both colonies. Subsequently, I examine how the political boundary, the precursor to the present border, played a crucial role in the creation of the Dominican nation following years of unsettled negotiations regarding its limits.

Chapter Two examines the gradual incorporation of the frontier into the Dominican nation under the dictator Rafael Trujillo. Between 1930 and 1936, territorial limits were finalized, ending years of ambiguity as to where each country's territory ended and the other began. This was also a time when Dominican-Haitian relations were perhaps at an all-time zenith. At no other point in the history of both countries did a sentiment of mutual understanding and friendship reign over the island with more authority than during this period. Six years of successful border negotiations with the Haitian government that culminated in fixed territorial limits between the nations, in addition to sobering trips that exposed Trujillo to the overwhelming presence of Haitians along the Dominican border, set the stage for a violent yet unexpected mass murder.

Chapter Three examines the state's genocidal policy of rounding-up and killing thousands of Haitian and Haitian-descended Dominican men, women, and children. Although the massacre tarnished Trujillo's international image, it eliminated a large Haitian presence that was especially visible along the border. The killings also

set the stage for the state to initiate, in earnest, an aggressive effort to colonize the frontier. The 1937 massacre ushered in a violent institutional and ideological state-building process that aimed to subordinate the border region to the authorities in Santo Domingo. This state-building project marked Trujillo's attempt to control a semi-autonomous region that had been heavily influenced by Haiti. Hence, a reign of terror that became one of the hemisphere's most brutal, yet forgotten, examples of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century was unleashed. The levels of state violence encased in the acts of the 1937 Haitian Massacre and in the subsequent policies aimed at Dominicanizing the border region were unprecedented and unique. Amidst the violence and subsequent to it, the border assumed a new and constant political, economic, and military significance for the Dominican government. Thus, the border region became a catalyst for the Dominican nation to remake itself—through the massacre—and create a new national identity.

As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, following the massacre, the Dominican state began the process of redefining the border. New provinces were created and border towns with previously Haitian names were renamed with Spanish names. Government agricultural and penal colonies were established to settle the region with Dominicans. This chapter also juxtaposes the violent project of ethnic cleansing to the persistent cultural and economic inter-border linkages between people, a condition that was exemplified by the continued post-massacre presence of Haitian currency within the Dominican border.

Chapter Five discusses the Dominican government's efforts to modernize and sanitize the border region. The state enacted a series of programs to further

distinguish Dominicans from their Haitian neighbors. As part of this effort, the state began an intensive program to promote hygiene. Hospitals, along with medical programs offering a range of medical services, began to appear throughout the border region. In addition, this chapter reveals the collaboration of the church with the Dominican State in Dominicanizing the border region. The Catholic Church played an instrumental and important role in demarcating this region as a pro-Christian Dominican space to be contrasted to a perceived pagan Haitian opposite.

Finally, Chapter six examines the ideological campaign conducted by state ideologues to demonize Haitians and identify them as a historic enemy. During this campaign, many Dominican intellectuals in the capital, alongside administrative bureaucratic government appointees, portrayed Dominican-Haitian border relations in adversarial terms. The border was essentially represented as a tumultuous and blood-infested region where Dominicans consistently and historically defended their nation against perpetually invading Haitian military armies and then waves of economic migrants.

Situating dissertation in a body of literature

The anti-Haitian writings published during Trujillo's regime represent one of many historiographical stages in understanding how the border has traditionally been conceptualized. Dominican historian, Frank Moya Pons, was the first to compartmentalize the historiographical evolution of the border. Thus the post-massacre "Trujillo" history of the Dominican Republic can be understood as part of

an integrated set of stages of Dominican border history. In this sense, my study is more than an analysis of the 1937 Haitian Massacre. Unlike previous studies on the massacre, which do not situate the event in its full historical context, I examine the history of the frontier region from colonial times to the Trujillo era and demonstrate the extent of collaboration between peoples on both sides of the island.³

In studying this region, historian Frank Moya Pons has suggested that there are three cycles to the historiography of the Dominican-Haitian border. The **first cycle** of historiography, published in the 1700's and 1800's, covers the history of the border's formation and describes the island's early history and the creation of a frontier to separate two European colonies.⁴ The **second cycle** is classified as the "history of the political border" and lasted from roughly between 1874 and 1936. In this stage, historians wrote about the evolution of the border through the examination of treaties and settlements. The border region was seen by scholars as a problem that needed to be resolved through the official demarcation of territorial boundaries. They underscored Dominican intellectuals' need to define national sovereignty through a

³ Although Bernardo Vega's two-volume work *Trujillo y Haiti* Vol. I. (Santo Domingo: Fundacion Cultural Dominicana, 1988); Vol. II. (Santo Domingo: Fundacion Cultural Dominicana, 1995), and Jose Israel Cuello H. *Documentos del conflicto Dominico-haitiano de 1937* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985), are invaluable to understanding the massacre, their works are a compilation of diplomatic sources without either a profound historical context or analisis of the massacre in relation to the border. There also have been novels by Dominicans: Freddy Prestol Castillo's *El masacre se pasa a pie* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1973); Haitian novels addressing the massacre have been written by Jacques Stephen Alexis, *Mi compadre el general sol* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones de Taller, 1987); and the recent publication by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Dandicat's *Farming of Bones* (New York: Soho, 1998). Other political and economic treatments of the massacre can be found in Eric Roorda "Genocide Next Door: The Good neighbor Policy, the Trujillo Regime and the Haitian Massacre of 1937," *Diplomatic History*, Vol.20 No.3 (Summer 1996):301-319; Thomas Fiehrer "Political Violence in the Periphery: The Haitian Massacre of 1937," *Race and Class* 32:2 (October-December 1990): 1:20.

⁴ Frank Moya Pons, "Las tres fronteras," in Wilfredo Lozano's ed. *La cuestion haitiana en Santo Domingo: Migracion internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-estatales entre Haiti y Republica Dominicana* (Miami,FL: FLACSO, 1992), pg.18-19.

fixed border. Between the massacre, through the period of the Dominicanization of the border to the end of the dictatorship, Trujillo intellectuals assumed the bulk of the writing and wrote from an explicit anti-Haitian perspective.⁵ During this historiographical period, the birth of the Dominican Republic would be fixed in the minds of Dominicans as an initial struggle against French colonialism and a subsequent fight against Haitian imperialism and colonialism. Haitians and their culture became the new enemy of a Dominican state, which unceasingly rationalized and promoted authoritarian policy implementations throughout the border region. Moreover, the massacre and its aftermath transformed how Dominican intellectuals wrote about the border and past treaties. By implementing an institutional and ideological “war” against Haitians and their influence in the border region, Trujillo’s intelligentsia created, or perhaps recreated, a new Dominican identity. After the massacre, the border was no longer seen as a region that undermined state power but one that could aid government efforts to Dominicanize the border. Thus, after centuries of being viewed by the state as a liability, the border now became an integral part in the consolidation and expansion of the nation.

After Trujillo’s assassination in 1961, the **third cycle**, defined as the “social border,” began. Trujillo’s removal allowed Dominican scholars to move beyond issues of territorial boundaries and addressing more diverse political, economic, and social questions concerning Haitians. This stage emerged in the mid-1960s through

⁵ Among some of the most recognized pro-Trujillo and anti-Haitian intellectuals, and whom I examine in this dissertation, are Joaquín Balaguer’s *La realidad dominicana*. (Buenos Aires: Ferrari Hermanos, 1947); Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle’s *El sentido de una política*. (Ciudad Trujillo: La Nación, 1943); Ángel S. Rosario Pérez’s *La exterminación añorada*. (S.I.: S.N, 1957); and Socrates Nolasco’s *Comentarios de la historia de Jean-Price Mars*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955).

1970s. According to Moya Pons, both leftist Dominican and Haitian scholars, "abandoned the emphasis on the political border studies, directing themselves to new themes: racial prejudice, economic domination, nationality, political class relations and the Haitian presence in the sugar industry."⁶ It is within the historiographical context of the various cycles of political, historical, and social border history that I situate my dissertation. I also utilize a narrative approach in an effort to outline the major turning points in the development of the frontier. Therefore my work, then, in some ways is part of the post-Trujillo historiography addressing race and the place of Haitian immigrants in Dominican society (both near and away from the border). It is a study of the continuities and continuum of border life and Dominican-Haitian relations through Dominican history.

Perhaps the major event in the historical continuum of frontier and territorial boundaries was the 1936 treaty. The final 1936 border treaty between Haiti and the Dominican Republic resolved the problem of border demarcations. Haitians who resided within what had been newly defined as Dominican territory, remained in their place of residence. This permanence presented a prominent barrier for Trujillo's plan to consolidate the nation. The 1937 Haitian Massacre became an enforcement mechanism for the 1936 treaty as military men and civilians (many of whom were long-time border residents) killed Haitians throughout the border area and beyond. After the Massacre, Trujillo and his cohort consistently denied that a government conspiracy of murder had taken place. They depicted the massacre as a "border skirmish" between Haitian thieves and patriotic Dominican farmers who were

⁶ Moya Pons, "Las tres fronteras," pg.26.

defending their lands and livelihoods. The post-massacre discourse explicitly linked the past military Haitian invasions with a "silent invasion" of poor Haitian immigrants residing throughout and beyond the border. For the Dominican government and nativist intellectuals, this "silent invasion" threatened not only the economic survival, but also the religious and racial character of the Dominican nation. In reality, the entrenched economic and personal relationships that existed for years between Haitians and Dominicans and beyond the control of the state was, in my opinion, the driving force behind government rationale and subsequent policies to nationalize the border.

Benedict Anderson writes that a nation is an "imagined community" because most citizens "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them."⁷ Moreover, the nation is conceived of as a community of people that shares a "deeply, horizontal comradeship." For Trujillo's intelligentsia, the imagined community required identifying formal markers along racial, linguistic, and religious lines to create a new nation of citizens. The state projected new labels of national identity to inculcate Dominicans with their "true" heritage. The massacre of Haitians provided the Dominican state and its intellectuals with the basis for defining essential attributes to distinguish "Dominicans" from "Haitian" interlopers within the national territory. Simply put, to be Dominican meant that you were not Haitian, and Dominican culture became the antithesis to Haitian culture. It meant, among other criteria, that Dominicans were practicing Catholics who did not participate in forms of "Haitian" Voodoo, even though the line between Catholicism and Voodoo-like

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pg. 6.

syncretic religious practices was, and still is, very thin across the Dominican countryside. It also meant that Dominicans were not black, regardless of their skin color, for to be black was to be Haitian. Concertedly, Trujillo's intelligentsia created a new range of color terms to describe the majority of Dominicans, who are predominantly black and of various shades of brown. Finally, it also meant that Dominicans spoke Spanish, not Creole, and language under Trujillo became "the soul of the nation...increasingly the crucial criterion for nationality."⁸ (Eric Hobsbawm has written)

How study is different/important than previous literature

In this study, I examine the formation of the political border and the emergence of the numerous geographic boundaries through the prism of the border region. I then examine the 1937 Haitian Massacre and the subsequent Dominicanization of the border. By incorporating oral histories and archival government documents, I show how much of a threat the border posed to Trujillo. In the pre- and post-massacre chapters, I show that the border was a fluid zone between Haiti and the Dominican Republic: a zone that developed beyond the control of the Dominican State. And I clearly show the threat that this region represented for Trujillo, who resorted to state violence to pave the way for the creation of his notion of a Dominican identity. Placing the massacre in the middle of a continuum instead of just focusing on Trujillo's genocidal policy and the massacre itself, as most

⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, and Reality* 2nd edition

previous scholars have done, marks an important difference in this study. It reveals an innovative approach to underscore the pivotal role of the border in the development of the Dominican nation.

This study is also important because it exposes one of the Americas' worst cases of mass killings in the modern era. It is a case that needs to be dissected, discussed, and used to better understand how and why examples of collective state violence occur in Latin America.⁹ Most historians and scholars, even those who conduct research in the field of genocidal studies, are unaware that these killings took place in the Dominican Republic in 1937. Most are more aware of the decimation of Indian populations in the Americas but not collective violence against particularly African populations and their descendants. Their ignorance, coupled with the ignorance of non-scholars, is reason enough to disseminate more information on this tragic event. Trujillo's policy of killing Haitians not only along the border but throughout the country, followed by his intensive Dominicanization program, presents an uncontested example of ethnic cleansing.¹⁰

The Case and how it is Special

(London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pg.95.

⁹ Five years prior to the Haitian massacre, another government-sponsored massacre took place in El Salvador. Around ten thousand (Indian) peasants with a significant participation by Communists who had revolted against the government of the dictator Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez were massacred. See Thomas P. Anderson's *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* 2nd ed. (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1992). For a more recent account of a contemporary massacre that occurred in 1981 in el Salvador during the Reagan led American financial and military support of anti-communist combat troops in Central America

See *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

¹⁰ Trujillo's project to nationalize the border could also be defined as racial cleansing. However just as important as the anti-black racial component in the anti-Haitian ideology was value placed on ethnicity to differentiate black Haitians with black Dominicans.

There are various categories of ethnic cleansing: induced assimilation, induced immigration, and induced emigration. Induced assimilation can be characterized by the assimilationist "melting pot" theory of the United States.¹¹ Induced immigration, on the other hand, was popular in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when governments in Australia, Latin America and the Caribbean encouraged "white immigrants" to settle their under-populated countries.¹² An example of induced emigration is perhaps best characterized by the nineteenth-century movement whereby both whites and blacks in the United States encouraged freed blacks to emigrate to Africa, particularly to Liberia. Scholar Michael Mann writes that none of these types of cleansing is coercive. As ethnic cleansing escalates, however, coercion becomes more pronounced. The last stages of ethnic cleansing are coerced emigration, deportation, murderous cleansing, and finally genocide. Following Mann's argument, two of these forms of ethnic cleansing occurred in the 1937 Haitian Massacre. First, prior to the massacre, there was induced immigration. Trujillo's government passed, albeit weak, laws aiding the immigration of "whites" to the country, especially to the border region. Meanwhile, the government also enacted

¹¹ See Michael Mann, 's "The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing," *New Left Review*, No.235 May-June 1999, pg.22; pp.18-45.

¹² Ibid. Although it was understood that these immigrants were racially white on their arrival at their respective Latin American countries, they were often classed by their ethnicities. See David Roediger *Wages of Whiteness*. For Dominican Republic see H. Hoetink's *The Dominican Republic, 1850-1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). It is also important to remember that white immigration as a mechanism to counter the large percentage of native Blacks in Latin American countries like Brazil was not the sole option for many of these countries' elites. In Brazil, like the Dominican Republic and the United States, Asians, Jews, and Arabs also represented significant waves of immigration which transformed national identity and the very meaning of what is was to be Brazilian. See Jeffrey Lesser's *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. (Durham,NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

coercive emigration for thousands of Haitians to be deported to Haiti in 1936.¹³ These deportations then escalated into what Mann calls “murderous cleansing,” represented by the 1937 massacre. Mann writes that “in rare cases, murder may lead to the final escalation, genocide, the deliberate, systematic attempt to wipe out a particular population.”¹⁴ What occurred in the Dominican Republic in 1937 did not start off as genocide. It began as ethnic cleansing and would have probably ended in full-scale genocide if the international community had not intervened and persuaded Trujillo to stop the killings.

Unlike other projects of mass extermination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, the 1937 massacre of Haitians by Dominicans marked the beginning, rather than the culmination, of an anti-Haitian state ideology. This is what emerges as most distinctive about Dominican ethnic cleansing in 1937. In Nazi Germany, anti-Semitic ideological propaganda preceded attacks against (i.e. *Kristalnacht*), and the eventual extermination of, the Jewish population. In more recent cases of genocide, such as in Rwanda, “the encouragement of ethnic hatred on the radio, together with the creation and arming of militias, was one of the clearest early warning signs of an imminent genocide.”¹⁵ What is so striking about the Haitian massacre is that, as the Dominican scholar Bernardo Vega has also suggested, there was no gradual build-up of hate or

¹³ To the best of my knowledge, there has been no in-depth study of these deportations that took place in the early 1930s, prior to the massacre. But there are famous immigration parallels that occurred during the same time. In the 1930s, the United States confronting an economic crisis stemming from the world-wide depression along with strong anti-Mexican feelings, led to the deportation of government deported thousands of Mexicans to Mexico. See Abraham Hoffman’s *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1974).

¹⁴ Mann, “The Dark Side of Democracy,” pg.22.

systematic ethnic attacks on the Haitian population through the media before the massacre. In fact, prior to the massacre, the Dominican press had maintained open and friendly relations in its coverage of Haiti. But this camaraderie between the two governments would disappear in the wake of the killings. The Dominican government's partnership with Haiti and its discourse of mutual respect and friendship cultivated during the first seven years of Trujillo's rise to power changed abruptly. The massacre and the new official anti-Haitian discourse were unprecedented. In no other period in Dominican history had a government invested so much money and ink in the creation and dissemination of a new national identity that aimed to portray diametrically opposing cultures.¹⁶

Like many border regions around the world, the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic had historically been a semi-autonomous region far from the centers of power and a magnet for rebels and revolutionaries. But different countries viewed frontiers in different ways. For the United States the frontier became the defining moment in the American identity and was looked upon by European settlers as redemptive (Frederick Turner). In contrast, throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Dominican capital elites, like their counterparts throughout Latin America, viewed the frontier as a "backward" and "barbarous" region to be feared and "civilized. In this case, capital cities represented the centers of life and civilization.

¹⁵ See Frank Chalk's "Radio Broadcasting in the Incitement and Interdiction of Gross Violations of Human Rights, Including Genocide," in *Genocide: Essays Towards Understanding, Early-Warning and Prevention* (Williamsburg, VA: Association of Genocide Scholars), pg.187.

¹⁶To my understanding Derby and Turits were the first ones to point out this that in the Dominican case propaganda as a precursor to violence was absent in 1937. See Lauren Derby and Richar Turits', "Historias de terror y los terrores de la historia," *Estudios Sociales* (Abril-Junio 1993), No.92 Ano XXVI, pg.71.

Historically, the Haitian side represented a neutral and often supportive refuge for Dominican dissidents who plotted against their governments in Santo Domingo. It appears to have been in this historical context that Trujillo feared an insecure border between the country he now ruled and its **co-island** neighbor. The border region undermined his power because, due to years of Haitian influence, represented a fertile ground for Dominican exiles to plan and undertake invasions against his government. How could Trujillo control a nation when part of its territory—the borderlands—was undefined and settled by Haitians? Thus, he had to first devote extensive energy towards befriending Haiti and seeking a resolution to the centuries-long border dispute. He accomplished this primary aim but centuries of intermarriage and cross-cultural trade between Haitians and Dominicans continued and came to undermine Trujillo's project to create a unified politically and culturally homogeneous nation. Therefore, as it will become evident, it was imperative for him to secure control of the Dominican side of the border. As Terry Martin has written for the Soviet case, a nationalist project to consolidate the nation through state borders "coincided with the creation of ethnic borders."¹⁷

New beginning

As my work points out, the study of the Dominican Republic's history must begin on the border. Scholars have suggested that for the national histories of Latin

¹⁷ See Terry Martin's "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, (December 1998), pg.815. I would like to thank Dr. Lewis Siegelbaum for bringing this article to my attention.

America and their elites, frontiers have not been "central to the formation of national identities or of national institutions".¹⁸ I argue, however, that the colonial frontier and the national Dominican border with Haiti have not been given the centrality that they deserve as the region where the Dominican nation came to life. Part of the goal of this dissertation is to challenge the traditional historiography that sees the border as a kind of separate string of wars, exiles, rebel caudillos, and massacres.¹⁹

Methodology

My study is a multi-layered examination of the border, which combines historiographical and ethnographic analysis with institutional and social history. Moving away from the traditional top-down history, I utilized primary government documents at the Archivo General de la Nación in Santo Domingo. From these archives, I teased out information that sheds light on the daily activities of border Dominicans and oral histories from elderly border residents present during the Trujillo era. My goals were: 1) to reconstruct, as best as possible, a snapshot of what daily life was like throughout the border region under Trujillo, during the massacres, and during the post-massacre reconstruction periods; and 2) to show the centrality of the border and its inhabitants in Dominican history as a whole.

¹⁸ See David J Weber and Jane M. Rausch's introduction in *Where Cultures Meet* ed. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994), xiii.

¹⁹ This study shows that from the seventeenth century through the twentieth century, the border has been an integral part and a catalyst in the development and evolution of the Dominican nation and society. Here I am very much influenced by Peter Sahlins who writes that "the shape and significance of the boundary line was constructed out of local social relations in the borderland." See Peter Sahlins' *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1989), pg.8.

Unfortunately, the type of history represented in my study has been, until very recently, largely neglected by the traditional Dominican historiography. Much like the German advocates of *alltagsgeschichte* (history of everyday life) who strove to “develop a more qualitative understanding of ordinary people's lives, both by investigating the material circumstances of daily existence at work, at home, and at play,” my study attempts to show that ordinary people both actively resisted and embraced state encroachment along the Haitian-Dominican border.²⁰ This study, although in no way an exhaustive examination of border relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, aims to show how a culture of co-existence emerged from years of semi-autonomous border life before 1937.

Because I was passionately devoted to uncovering this hidden violence, I was confronted with the possibility of unassumingly presenting this subject as a spectacle of blood. The unavoidably necessary violent aspect of my work preoccupies me in several ways. Like scholars such as E. Valentine Daniel, I am challenged by the dilemma of informing the reader of a **nefarious** event without succumbing to the need to be sanguinary. Daniel poses the query: “How do you write about the anthropology of violence without it becoming a pornography of violence?”²¹ By writing about the 1937 Haitian Massacre and presenting the violence that it entailed, I have tried not to make violence a fetish. I do, however, underscore the centrality of violence during the Trujillo regime to show how he utilized this strategy to implement his state-building project. Throughout my years of doctoral research and writing, I have been aware and

²⁰ See Geoff Eley’s Forward in *The History of Everyday Life. Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* ed. Alf Lüdtke (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), viii.

often overwhelmed with the fact that Trujillo exterminated more than 20,000 Haitian and Dominican-Haitian human beings. I believe that this should and must be documented to bring back to life, at least in some measure, the victims and their memories—victims who have remained virtually invisible in the Dominican history of the massacre and the history of global mass killings. All of the victims possessed names, surnames and nicknames. Dramatizing the violence employed during 1937 speaks to the brutality of the Dominican perpetrators but, more importantly, focuses attention on a group of human beings who suffered cruel deaths—deaths that have remained anonymous. Today their deaths take on an even more special meaning given the prevalent tumultuous Dominican-Haitian relations.

To this day, Haitians are portrayed as invaders in Dominican society and the Dominican government continues to intermittently deport them. In general, Dominicans fail to see Haitians in a different light because they have been taught to perceive them as a threat. It is true that the Republic of Haiti unsuccessfully attempted to conquer the Dominican Republic in three different occasions in the nineteenth century. These events have become a prominent part of the national memory. However, it is important to point out that although the traditional historiography neglects it, the reality is that Dominicans today should be grateful for the 1822-1844 Haitian unification of the island, which essentially abolished slavery. Many Dominican border towns supported the 1822 invasion which represent the untold story of a region and a people whose history has been more collaborative than adversarial. From the mid- to the late nineteenth century and through the twentieth

²¹ See E. Valentine Daniel's *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*.

of the massacre must show how ordinary Dominicans participated willingly and unwillingly in this genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing. Debates similar to those that other countries confront about their participation in the destruction of ethnic minority groups must take place in the Dominican Republic. The most recognized example of this self-negotiation is witnessed in contemporary German society's present attempt to comprehend why their forefathers participated in the killing of Jews and other minorities knowing full well that their actions were morally reprehensible. The Dominican Republic, a country much smaller in size and economic production and very different from Germany in multiple ways, should not excuse itself from the dialogue. Dominican Republic's comparatively weaker position in the developing world should not obviate its society from simulating Germany and asking itself: How could Dominicans, especially those living in an undefined frontier zone, who were familiar with Haiti and its people, be so callous about killing, burning, and burying their Haitian neighbors?

With rampant talk of globalization in the Dominican Republic, the government has failed to globalize the way it remembers its past. At a time when there is a global movement to remember genocides and other crimes against humanity, the Dominican Republic has not acknowledged or commemorated the memories of the victims of the 1937 Haitian Massacre or any historical events associated with Haiti. Among foreigners, Americans especially should be made aware of this massacre because President Roosevelt, through diplomatic correspondence, was aware of the killings, but failed to punish Trujillo and his government. For the sake of preserving Latin American solidarity and assure the success of his Good

Neighbor Policy, President Roosevelt failed to publicly or privately scorn or develop a **policy** to isolate Trujillo. All was forgotten when the United States entered **World War II** against Germany and Japan and Trujillo declared his support for the allies.

One way in which Dominicans can begin rethinking the past is by actively **remembering** their nation's mistakes. Benedict Anderson writes that there is no shame **in feeling** ashamed of your country's past mistakes and that crimes committed by the **state**—past or present—should be condemned by the entire citizenry. Using the case of America's role during the Vietnam War, Anderson writes that Americans "felt ashamed that 'their' country's history was being stained by cruelties, lies, and betrayals. So they went to work in protest, not merely as advocates of universal human rights, but as Americans who loved the common American project." He adds that, "This kind of political shame is very good and always needed."²³ Dominicans need to have this kind of shame as a collective group concerning not only Trujillo's genocidal policy against Haitians in 1937, but other human rights violations during the regime which continued to occur well beyond the dictatorship.

Today, more than ever, the concept of remembering a nation's shameful past has become an extremely important tool in countries' ability to cope with uncomfortable parts of their history. As a way to come to terms with its past, the South African government has created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the crimes committed against Blacks under the Apartheid government. Swiss banks have agreed to pay more than a billion dollars to Nazi Holocaust survivors and their families whose accounts were hidden by the banks. Recently, Sweden's prime

minister, Goran Persson, began reevaluating his country's role and collaboration with Hitler's army during World War II. According to a recent New York Times article, "Mr. Persson broke 60 years of tradition by ending a defense of neutral Sweden, which, it has emerged, sold iron ore to Germany for munitions and let German troops cross its territory into Finland and Norway." Trials against those persons who masterminded the genocide in Rwanda are being conducted, albeit at a very slow pace. President Clinton, who almost apologized for slavery in the United States during his trip to Africa, became the first U.S. president to apologize to his fellow Americans and, in particular, to African-Americans for the painful and reprehensible government project called the Tuskegee experiment. If other governments throughout the world can come to grips with their nations' unspoken and shameful histories, then surely the Dominican Republic can begin the painful (not just historiographical) but redemptive process of remembering the victims of the 1937 Haitian Massacre and their responsibility to this event as heirs to this history.

Through this dissertation, I hope to undermine the persistent and inherent notion in Dominican society that both groups have always existed apart from each other. This study serves as a denunciation of a regime which was not held accountable for its actions in 1937, and for which regrettably the statute of limitations prevents any future legal and redemptive recourse. Unfortunately, Trujillo was never punished for his crimes against Haitians and for his crimes against humanity. Nor were any of his ideologues, many of whom, have since died, ever held accountable for their participation in those crimes. None of his supporters has been brought before a judge

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century, Haitian and Dominican border residents created an interdependent and mutual space where negotiation, understanding, and daily interaction were the norm. Even today you can witness Dominicans and Haitians unassumingly buying and selling goods to each other in markets along the border. According to one Dominican provincial border governor, Dominicans "sell food to Haitians and they, at the same time, sell them [Dominicans] clothes, perfumes and other personal items."²²

The study's aims---why it's important to do/ Bringing redemption

This study builds on the work of others who seek to expose Trujillo's doctrine of anti-Haitianism and Hispanidad as a means to simultaneously underscore Dominicans' cultural similarities with Spain and distance from Haiti. In reality, however, Dominicans share more similarities than differences with their Haitian neighbors. Teaching a more accurate version of Dominican-Haitian history will begin the transformation of Dominican attitudes toward Haitians and, perhaps, will increase sensitivities toward immigrants' rights in the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, the 1937 Haitian Massacre must be taught so that Dominicans see it as a shameful part of their history; a history that is part of the tragedy of genocide and ethnic cleansing around the world. The massacre must not be remembered as neither an isolated incident nor as an aberration by a dictator and his band of soldiers in a remote region of an underdeveloped country. The public memory

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pg. 4.

²² Interview with Miguel Mateo, Governor for the border province of Elias Pina *Listin Diario* May 12, 1997, 6C.

of the massacre must show how ordinary Dominicans participated willingly and unwillingly in this genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing. Debates similar to those that other countries confront about their participation in the destruction of ethnic minority groups must take place in the Dominican Republic. The most recognized example of this self-negotiation is witnessed in contemporary German society's present attempt to comprehend why their forefathers participated in the killing of Jews and other minorities knowing full well that their actions were morally reprehensible. The Dominican Republic, a country much smaller in size and economic production and very different from Germany in multiple ways, should not excuse itself from the dialogue. Dominican Republic's comparatively weaker position in the developing world should not obviate its society from simulating Germany and asking itself: How could Dominicans, especially those living in an undefined frontier zone, who were familiar with Haiti and its people, be so callous about killing, burning, and burying their Haitian neighbors?

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²³ See Benedict Anderson's "Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future," in *The New Left*

to be tried in a court of law. And some, like Joaquin Balaguer, who has published racist diatribes about Haitians, have gone on to become President of the Dominican Republic.

Rewriting history is very much a political act, with readers serving as the judges and the jury members.²⁴ With this study, and others like it, the perpetrators can finally be brought to trial. Surely we owe this to ourselves and to the thousands of Haitian and Dominican-Haitian victims whose spirits roam the borderlands without closure.

Review, No.235 (May/June 1999), pg.18.

²⁴ Michel-Rolph, Trouillot, *Silencing the Past Power and the Production of History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Chapter 1

BIRTH OF A BOUNDARY

The border has shaped the historical development of both Dominican and Haitian history since the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. In peacetime or in war, successive Spanish colonial regimes and, subsequently, Dominican governments had to wrestle with the border question as it pertained to the central government's agenda in Santo Domingo. Long before this region became an integral component in the consolidation and modernization of the Dominican nation under the dictator Rafael Trujillo, the border had been the site of both interethnic relations and vibrant economic activity. Through secondary sources, this chapter establishes the borderlands as pivotal in the political and economic formation of this region, which emerged from the violent encounter between the Spanish and the Indigenous inhabitants of Hispaniola.

Cimarrones and Contraband: The Border Region in the Sixteenth Century

Genocide was not exactly new to Hispaniola in 1937. The Spanish conquest of the indigenous Tainos in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries led to the economic exploitation of Hispaniola. Tainos were enslaved and the harsh and brutal working conditions of the gold mines, along with a reduced immunity to the diseases carried by Europeans, caused their dramatic decline in the early seventeenth century. The shortage of Indian labor led the Spanish Conquistadores to replace a dwindling labor force with imported African labor. However, like their Taino counterparts, many

Africans resisted their new slave conditions by escaping to the colonial frontier: a region virtually uninhabited by Europeans.

The frontier became an ideal place for runaway African and Indian slaves to escape slavery. The inhospitable and varied landscape, which ranges from steep mountains, semi-deserts, dry vegetation, and hot temperatures made the border an ideal place to hide from the French and Spanish colonial authorities. Moreover, the sparsely populated frontier and the lack of a strong Spanish presence (due to the crown's depopulation policies, which I explain later) opened the way for French expansionism in western Hispaniola and increased economic competition against Spain.

The struggle for land and resources between the two European powers converged on the border. This no-man's land allowed the French to establish trading and military posts throughout this region, while constantly encroaching eastward. This provoked consecutive military confrontations between the French and the Spanish forces. Although conflicts persisted intermittently along the border, several major border agreements and treaties that became legal precedent for future diplomatic border arbitrations emerged throughout the colonial period. They would forever change the geographic, political, economic, and linguistic landscape of the island. The French would come to occupy one-third of western Hispaniola, while Spain controlled the eastern two-thirds of the island. These distinct monarchies and governments, as well as differing economic systems, gave rise to a new border culture whose importance continued long into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

Spanish colonization

During the initial phase of Spanish colonization and settlement, the only boundaries within the island were the regional indigenous cacicazgos (chieftancies) controlled by the five major Taino caciques (chiefs).¹ As the Spaniards settled the island and their authority increased, the cacicazgos as regional markers (along with their inhabitants), gradually disappeared.

For most Tainos, the arrival of the Europeans was an overwhelming threat to their existence bringing with it violence, slavery, and death. The Spaniards forced Tainos to work in agriculture and mining, especially in the dangerous and inhumane task of extracting gold from the mines.² This unprecedented exploitation along with high mortality rates due to widespread disease, forced many Tainos to flee their respective homes. Many of these Taino cimarrones (runaway slaves) and, later, African slaves, escaped to the inaccessible mountainous center part of the island to escape the Spanish colonial authorities.

In the early sixteenth century, Africans were brought to Hispaniola as slaves to work in the sugar ingenios (sugarmills). From the backbreaking ordeal of cutting the sugarcane to the exhausting process of extracting the juice and processing it, sugar production on Hispaniola, as it would later become in Brazil, Haiti, Barbados,

¹ Frank Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana*, 9th ed. (Santo Domingo: Caribbean Publishers, 1992), pg. 8. Each one of the five major Taino caciques: Guarionex, Caonabo, Behechio, Goacanagari, and Cayacoa, was responsible for a specific region of the island.

² Ibid. Moya Pons writes that "...the extraction of gold became everyone's central occupation...Ovando [the governor of the island] was responsible for converting Hispaniola into a giant farm to exploit gold, where the Indians were enslaved and taken by force from their communities to work in the mines and the rivers breaking nuggets and washing gold for periods of eight to twelve

Martinique and Cuba, was a labor-intensive process.³ The Spaniards' quest for higher profits amidst a strong desire for freedom on the part of the slaves led the latter to escape to the mountains along the frontier. Along with Indian cimarrones, such as the well-known Taino cacique Enriquillo, there were countless African runaway slaves seeking refuge and freedom throughout the center of the island.⁴

From its beginnings, the border became a place where people escaped to, settled, and co-existed together beyond the reaches of the state authorities. In essence, the border was born out of a democratic need where people existed on equal terms.

Besides being a safe-haven for Indian and African cimarrones escaping Spanish domination, the sixteenth-century border region became the site where a very distinct, hybrid, and vibrant culture emerged. The conglomeration of African slaves, Tainos, and European Spanish settlers led to the creation of a new and complex culture that became the precursor of today's Dominican-Haitian border culture. The absence of a strong Spanish presence and, by extension, a lack of restrictive colonial control on the frontier, meant that "there were multiethnic Creole children all over the island, not just in Spanish dominated regions."⁵ This new and diverse culture, which emerged in resistance to Spanish rule, created a frontier region that presently

months, enduring fourteen hours daily without any food except casabe and water." See Frank Moya Pons, *El choque del descubrimiento* (Santo Domingo: Biblioteca Taller, 1992), pg.39.

³ Some historians have argued that the early seventeen century Caribbean sugar plantations were examples of proto-industrial processes originating in the colonies and not the metropole. See Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 48.

⁴ Ibid. 277. According to Dr. Silvio Torres Saillant, "The best known maroon society in Santo Domingo, whose population was crushed by the troops of a Captain Villalobos in 1666, had its camp in the maniel (maroon settlement) of San José de Ocoa." Closer to the border region and "historically closest to us existed in Neiba, a section of present Barahona." See "The Dominican Republic," *No longer Invisible: Afro-Latin Americans Today* edited by Minority Rights Group. (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1995), pg.119.

⁵ Ibid.313.

continues to be multilingual, multicultural, and neglected by the central government. Moreover, by the seventeenth century, the center of the island already boasted ethnically and racially diverse communities setting the precedent to the mosaic of complexions extant in present day Dominican Republic.⁶ This cultural dynamism and economic autonomy, so integral to the Dominican-Haitian border, would represent a serious challenge to the Spanish government and, subsequently, to Trujillo's twentieth century nation-building schemes.

The spontaneous border colonies composed of runaway Africans, Tainos, and rogue Spaniards came to represent a threat to the Crown's rule on the island. Furthermore, these colonies also resulted in an autonomous economy existing beyond the control of the Spanish authorities. For the Spanish colonists it was more profitable to participate in the contraband trade with the French, the English, the Dutch, and the Portuguese than it was to purchase imported goods from Spain. According to Manuel A. Peña Batlle, "The foreigners paid better than the Spaniards, bought much more, diversified the exchange and provided the inhabitants on many occasions with many more things than what was sent from Spain."⁷ Another reason for the prosperity of the contraband trade was the continued lack of Spanish enforcement along the frontier. The majority of the illegal trade was conducted on the north side of Hispaniola because Spanish presence and control was weaker there vis-a-vis Santo

⁶ See A.O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America: A True Account of the most remarkable assaults committed by the English and the French buccaneers against the Spaniards in America*. (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1992), 30. Originally published in 1678.

⁷ Manuel A. Peña Batlle, *La isla de la tortuga, tercera edicion*. (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1988), 47.

Domingo in the south.⁸ Throughout the 1500s, on the northern coast of the island, contraband trade continued with Spain being unable to exert any control over it. By the early 1600s Spanish authorities, still unable to contain or eliminate the contraband trade, decided to depopulate the northern border of all its colonists and relocate them around the city of Santo Domingo to the south.⁹ The redistribution of people and its concomitant transformation of frontier society would become one of the first examples of numerous future crown and state interventions in the lives of border residents.¹⁰

To contain the contraband trade, the Spanish Crown pursued a variety of strategies. One such strategy was that of relocating the border population. The Spanish authorities believed that depopulating the northern section of the island would undermine the contraband trade and, with the new arrivals from the north, reinvigorate the southern economy around Santo Domingo.¹¹ Spain believed that these relocations would strengthen their trading and military position against the “enemy” contrabandists. However, the relocations proved to be traumatic considering that the inhabitants were part of a frontier society that had been in existence for about

⁸ Manuel A. Peña Batlle, *La isla de la tortuga*, pg.45.

⁹ Americo Lugo, *Historia de Santo Domingo desde el 1556 hasta 1608*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Editorial Librería Dominicana, 1952), 159.

¹⁰ Americo Lugo, *Historia de Santo Domingo desde el 1556 hasta 1608*, pg.160.

¹¹ According to a Crown letter to Hispaniola Governor Osorio, “commerce will grow sending their products to Spain, everything leaving and entering through the port of Santo Domingo...it appears to me a good thing...the relocation of the three towns.” See *Real cedula a Ossorio, 6 agosto 1603, Reales cédulas y correspondencia de gobernadores de Santo Domingo de la Regencia del Cardenal Cisneros en adelante, 1582 al 1609*, tomo III. (Madrid: Graficas Reunidas, S.A., 1958), 789.

hundred years.¹² This was their home and many decided not to follow the crown's orders.

The relocations also marked the beginning of a long tradition of border resistance against capital government encroachment. The relocated colonists protested and these protests escalated to a popular rebellion resisting being moved to the south. Many of the border residents (most of who were black and mulatto) fled to the mountains in order to avoid relocation.¹³ Instead of undermining the contraband trade in the north, the relocation project of the Spanish authorities, unintentionally, opened the doors for the French to temporarily and, eventually, permanently to settle in northwestern Hispaniola. As a result, this region became the site of initial conflict between the European colonial powers of Spain and France. The future struggles over territory and eventual border disputes would all stem from the question of who would control this region and its commerce.¹⁴

French colonial expansion and eventual settlement of northwestern Hispaniola led to military confrontations with Spain. The point of confrontation between the two colonial powers shaped the development of the Dominican-Haitian border. Part of this conflict was also due to the growing inter-colonial trade between French San Domingue in the west and Spanish Santo Domingo in the east, despite intermittent

¹²Peña Batlle, *Obras escogidas*, pg.233. According to scholar Peña Batlle, "It is reasonable to think that when the order was given to destroy these northwestern towns, those with more than one hundred years of being founded had generated their own way of life."

¹³ Americo Lugo, *Historia de Santo Domingo desde 1556 hasta 1608*, pg.176-177. According to Lugo, after the depoblaciones, "All of the island's population remained between the cities of Santiago and Villa de Azua, except other small towns, which were Boia, Ceibo, and Higuei, which are on the other side of this city [Santo Domingo]." pg.204.

¹⁴ "The first buccaneer on Tortuga was a certain Pierre le Grand of Dieppe, who, in the year 1602, with one boat and a crew of twenty-eight, captured the vice-admiral of the Spanish fleet off Cape Tiburón, in the west of Hispaniola." See Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, pg.56.

wars in Europe between France and Spain. Yet, the growing economic activity in an undefined region far from both colonial capitals convinced colonial officials that a boundary demarcating territorial conquests was necessary. The end of the seventeenth century saw France and Spain end their hostilities in Europe. This detente between the two colonial powers would have a major impact in their Caribbean colonies and resulted in the first drafted border agreements followed by treaties demarcating the colonies' territorial limits.

The First French-Spanish Border Treaties

Ironically, the first agreement associated with the colonial partition of Hispaniola had nothing to do with the Caribbean island. The Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 was not created with Hispaniola in mind. The treaty, which ended a European war between France and Spain, brought peace to France's King Luis XIV and the Habsburg Alliance.¹⁵ Contrary to what much of the Dominican traditional historiography recounts, this was not a treaty giving France the western one-third of Hispaniola. The treaty never referred to Hispaniola and/or French claims to their settlements on the island, and it had no reference to border demarcations. According to Frank Moya Pons, the confusion concerning the "First border line of some Dominican historians comes from the interpretation that the French gave to the Ryswick Peace Treaty, since the belligerent parties in Europe agreed to put an end to the war, returning the conquered lands and recognizing the possessions that each one

of them had prior to the conflict.”¹⁶ Quite naturally, the French colonists in western and northern Hispaniola used the Treaty of Ryswick to justify further eastern encroachments into Spanish territory.

The French gradually occupied lands east of the accepted river boundaries, causing violent confrontations with Spanish colonial forces who were intent on dismantling these settlements east of the established rivers.¹⁷ Ultimately, the skirmishes between the French settlers and Spanish troops led to the 1731 border agreement. This agreement was the first of its kind. It became the foundation for future border negotiations on the island. The formal boundaries now became the “Dajabon River in the north extending southwards to the Libon and Artibonito rivers.”¹⁸ While both the French and the Spaniards were trying to create a fixed border, two distinct but complementary economies were developing on both sides of the island.

The low numbers of settlers forced the Spanish authorities to initiate an immigration policy that would be repeated up through the twentieth century with the hopes of populating the eastern part of the island. In light of this problem the Spanish Crown, as early as the late sixteenth century, brought over families from the Canary Islands to increase the population levels in Hispaniola. The Canary Islanders were brought to live in Santo Domingo and, particularly, to the frontier. These families, established in border towns such as Bánica, were positioned to act as buffer zones

¹⁵ Jacinto Gimbernard, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, (Santo Domingo: Offset Sardá, 1971), 154.

¹⁶ Frank Moya Pons, “La Primera linea fronteriza,” *Rumbo*, pg.5.

¹⁷ Ibid. 5. Moya Pons writes that, “In the south, the maps of that period show that the French demands reached up to the vicinity of Azua.”

¹⁸ Moya Pons, *Rumbo*, February 10-16 1994, pg.5.

against French settlers who periodically sought eastward expansion into Spanish territory. The new immigrants, however, were unaccustomed to Hispaniola's harsh terrain and its tropical hot climate. Many abandoned the region or fell victim to disease.¹⁹ Along with the depopulation policy of the early 1600s, the discoveries of massive gold, silver, and copper deposits in Mexico and Peru diverted many conquistadors away from Hispaniola. In other times, these conquistadors would have remained in Santo Domingo as settlers.

Overall, eighteenth-century Santo Domingo accounted for very low population levels. The classic travel account by the Martinican M.L. Moreau de Saint-Mery, who visited Santo Domingo in the late eighteenth-century, offers some data on population levels. In Spanish Hispaniola, Moreau de Saint-Mery writes that, "A census taken in 1737 demonstrates clearly that the total population did not reach more than six thousand souls and the capital only counted with barely 500."²⁰ For Santo Domingo and the border, the eighteenth century brought a languishing economy. Furthermore, the colony remained a difficult place for the Spanish colonial authorities to control. For French Hispaniola, on the other hand, life was a completely contrasting story.

Since the 1600s and the days of buccaneers and contrabandists, French settlement on western and northwestern Hispaniola had been growing at a steady pace.²¹ The western part of the island, now called Saint Domingue, would become France's richest colony thanks to the forced labor of African slaves and the "white

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ M.L. Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Descripción de la parte Española de Santo Domingo* (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora Montalvo, 1944), pg.158.

gold” of the Caribbean: sugar. It has been estimated that by the 1700s Saint Domingue produced close to one-fourth of all the world’s sugar supply. Thus, this French colony reaped the benefits of selling a highly prized commodity to an insatiable international market, while eastern Hispaniola and Santo Domingo languished in isolation. The disparity between these two colonial economies could be seen clearly from the perspective of the periphery or frontier.

The difference in colonial economic development between French and Spanish Hispaniola is evident in the observations of traveler’s accounts such as the Moreau de Saint-Mery. The Martinican Francophobe traveler recorded his biased observations of the eastern end of the island and was surprised to find French Saint Domingue in a more advanced state vis-à-vis Spanish Santo Domingo. While traveling near the border, Saint-Mery observed: “The most surprising thing and perhaps the most typical to demonstrate, the character of the two nations, is to look west of the Massacre [River], establishments in which all of them announce an active industry and a joy that extends to luxury items, while on the other side, everything shows sterility; since the small portions of cultivated land with barely what is necessary for the life of an animal cannot destroy the sad monotony of this aspect.”²² Since the depoblaciones, the Santo Domingo colony descended into a state of economic paralysis. Neither mining nor sugar production fueled the economy of Santo Domingo. Eventually, cattle and livestock breeding, rather, became Santo Domingo’s major source of trade.

²¹ Buccaneers were seventeenth-century traders and hunters who inhabited the island of Tortuga north of Hispaniola. They often traded with the inhabitants of the northern coast of Hispaniola who decided to remain there after the depoblaciones.

In the late eighteenth-century the laws of supply and demand would force these two neighboring, one-island colonies to become mutually dependent economic trading partners. For years, eastern Hispaniola had dedicated itself to developing an economy of ranching and to the cultivation of small plots of land.²³ Yet, due to the crown's monopolistic regulations, Santo Domingo's meat could only legally be shipped and sold directly to Spain. This strict economic trade regulation explains the increased contraband trade to and from colonial French Saint Domingue. Furthermore, this trade with French Saint Domingue was more profitable for Santo Domingo than the sanctioned trade with Spain. With an entrenched and profitable slave economy that consisted of hundreds of thousands of slaves and thousands of colonists to the west, Santo Domingo emerged as the best source of meat for the French colony. Consequently, the frontier became the economic lifeline that supported both internal economies. This arrangement became, as the father of Dominican historiography writes, "more advantageous for the Spanish part than for the French because the former did not have anything to trade but beasts and livestock, while the latter had an abundance of everything, and found itself already at the height of progress, which depended on the constant work of three hundred and fifty thousand slaves[.]"²⁴

In the French colony of Saint Domingue the economy of sugar required a large and constant supply of slaves to produce, package, and export this product for

²² M.L. Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Descripción de la parte española de Santo Domingo*, 209.

²³ Frank Moya Pons writes that "Those who study history know that during almost four centuries cattle was the base of the Dominican economy." See *Rumbo*, 19-25, April 1995, pg.4.

²⁴ José Gabriel García, *Compendium de la historia de Santo Domingo*, tomo I. (Santo Domingo: Editora de Santo Domingo, 1979), pg.207.

European consumption. Santo Domingo's economy revolved mainly around small plot agriculture and livestock. In the late 1700s, the exploitative slave system that was so integral to colonial Haiti failed to materialize on the eastern part of the island. This profoundly affected the institution of slavery in both colonies. The different economies that evolved between both colonies would also shape the racial majorities that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

In order to export one-fourth of the world's sugar, Saint Domingue required large number of slaves to grow and harvest the crop. With so many African slaves arriving in Saint Domingue, Haiti's population quickly became predominately black. Santo Domingo's economy in Eastern Hispaniola, conversely, did not depend on similar highly intensive mono-crop production. Colonists on eastern Hispaniola "continued, for various reasons, attached to the traditional mode of production, which consisted, in an extensive way, of utilizing the land and dedicating it to the breeding of livestock or the cultivation of staple crops."²⁵ The sugar plantation system in Santo Domingo, like the rest of eastern Hispaniola, declined throughout the late seventeenth century. This, along with political and economic neglect by Spain in the seventeenth century, led to higher rates of miscegenation in Santo Domingo, and especially along the frontier. As a result, the mulatto would become the future "predominant type in the ethnic composition of the Dominican Republic."²⁶

Despite their economies becoming more integrated, the Spanish and French colonies had not reached a political agreement over the territorial limits of their

²⁵ Frank Moya Pons, *Historia Colonial de Santo Domingo*, tercera edicion PUCCM (Espana: Industrias Graficas M. Pareja, 1977), 249.

respective frontiers. During the mid-eighteenth century, violent confrontations between French and Spanish colonists on the border led colonial authorities to begin negotiations over a potential border agreement. Between 1731 and 1777, France and Spain entered into a series of border agreements in efforts to secure the economy and territorial limits of French Saint Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo. Thanks to the 1731 border treaty, which established the first border limits on the island and made possible the stabilization and increase in commercial trade between the two colonies, new border towns were founded to repopulate the Spanish frontier. Towns such as San Juan de la Maguana (1733), Neiba (1735), Montecristi (1751), and San Rafael (1761), among others farther east in Samaná and south in Baní, were founded to repopulate the northern border with Spanish colonists. One town that symbolized the eighteenth-century border growth was Dajabón (1776). According to Dominican historian José Gabriel García, Dajabón “continued to progress morally and materially, at a faster pace than others. The town of Dajabón, founded in 1776 on the eastern shore of the Dajabón river, which, due to the mercantile transactions that were made between the sections of the island, already could count on more than a hundred houses and four thousand inhabitants, and with much reason the parish was erected and separated from the one in Santiago [in 1740].”²⁷

Throughout this period, the border continued to be an attractive place for people running away from the law. The colonial authorities’ inability to control this region led to perhaps the island’s first inter-colony extradition treaty in 1762.

²⁶ See Silvio Torres-Saillant’s, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol.25, No.3 (May 1998), 134.

Fugitives “would be returned to the first border positions with the promise of only having employed on them the penalty of prison or personal work in public works.”²⁸ No longer was the border, at least on paper, a nebulous region of the island. With the Treaty of Aranjuez (1777), the border became a tangible reality when stone pyramid-shaped markers were placed to demarcate the agreed-upon border between the colonial governments of Saint Domingue and Santo Domingo. The Aranjuez treaty marked a turning point for the economy of Spanish Hispaniola. The treaty allowed freer and less restrained trade across the border for Santo Domingo beef exporters, who had become the major suppliers in Saint Domingue’s economy. Furthermore, the success of sugar production in western Hispaniola and the concomitant importation of thousands of slaves served as the catalysts for the economic revival of Spanish Santo Domingo in the mid to late 1700s.²⁹

The Haitian Revolution and the Treaty of Basilea

The Haitian Revolution struck an undeniable blow to slavery and its ideological underpinnings of white supremacy. The 1789 French Revolution’s slogan—Liberte, Fraternite, and Egalite—had a profound impact on the poor and non-privileged sectors of French society. Furthermore, these ideals were appealing to the Caribbean-born slave-owning mulattos who, despite their wealth and influence, faced discrimination by white Saint Domingue colonial society who detested the mulattoes’ African heritage. Between 1790s and the early 1800s and led by the great Toussaint

²⁷ José Garbiel García, *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo*, Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1893, pg.210.

²⁸ M.L. Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Descripción de la parte este española de Santo Domingo*, pg.416.

L'Ouverture, former black slaves fought against a British and French invasion and participated in a civil war against the mulatto class. For Spanish Hispaniola, there was no escaping the revolutionary upheaval on the western end of the island. Spain went to war with France to, among other things, protect slavery in its colonies and especially in their once-prized possession of Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, Spanish Santo Domingo would also be controlled by Toussaint L'Ouverture and his followers.³⁰ Thus, in the mid-1790's, the island became temporarily, if only legally, unified. For a people who had lived as Spanish subjects, the incorporation of eastern Hispaniola into the realm of their old nemesis, France, proved to be traumatic.

In 1795, France and Spain ended their disputes in Europe and signed the Treaty of Basilea. The treaty ceded Spain's Caribbean possession of Hispaniola to the French. The Treaty stipulated that "the Spanish troops were soon to be evacuated from the plazas, ports and establishments they occupied to hand them over to the French forces that will be present themselves to take possession of these sites."³¹ Years of military conflicts, diplomatic negotiations, and treaties came to an end, not in victories on the battlefield but by a stroke of the pen. Those colonists who felt threatened by the new reality of French rule, and who could afford to, fled Santo Domingo to neighboring Caribbean islands. They chose as a destination those islands controlled by Spain. Others fled the border towns and the colony before being

²⁹ Frank Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana*, pg.153.

³⁰ Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle. *El Tratado de Basilea y la desnacionalización del Santo Domingo español*. Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1952), pg.5. It is important to point out that Spanish colonial support on the eastern part of hispaniola was crucial for the success of the Haitian Revolution. I like to thank Dr. Laurent Dubois for helping me to understand that neither nation (Haiti or the Dominican Republic) could have existed without the support of the other.

³¹ José Gabriel García *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo*, Jose Gabriel Garcia, pg.255.

captured by Haitian (Toussaint's) forces.³² Nevertheless, although eastern Hispaniola was now legally French, the future of the island and, who would ultimately rule it, remained uncertain.

Toussaint's arrival in Santo Domingo in 1801 affirmed the black Haitian leader as the undisputed military leader of the entire island. Additionally, his arrival reinforced the Treaty of Basilea and officially consolidated Hispaniola as a French colony occupied by pro-French Republican ex-slaves. Toussaint's unification, however, was short-lived. In 1802 Napoleon sent his army to Hispaniola to overthrow Toussaint and declare slavery once again. Napoleon's army failed. In 1804, Haiti was finally able to declare political independence from France and became the first nation in the Americas to abolish slavery.

No other European colony felt the brunt of the Haitian Revolution more than Santo Domingo. The Spanish colony now abandoned by Spain, thanks to the Treaty of Basilea, was left to fend for itself as the defeated French armies withdrew from Hispaniola. Between 1804 and 1808 Spanish Santo Domingo was controlled by the French under General Jean Louis Ferrand who barely was able to defend the capital against

three Haitian military assaults. In retreating to Haitian soil Haitian armies applied a scorched earth policy to all the interior towns of the former Spanish colony.

Historical events such as this will eventually form a legacy, which Trujillo and post-

³² "...the comfortable class [of the Spanish side] continued to leave through all the ports and in all directions, as the occasions present themselves." See José Gabriel García, *Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo*, pg.268.

Trujillo intellectuals used to mobilize Dominican anti-Haitian prejudice in the twentieth century.

It was not until 1809 that Santo Domingo reverted back to being a Spanish colony.

In Dominican history, the period between 1808 and 1822 is called “La España Boba” (loosely translated as “Silly Spain”) to describe the colony’s fall into economic and political disarray. In late 1821 and early 1822, the Spanish colonial governor Núñez de Cáceres would claim an ephemeral independence, which was seen by many Dominicans as an effort to “maintain slavery.”³³ Apparently, Núñez de Cáceres believed he could easily win independence while reestablishing slavery without any resistance. Between 1822 and 1844, however, eastern Hispaniola was once again annexed to Haiti under Haitian President Jean Pierre Boyer. Significant Dominican support for Boyer’s unification plans confirmed that many of the black and mulatto inhabitants of eastern Hispaniola, especially those near the border region, were all too aware that they would suffer under Núñez de Cáceres’ paradigm of independence. They would become slaves, just like the men, women, and children in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and the United States. It was no surprise then that many towns, particularly near the border, raised Haitian flags in support of Boyer and freedom.³⁴ Nevertheless, Boyer’s “invasion” in Dominican history is typically represented as a

³³ Gustavo Rodolfo Mejía Ricart, *Historia de Santo Domingo*. Vol.VIII. (Ciudad Trujillo: Editores Hermanos Pol, 1956), 447. The traditional historiography ignores that with the Haitian invasion of eastern Hispaniola slavery--which had stood since the sixteenth century--was abolished by Boyer’s government.

³⁴ Andrés Julio Montolio, *Resumen de una cuestión Diferendo Dominico-Haitiano*. (Santo Domingo: Imprenta Escobar, 1911), pg.46-47. On February 9, 1822, in the National Palace of Santo Domingo, Boyer began his triumphant and unprecedented speech by saying, “The National [Haitian] flag floats

“dark chapter” in the traditional nationalist historiography. This event is yet another example of how the border came to play an integral role in the development and representation of Dominican history.

Aside from the prejudice that Boyer encountered in Santo Domingo, he was welcomed and supported by many Dominicans.³⁵ Prior to his invasion, Boyer wrote that residents of eastern Hispaniola, particularly border cities such as Dajabón, MonteCrist [sic], Las Caobas, Azua, San Juan, and Las Matas [de Farfan], “have received their orders and obey them.”³⁶ Dominican border residents, many who could trace their origins to runaway slaves, again, were at the forefront of claiming their freedom this time by supporting the faction they believed was most beneficial to them. Finally, Boyer was able to enter triumphantly through the gates of Santo Domingo in 1822 because border residents from Monte Cristi to Dajabón had resoundingly opted to support his military campaign. This is a historical fact that has never fully been incorporated into either the Dominican historiography or transmitted through the educational system’s curriculum.³⁷ Much of the Haitian annexation’s appeal, in the eyes of the inhabitants of Santo Domingo, came from Boyer’s declaration of the abolition of slavery throughout eastern Hispaniola. In fact, the

over all the points of the island that we inhabit!...Already over this land of liberty there are no longer slaves and we do not form anything but a single family whose members are united forever...,” pg.42.

³⁵ Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana*, pg.223. Pons writes that “He (Caceres) like Boyer knew that the majority of the the population was mulatto and it saw favorably the island’s unification with Haiti, whose government promised lands and the abolishment of slavery—which were very little for sure—and he knew that he could not count on support from even his own class.” As Pons also points out during Boyer’s march on Santo Domingo, Dominicans were divided into three ideological camps: one pro-hispanic; pro-Colombian (Simon Bolivar’s Gran Colombia project); and one pro-Haitian. The existence of a group of Dominicans who favored the Haitian invasion is important but in the traditional anti-Haitian Dominican historiography this example of Dominicans supporting a Haitian invasion (“the dark chapter” in Dominican history) is not ignored.

³⁶ Gustavo Rodolfo Mejia Ricaart, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, VIII, pg.451.

Haitian unification of Hispaniola represented a beacon of liberty for slaves all across the Americas. Even as late as the mid-1800s, Puerto Rican slaves took wooden boats and made the treacherous seventy mile westward journey to reach the Dominican Republic where, thanks to Haiti, slavery had been abolished since 1822.³⁸

On the other hand, the unification of the towns by Boyer had, according to one Spanish document, “produced great and general uncertainty on the part of the inhabitants, and especially the white people, in terms that the neighbors of Samaná and Sabana de la Mar, French and Spaniards alike, have not received aid.”³⁹ Needless to say, whites in Hispaniola, already traumatized by the 1804 Haitian revolution next door, viewed the unification of the island under Haitian forces as a threat to their economic stability and racial superiority. For them, Boyer’s march across the island did not represent a beacon of hope but a loss of economic and racial power and privilege.

In 1844, the Dominican Republic, unlike other Latin American and Caribbean nations whose independence movements mostly emerged from a rejection of European colonialism, declared its political independence from Haiti, itself a former European colony. For the next sixteen years, Haiti tried several times to invade the Dominican Republic and reunify the island. As a result, the border continued to play a

³⁷ See Frank Moya Pons, *La dominacion haitiana, 1822-1844* 3rd. Ed. (Santiago: UCMM, 1978), pg.31.

³⁸ Punta Cana is in the southeastern tip of the Dominican Republic. “Up until the year 1873, in which the abolition of slavery was proclaimed in Puerto Rico, the escapes by Puerto Ricans toward the Dominican Republic were frequent, in spite of the extreme precautions of the Spanish authorities in Borinquen [indigenous name for Puerto Rico].” See Aristides Inchaustegui and Blanca Delgado Malagon in Vetilio Alfau Duran’s *Clio*, Vol.II. (Santo Domingo: Gobierno Dominicano, 1994), 378-379.

significant role in the political development of the young Republic. Each time Haiti organized its armies to invade eastward, the Dominican border felt the brunt of the invasion. Between 1844 and 1855, most of the major military battles that took place between Dominican and Haitian troops occurred throughout the border region. Even the last battle that saw Dominicans defeat the Haitian army definitively, occurred near the border town of Monte Cristi.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, and in the midst of war, Dominicans continued to entertain the idea of attracting immigrants to their country due to the “great lack of inhabitants.”⁴¹ Offering everything from free state lands to travel sponsorships and exemptions for potential immigrants, Dominican officials viewed immigration as a panacea for their nation’s [read Haitian] ills.⁴²

In the nineteenth century, the border region became the most important marker for measuring the survival of Dominican independence. Militarily speaking, Haitian forces seeking to control the capital of Santo Domingo would have to traverse the mountainous border region and control it to advance to the capital. The difficulty of this task explains why subsequent attempts to reunify the island failed. Moreover

³⁹ See *Edición oficial República Dominicana Secretaria de Estado de Relaciones Exteriores, documentos históricos procedente del Archivo General de Indias. Audiencia de Santo Domingo 78-5-17. II.* (Santo Domingo: Tip. Luis Sanchez A., 1928), pg.91.

⁴⁰ “At the end of January 1856, the battle of Sabana Larga in Monte Cristi, and with the secondary actions, the fourth and final independence campaign [against Haiti] ended.” See Rufino Martinez, *Hombre dominicanos: Deschamps, Heureaux y Luperón Santana y Báez*. (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1985), 263. The names of the battles are: The Battle of La Estrelleta and Beler (1845); the Battle of Las Carreras (1849); the Battle of Santomé and Cambronal (1855); and the Battle of Sabana Larga and Jacuba (1856).

⁴¹ José del Castillo, “Las inmigraciones y su aporte a la cultura dominicana (Finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX)”, in *Ensayos sobre cultura dominicana*, Bernardo Vega, Carlos Dobal, Carlos Esteban Deive, Ruben Silié, and Frank Moya Pons. (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1981), 182.

⁴² *Ibid.* Some of the immigrants arriving to the Dominican Republic in the late nineteenth century were Italians, Spaniards, Dutch, Sephardic Jews, Haitians, English speaking West Indians, Cubans, and Arabs.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Dominican society saw immigrants arrive from

aside from geographical terrain which served as a defense barrier, without the support of border towns and its residents bearing the brunt of the numerous invasions, Haitian imperial designs would have probably succeeded.⁴³

The Border Region During the Spanish Annexation

The major test to sustain Dominican independence would come in the early 1860s when Spain would annex its former colony. The Dominican Republic, the only Latin American nation not to declare independence from a former colonial power, would finally get the chance to do so in a bloody guerilla war for national independence. This war to restore the Republic in the early 1860s showed, once again, how the border played a fundamental role in the victory against Spanish forces as a strategic economic and military zone.

In 1861, after years of fighting for its independence against Haitian military invasions, Spain annexed the Dominican Republic. Led by Dominican annexationists such as President Pedro Santana, who feared the nation was too weak to preserve its independence alone, the Dominican Republic returned to the colonial fold and lost its sovereignty. In a letter dated April 1860 to Her Majesty Queen Isabel II of Spain, the

⁴³ For the Estrelleta and Beler battles, see Frank Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana*, pg.299-300. For the rest of the battles, see Cayetano Armando Rodríguez, *La frontera dominico-haitiana*. (Santo Domingo: J.R. Vda. García, Sucesores, 1929), 495. By the mid-1840s, the Dominican army responsible for repelling the post-independence invasions was comprised of 1,500 men. There are several travel accounts by foreigners, which documented Dominican society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among these was an account by David Dixon Porter, an American sent to the Dominican Republic to facilitate Washington's decision in giving the Caribbean nation diplomatic recognition. Porter writes, "The soldiers, as I said before, are not well-disciplined and many of them are badly dressed and without shoes, but they are a group of men with good presence (the majority of the soldiers are black) and appear to have a certain military pride. Their marvelous success against numerous overwhelming enemy [attacks] has given them a sense of their superiority and would fight until the death in defense of their colors." See David Dixon Porter, *Diario de una misión secreta a Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1978), 43.

General from the eastern province of El Seibo, military hero, and veteran of countless battles against Haitian forces wrote: "Our origin, our language, our religion, our customs, our sympathies, inspires us to wish to find that stability in our mother [Spain] one more perfect union, and surely a better opportunity will never present itself than the circumstances offered us today."⁴⁴ However, Spaniards had their own opinions about the inhabitants of Santo Domingo. In debates concerning the future of Spanish annexation in Santo Domingo, Spaniards clearly contradicted Santana's romantic view of Spain. Spain viewed the Dominican Republic as a former colony inhabited by former slaves. Many in Spain, regardless of cultural similarities brought about by colonialism, could not see themselves treating as equals people of the "Ethiopian race...composed of negroes and mulattoes."⁴⁵ The Spanish considered Dominicans to be black, inferior, and incompatible with their own culture and background.

By the time that Spanish annexation was being contemplated, Dominicans were living as independent people and many Dominicans occupied positions of power in the military. Blacks were so successful in the military that when Spain annexed Santo Domingo, there were Dominican blacks who sided with the Spanish government but held higher ranks (because of their military experience in the various wars against Haiti) vis-a-vis the less seasoned and inexperienced white annexationist officers and foot soldiers. Spanish soldiers, particularly in Cuba, were accustomed to

⁴⁴ José de la Gándara, *Anexión y guerra de Santo Domingo*, Tomo I. (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1975), 396.

⁴⁵ Declaration by Seijas Lozano, Spain's Minister of Colonies. See *Highlights in the Debates in the Spanish Chamber of Deputies Relative to the Abandonment of Santo Domingo*, ed. David G. Yuengling (Washington DC: Murray & Heister, 1941), pg.115.

seeing blacks in subservient positions and not as commanding officers, and especially not having command over white soldiers. Moreover, Caribbean and Latin American whites contained a fear that well-armed black men would mobilize under the banner of freedom and threaten their achieved power.⁴⁶ Historians like Phillip Foner, along with recent groundbreaking work by historian Ada Ferrer, confirm the participation of Cuban blacks commanding multiracial Cuban armies in the Ten Year's War (1868-1878) and after.

For Ferrer, "this was not just an [Cuban] army in which the masses of black soldiers served under a much smaller number of white officers, for many black soldiers ascended through the ranks to hold positions as captains, colonels, and generals and to exercise authority over men identified as white."⁴⁷ Similar developments had occurred in the Dominican Republic where black officers commanded their troops against Spain. However, unlike Cuba, black Dominican officers were given command of white Spanish troops.⁴⁸ This undoubtedly became a source of contention for the white annexationist army troops who were accustomed to seeing Caribbean blacks, especially those in their Puerto Rican and Cuban colonies, in subservient positions. Needless to say, the Spanish soldiers "were unable to understand [this new racial reality] and they treated those decorated [Dominican] men

⁴⁶ "The spectacle of present or former bondsmen, or their descendants, organized into disciplined fighting units inevitably suggests the possibility that those units may acquire institutional autonomy and strike against the very government and society that created them." See George Reid Andrews *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press), 113.

⁴⁷ See Ada Ferrer's *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pg.3. Ferrer writes that "40% of commission officers in Cuba's revolutionary army were men of color."

⁴⁸ In a conversation with archivist Orlando Martinez of Cienfuegos, Cuba, I was told that between 1868 and 1898 no Cuban blacks commanded Spanish troops in Cuba. However, he told me that the only

with insulting contempt. The [white annexationist] soldier always saw in these chiefs the slave or the freed slave and despised him and resented giving him the honours due his ranks.”⁴⁹

Debates surrounding the question of annexation in Santo Domingo further reveals that Dominican society of the early 1860s was an anomaly within the Spanish Caribbean. Slavery in Dominican Republic had been abolished since 1822 and this reform was reiterated in the 1844 Constitution. Spaniards acknowledged that it would be difficult to control a population that had experienced freedom—legalized freedom—for more than forty years. The authorities in Madrid debated the feasibility of maintaining its hold on Santo Domingo and wondered why they were rewarding their [black and mulatto] Dominican officer colonists with high-profile military assignments.⁵⁰ This was the question that preoccupied Spain in the early 1860s with respect to their former and now current colony. Meanwhile, rumblings of a revolutionary war of independence could be heard from the distant border.

In 1863 Dominicans rose up in arms against the Spanish who, unlike the previous invading Haitian forces, were dispersed throughout the population centers around the country. This time the border became a safe-haven for Dominican rebels. Not only did they retreat to the border region and to Haitian territory to escape Spanish attacks, but Dominicans also received support from a Haiti which was very leery of a European slave-owning power sharing the same island. Spanish military sources of that time confirm that the border and Haiti played a major role in the final

black officer was a Dominican by the name of Dionisio Gil. November 6, 2000, Evergreen Grill, East Lansing, MI.

⁴⁹ *Highlights in the Debates in the Spanish Chamber of Deputies*, 115-116.

victorious outcome of the war against Spain. According to Captain D. Ramón Gonzalez, an official of the Spanish army, Haitian-Dominican collaboration was evident because a Haitian “General Simón Sam, commander of the border department of Fort-Liberté, has received a rebel commission from Guayubín, and he has given them a friendly reception.”⁵¹ Thus, the border region became fertile ground for conspiracy and the organization of rebel movements. Just as the previous colonial administrations were incapable of controlling the entire border region, the annexationist Spanish government was unable to monitor, much less control, vast stretches of borderland against Dominican rebels.⁵² Therefore, it was no surprise that the Dominican war of independence against Spain began in the border town of Capotillo, where the rebel forces capitalized on the proximity to Haiti and its tacit support in the form of essential war supplies.

The War of Restoration also capitalized on a cross-border trade that saw Haitians and Dominicans united around common goals. Border towns such as Las Matas, San Juan, and Neyba were commercial centers where Dominicans traded livestock publicly to mostly Haitian buyers in exchange for highly desired gunpowder.⁵³ Both sides benefited from the border trade because it furthered their particular goals of overthrowing their respective governments from power; Haitians

⁵⁰ Ibid. 156-157.

⁵¹ D. Ramón Gonzalez Tablas, *Historia de la dominación y última guerra de España en Santo Domingo*. (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1974), 117.

⁵² Ibid. 119. González Tablas writes that, “On the Haitian border, along the points called Dajabón, Capotillo, Piedra Buena, and la Joya, there is a country apparently neutral in which malefactors of both sides live...without the law reaching them. In that zone, difficult to scan by the authorities, because of the excessively mountainous [terrain], it is not easy to capture the criminals, who in their haste pass from one country to the other.” 119.

⁵³ Gándara, *Anexión y guerra en Santo Domingo*, tomo I, 385.

wanted to remove President Geffard and Dominicans were fighting against a colonial Spanish government.

In no uncertain terms, Dominicans called for the expulsion of Spanish forces from Dominican territory. A letter from the Dominican Revolutionary government confirmed this attitude against Spain and referred to the border as the birth of their battle cry of freedom:

Free we have been and free will want to remain. You [the Spanish colonial government] have been deceived believing that you would find here nothing but docile and tamed Indians who you would rule like a tyrant..., like you did with impunity with the first villagers of this antillean [island], cradle of your barbarous domination and your bad government; you made it seem that there was complete [support and] spontaneity in the annexation; now you are seeing the contrary. The revolution began in [the border town of] Capotillo, with only twenty Dominicans with hardly any munitions and with few arms, and today, they have three-fifth's part of the nation.⁵⁴

The War of Restoration represented death, destruction, and mutual animosity between the annexationist government and the Dominican rebels. Yet, Spanish documents reveal the strategic importance the latter placed on the border region and its development despite the war. During the war, one of the most important border towns underwent considerable urban and cultural transformations. Prized for its strategic location and possession of an excellent bay that facilitated the flow of military supplies, the northwestern coastal town of Monte Cristi underwent dramatic changes under Spanish rule. The Spanish army official Ramón González Tablas described Monte Cristi's war time transformation:

⁵⁴ Ramón Gonzáles Tablas, *Historia de la dominación y última guerra de España en Santo Domingo*, 167. This memorandum was signed by the rebel government's Foreign Minister Ulises F. Espaillat.

The Monte Cristy of today is made up of one hundred and fifty very good houses some of them with two floors, a slaughterhouse, a wheat mill, two great deposits of supplies, a pretty and well decorated church and seven hospitals...In all these works commerce has taken a very active part, that had opened in establishments of all kinds.⁵⁵

If Spanish accounts failed to mention the southern border, it was because the most important and strategic towns along the border were in the north, in addition to the town of Dajabon, which was a major economic center. Dajabón was the most important city along the border because of its extreme proximity and historic commercial ties with Haiti. During the war, although occupied by Spanish forces, the region developed into an economic corridor for an extensive contraband trade.⁵⁶

The War of Restoration ended in 1865 with the Dominicans defeating and driving out the Spanish. Nevertheless, the border conflicts with Haiti regarding issues of territorial limits and domain persisted.⁵⁷ In 1874 the Dominican and Haitian governments, after years of internecine struggles, signed an anti-colonial treaty obligating both nations to maintain their sovereignty and mutual friendship in the face of American and European imperialism. The treaty not only called for both nations to create a fixed border but it made clear that the days of European and American annexations were gone. Article 3 of the 1874 Treaty stated that, “both contracted sides were obliged to maintain with all their strength and power the integrity and their

⁵⁵ Ibid. 250-251.

⁵⁶ Ramón González Tablas, *Historia de la dominación y última guerra de España en Santo Domingo*, 245.

⁵⁷ The Trinity of Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Ramón Mella are the founding fathers of Dominican independence. Another example of the border's role and impact on the evolution of the Dominican nation was during the government of President Buenaventura Báez in the 4 June 1871 battle, where the General and veteran of the War of Restoration, José María Cabral was defeated by President Báez's army in San Juan de la Maguana “in a battle in which it is assured that five Haitian

respective territories and to neither cede nor to alienate in favor of a foreign power neither the totality nor a part of their territory nor the adjacent islands...Likewise they commit themselves to neither solicit nor consent to foreign domination.”⁵⁸

The Dominican-Haitian border would continue to maintain its importance throughout the late nineteenth century. Specifically, Dominican dictator Ulises (Lilis) Heareaux’s rise to power revived the tradition of the border as a site for anti-government rebellions. Moreover, Heareaux was perhaps the only Dominican president during his term in office who, traveled extensively throughout Haitian border towns. His extensive knowledge of the border made him acutely aware of the growing Haitian presence and what the region’s continued territorial disputes could mean to the sovereignty of his nation. This acknowledgement of Haitian expansionism into a Dominican territory that remained legally undefined, precluded successful negotiations between the two governments. Legitimate territorial border boundaries enforced by written treaties would have to wait until the twentieth century, when the dictator Trujillo would finish what his predecessor began.

In the last three decades of the 1800s, the Dominican Republic was an independent country free of foreign military control. Domestically, however, the Dominican nation experienced its share of revolutions by regional caudillos who, challenged the central governments in Santo Domingo. Once again, the northwest border region stood out as a base for political agitation and military insurrections against central government authority. According to President Ulises Francisco

generals participated with [Cabral’s] troops.” See Charles C. Hauch, *La República Dominicana y sus relaciones exteriores, 1844-1882* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1996), 239.

Espaillet, during 1876, his government forces made little progress controlling the border region due to a lack of arms. "The border towns of Guayubín, Sabaneta, Monte Cristi, although they are still under insurrectionist control, they [the towns] are against the movement and are inclined morally in favor of the government of the Republic. Unfortunately, our [pro-government] friends of the [Northwestern border] corridor do not have arms to operate there a [counterrevolutionary] reaction."⁵⁹ To make matters worse, according to Moya Pons, Espaillet "had no organized personal army at his service."⁶⁰

Under President Lilís (1882-1899), sugar became the principal and the most lucrative export crop in the Dominican Republic. During this time, ingenios (sugarmills) appeared throughout the traditionally sugar-rich lands in the eastern and southern parts of the country.⁶¹ Under his dictatorship, Lilís expanded the state and increased economic trading ties with Europe and the United States. The border came to play an important role in his struggle to maintain and project his power nationally and internationally. Lilís, whose father was Haitian, was well acquainted with the border and Haiti. For a while, and prior to becoming president of the Republic, Lilís had lived in the Haitian border town of Juana Méndez, where he had established a

⁵⁸ See J.R. Roques Martínez, *El problema fronterizo dominico-haitiano*. (Santo Domingo: Sindicato Nacional de Artes Graficas, 1932), pg.33.

⁵⁹ Ulises Francisco Espaillet, *Escritos* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliofilos, 1987), 349.

⁶⁰ See Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*, pg.237.

⁶¹ Although for the most part sugar was not cultivated throughout the border region, there were some parts where the soil was conducive to the cultivation of sugar. "The border region sugarcane was produced in places like Guayubín; Bao; Sabana Iglesia; Mao; Duverge; Barahona; Las Damas de Duvergé; El Rincón; Enriquillo; Monte Cristi"; and "in Sabaneta and Dajabón, where it was cultivated and where it is still cultivated with success." Juan J. Sánchez, *La caña en Santo Domingo*, (Santo Domingo: Biblioteca Taller, 1976), 17.

small business⁶². As president, he was fond of traveling to Haiti and was known to conduct “lavish and extraordinary galas” during his visits.⁶³ But Lili's, like Trujillo, was more interested in political and economic power than fostering a genuine solidarity between the two nations. Lili's' interest in attaining power was so extreme, that at one time he even considered invading Haiti.⁶⁴ He had examined the possibility of an invasion and had even planned against a possible U.S. response to his imperialistic aggression. In 1891, Lili's wrote that “[i]n the case that the Dominican Republic declares war with Haiti, the government of the United States would determine if Dominican aggression was justified, in the case that was deemed to be, the United States would facilitate two warships and a one million dollar loan. The Dominican government [then] would occupy the Mole San Nicolas [in Haiti].”⁶⁵ Lili's was a very shrewd politician; as one Haitian diplomat, José I. Pou wrote in 1897, “No one knows when and up to what point the Chief of the Dominican [Republic] is sincere.”⁶⁶ But despite his shrewdness and dictatorial qualities, there were dissident movements. In 1893, in the northwestern border city of Dajabón, a revolutionary

⁶² Victor M. de Castro, *Cosas de Lili's*. (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1977), 13-14. Castro also writes that it was in Juana Méndez where Lili's was shot in the right arm and consequently lost his ability to use it.

⁶³ Miguel Angel Monclus, *El caudillismo en Republica Dominicana*, tercera ed., (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1962), 115.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Monclus writes that “...Lili's, less than any of our leaders was interested sincerely in the border problem; the times he was moved to act was with the intent to take immediate economic advantage.” pg.116.

⁶⁵ Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Cancionero de Lili's: Poesia, dictadura, y libertad*. (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe), 290. The Lili's regime also feared a Haitian invasion, citing that “rumors are running that our territory will be invaded; the preparations are to fortify the Mole Saint Nicolas and almost all the points of the Republic. The Haitian arsenals are replete with war supplies; and canons in all the ports, the same goes for munitions and recruiting is daily. French military instructors have arrived. The government has eight steamships at its disposal. Between them three armed for war and five merchant ships that can be armed at a moment's notice.” See Federico Henríquez I Carvajal, *El mensajero 1886-1889: Editoriales, estudios varios, ensayos, crónicas*. 2do. tomo (La Habana: Instituto de Historia, 1964), 91.

manifesto was written denouncing Lilís' government and calling for an armed insurrection. This revolt was called Los Bimbines and, although ultimately a failure, it was remarkable for the prestigious leadership it brought together.⁶⁷ Moreover, the revolt once again demonstrated how anti-government forces viewed the border region. They did not view it as backward or dangerous, as the border was seen by the Santo Domingo elites, but as an important and strategic platform from which to launch their anti-government rebellions and revolutions.

Lilís' governmental authorities along the border, aside from viewing this region as a hotbed for revolution, also warned of the growing Haitian population on the Dominican side. A letter from Lilís' governor in Monte Cristi, Guelito Pichardo, underscored this preoccupation and reminded his Commander-in-Chief that the border's political ambiguous boundaries was leading to the increased presence of Haitian military forces in Dominican territory: "The Haitian guard, reinforced with thirty and a little more still remains on our territory...If this is left to continue for several months in just a short while there will be a small town like the ones that are improvised in Haiti and we will have lost another piece of land."⁶⁸ Dominican governments like Lilís' reflected a peculiar schizophrenic policy that displayed, on the one hand, peaceful overtures to Haiti and, on the other hand, alarm as to what they perceived was an ever-increasing Haitian presence on the border.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.322. Among the leaders who led this uprising were Eugenio de Champs; Gregorio Luperón; Ignacio M. González; Agustín Morales; C.N. de Moya; Pablo López Villanueva; Cayetano Armando Rodríguez; Horacio Vásquez; and José Ramón López. Demorizi writes that five years later in 1898, a year before Lilís' assassination, there was another botched border insurrection, this time with the unsuccessful Fanita expedition in the port of Monte Cristi headed by Juan Isidro Jiménez. pg.391.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 289.

At a time when the debate centered around the inferiority of the rural countryside vis-a-vis the progressive and enlightened cities, immigration had come to be understood as the remedy that could facilitate growth and progress in the backlands. One Dominican study from the late nineteenth century concluded that, “there [in the border] the causes that disturb social harmony are always multiplied, and it is necessary that the authorities delegate their physical strength and moral effectiveness to obtain the submission and obedience of everyone. This way, then, increasing the effective strength of the legitimate [state] authority on the border and at the same time, lay the foundation of a profitable colonization.”⁶⁹ Although there was more than enough legislative momentum supporting emigration to and colonization of Dominican territory, few tangible results transforming the borders via the creation of colonies were evident in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the idea of establishing agrarian military colonies along the border in the 1870s remained just that: an idea that in the 1880s left Dominicans to “believe that such a useful project had been abandoned [and] that it will encounter mayor difficulties in its execution.”⁷⁰

Two years before Lilís took office in 1880, both nations signed a convention of “loyal friendship” and “good will” that was consistent with the spate of previous bilateral treaties promising eternal cooperation. Just one year following this treaty, a Dominican government report warned that,

⁶⁹ See José Ramón Abad, *La República Dominicana: Reseña general geográfico-estadística*. (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1888), 274. Some of the places considered ideal to receive immigrants and establish colonies were in border towns such as Neiba, Barahona, Enriquillo, and El Cercado.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 276.

The situation of these border towns has placed them in very unfortunate conditions having to suffer alongside the robbing that feeds our western neighbors [in a] pacific and gradual invasion...for these motives I consider necessary to adopt very energetic measures that thwart both evils and will end by establishing a fixed limit between both republics that will be respected by our border authorities.⁷¹

Controlling the border was as difficult for Haitian authorities in Port-au-Prince as it was for the Dominican authorities in Santo Domingo. A letter from the Secretary of the Haitian Foreign Ministry, B. Monción, underscores how difficult it was for the state, on either side of the island, to monitor these border regions through political appointees. "Of all the Departments of Haiti, the Fort Liberte one is the most difficult to govern like all the rest of the points that adjoin the borders. In the almost five years since His Excellency, President Salomon, came to power, he has had to provide five governors to the [border] Department of Fort Liberte."⁷²

In 1887, there was a government commission to study the border which confirmed Pichardo's observations of an existing Haitian presence along the border. This observation should not have surprised Lilís. Lilís was familiar with the border and, likely, all too aware of the significant Haitian presence throughout this region. In a letter to the Governor General of the southern province of Barahona, Lilís requested that Haitian border residents be interviewed in order to get their self-ascribed nationality: "In all the places that you visit where you find established Haitian citizens, you will make formal demands from them to declare through a verbal process if they live in our territory as a Haitian or if they live here adopting the

⁷¹ Legación de la República Dominicana, Washington DC, Cuestion fronteriza Convenciones e incidentes 1906-1912. Libro #2, AGN pg.2.

Dominican nationality.”⁷³ The poll was intended to gauge the amount of anti-Dominican sentiment among Haitians in the border. Although the threat always existed that a military conflict could emerge (and often there were border skirmishes between Haitian and Dominican troops), both nations usually worked through diplomatic channels to resolve their differences.⁷⁴

In 1895, concerns regarding territoriality, contraband, and revolution—all relevant to the border—eventually led both nations to sign an agreement allowing an independent arbitrator rule on territorial limits.⁷⁵ This independent arbiter turned out to be Pope Leo XIII, who was chosen “to resolve the existing difficulty with respect to the interpretation of Article 4 in the 1874 Dominican-Haitian Treaty.”⁷⁶ According to the 1874 Treaty, Article 4 stipulated that “both signers of the 1874 Treaty formally binded to establish in a way that conforms to the equity and the reciprocated interests of both nations the border limits that separate their actual possessions. This necessity

⁷² Letter dates 17 April, 1885. Legación de la República Dominicana, Washington DC, Cuestión fronteriza convenciones e incidentes, 1906-1912. Libro #2, AGN. Pg.10.

⁷³ Letter dated August 10, 1887, Cuestión fronteriza dominico-haitiana. Legación de la República Dominicana, Documentos 1862-1910 libro 1 AGN, pg.3.

⁷⁴ The shift toward diplomatic rather than military options in resolving Dominican/Haitian border conflicts began with the 1867 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Commerce and Navigation and subsequent territorial treaties in 1874, 1880, 1884, 1895, 1899, and 1900. See Frank Moya Pons’, “Las tres fronteras: introducción a la frontera dominico-haitiana,” in Wilfredo Lozano’s *La cuestión haitiana en Santo Domingo: Migración internacional, desarrollo y relaciones inter-Estatales entre Haití y República Dominicana* (Miami,FL: FLACSO, 1992), 19.

⁷⁵ On the first and second of June 1895, a plebiscite was taken in Santo Domingo concerning the resolution of the border dispute. The main voting issues were: “that the border crisis be taken to arbitration; that the arbiter should be empowered as the Pontiff to arbitrate the proceedings; and that the Pope be authorized to secure territorial compensations.” See Federico Velasquez H. *La frontera de la República Dominicana*. (Santo Domingo: Editorial Progreso, 1929), pg.44.

⁷⁶ Virgilio Hoepelman, *Nuestra vida exterior: notas sobre historia diplomática dominicana 1844-1950* (Ciudad Trujillo: “Arte y Cine”: 1951), 135.

will be the object of a special treaty and for this end both governments will name their commissaries as soon as possible.”⁷⁷

Though the 1874 Treaty formalized a peaceful commercial and formal relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the controversial issue of the nations’ territorial limits remained unresolved. This issue would not be resolved until the 1930s, under the governance of Trujillo over Dominican Republic. The Haitian government wanted its borders moved up to where they last had unsuccessfully invaded Dominican territory in 1856. The Dominican government, on the other hand, believed that the territorial boundaries dividing both countries should revert back to the 1777 Aranjuez Treaty, where the Dominican border extended farther west⁷⁸.

In 1898, Lilís held a conference with fellow Haitian President Hippólite to once again have the Pope arbitrate the border dispute but also to assign who “deserved the appropriate indemnification.”⁷⁹ Unfortunately the Pope was never able to rule over the border issue. In 1899 Lilis was assassinated in the town of Moca before his government was able to reach a diplomatic border solution. Even if Lilís had survived, it is doubtful that he would have sincerely sought an end to years of

⁷⁷ Peña Batlle, *Historia de la cuestión fronteriza*, pg.397.

⁷⁸ Hoelpman, *Nuestra vida exterior*, pg.139. According to one contemporary Dominican scholar, the 1895 arbitration case assigned to the pope “parted from the power given [to the arbiters] by the [Dominican] people [in the plebiscite]...[and] that the people did not authorize the Executive [branch] to dispense with [the treaty of] Aranjuez”; and that according to the Dominican constitution of June 2, 1896 article 3: “the territory of the Republic is and will forever be indisputable.” Manuel Machado, *La cuestión fronteriza Dominico-haitiana*, 2da ed. (Santo Domingo: Imprenta Escobar y CIA, 1912), ppgs.90-91.

⁷⁹ Summer Wells, *La viña de naboth*, 1844-1924. Tomo I. (Santiago: Editorial El Diario, 1939), 500. Also see Haitian scholar J.C. Dorsainvil’s *Manual de la historia de Haití*. (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1979), 247.

border conflicts given that he had strategically used the possibility of a border resolution with Haiti to counter North American influence in Port-au-Prince.⁸⁰

The new century began with diplomatic border talks stalled due to new crises enveloping both nations along the border. Between 1900 and 1930, the Dominican-Haitian border had become home to regional revolutionary movements intent on overthrowing the central governments in Santo Domingo. Additionally, both the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) and the Republic of Haiti (1915-1934) experienced U.S. military occupations. All the while, numerous unsuccessful diplomatic negotiations concerning territorial limits between both island governments characterized this turbulent period.

In 1901 Haitian forces occupied territory near the Dominican border town of Dajabón, but retreated with the arrival of a Dominican military contingent.⁸¹ Border disputes with Haiti, and political discontent and revolution from within, ravaged the Dominican political landscape. During this time, major resentment against the governments in Santo Domingo came from the Linea Noroeste (the Dominican Northwest Corridor), which included the Dominican-Haitian border. Two major rebel caudillos at this time were Demetrio Rodriguez and Desiderio Arias. They attacked major northern cities such as Santiago and Puerto Plata.⁸² Eventually, Rodriguez was killed and Arias sought refuge near the northwestern border. In 1905, American fear

⁸⁰ Lilís “knew that while the Haitian government believed in the possibility of a good deal from the border dispute, the Americans could not bribe the Haitian government. [Lilís’] tactic consisted then in simulating a disposition to the [border] deal without ever having to arrange it.” See Enrique Apolinar Henriquez, *Reminiscencias y evocaciones* Tomo I (Santo Domingo: Libreria Hispaniola, 1970), pg.118.

⁸¹ Federico Velásquez H. *La frontera de la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Editorial Progreso, 1929), 48-49. The town Haitian troops occupied was called Pitobet.

⁸² Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, pg.296.

of European intervention to collect monies on loans forced the United States to partially supervise the Dominican Customs Receivership. By 1907, a treaty was created placing the Dominican receivership under the U.S. Bureau of Insular Affairs.⁸³ The Americans now controlled the collection duties of the Dominican Republic. Meanwhile, Dominican government troops began the bloody pacification of this region and forced anti-government forces to flee across the border into Haiti to avoid being captured or killed.⁸⁴

In 1907, the Dominican government finally took official action in the matter of colonization and gave structure to the border colonization scheme. Passed by the Dominican Congress, this legislation outlined a series of articles detailing the character and form of the border colonization. According to the new law, land on the Dominican side would be utilized by the state to recruit immigrant white families. Article 2 of the congressional legislation specified that, "The sum of \$40.00 in American gold will be allocated every year to bring to the country forty agricultural families of the white race by the State."⁸⁵

In 1911-1912 diplomatic negotiations again failed between both nations, bringing them to the brink of war over disagreements concerning the demarcation of

⁸³ See Bruce Calder's, *The Impact of Intervention. The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1984), 4. According to Calder, a representative of the United States collected 55 percent to "pay off foreign claimants and remitting 45 percent to the Dominican government."

⁸⁴ Moya Pons, *Manual de historia dominicana* 449. According to Pons, government troops under Ramón Cáceres (Lilis' assassin) believed that a scorched-earth policy would cripple the revolutionaries. The policy was a pyrrhic victory and left the Northwest region of the Dominican Republic "planted with the cadavers of animals and its economy completely ruined."

⁸⁵ *Colección de leyes, decretos y resoluciones. Emanados de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de la República Dominicana*. Tomo XVIII. (Santo Domingo: Listín Diario, 1929), pg.353.

new border limits.⁸⁶ The point of contention was the southern and least developed part of the Dominican Republic around what are today the provinces of Bahoruco and Pedernales. The Haitian government felt that the border limits should extend farther eastward.⁸⁷ The Dominican government disagreed, but there was no bilateral treaty that legally defined territorial boundaries. Moreover, political events in Santo Domingo, such as the assassination of Dominican President Ramón “Mon” Cáceres in 1911, added to border tensions and the diplomatic impasse. Both governments engaged in a series of maneuvers to control the southern region.⁸⁸

It was President Cáceres who told his Congress that the nation’s progress depended on a strategic immigration policy. Only by accepting “a desirable class of immigrants to the Republic,” Cáceres said, could the Dominican Republic ever hope to harness its full potential.⁸⁹ The “desirable class” of immigration that Cáceres had in mind focused on white immigrants; a policy that was very popular among many

⁸⁶ This is not to say that the entire country was prepared for war. On the border, the routine of everyday life continued as the national congress passed a resolution authorizing the municipal authorities in the northern border town of Monte Cristi to tax alcoholic beverages. “To tax from one to ten cents of each gallon of alcoholic drinks that was produced or introduced in it for consumption.” See *Colección de leyes, decretos y resoluciones de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de la república 1910-1911* vol.20, (Santo Domingo: ONAP, 1983), pg.52. Also see Gaceta Oficial Num.2107 21 de junio 1910.

⁸⁷ Moisés García Mella (Santo Domingo: Rafael V. Montalvo, 1923), pg.37. The Dominican South (el Sur) is known for its aridness vis-a-vis the center Cibao region. In the port town of Enriquillo, in the province of Barahona, when there is a lot of wind, along with the “hot sun, it is impossible to stay in the port, because of the mosquitoes and ants (jejenes) there.”(pg.37-38). In spite of the harshness of the land, people owned land in this region, especially along the border. Foreigners, too, owned land, such as the Spaniard Mr. Parra and an American named Mr. E.E. Dreyfus, who were proprietors along the Pedernales border.(pg.42).

⁸⁸ Telegram sent by Dept. of State to U.S. Legation at Port-au-Prince: “Shortly after the assassination of Cáceres, the Haitian authorities actually moved into and continued to occupy territory east of the Pedernales River, heretofore in peaceful possession of the Dominican government, under the pretext of assisting the Dominican government to capture the late President’s assassins near the frontier. It also appears that the Haitian government has taken no action to comply with its plain duty in the matter and withdraw its troops and civil authorities from the place in question, notwithstanding repeated protests on the part of the Dominican Minister in Haiti.” See *Listín Diario*, June 29, 1912, pg.23.

⁸⁹ Bulletin of the International Bureau of the American Republics, Vol.XXVIII, Nos.4-6 (April-June, 1909), pg. 940.

Latin American and Caribbean governments at the turn of the century. These governments believed that one of the ways to combat their physical, economic, and cultural underdevelopment was to invite white immigrants to infuse these tropical nations with “progress.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, the governments promoting these immigration policies facilitated the transition and adaptation process of these immigrants in the new country. The Dominican Republic was no different. In the early 1900s, Dominican immigration law required that the government provide the newly arrived immigrants with appropriate farming equipment, a monthly stipend, and several acres of land.⁹¹ Despite government’s propitious legislation towards non-Dominican (white) immigrants, the colonization project did not flourish throughout the early 1900s and the teens.

Between 1912 and 1914, subsequent Dominican revolutions underscored the importance of the border. These revolutions, as one foreign traveler to the Dominican Republic wrote, were conducted from military bases on Haitian territory.⁹² By 1916, both Caribbean nations were subjected to simultaneous traumatic and violent military occupations led by United States Marines. Both US occupations reflected economic

⁹⁰ For an analysis of the relationship between eugenics in and immigration policies geared toward racial improvement in Latin America see Nancy Leys Stepan’s *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). For a specific case study see Winthrop R. Wright’s *Cafe con leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

⁹¹ *Colección de leyes, decretos y resoluciones. Emanados de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de la Republica Dominicana*. Tomo XVIII. (Santo Domingo: Listin Diario, 1929), 353. According to the document, men and women older than 45 and 35 years of age, respectively, were denied these benefits.

⁹² Otto Schoenrich, *Santo Domingo: un país con futuro*, (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 1977), pg.100. Originally published in 1918. Years earlier, when the United States threatened to annex the Dominican Republic in 1871 the border played an equally important role as both a point of revolution and an anti-government destabilizing force. According to military correspondence, “It is there [in the border] where Cabral operates with a small force of residents that, according to President Baez, are recruited from Haiti and the government of that country gives them all

and political strategies that sought to, in particular, safeguard the Panama Canal from encroaching European powers and, in general, maintain American economic interests in the greater Caribbean basin. As a result of the occupations, Anti-American sentiment rose across the island. A wave of solidarity emerged between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the face of both U.S. military invasions. Employing guerilla war tactics, the Dominican Gavilleros in the eastern part of the Dominican Republic and the Haitian Cacos in northern Haiti fought against the U.S. military occupation forces and used the border as a strategic retreat.⁹³

During the military occupation of both countries, the Dominican-Haitian border, always a haven for insurgents, again was prominent as it became an asset for Dominican anti-American insurgency.⁹⁴ The border's inaccessibility and distance from both capital cities made it a perfect meeting place for Dominicans and Haitians

types of help." See Proyecto de incorporación de Santo Domingo a Norte America apuntes y documentos (Santo Domingo: Editora Montalvo, 1964), pg.380.

⁹³ See Bruce Calder's *Impact of intervention The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1984), 133-182. Like the Gavilleros in the Dominican Republic, the Cacos in Haiti were "northern peasant insurgents whose loose organization and presumably ill-defined goals caused them to be easily labeled as 'bandits' by the U.S. military and State Department." See Patrick Bellegarde-Smith's *Haiti: The Breached Citadel* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 71. Reminiscent of what was to take place more than forty years later in Vietnam, U.S. Marines (led by an officer named Lieut. Weder) with Haitian Gendarmes' assistance, according to a French-born Catholic priest named Lebidaner, burned between 250 to 300 houses in the Haitian region called Les Crochus. Apparently, Lieut. Weder believed this region was infiltrated by the Cacos: an insurgent Haitian guerilla movement intent on forcing the withdrawal of American troops in Haiti. Therefore he applied a scorched-earth policy. See *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo. Statements by Haitians and Dominicans, and U.S. Senators. U.S. Senate Hearings before a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, 67th Congress, 1st and 2nd Session, 1922*, pg.850.

⁹⁴ During both military occupations American military personnel committed human rights abuses. An all-white military force composed of many U.S. southerners, accustomed to a racist and segregationist U.S. society, entering black and mulatto societies was a recipe for abuse and brutal violence. An American, Captain Merckle, ordered four men shot (one with Yaws): "he ordered them to be released one by one, and he stood off with a machine gun and killed each one, only leaving the man whose ears had been cut off and whose chest had been marked with crosses. Then he shot each of these men through the ear and left then [sic] dead on the plain near the road, and the bodies were eaten by the hogs and dogs." See *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo*.

to conspire against the U.S. occupation forces and reinforce their historic inter-border collaborative relationship. Thus, in the face of a common enemy, Dominican anti-Haitianism an ideological lynchpin for Trujillo's dictatorship, was at a very low point. Meanwhile, between 1919 and 1922, the U.S. military government in Santo Domingo attempted to resolve the historic border conflict between both nations by suggesting a border commission to the American ambassador in Port-au-Prince. This delegation would comprise two Dominicans, two Haitians, and, in contrast to the selection of the Pope as the arbiter in 1895, the President of the United States would be the final arbiter.⁹⁵ By 1922, however, the U.S. government believed that such an initiative was not appropriate and dismissed attempts to find a resolution to the border problem. The United States had more pressing issues on the island, such as bringing to an end the Gavillero insurgency in the eastern part of the island and facing harsh criticism from abroad demanding its withdrawal from the Dominican Republic.

The level of Dominican discontent with the military occupation is reflected in the laws passed by the U.S. military government during this time. Laws prohibiting Dominicans to carry firearms were passed in an effort to maintain order. Additionally, these laws were a reaction to a perceived threat of imminent danger toward American troops and an acknowledgment that many Dominicans possessed guns coupled with a strident dose of Yankee animosity.⁹⁶ The international campaign against the

Statements by Haitians and Dominicans, and U.S. Senators. U.S. Senate Hearing before a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo, 67th Congress, 1st and 2nd Session, 1922), pg.1144.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 50-51.

⁹⁶ "It will be illegal for any [Dominican] person to import, receive, purchase or in another form acquire any type of firearm, be they loose parts of firearms or munitions or explosives...have them on their person or under custody, sell or to dispose of in any way or form." See *Colección de leyes, decretos, y resoluciones del gobierno provisional de la república*. Oct. 21, 1922 hasta Dic. 31, 1923 #29. AGN (Santo Domingo: ONAP, 1983), pg.11.

American military occupation and the ruthless guerrilla war in the east gradually convinced the United States to completely withdraw from the Dominican Republic in 1924. Despite the Marines' departure from the Dominican Republic, however, the Americans remained in Haiti until 1934. Thus, Dominican border negotiations with Haiti through the late 1920s and early 1930s developed with the US occupational force in Haiti as a backdrop.

In 1924, with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Dominican soil, President Horacio Vásquez passed a law similar to the one established in 1907 declaring the border open for colonization. This time, however, the Dominican government authorized a specific commission "in charge of writing and formulating a colonization plan of these regions with immigrants from Spain, the Canary Islands and the Balearic Isles or Hispanic-Americans of the white race."⁹⁷ Overall, the Commission's findings supported the colonization scheme but also reminded its readers that the ultimate goal was to "prevent the usurpation of our territory and Dominicanize those [border] lands."⁹⁸ Who was usurping the border? In the government's view, the large Haitian presence and their continued contact with Dominicans threatened the survival of the nation. Thus, according to the government, it was important to increase the

⁹⁷ See *Colección de leyes, decretos, y resoluciones emanados de los poderes ejecutivo de la República del No. 1 al 90. Inclusive del 13 de julio hasta el 31 de diciembre, 1924*. (Santo Domingo: J.R. Vda. García, 1925), pg. 191. This law passed by the Dominican Congress states that the commission would be comprised in the following order of: the Secretary of Agriculture and Immigration; followed by one Senator; a Congressman; and the Government's Consultant Lawyer.

⁹⁸ See *Informe que presenta al poder ejecutivo la comisión creada por la ley Num. 77 para estudiar las tierras de la frontera y senalar los sitios en que se han de establecer las colonias de inmigrantes*. (Santo Domingo: J.R. Vda. García, 1925), pg. 19. The report begins by stating that, "The purpose to populate the border is connected to the necessity of shortcutting or containing the slow but incessant advance that the Haitian people have been conducting day after day towards our territory without having been impeded by the physical condition of the dividing line."

Dominican presence along the border through such initiatives as the colonization projects.

In the late 1920s, there was a flurry of diplomatic activity and border treaties aimed at resolving years of misunderstanding concerning each country's border limits. In 1929, Haiti and the Dominican Republic signed yet another border treaty formally agreeing to the definition of their territorial boundaries. The meetings to discuss this treaty turned very contentious as the countries disputed each other's claims as to appropriate placement of the fixed border. As the unsuccessful negotiations were conducted, Haitian officials submitted a proposal requesting that the contested borderlands remain an extension of Haiti. The justification for the proposal's claim was that there was a tenured Haitian presence in the area, who had lived there for years. The presence of Haitians gave them, in their view, the right to possess the land.⁹⁹

Treaty meetings were suspended due to this Haitian proposal. In the eyes of Dominican officials, the treaty undermined the country's constitutional and territorial sovereignty. The Haitian proposal challenged Article 3 of the Dominican Constitution, which explicitly stated that "The territory of the Republic is and will be unequivocally. Its limits, which comprise all that before was called the Spanish part of the island of Santo Domingo and the adjacent islands, are the same as in the 1777 Treaty of Aranjuez."¹⁰⁰ Thus, at the conclusion of the treaty meetings the countries

⁹⁹ See Moises García Mella, *Alrededor de los tratados 1929 y 1935 con la república de Haití*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Listín Diario, 1938), p.21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 6.

were unable to agree on the border's limits.¹⁰¹ While the nations remained at loggerheads over the controversial 1929 border treaty, a new force on the Dominican political landscape was emerging. The budding force would forever change the landscape of the Dominican-Haitian border and the relations between its two people.

At its withdrawal from the Dominican Republic, the United States left behind an institution called the national guard. As it did for Nicaragua and Haiti, this body often served as the United State's surrogate army and police force. In lieu of invading every time a political crisis arose in a Latin America or Caribbean nation, the native but U.S. trained soldiers would maintain order. It is from this military institution that the dictator Rafael Trujillo emerged to control the nation for thirty-one years.

A former cattle thief and National Guard officer from the non-border southern city of San Cristobal, Trujillo rose to power in 1930. Under his rule, the government set in motion a plan to secure control of the border, which allowed for the violent removal of Haitians followed by state policies to Dominicanize the border. Trujillo, unlike Lilis, was unfamiliar with border life. He was an outsider to the border and his knowledge of and experience with Haitians stemmed from his days as a camp guard at a sugar mill in San Pedro de Macoris. Simulating his tyrannical predecessor Lilís, in Trujillo's view, Dominicanizing the border also meant limiting the Haitian presence. Thus, during Trujillo's first term in office (1930-1934) new immigration laws were passed discouraging blacks in general and Haitians in particular of entering the Dominican Republic. Overall, nevertheless, Dominican foreign policy toward Haiti was cordial, friendly, and collaborative during the early 1930s. It appeared that

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 11.

despite the military wars fought almost eighty years before, a new age of friendship and collective interaction would replace the historic tensions and misunderstandings that had plagued the relations of these two republics. Indeed, the first seven years of the Trujillo dictatorship were marked by little antagonism and high mutual praise between the two countries and their leaders. Since independence was attained, this period would also mark an all-time low in the historic prejudices harbored by Dominican against Haitians.

Chapter 2

Border Colonization, Anti-Haitian Immigration, and Border Treaty Negotiations

The 1929 Border Treaty appeared to represent the end of border conflicts between the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Haiti. Both Haitian and Dominican leaders hailed the treaty as the beginning of a new relationship of cooperation and understanding. The long history of diplomatic disputes that had engulfed these two nations for centuries was now on the verge of being settled. The 1929 border treaty held great promise because of the credibility that the principal mediators--Dominican President Horacio Vasquez and Haitian President Louis Borno--brought to the negotiations. The 1929 border treaty came to fruition, in part, because both presidents had cultivated a mutually friendly relationship and broken away from the traditional squabbles and misunderstandings previously associated with border negotiations. The treaty, however, failed to definitively resolve the question of Haitians living inside Dominican territorial limits. Instead, the issue became a major source of contention between the two governments. In any case, talks concerning the 1929 treaty would soon be overshadowed by Trujillo's rise to power and his personal agenda to transform the role of the border from a "backward and dangerous" region to a progressive and sovereign extension of the Republic. This chapter examines how Trujillo's colonization of the border after 1930 was as much a defensive mechanism against his enemies as it was a campaign to consolidate the nation. Trujillo's intensification of a colonization program that had been inherited from Vasquez's government represented a history of attempts by Dominican governments to colonize the border. Moreover, the state's renewed interest in and control of the border revealed something more than an intent to secure a region that had traditionally served as a stage for anti-government movements. Under Trujillo, the state would draft anti-Haitian and anti-black immigration legislation in an attempt to limit the ubiquitous Haitian presence along the still undefined border. These attempts by the state to gradually distinguish

Haitians from Dominicans would conclude in a violent campaign of ethnic cleansing that would mark this episode of border attention as radically distinct from previous efforts. Furthermore, in this chapter I also refer to Dominican newspapers and examine the border negotiations and meetings that took place between 1933 and 1936 to reach the final settlement demarcating the territorial limits of both republics.

Dominicanization of the Border Region: 1930-1934

The rise of Trujillo to power ushered in a wave of political discontent that forced many of his opponents to flee across the Haitian border. As in previous years, Haiti and the border became a haven for revolutionaries. In this case, anti-Trujillistas escaped and used Haitian territory along the border as a base to plot the dictator's downfall. For the fledgling dictator, the border was seen as a serious and uncontrollable threat to his power. According to scholar Bernardo Vega, "Trujillo was bothered by the support that the Dominican exiles received there [in Haiti] not only of the free and independent press but even some elements within Vincent's own government."¹ Although Haiti and the Dominican-Haitian border were both fertile ground for anti-Trujillo conspiracies, the U.S. military government in Haiti and its policy of stripping all Haitians of their weapons reduced the possibilities of a military confrontation between Dominicans and Haitians.² Nevertheless, fear of reprisals from Dominican exiles became a good reason to secure control of the border through colonization efforts.

Under Trujillo, colonization of the border was exercised through the creation of agricultural colonies. By 1930 the colonies, originally established by President Horacio Vasquez and operating under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture's Colonization

¹Vega, *Trujillo y Haiti*, pg.55.

²*Ibid.*, pg.60.

Section, numbered nine.³ Documents from the early 1930s offer a glimpse into the type of Dominican who yearned to be a colonist. The documents have a record of each person's name, age, marital status, number of children, nationality, name of colony, and the number of hectares each colonist would receive. In their contract with the State, the colonists were required to honor a set of obligations for the duration of tenure on the government-owned lands. For the first ten years of their stay, colonists could not purchase, own, or sell the land they toiled.⁴ Despite this prerequisite, many people applied for and received contracts to cultivate land along the border. 1932 colonization documents of the northwestern border province of Monte Cristi show that most colonists were single Dominican males between the ages of 18 to 42. Most colonists received an average of 10 to 20 hectares to farm, although some received up to 50 hectares.⁵ Dominican men, be they single or married, were not the only persons obtaining contracts to colonize the border. Women, as well as foreigners, also appear in the documents as recipients of state lands. The women's ages, as well as the number of children women declared on their contracts, span a wide range. There were some married women, such as Sofia Tavárez Justo, who according to the colony's administrator Guido D'Allessandro' in Villa Vásquez shows she was twenty-three years old and received 15 hectares. There were also women like the 45-year-old María Reyes, a single mother of eight, who was granted 8 hectares. For the most part, land contracts do not appear to have been granted to Haitians. However, I did come across two cases where Haitians naturalized as Dominican citizens had their contracts approved.⁶ In the first case three individuals named S.

³See C. Harvery Gardiner, *La política de inmigración de dictador Trujillo. Estudio sobre la creación de una imagen humanitaria.* (Santo Domingo: Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 1979), pg. 14.

⁴Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura E Inmigración y Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura y Comercio, Sección de Colonización Leg. 1933. AGN.

⁵Ibid. 21 March 1932. Foreigners, too, were awarded contracts. Although comparatively fewer than Dominicans, there were contracts granted to Finnish single men in the early 1930s in the colonias of Villa Vásquez and Capotillo. Apparently these particular documents only divided individuals by nationality and categorizations by race was not mentioned.

⁶Ibid. I found an even older women in the contract of Marcelina Vda. González, (a widow) who was granted 28 1/4 tareas on 17 March 1932.

Belizea, Telisma Teispol, and Semerá Telismó were approved as colonists. According to an official army letter, the Secretary of State of Agriculture and Commerce had given permission to these persons “for living and having grown coffee plants in these grounds which corresponds to the Mariano Cestero colony.”⁷ The second case involved Filosten Jean Luis, a Haitian with Dominican citizenship who sought approval for a land grant along the border. A letter by the army official in charge of the agrarian colony to his superior states that “Mr. Jean Luis is a well-known inhabitant recognized by the best persons of this place; also he was recommended by the colono Juan de Dios Rodríguez.”⁸

Despite the number of Haitians granted contracts to farm on the border as colonists, Trujillo continued to encourage white immigration to the Dominican Republic. Like past presidents Ramón Caceres and Horacio Vásquez, Trujillo made it clear that border colonization was crucial in the nation’s development. New legislation established by Trujillo required that at least 25% of the colonists be white.⁹ In addition to setting up a quota that required that a certain percentage of colonists be white under Trujillo, laws discouraging black immigrants from entering, working, and settling in the Dominican Republic were established. Ironically, due to a resurgence of sugar in the world market, the Dominican government came to depend heavily on mostly black, immigrant, sugar field laborers. Thus, the Dominican government was unable to fully implement the anti-black immigration laws. The American-owned sugar mills that depended heavily on the mostly Haitian and West Indian laborers viewed the laws as a threat to their economic well-being and paid the fees and to avoid Haitian deportations from the sites. Those Haitians outside the realm of the American-owned and operated sugarcane mills, however, were subject to deportation. Indeed, in 1932 several thousand Haitians were

⁷Ibid. Letter dated 15 October 1932 from Second Lieutenant Leonidas Ramírez Colonial Administrator for the northern frontier in the town of Restauración to César Pérez A., Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Colonization of the Northern Department.

⁸Ibid. Letter dated 31 August 1933 from second Lieutenant Domingo Lantigua, administrator of the colonies in the northern border in Restauración, to the Chief Inspector of the Colonization and Cooperative Project.

⁹Vega Vol 2, pg.234

deported from the Dominican Republic.

Trujillo's immigration law required that "all foreigners be they cane cutters or not in order to enter the country [DR] had to pay \$6.00 and every year had to pay \$6.00 for permanent residency."¹⁰ This entrance and residence fee was very expensive and served to single out undesirable non-white immigrants. The law, modeled after similar racist anti-immigrant laws extant in the United States at the time, also excluded Chinese immigrants and persons from Africa who were not of the "Caucasian race". Both of these groups were required to pay a \$300 entrance fee and another \$100 to reside in the country.¹¹

A second law established by Trujillo required that at least 70% of all employees of businesses in the Dominican Republic be Dominican. This meant that most of the laborers in the sugarcane industry who were Haitian and West Indian would have been dismissed causing a severe shortage of workers and an economic disaster for the US owned sugar mills. Yet once again, the sugar industry along with the persuasive American Diplomatic Corps in Santo Domingo persuaded Trujillo to rescind the law and change it to allow foreigners to constitute up to 70% to 75% of all cane cutters in the sugar industry.¹²

Every attempt by Trujillo to limit, or prohibit black and Haitian immigration was counteracted by American sugar interests. As one American Vice-consul wrote at the time, Trujillo's project to *blanquear* or whiten the nation had been unsuccessful thus far. "The population of the [Dominican] Republic consists in great part of people of the black race and despite the favorable regulatory measures to the immigration of people of the white race during the last four years the majority of people who have migrated to this country are of the black race."¹³

¹⁰Vega Vol I. pg.133.

¹¹Ibid. Failure to pay these fees brought a penalty of "three to six months in jail or a fine of between \$100 and \$200."

¹²Ibid.234-235.

¹³Ibid.235.

Border Negotiations

It appears that when the Haitian and Dominican presidents Louis Borno and Horacio Vásquez signed the 1929 Border Treaty, they recognized that demarcating the Dominican-Haitian border would be easier on paper than the actual process of physically dividing geographic space. The treaty established a border commission comprised of qualified individuals from both nations who would work together to decide the territorial boundaries of the countries.¹⁴ Neither the drafters of the 1929 border treaty or the subsequent border commission, however, realized that demarcating the border disrupted communities and the unique way of life that had developed throughout hundreds of years. More importantly, the 1929 treaty failed to address the border residents who would be affected by potential geographic reorganizations. For Dominican officials, the fear laid in absorbing Haitians who lived in remote places that were now, thanks to the 1929 treaty, part of the Dominican territory. According to one Dominican scholar, all the people living in the border region of La Miel “would be considered Dominican citizens and we would have a part of our Dominican population by the [1929] treaty law [as nothing but] true Haitian; Haitians by custom; by race and by language; with the right to spread and extend themselves to all the confines of the country; and with the vocation of the highest public positions reserved to the nationalists [natives].”¹⁵

Although anti-Haitian, the preceding quote speaks to the quandary faced by Dominican officials who recognized that border limits were, perhaps, hollow due to the

¹⁴“It is a sincere wish of the Dominican Government that the Haitian Government order the conclusion of the work that awaits the Haitian Section, and thus that both Governments arrive within the text of the [1929] Treaty at an agreement about the existing difficulties so that, finally, in the shortest time possible, the old and confused dispute can be canceled and both States can fulfill their destinies through the protection of a solid and sincere friendship that will permit them to tighten their economic and moral ties.” Rafael L. Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes, y proclamas* Vol.1 (Santiago: Editora El Diario, 1946), pg.70.

¹⁵See Moises García Mella, *Alrededor de los tratados, 1929 y 1935 con la república de Haiti*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Listín Diario, 1938), 34.

significant number of Haitians living and working throughout the Dominican border and beyond, particularly in the sugarcane fields. Dominican officials quickly faced the inevitability that no matter where the borderlines were drawn, there would always be Haitians living in Dominican territory. This was a reality that would permeate state policies of incorporation straight through to the 1937 Haitian Massacre.

As the decade of the 1930s began, Haitian officials withdrew from the border talks even though these negotiations were required under the 1929 treaty. The Haitian government argued that the border treaty, signed under Borno's administration, undermined Haitian sovereignty by setting up Dominican territorial markers that encompassed Haitian communities. The Haitian government claimed that extant Haitian communities were residing on Haitian soil. Moreover, Haitian diplomats such as Abel Leger believed that the "1929 Border Treaty was contrary to the Haitian Constitution and violated the 1915 treaty with the United States since it ceded Haitian territory and explained that the report by Haitian members of the Border Limits Commission said that the latter's Dominican members wanted to take territory away from Haiti."¹⁶ Another setback to the border demarcation mission was the fall of both presidents, President Vásquez and President Borno, from power.

By 1930, the political landscape had changed dramatically on both sides of the island. In Haiti Stenio Vincent had replaced Borno and in the Dominican Republic Rafael Trujillo deposed of Horacio Vásquez in a bloodless coup d'état. Both leaders were, in many ways, forced to govern cautiously because Haiti remained under U.S. military occupation until 1934. Uncle Sam notwithstanding, Trujillo pressed on early in his first six years of power to negotiate a permanent border treaty with Haiti's President Stenio Vincent.

¹⁶Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haití* Vol. 1 (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988), 123.

Presidential Meetings and Border Treaties

In the midst of agrarian border colonies, an extreme dependency on Haitian labor for Dominican sugar fields, and pressure from exile groups both in Haiti and Cuba, the prickly issue of resolving the Dominican nation's territorial limits had not been resolved. Publicly, Trujillo's principal motive for seeking a final border resolution with Haiti was a concern with preserving the country's national security. Because the U.S. occupation of Haiti limited his options, Trujillo initiated a series of encounters with his Haitian presidential counterpart to establish permanent territorial limits of the two nations.

The first of the Trujillo and Haitian President Stenio Vincent meetings took place in October 1933 in the Haitian border town of Juana Méndez (Ouanaminthe) and its Dominican sister town of Dajabón. In Juana Méndez, both presidents had lunch and promised future fraternal cooperation between the island nations. During this first historic meeting between Dominican and Haitian presidents, there were no formal treaties signed, but they did sign "an agreement of mutual support to avoid being attacked from the neighboring country's territory by their enemies."¹⁷ The meeting did represent a very important step in laying the foundations for the subsequent meetings and final border treaty of 1936. In November 1934 Trujillo, for the first time in his life, visited the Haitian capital city of Port-au-Prince. This was the second time these presidents met and despite resounding optimism throughout both diplomatic camps of an impending settlement, the leaders failed to reach a final border agreement. The point of contention stemmed from the 1929 Border Treaty. Initially, the 1929 agreement was satisfactory to all parties, seeing that both presidents were signatories. The problem, as pointed out by the Haitian

¹⁷Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haiti*, 173.

government, was that the new boundary incorporated Haitian border communities such as La Miel within the Dominican State. Thus, after the 1929 treaty, the Haitian government refused to honor this agreement, claiming *uti possidetti* or effective occupation. Since there were Haitians who had long settled border territories now considered Dominican by the treaty, Haiti had the right to claim these communities as an extension of their soil.¹⁸ Conversely, the Dominican government believed that the 1777 Treaty of Aranjuez, the first border treaty ever drafted, held precedent over any other treaty and clearly placed these contested Haitian communities within the limits of the Dominican Republic.¹⁹ Indeed, for the Dominican government these Haitian communities, whose inhabitants included Dominicans of Haitian-descent, were illegally occupying Dominican lands without a legal title. If possession is 9/10s of the law, then the Haitian government had a very strong case. Indeed, the territory in question had been occupied by Haitians for several generations. Nevertheless, the Dominican government insisted on the communities' withdrawal and attempted to resolve the issue through peaceful mediation with Haiti.

The negotiations surrounding the Dominican-Haitian territorial boundaries between 1929 through 1936 were complicated. Both presidents visited each other's capital on more than one occasion to resolve the aged question of where one nation ended and the other began. Finally, after several hundred years of frontier, border disputes, and diplomatic meetings, a definitive border accord was finally reached.

In Port-au-Prince, Trujillo proclaimed:

By the very nature of things and by the comprehension that your destinies have both peoples, between Haiti and the Dominican Republic there does not exist nor can be created problems that affect the national honor. Pending problems typical between bordering neighbors that undoubtedly will always reach a friendly and

¹⁸Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, pg.186.

¹⁹See Federico Velásquez H. *La frontera de la República Dominicana*, (Santo Domingo: Editorial Progreso, 1929), pg.55.

definitive solution are the only differences that confront our peoples and those studied and considered by our Governments with cordial and understanding spirit having been modified will not but strengthen even more the roots of the fraternal friendship happily reigning between both countries and governments.²⁰

In February of 1935, Vincent reached an agreement with Trujillo that was more propitious for Haiti than for the Dominican Republic.²¹ According to Vega, Trujillo actually ceded more land than stipulated by the 1929 Border Treaty. Driven by the need to control the border and secure his power in a traditional autonomous region and prone to insurrection, Trujillo offered Dominican land for national security. Says Vega, Trujillo “gave the Haitian government 666,076 hectares lands that Horacio Vásquez had, in 1929, succeeded in having the Haitians, recognize as Dominican!”²² Nonetheless, the official was already celebrating the unprecedented success of the new accord. One influential Dominican daily wrote,

Trujillo and Vincent; the Dominican Republic and Haiti, without cowardly hesitations, penetrated by a high obligation of their functions, illuminated and persuaded by the strictest idea of country, have fixed not a border but a bridge of cordiality without reticences...for the brightness of their history and gloriousness for the equanimity of their decisions.²³

Indeed the 1935 border treaty elevated Trujillo’s international status for resolving a problem that had endured for many centuries. For Trujillo, this new legitimacy as peacemaker emboldened with a new legitimacy as statesman led him to express interest

²⁰Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes, y proclamas*, vol. 2, pg.105.

²¹“From the East his [Vincent’s] friend, President Trujillo, came to visit him, beautiful, arrogant, elegant energetic and overall charitable.” See *Listin Diario* Nov. 14, 1934, pg.1.

²²Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, pg.230. As Vega reminds us there are many Dominicans, particularly conservatives and Trujillo apologists that believe that Trujillo was responsible for resolving the border dispute yet in light of how much Dominican land Trujillo actually gave in this treaty Vega asks if historiographically speaking should the Dominican leader “continue to receive this credit?”

²³See *Listin Diario* March 8 1935, pg.8. Another article stated that “Santo Domingo and Haiti two struggling and expert countries that ignore nothing because they have suffered everything have now given in the present hour an example to the world worthy of imitation.” See *Listin Diario* March 6, 1935, pg.6.

in mediating other border conflicts, such as those in the South American Chaco region.²⁴

Following this monumental agreement, Trujillo would visit Port-au-Prince twice, once in March and another in May of 1936, while Vincent returned to visit his counterpart in Santo Domingo in April 1936. In March, President Vincent hosted a banquet in the National Palace in Port-au-Prince in celebration of the Dominican-Haitian Border Agreement. During the banquet, Vincent toasted his guest (Trujillo) and exclaimed:

It is for this reason that on a recent occasion, addressing the Dominican Congress, I underscored the idea that this solution so longed for tended to strengthen the life of the State because when Dominicans and Haitians are free of rancor and prejudices, they offer themselves to work together for their own prosperity. The world will contemplate how civilization and progress motivated by the most energetic and loyal cooperation between men achieved happiness throughout the preferred island of Christopher Columbus.²⁵

Having been signed by both presidents and ratified by each representative's national congress, the 1936 border treaty was complete. After years of unsuccessful diplomatic exchanges, military conflicts, and political crises originating with European colonization, the island of Hispaniola was officially divided on paper and territorial boundaries were now politically and geographically definitive.

Trujillo's first seven years in office can be categorized as a mix of ineffective state immigration/colonization policies. The government's efforts to whiten the border yielded little success yet a successful and surprisingly amicable diplomatic relationship toward Haiti emerged at this time. Furthermore, unlike the post-massacre period, an examination of the Dominican newspapers of the time confirmed that there was hardly any trace of anti-Haitianism during these first few years. The tone of the articles

²⁴See *Listin Diario* March 15, 1935, pg.7. The unprecedented task of unending the centuries-old border conflict even moved some Dominicans to "the conclusion that he [Trujillo] deserves the Nobel Peace Prize." A prize he never received let alone nominated for.

²⁵See Rafael Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes, y proclamas*. Vol.2, pg.275.

published between 1933 and 1936 was not only festive, but demonstrated a belief that a roadblock for mutual cooperation had been removed. Ulises Heureaux, Jr., son of the famous Dominican dictator Liliú, wrote that in terms of the “irritating frontier question...everything was defeated. The terror of many years now does not exist. With the double firmness of the last Protocol [1936 border treaty] Act all the fears and all the misgivings have disappeared.”²⁶ Trujillo and Vincent were seen as heroic saviors and symbols for peace on an island where both countries had experienced their share of U.S. occupations and internal revolutions. It appeared that genuine peace had arrived in Hispaniola. As one Dominican newspaper commented at the time, “For the Dominicans, like the Haitians, Trujillo and Vincent personify a single symbol. They are the glorious end with which God has sculpted definitively the jewel that he once threw in the Antillean Sea to embellish this western hemisphere.”²⁷

The Tide Turns

Just before October many, on both sides of the island, were convinced that a golden age of intra-island cooperation was beginning.²⁸ Even Trujillo, who after 1937 would adopt racist, pro-Nazi tendencies, had proudly proclaimed his African heritage. His affirmation was a resounding confirmation that he too, like his maternal grandmother Diyetta Chevalier, was Haitian.²⁹ The Dominican press also reported Trujillo’s unabashed pride for his Haitian/black heritage. Praising the peace process and the border treaty resolution, one Dominican article stated that what “gave the [treaty] Protocol its worth

²⁶See *La Opinion* April 23, 1936, pg.1.

²⁷See *Listin Diario* March 17, 1936, pg.1. The article continues, “For them [Trujillo and Vincent] will be the glory of an inalterable peace in this favorite land of Columbus.”

²⁸“The Honorable President Trujillo and the Honorable President Vincent have signed today at ten in the morning, the definitive border agreement protocol.” See, “Fue firmado ayer el protocolo final del arreglo fronterizo,” in *Listin Diario*, March 10 1936, pg.1.

²⁹“I am proud to announce before my fellow citizens and before the world, that a high proportion of African blood runs through my veins”. See Vega’s, *Trujillo y Haití*, pg.241.

and that liquidates definitively the question of the border is that it was signed by a Dominican president who declares with pride to be of Haitian stock.”³⁰ Sadly, the joyous feeling was ephemeral on the island of Hispaniola, which was to join the ranks of other countries of the early twentieth century in the legacy of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

It is difficult to grasp how a foreign policy that appeared to be pro-Haitian could, in a matter of months, change course dramatically and conclude in massive violence. Even as early as March 1937, six months prior to the massacre, Dominican newspapers continued their praise of inter-island solidarity. During the festivities for Dominican Independence Day in February, a group of prominent Haitian senators is quoted as saying, “On this solemn day our hearts beat in unison with the hearts of our Dominican brothers.”³¹ Several days later, the first Congress of Dominican-Haitian Intellectual Cooperation was held in Santo Domingo, commemorating the one-year anniversary of the 1936 border treaty.

In spite of its celebrated successes, the border treaty failed to give Dominican the state authority over the border region. Residents of the border region remained very much autonomous and beyond government control. Furthermore, the border region remained a multicultural and bilingual zone that was more oriented toward Haiti than to Santo Domingo. This reality undermined Trujillo’s efforts at consolidating state control over the border and soon led the dictator to order a military campaign to destroy Haitians principally throughout the border region. There were no major signs to hint at an impending slaughter and the killings represent a traumatic event in the history of the Dominican border region. Without precedence, the massacre left thousands of dead and wounded Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent and displaced many more as survivors escaped to Haitian territory. Once the Haitian presence was killed or chased

³⁰See *Listin Diario*, March 28, 1936, pg.1.

³¹See *Listin Diario* March 3, 1937. Once again Trujillo and Vincent were praised as the “island’s heroes” for bringing about mutual cooperation. See *La Opinion*, March 13, 1937, pg.4.

from Dominican territory, Trujillo would finally and effectively colonize the border region for the first time in the history of his country.

Chapter 3

A Genocidal Massacre and an International Scandal

Twenty-two years after the Armenian genocide; four years after the slaughter of thousands of peasants in El Salvador; a few weeks before 300,000 Chinese were murdered by Japanese soldiers in Nanking; and a few short years before the genocide by the Nazis, Dominican military and civilian forces under Trujillo' command repatriated and killed approximately 20,000 Haitian men, women, and children.¹ For Haitians living in Dominican territory, especially in the border, the months between September 1937 and January 1938 must have been a nightmare. What had started out as deportations of Haitians from the Dominican Republic in May and June of 1937 ended in what is perhaps one of the western hemisphere's most brutal examples of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth-century.

In October of 1937 Trujillo, who had shaped a proactive and neighborly foreign policy toward Haiti, was responsible for instigating a genocidal massacre that left thousands of Haitians dead. No one would have predicted that carnage would erupt in the last months of 1937, shortly following seven years of close diplomatic relations, mutual visits, and public accolades in the print media. The killings would become the foundation for an official Dominican racist discourse, which initially denied that a massacre of Haitians ever took place. The Dominican government would argue that, in reality, the "massacre" had been a series of violent skirmishes resulting from Dominican farmers' efforts to defend their farms and properties from Haitian thieves. Once the image of Dominicans as victims of Haitian invaders was solidified

by the government, the Dominican crusade to reclaim the border from Haitians began. The massacre became an example of the negative effects that government laxity and neglect over a region could produce. The disinterest from the government was held accountable for producing an environment of violence and anarchy in the border. Following the massacre, the Dominican government would capitalize on the historic anti-Haitian animosity and prejudice to Dominicanize the border. The government's aim was to demonize Haiti and the mechanism was to establish state institutions and to disburse official propaganda that generated ideological discourses against Haiti.

The Calm Before the Storm

Prior to the massacre, the only sign of impending danger was the deportations of Haitians, which had begun in May of 1937. However, there was no indication that the repatriations would lead to a massacre.² On the heels of the expulsion of thousands of Haitians from the island of Cuba in 1936, the Dominican government initiated the repatriation of Haitians as part of its quest to Dominicanize the border. Ever since the early twentieth century, the Dominican sugar industry had come to depend heavily on Haitian laborers. The first Dominican census of 1923, conducted under the supervision of the U.S. military government occupying the island, counted 28,258 Haitians in the entire country.³ For Dominican sugar mill owners, Haitian

¹ Although not as violent, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans during the 1930s were forcibly repatriated to Mexico by the U.S. government.

² According to Vega, from May 1937 and the several subsequent months prior to the massacre, 8,000 Haitians were deported to Haiti. See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, Vol.I., pg.306.

³ Martin F. Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations: Production and Foreign Labor Integration*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 76.

workers provided a cheap, reliable and consistent source of labor. For Trujillo, on the other hand, the growing numbers of Haitians in the Dominican Republic undermined his project to create a new national identity; one that would project Dominicans as being of Spanish descent.

By the 1930s, a worldwide depression had lowered world sugar prices. The depression intensified the Dominican-based U.S. sugar companies' demand for more cheap Haitian labor. Trujillo was aware of the Haitian population's increase, even as he tried unsuccessfully to implement exclusionary immigration laws against Haitian immigrants. Nevertheless, the continued dependency of sugar mills on Haitian workers only served to increase the numbers entering the Dominican Republic. By 1935, the number of Haitians in the Dominican Republic had increased to nearly 52,657 out of a total population of 1,479, 417.⁴ Most of the Haitians in the Dominican Republic at the time were concentrated in the sugar plantations of the east and the border provinces. The population along the border had also been growing since the eighteenth century. Between 1908 to 1920, the population in the northern border town of Monte Cristi climbed from 48,000 to 67,073. During the same period, the population in the southern border town of Barahona, where a sugar mill had been built, more than doubled from 22,000 to 48,182.⁵

It was in the context of countering the rapid growth of Haitian-born workers that Trujillo and his government promoted a policy in favor of (white) immigration. Under Trujillo, white immigrants—specifically Spanish immigrants—were preferred

⁴ Suzy Castor, *Migraciones y relaciones internacionales: el caso haitiano-dominicano* (Ciudad Mexico: Facultad Ciencias Politicas y Sociales, UNAM, 1983), pg.61.

because they were thought to be the most culturally compatible with Dominicans. In the grand scheme of Trujillo's nation-building program, Spain was to become the source from which Dominicans inherited their culture and language. According to Trujillo's Director of Immigration, success of this immigration policy hinged on not only white immigrants but also immigrants from the Iberian motherland: "from the point of view of ethnicity, it is necessary for it to be DISTINCTLY SPANISH...for its cultural linguistic similarity."⁶ In mostly black and mulatto Dominican Republic, the construction of race, particularly under Trujillo, was traced to indigenous and Spanish origins. In order to promote a Eurocentric Dominican identity and dismiss the black and mulatto majority, the Trujillo regime officially sanctioned the use of the word "*Indio*" to define mestizos. Although the Tainos had disappeared from Hispaniola in the seventeenth century, the *Indio* became the commonly used term to describe a person who was neither black nor white. Under Trujillo, the category of *Indio* appeared in the *cédula* (national identification card) to describe one's complexion. The term was conveniently utilized by the regime to classify many dark-skinned Dominicans as Indians. The Dominican Republic was not alone in its practice of

⁵ Frank Moya Pons, "Nuevas consideraciones sobre la historia de la poblacion dominicana: curvas, tasas, y problemas," *Eme-Eme* Nov.Dic. #15 (1974), pg.26; total page numbers=3-28.

⁶ See Relaciones Exteriores Leg.216. Correspondencias recibidas de Sept. a Dic.: Letter from Reynaldo Valdes, Dir. of Immigration June 4, 1937. AGN. Ironically, Valdes is not interested in all-white inclusive immigration but a specific/European white immigrant. He writes, "Whereas the Nordic races lack all the advantages and evidently need to be rejected as much as the Jews and the Semites from any immigration plan directed and protected by the [Dominican] state; the Finns brought here a while back are a recent example of their inadaptability to our means." Even Asians were seen as undesirable. One Dominican official wrote that "During 1936 there has been one Chinese immigrant every week just through this port. I don't think that any other country is giving presently that reception to a race that although composed of workers is undesirable because they never become consumers; that they do not mix with the natives is an advantage because that type of mixture is always inconvenient. Any limits that is placed on this popular immigration will always be good in my humble opinion." Letter from Dominican Consul in New York Rafael Espaillat de la Mota to Sec. Foreign Relations,

manipulating ideas of race and applying it to domestic and foreign policy. During the 1930s, several Latin American countries had adopted policies that limited immigration. Like Trujillo, some Latin American leaders and their nations pursued a policy of *blanqueamiento*/whitening of their countries. Since the turn-of-the-century, elites in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba had supported immigration laws that prohibited immigrant blacks from entering their countries while espousing the settlement of European foreign-born whites.⁷ However, not all the countries espoused a pro-Spanish immigration policy like the Dominican Republic. In predominantly white Argentina, where most Indians and Blacks were either killed or incorporated into society, the preferred immigrant did not originate in Spain. The dynamics were such that Spain, a dying empire, was seen as responsible for the degenerative state of affairs in Latin America. Consequently, the most desirable and coveted people in Argentina were Anglo-Saxon immigrants.⁸ The main difference between the formation of elite racial policies in the Dominican Republic and the aforementioned countries, however, was Haiti's principal role as the "invader" in Dominican historical memory. Under Trujillo, historic Dominican prejudices against Haiti and a concomitant Dominican "de-racialized social consciousness" fused to implement

Correspondencia recibida de consulados dominicanos en 1937. Correspondencia recibida y enviada, Leg.227.

⁷ In Brazil for example, "The Constitution of 1891 specifically banned African and Asian immigration into the country, and the national and state governments made the luring of European immigration into Brazil a priority of national development." See George Reid Andrews *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil 1888-1988* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 52.

⁸ See Aline Helg's "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880-1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*. Ed. Richard Graham (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1990), pg.40. Of course Italian migrants known as *golondrinas* also contributed significantly to the development of Argentinian society. See Peter Winn, *Americas: The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean*. (The University of California Press, 1999), 104-5.

violent state policy and transform the border.⁹ Therefore, Dominicans participating in the killings were the “protectors” of the national territory against another invasion of black Haitian forces.

He Stomped His Foot and Announced the Massacre

The 1937 Massacre was so spontaneous that it took many Haitians and Dominicans, unprepared for such intense violence, by surprise. However, the violence was premeditated and well-organized on the part of Trujillo and his military machine. Throughout the months of August and September, Trujillo traveled the border region visiting and inspecting communities. On October 2, Trujillo attended a dance held in the second floor of City Hall in the border-town of Dajabón. According to a eighty-five year old Dominican native of Dajabón who witnessed the event, Francisco Antonio Espinal, Trujillo stomped on the floor with his foot and exclaimed that “two to three Haitians had to be eliminated in every town, that way the rest would be scared and go to Haiti.”¹⁰ Although the massacre had begun in late September, Trujillo’s October 2nd remarks accelerated the killings. The following day, the twenty-four year old Espinal, who is black and worked in the post office, was ordered by an army Captain named David Carrasco to remain in his office for eight days. Espinal states

⁹ See Silvio Torres-Saillant’s “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 100, Vol.25 No.3 (May 1998), pg.139.

¹⁰ Audio interview with Francisco Antonio Espinal in Dajabón, Jan.1999. In January and the Summer of 1998, after receiving permission from the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human or Animal Subjects, I conducted more than 40 audio and video interviews in the northern and southern border provinces of the Dominican Republic. The interviewees ranged from 60 to 90 years of age and most were farmers. Those varied from participating in the actual killings to guiding Dominican army patrols to the location of Haitians. Most participants were eager to answer my

that he was responsible for receiving and transmitting telephone and encrypted telegraph messages during this period. He was unable to read the secret military information and forbidden to leave.¹¹ During Espinal's forced stay, thousands of Haitians were killed and many more were forced to leave their homes and flee the Dominican Republic. Haitians who had resided in the Dominican Republic for many years were killed mostly by Trujillo's military but civilian volunteers also participated. Using machetes and minimal firearms, to avoid future accusations of organized military murder, the Dominican soldiers killed Haitian men, women, and children. Not even the internationally recognized Boy Scouts organization was spared. According to a State Department memorandum, "Haitian Boy Scouts were among the Haitians killed at Dajabón, Monte Criste [sic] and other places in the Dominican Republic. The Scout headquarters has just received a very comforting letter from Dr. Rowe, Director, General of the Pan American Union. The Internat'l. Scout Office in London has asked for a detailed report on the gravity of the situation. Requests aid and protection from the [U.S.] President".¹² Throughout the month of October, Haitians attempted to reach and cross the border to safety. Many Haitians were killed because they chose to remain until it was too late or as they returned after fleeing in an effort to salvage their belongings. Most of the residents who were targeted during the massacre found it difficult to leave the only home they knew in the Dominican

questions which began with general inquiries about their experiences during the Trujillo era and gradually got more detailed concerning the massacre and the post-Dominicanization border project.

¹¹ Ibid. Espinal is representative of older border Dominicans who are bilingual and very familiar with Haiti. Dominican medical doctor Miguel Aquino also conducted brief oral histories in the border region with Espinal among others. See his most recent English translation from the Spanish in *Holocaust in the Caribbean: The Slaughter of 25,000 Haitians by Trujillo in One Week*. (Waterbury, CT: Emancipation Press, 1997).

side of the border. Many had established themselves in the Dominican side over the years and had accumulated homes, businesses, land, and familial ties. In fact, many had been born and raised in the Dominican Republic, making them Dominicans of Haitian descent. According to one scholar, most of the communities along the border were constituted by prototypical bicultural border families.¹³ Longtime border resident Ramón Antonio Blanc (Filande) reminded me that in several border-towns Haitians were the majority and considered Dominican territory their home. He says that, prior to the massacre, “all this was Haitian. Here there were only three Dominican houses. After that it was all Haitian. These farms (read lands) were all Haitian [here in] Loma de Cabrera. We all got along very well here.”¹⁴ Testimonies like these are important in suggesting a strong Haitian presence throughout the border prior to the massacre. Furthermore, beyond speaking to the overwhelming Haitian presence along the border, personal testimonies reflect the manner in which Dominican men systematically searched, rooted out, trapped, and slaughtered innocent human beings. When asked if he participated in the killings, Filande denied it adamantly. He stated that soldiers were in the practice of inviting civilians to search for Haitians. Offers which Filande claims to have declined. Filande’s refusal to participate means that he and many others had a choice not to participate in the slaughter of Haitians. Although individual experiences vary, most persons interviewed stated that Dominicans were urged by soldiers participate in the killings. Refusals to

¹² Memorandum from the Department of State to M.H. McIntyre, Secretary to the President, December 29, 1937. OF Official File Box #162-A, Haiti 1935-1938, FDR Presidential Library.

¹³ According to one scholar, most of the Haitians living throughout the Dominican border provinces were “second-generation.” See Lauren Derby’s, “Haitians, Magic, and Money, 1900 to 1937,” *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 1994, pg. 508.

participate represented risking any possible reprisals.¹⁵ One of the most candid persons I interviewed was Pedro Leclerc Batista in the small northwestern community of Capotillo, in the province of Dajabón. A small dark-skinned man in his eighties, Leclerc was shockingly comfortable sharing his stories about participating in the killings of Haitians. In his testimony, Leclerc justified the massacre by recounting nineteenth-century Haitian cruelties and their ubiquitous presence along the border. Leclerc recounted how he and a team of five other men were organized to participate in the massacre.¹⁶ He and his men “did service”(servicio), going out at three in the afternoon into the mountains looking for Haitians and returning in the early morning. He killed many Haitians and states that he individually buried at least forty people. Leclerc claims that throughout the month of October, his group killed a total of more than two hundred Haitians.¹⁷ Leclerc still remembers where several graves hold the decomposed remains of hundreds of Haitians buried by soldiers and civilians.¹⁸ Many horrific events surrounding these killings presaged the larger mass murder perpetuated just a few years later during the genocide of European Jews in Nazi Germany.

¹⁴ Interview with Ramón Antonio Blanc in Loma de Cabrera, Jan. 1999.

¹⁵ None of the persons I interviewed offered evidence to show that those who refused to kill were punished. However, there were apparently “volunteers” who participated in the killings with the military and others whose only job was to guide the soldiers. Bienvenido Gil was a guide who, in a newspaper interview, said he refused to follow the orders given by a Corporal Peguero, who ordered the killing of three toddlers.

Gil told the Corporal: “Shit, look, I am not that type of man. For you to order me to do that you should do it yourself because I am not a man who has killed.” After several refusals, and after the Corporal himself refused to kill the children, a man named Elonginio Rosa “took them by the arms to the mountains and took care of the problem.” See *Listín Diario* May 23, 1999, pg.14A.

¹⁶ Interview with Pedro Leclerc Batista in Capotillo near Dajabón. Jan. 1999. These men were Bruno Fernández (deceased), Antonio Aren, Eusebio Cordero(deceased), Teofilo Pérez, and Anecleto Cordero.

¹⁷ Ibid. Asked if he used any depressants, such as rum, to make it easier to kill, Leclerc said no.

¹⁸ Ibid. Some of these unmarked graves, such as Canal de Juan Calvo (between Loma de Cabrera and Dajabón), lower part of the Juan Calvo Hill, have now been covered by water canals and pasture.

Witnesses to the massacre state that in some cases Haitian corpses were burned to eliminate all evidence of foul play. It is important to note that not all the corpses were burned. Many were buried in make-shift graves in remote and mountainous forest regions away from the gazing eyes of curious citizens. In any case, the smoke that was produced by the burning bodies was visible to some Dominican towns-people. According to native Emilio Díaz of Las Clavellinas, in one of several small southern towns between Neiba and La Descubierta that straddle Lake Enriquillo, it was clear that Dominican soldiers were burning Haitian bodies to eliminate any evidence that a crime had occurred:

They brought down the Haitians over there but they took them mistakenly to the firewood...and they took them to the water [the edge of the lake] and there we (us being children [12 and 13 years of age]) were able to see the black smoke and the next day my father went to see what was happening and said that what they saw there was very terrible: the pieces [burnt debree from the corpses] in and outside of the water. Afterwards they told me that the Haitians [who before being killed] cried out 'señor, muñé papa' [for mercy]. Most people in town saw that black smoke.¹⁹

During one interview, a participant remembered that in order to more efficiently burn the bodies, the Dominican soldiers and their civilian counterparts made a small incision between the cadavers' toes. Then they would place a lighted match or burning wooden stick in the incision within the foot, whereupon the flames gradually

¹⁹ Video interview with Emilio Díaz alias Nino. May 1999. 74 years old. Interestingly Emilio claims adamantly that the killings during his childhood took place in March of 1937, almost six months before the massacre in Dajabón. It is important to examine Díaz's assertion because, as we examine the massacre in more detail, we see that although highly organized by the military, it varied in its application depending on the region. Richard Turits has suggested that another massacre occurred in early 1938 in the south long after Trujillo stopped the massacre. I have met some older people in the south who have corroborated this second massacre of Haitians in early 1938.

consumed the bodies.²⁰ In this case, ovens were not used, as they were with the Jews in Nazi Germany. The goal of extermination, however, was one and the same.

Everyone thought to be Haitian during this time—including children—risked being killed. A former principal and primary school teacher in Dajabón, Diego Blanco, lost over half of his 105 students during the killings. After the massacre sixty-five boys and girls of his classroom were either killed or fled to Haiti.²¹ Gruesome stories like this were not isolated during the Haitian Massacre. In the southern town of La Descubierta, S. Ramírez recounted how he and his civilian companions had to demonstrate to their superiors (army officers) that the ammunition they received was not wasted. Therefore, for every Haitian killed, Mr. Ramírez had to present the victim's ear.

The proof?: because I could leave with a shot-gun cartridge and I could kill pigs and I bring back three [human] ears but I can't say that I had to make four or five shots because it could be that in the first shot I could have killed him or killed two in two shots and the rest [of the bullets] could have been for something else then they [the military] would again give me those cartridges but it wasn't like 'I already killed'—you had to prove you had killed.²²

²⁰ Video Interview with with ninety-nine-year-old Guarnacito Pérez Gómez alias Mañon, resident of Los Ríos near Neiba. May 1999, during the period of two months I conducted video interviews with elderly Dominicans on the border who participated directly and indirectly in the massacre and who gave their impressions or recollections of life under Trujillo's dictatorship. The video interviews will be deposited at the Dominican Studies Institute in the City College of New York, in New York City, for researchers.

²¹ Unfortunately, by the time I reached Diego Blanco's home in Dajabón. Jan. 1999, he was senile. However he did leave his account of the massacre a few years ago. The above excerpt was taken from José Israel Cuello H. *Documentos del conflicto Dominico-Haitiano del 1937* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985), pg.46. I did speak briefly to his octogenarian wife, who told me a recurrent story told by border Dominicans that in a savannah near Dajabón Haitian children were thrown in the air and caught by the soldiers' bayonets and then thrown atop their mothers corpses. She also told me that she helped saved six Haitians by hiding them under a bed and that her husband's business was burned down.

²² Video Interview in La Descubierta, June 1999.

The distribution of weapons by the Dominican army to civilians for the purposes of persecuting and killing Haitians contradicts the government's denials of complicity in organized state violence. When the world later learned of the massacre and of the victims who had suffered gunshot and machete wounds, Trujillo would claim that the massacre was simply a border skirmish between Dominican and Haitian residents.²³

To no one's surprise, it would be the Dominican exile community that would turn world attention to this crime and present it as yet another example of Trujillo's thirst for power and total disrespect for human life. News of the killings and the impending crisis that was mounting between Haitian and Dominican governments convinced the exile community in New York City that Trujillo's downfall was imminent. The belief was so strong that the name of Ángel Morales, a prominent Dominican exile, circulated in the New York City press as the next presidential candidate in elections that would be held as soon as Trujillo fell from power.²⁴ But Morales did not witness the predicted fall of Trujillo. It would take twenty-three more years before the exile community would see a democratic transition in the Dominican Republic after the assassination of the dictator.

Trujillo's ability to retain power for many years and carry out a full-scale organized, collective slaughter for several weeks, required control of the army. The institution of the army or *ejercito nacional*, above all the rest, explains how Trujillo could have logistically committed the collective murder of thousands of Haitians and remain in power for such a long period of time. Under Trujillo, this institution was

²³ Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, Vol. I. pg.361-362.

²⁴ Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haití, 1937-1938*. Vol.II. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1995), pg.170.

transformed into a modern organization that served to maintain his power as an outlet for the mostly poor young volunteers. Enlisting in the army represented an opportunity for social mobility. Many of the new recruits were between eighteen and twenty-five years old and came from very poor socio-economic conditions.²⁵ For the average enlisted man, joining the army meant having a steady income while gaining social prestige within his community. It also meant going through a process of indoctrination where soldiers were expected to pledge their allegiance to Trujillo from the moment of recruitment. Therefore, by the time of the massacre, these young soldiers had been indoctrinated to carry out orders—any orders—in the name of Trujillo and the country. These young soldiers also comprised a rapidly growing army who had increased from 2,125 men in 1929 to 3,029 men in 1938 out of an overall population of 1, 479, 417.²⁶

During the massacre, nearly 3,000 soldiers could not all be stationed throughout the border. Thus, the killing of 20,000 Haitians relied on the crucial support of civilians.²⁷ Many soldiers were unfamiliar with the border region and relied on long-time civilian residents of the region to guide them in locating and killing Haitians. Many relied on the rural police or *alcaldes pedáneos*—usually former

²⁵ Valentina Peguero, "Trujillo and the Military: Organization, Modernization and control of the Dominican Armed Forces, 1916-1961," Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 1993, pg.194; 196. According to Peguero, new recruits also had to be "at least five feet six inches tall, with good physical and mental health and no personal or family records." In other words, have no police record of criminal activity or political dissent against the regime.

²⁶ Ibid. 230. During the Trujillo regime only three national censuses were taken: 1935, 1950, and 1960. Initially and according to a 1943 law, the national census would be conducted every fifteen years. At the time of writing, I was not able to locate the 1935 census. However, the 1950 census does offer the statistical population figure for 1935: 1,479,417. See *Tercer censo nacional de poblacion 1950* Republica Dominicana Direccion General de Estadistica Oficina Nacional de Censo, Ciudad Trujillo, 1958.

²⁷ Ibid.

soldiers who became the highest authority in the villages or towns. The rural police, alongside the volunteers, became the state's eyes and ears and facilitated the army's "search and destroy" missions against Haitians. In all and according to scholar Valentina Peguero, aside from the army's more than 3,000 soldiers, the government could count on a force of 10,000 men in the police force and a corps of civilian reserves.²⁸ Men like ninety-nine year old farmer Fermín Medina remembered being invited by army officers, specifically lieutenants, to participate in the massacre. Asked why he participated in the massacre, despite being a civilian, Fermín replied:

Trujillo [read the military] placed a shot-gun in my hands to kick the Haitians out...no [I was not a soldier] but I was very much liked by the chiefs. I worked with the military on the patrols. Every day the patrols were changed...when those [men] left a patrol, there was another one [to substitute] it. [We were] five or six persons [in the patrol] and armed. With a 12 caliber shot-gun. I went twice."²⁹

Many border residents were torn emotionally by witnessing the rounding-up and killings of Haitians and black Dominicans of Haitian descent, some of whom were longtime friends. Yet many remained silent. Husbands, wives, children, and entire families were separated because intermarriage between Dominican and Haitian border residents was very common. Moreover, many Dominicans of Haitian descent were also forced to cross the border into Haiti for fear of not being able to prove they were Dominican.³⁰ Those Dominicans that were not affiliated politically with the regime and who were asked to volunteer had little choice. In a dictatorial society

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Video Interview in La Descubierta, June 1999. Also see *Cuello's Documentos del conflicto Dominico-Haitiano del 1937*, "Yo conozco todos los puntos..." pg.45.

where arbitrary arrests were common, civilians who did not follow military or police orders were subject to, at a minimum, being arrested. In essence, saying no to the military was tantamount to treason against Trujillo and marked you as his enemy.³¹ Many border Dominicans never participated in the massacre because they were not asked to help by the military and never volunteered to scout Haitians in the forests or kill them. Many interviewees recalled that people had to obey orders by killing or witnessing atrocities during the massacre, even though you found the killings morally reprehensible. Ninety-nine year old Mañon told me the following story:

Personally I saw it [the burning of Haitian bodies] and it filled my heart with sorrow but I couldn't speak. I can't say 'don't do this' because they were the chiefs. I could not say to them don't do it because they were the big people and they were the chiefs. I was with them because they were taking me. What I use to do was turn my face, I turned my face so as not to see certain things. I myself had a small Haitian boy which I found [prior to the massacre] in one of those hills and I raised him and I had him in my house and when the "removal" [i.e. massacre] came it was to take him to Haiti and I got tired of arguing with the sergeants who were friends of mine saying: 'oh, leave him'; it was no use but I think that on the road they killed them, they killed [all of] them on the road.³²

It is difficult to imagine the beautiful Dominican border landscape dotted by unmarked and makeshift bloody graves with the stench of charred human flesh permeating the quiet countryside. As Trujillo biographer Robert Crasweller writes, "Bodies clogged the river. Bodies were piled into obscure little valleys. Bodies lay in village streets and on country roads and in gentle green fields. Trails of blood lay on dusty country lanes up and down the border. Blood dripped from trucks that carried

³⁰ See Orlando Inoa, "Huida de negros dominicanos durante la matanza de 1937," *El Siglo* May 18, 1993, pg.7.

³¹ Video interview with S. Ramirez in La Descubierta, June 1999.

³² Video interview with Mañon, June 1999.

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corpses to secluded ravines for disposal.”³³ It is difficult to imagine what went through the minds of Haitians attempting to escape from Dominican territory. As previous scholars like Garcia, Cuello, Vega, Turits and Derby have shown, oral testimonies provide valuable information on historical events where victims’ voices are ignored. After collecting video histories of Dominican border residents who directly or indirectly participated in the massacre, I traveled to the northwestern border of Haiti and conducted video interviews with survivors of the massacre a year later.³⁴

The oral testimonies of the massacre allow us to capture, if ever so superficially, the feelings that loomed over the border region during the time of the massacre. One of the persons I interviewed was seventy-five year old Dominican-born Antoine Joseph. Like many border residents, Antoine’s parents were Haitian and Dominican. Most of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. He recalled that no one knows why the massacre began. It “started on a Wednesday but in Dajabon on Sunday October 5th.”³⁵ Like many others were to tell me, upon hearing news of the killings Joseph and his family, similar to many Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent fled their communities and towns. Many families, like them, made their way to the border. Their hope was to reach the border, cross it, and safely reach Haitian territory without being stopped by the roving military and civilian killing squads.

³³ See Robert D. Crasweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 154-155. According to Turits, makeshift refugee camps were established on the Haitian side of the border where the wounded arrived. Several of these sites were Terrier Rouse, Grand Bassin, Savan Zombi, Dosmont and Thiote. See Turits’ “Foundation of Despotism,” pg.488.

³⁴ The video interviews in Haiti were conducted during the early part of August 2000. I would like to thank Solange Pierre, the Haitian Consul in Dajabon Jean Baptiste, Jeremiah, and Adela in the Consulate for introducing me to the interviewees.

³⁵ Video interview with Antoine Joseph in Juana Mendez, August 2, 2000.

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Whether you were near the territorial limits or separated by hundreds of miles, the goal was to cross the border without being killed. Many of the persecuted spent several fearful days and nights hiding in the woods as they made their way to the border. It was during these days of clandestine uncertainty that Antoine says he saw cadavers of those massacred. "I saw people on the ground [dead]. I was looking for pecans, you know children love pecans, and I saw various people laying on the ground with blood and old clothes. I got scared and I went down to a ravine...where we were hiding and I told my father and they came to see. It took us four days to cross over all the while living and sleeping in the mountains."³⁶

Despite a ubiquitous fear, the interviews also echoed similar conversations with Dominicans where some Dominicans are portrayed as risking their lives in the face of potential military reprisals in order to assist Haitians trying to reach the border. During the eight days he and a large group of Haitian men, women, and children were hiding in a pasture making their way to the Haitian border, now eighty-two year old Leonor Foronn recalled how some Dominicans brought them food like "milk, eggs, plantains, yuca, sweet potato, yautia, peas, rice...we did not experience a lot of hunger."³⁷ Despite stories like these of Dominican humanitarianism, most Haitians walked several days foraging in the forest without outside help as they made

³⁶ Ibid. Most of the survivors were never treated for their psychological trauma whose impact is still felt years later. Antoine says, "I am not going there [to the Dominican Republic]. I remember everything that happened. In my very dreams everytime I am dreaming, I am running, fleeing from a Dominican with a machete in his hand is running after me...that is why everytime I think about it--that is why I do not go."

³⁷ Video Interview with Leonor Foronn. Aug.2, 2000 in Juana Mendez. Born in Haiti around 1918 and raised in Santiago de La Cruz near the border in the Dominican Republic. Fanrul also recalled waiting for a Haitian truck as they were hiding to take them across the border. Although he says the truck arrived at 4am, it is not clear how this truck was allowed to enter Dominican territory during the

their dangerous journey toward the border. A salient example is the testimony of now the octogenarian madam Augustin, who narrated to me her personal experience during the massacre. The daughter of Haitian parents in Puerto Plata, Augustin traveled through mountains and forests for almost a week until she reached Haiti.

I came walking. Everybody ran. They fled and left all their belongings. A lot of people. We walked about 5 to 6 days because you could not go out during the day or the night. At night everyone one was one group and searching where to exit the country. We arrived in a place called Balbao and from there we returned to our country—all of us. [What did you eat during those 5 to 6 days?] When you are in such a mess like that are you going to have time to be hungry? When you find yourself in such a mess a little bit of casave, a piece of bread, bit of sugar and you make sugar water, place bread with that and you can last 5 or 6 days, it's like that.³⁸

Many who escaped the northern Dominican border region arrived in Juana Mendez—the first Haitian city after Dajabon. Eighty-nine year old Ernesto Jose, born and raised in Dajabon of Haitian parents, remembers his older brother who was a school teacher warning his family after he returned from the infamous dance celebrated in honor of Trujillo's arrival to the border town.

Naturally I crossed the border the next day. In customs they asked me for my cedula (identity card)—I still had not reached my sixteenth birthday. They [the Dominican authorities] did not agree. I showed them my birth certificate and they took it and kept the certificate. But I still thought that I was not sixteen. I was born in 1921 and left in 1937. I was born on November 10, 1921 and left Dajabon in 1937. I crossed with my mother because I was a minor.³⁹

killings. "The truck was full...[the truck] entered through Juana Mendez...the driver of the truck was Haitian."

³⁸ Video Interview with odiwi soguise in Colonie, Gran Bassin. August 17, 2000.

³⁹ Video Interview with Ernesto Jose Aug.3, 2000 in Juana Mendez.

The scene at Juana Mendez, with the constant stream of people pouring in during those October and November months, was surreal. Ernesto Jose recalled seeing Haitian refugees arriving in Juana Mendez severely injured. "They came in large numbers. They came tied almost like an ox tied to an anvil. They had them bound by rope and sometimes they managed to escape [from the soldiers]." ⁴⁰ While in Juana Mendez seventy year-old Geraldo Moises, the son of a Haitian mother and Dominican father and raised in Dajabon, remembers that although he did not see any injured persons he "heard many stories of people who were injured." Yet, at night, since Dajabon and Juana Mendez (Ounaminthe) are border towns separated by a very small and narrow river, Jose recalled listening from Haiti the cries from the dying on the Dominican side. "When we went to sleep a lot of screams on the other side: 'knife!' The Haitians screaming 'amue!' I lived near the river." ⁴¹ During this time, the hospital in Juana Mendez received the wounded and dying as they struggled to reach Haitian territory. One of those persons who managed to reach Haiti was sixty nine year old Carlos Antonio (Calixte Antoine). Like many of the refugees, Antonio was born in Dominican Republic (Puerto Plata) of Haitian parents. He traveled five days to reach Juana Mendez. There he recalled seeing in the hospital the constant arrival of the wounded .

I hear from the wounded that they [Dominicans] are killing many people but I never saw this [killings] with my own eyes. Yes there were a lot of people in the hospital, they were brought there, I saw this with my own eyes. There were many wounded people, a lot of wounded people, a lot of wounded. Men and women who were alive and ran but when they escaped were badly wounded. The wounded that I saw did not die but were placed in the hospital and were

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Video Interview with Geraldo Moises in Juana Mendez August 16, 2000.

treated. There are some who lived and others who died because they could not withstand the injuries.⁴²

Many Haitians in Dominican territory tried desperately to warn their loved ones but the spontaneity of the massacre prevented them from doing so. The following letter, written by a Haitian, was intercepted by the Dominican authorities. In this letter he warns his mother, who lived in the southern province of Azua, of the massacre which was already taking place along the border and feared, in what proved to be a justified fear, that it would extend beyond the border.

“My Dear Mother, Hello. It is with a heart filled with happiness that I write you this letter since I cannot enjoy the pleasure of seeing you. They have killed at least thirty Haitians in Dajabón, and I believe that they have killed Racine. Do whatever is possible to leave before the month of January, its the last warning that has been given to kill all the Haitians that still are left in the Dominican Republic. If you do not leave--you are the one that knows. Alberto is not in Dajabón, he is in Haiti. There are no Haitians in Dajabón. You can send me the peso by mail. Hurry-up to come before the month of January. Your son that loves you.”⁴³

The killings continued throughout the month of October, even though both Dominican and Haitian governments signed a diplomatic communiqué with assurances of their continued good relations. Unsurprisingly, both sides used diplomatic hyperbole in an attempt to contain the situation and convince their citizens and the rest of the world that what occurred in the border was only a spontaneous outburst between Haitian peasants and farmers. The communiqué was signed by

⁴² Video Interview with Carlos Antonio in Belé: a rural hamlet near the town of Gran Bassin. August 17, 2000.

⁴³ Letter from Eugenio Tassy to his mother Emilia Bazile, Oct. 7, 1937. Ejercito Nacional Leg.253, #95. AGN. This letter leads one to conclude that there were more literate Haitians corresponding with each other between countries than previously documented. Indeed in the document Tassy tells his mother that he received all the letters she sent him. How was Tassy able to write his letter with the

Haitian Foreign Minister Evremont and Dominican Secretary of State of Foreign Relations, Joaquín Balaguer. The letter was vague stating there were some “incidents” in the northern Dominican-Haitian border of an “exaggerated” nature. It proposed an official investigation of the events by the Dominican government but assured its readers that cordial relations between both countries continued uninterrupted under the respective Dominican and Haitian Presidents Trujillo and Vincent.⁴⁴ The letter was surprisingly low-keyed and deceptive, down-playing the bloody events which at this time were taking place throughout the Dominican border. While Trujillo was trying to diffuse the powder keg he himself lit, Dominican archival documents reveal that the Dominican military was involved heavily in a conspiratorial operation. A day after the October 15 communiqué, an Army document outlined nine points to its members to maintain strict vigilance throughout the border region:

Maintain the [border] line almost closed and practice vigilance to whomever enters the Province, even foreigners [presumably tourists]. For this end, utilize civil authorities and friends, not military personnel; an absolute control of the line in such a way that anyone that touches the territory is watched; control over the priests. Visit them frequently and motivate them so that they can be on our side; probe prominent Haitian residents in the territory through civilian friends; persons who frequently travel to Haiti to exchange money should do it in Santiago; Control all correspondence that goes or comes from Haiti; Control the postal and telegraphic correspondence directed by the Customs’ employee; Treat well the Haitian Consul and maintain friends entertained, thus absorbing all his time, in order so that he will not investigate; and that the Law act every time that an encounter occurs and process descriptions of the event and send to the Secretary of Justice.⁴⁵

impending massacre surrounding him? Most likely, he was writing from Haiti which often sent its outgoing Dominican mail through Dajabón.

⁴⁴ Relaciones Exteriores. Correspondencia Recibidas. Sept. to Dec. 1937. Leg.216. AGN. This official diplomatic communique was signed in Ciudad Trujillo (Santo Domingo) respectively by the Haitian Foreign Minister in the Dominican Republic, Evremont Carrié, and Dominican Secretary of State of Foreign Relations, Joaquín Balaguer.

⁴⁵ Instructions from Army’s Northern Department in Dajabón to the Official Commanders of the fourth and Nineteenth Army Company, October 16, 1937. See Ejército Nacional, Leg.258-A, Exp.76. AGN.

During these tense weeks, Dominican newspapers were censored by the government from publishing any information surrounding the massacre. Ironically, throughout the month of September in which Trujillo's army gradually began its wave of killings, newspaper editorials focused on issues promoting peace. One Dominican editorialist portrayed his country as a promoter of peace and goodwill as it encouraged peaceful negotiations to resolve a Nicaraguan-Honduran territorial dispute.⁴⁶ There was also the strengthening of relationships with European Fascist powers like those in Germany and Spain. The burgeoning fascist ties between Hitler's Germany and Trujillo resulted in the inauguration of the Instituto Científico Dominico-Alemán (Scientific Dominican-German Institute). Supposedly, the objectives of the Institute were to, among other things, study Dominican flora and fauna, oceanography, biology, geology, geography, and Pre-Columbian archeology.⁴⁷ While Trujillo built alliances with a country that had already begun the systematic marginalization of Jews, nothing in the Dominican press gave the slightest indication that a genocidal project to exterminate Haitians was taking place. In essence, because of government censorship, events were kept secret.

Most Dominicans, particularly those far removed from the border, were oblivious to the events throughout the border. Not surprisingly, the nation's attention was focused on Trujillo's 1938 reelection campaign. Readers sent their articles to

⁴⁶ See *Listín Diario* September 11, 1937, pg.2.

⁴⁷ See *Listín Diario* September 27, 1937, pg.2. Aside from having closer ties with Germany, Trujillo at this time not only began to apply Hitler's racist views of racial superiority to Haitians but he also started imitating the German leader's style of dress and distinctive mustache. See Eric Paul Roorda, "Genocide Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy, the Trujillo Regime, and the Haitian Massacre of

newspapers urging a third term for their President.⁴⁸ One article is particularly ominous since its author's words were published at a time when the massacre was in full-swing. "Now in this historic moment, the nation gets ready, ready to erase a sad and nebulous past to surrender itself with faith and love to the reconfiguration of a new and happy homeland with all the beautiful contours of a perfect nationality."⁴⁹ Although many Dominicans as well as the international community were oblivious to the ethnic cleansing project campaign, Haiti bore the brunt of the massacre as it received thousands of survivors that were fleeing Dominican soil.

In the international community, Haitians were the first ones to learn of the killings and see beyond Trujillo's incessant denials of Dominican complicity. Haiti witnessed, first-hand, the multitude of people escaping from the Dominican Republic. Even as early as October 9, six days before both countries issued the famous diplomatic communiqué, President Vincent was complaining to Dominican diplomatic authorities stationed in Port-au-Prince about hundreds of Haitians fleeing from the Dominican Republic.⁵⁰ However, throughout the entire ordeal President Vincent did not demand explanations from the Dominican government. His reaction to the massacre was slow and passive. Vincent feared a potential military

1937," *Diplomatic History*, Vol.20, N0.3, 1996. Also see Bernardo Vega's, *Nazismo, fascismo, y falangismo en la Republica Dominicana*. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1986.

⁴⁸ "The reelection of the Honorable President Trujillo is more than a political necessity, a biological-social need for the Republic. It is the glorious culmination of a radiant historical process whose illustrious stages mark the road of the Republic towards an achievement of its highest aspirations." See *Listín Diario* September 13, 1937, pg.2.

⁴⁹ Originally written on September 30 but published in See *Listín Diario* on October 4, 1937, pg.6. Also see "Hacia la reeleccion presidencial del generalísimo Trujillo Molina," *Listín Diario* September 13, 1937, pg.2.

⁵⁰ José Israel Cuello H. *Documentos del conflicto Dominico-Haitiano de 1937*. (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985), pg.313. This invaluable book is a compilation of primary documents diplomatic correspondences between Haitian, American, and Dominican officials and declarations by Dominican and Haitian military, police and civilians.

confrontation with the more heavily armed Trujillo and feared a palace revolt against his government from the already disenchanted and politicized Haitian Guard.⁵¹ In fact, the situation in Haiti was becoming increasingly tense through mid-October. The events increased pressure on Haiti from the international community to learn the truth of the extent of the massacre. This pressure, in turn, would eventually pressure Trujillo to settle with the Haitian government. The settlement, however, would not take place without a diplomatic fight.

The International Community Learns of the Massacre

News of the massacre was slow to reach the United States since Dominican newspapers were under strict government control and censorship. For Dominican readers, their first encounter with the “border skirmishes” occurs when the diplomatic communiqué of mutual cooperation is published verbatim a day after both governments sign the agreement.⁵² Throughout the months of October, November, and December the Dominican government continued its denials of having anything to do with the massacre. On the eastern part of the island, while there was no mention of the killings in the press, Haitians continued to systematically die. Conversely, the western part of island—Haiti—experienced increasing protests against the massacre.

⁵¹ See Robert Debs Heintz Jr. and Nancy Gordon Heintz, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*. (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1996), pg. 503. See also Richard Lee Turits’ “A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed,” Paper presented at the Latin American & Caribbean Studies Evening Seminar Series, Fall 2000: Ethnicity and Migration in the Caribbean, September 26 at

At times, these protests were manifested in “anonymous pages with a palm of fire against Vincent and his government and at the same time against the Dominicans.”⁵³ In order to maintain control of the politically delicate situation that was evolving, the Haitian government began arresting “agitators” who were expressing their anger over the killings. Consequently, Vincent, weary of losing control of the situation, prohibited public manifestations in Port-au-Prince.⁵⁴ News of the massacre, and its resulting unrest in Haiti and deafening silence in Santo Domingo, spread beyond the island of Hispaniola. Cognizant of the damage that ongoing events could have on his image, Trujillo continued his incessant denials and refuted all accusations made against his government. Most importantly, Trujillo and his coterie of diplomats lied repeatedly to their most important economic and political ally in the western hemisphere—the United States. Trujillo denied that he had any knowledge of the massacre and described the alleged “massacre” as a series of minor “incidents” between Dominican farmers and Haitian bandits. However, while Trujillo tried to convince his American counterpart that the killing of hundreds, and later thousands, of Haitians was an exaggeration, Roosevelt received sobering news of the carnage from his ambassador in the Dominican Republic, R. Henry Norweb. Although Norweb did not personally travel to the border and survey the damage, he assured Roosevelt that a massacre was indeed taking place along the border. His report relied on the investigation of a Major Norris, who at the time was the Auditor of the

the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, pgs. 38-39. Turits writes that “If troops were sent to the frontier, the palace would be left vulnerable to attack.”

⁵² See “Comunicado para la prensa,” *Listin Diario* October 16 1937.

⁵³ Cuello H., *Documentos de l conflicto Domincano-Haitiano de 1937*, pg.319.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 324.

Receivership General of Dominican Customs. Norweb confirmed to the President of the United States, through diplomatic correspondence, that a massacre had indeed taken place contradicting Trujillo's official denials. Norweb writes that "apparently with the approval of President Trujillo, a systematic campaign of extermination was directed against all Haitian residents in an area from some thirty kilometers south of Dajabón north to Monte Cristi. The drive was conducted with ruthless efficiency by the National Police and Army."⁵⁵ Dominican complicity was now confirmed despite Trujillo's incessant denials and self-portrayals as a victim. Norweb writes that prior to writing his letter to Washington, Trujillo had stopped the massacre during the first week of October. However, interviews with elderly participants suggest that the massacre continued intermittently through January. Nevertheless, as Norweb recounted, "The very fact that the campaign of murder was halted instantly in accordance with the President's [Trujillo's] wish clearly implies a degree of governmental responsibility for what happened."⁵⁶

Even in the midst of an extermination project and a repressive dictatorship, some Dominicans risked their lives to save Haitians. Like other cases of genocide and genocidal massacres, there were those who felt compelled to help, support, or rescue those being persecuted. Ordinary people like the deceased Don Eduardo and his widow Dona Estela Bogaert personally saved a number of Haitians by creating a clandestine network to rescue Haitians. The operation surreptitiously transported

⁵⁵ PSF Box 70 State: 1937 FDR Library, Hyde Park, NY. pg.2. Norweb writes that, "On three successive nights groups of Haitian men, women and children were herded to the end of the customs wharf at Monte Cristi and there despatched by the soldiers. They were clubbed over the head and thrown into the sea where the sharks completed the task by destroying the evidence." pg.3.

⁵⁶ Ibid. pg.4.

Haitians to an American starch factory in a community called La Yuca between the city of Santiago and the province of Mao in northwestern Dominican Republic. Sanctioned by the American Consul, the plant's Finnish manager and fellow accomplice had raised an American flag and declared the factory American territory. During the night, trucks with safe-conduct passes secretly transported Haitians to the border.⁵⁷

It is worth noting that not all Haitians in the Dominican Republic at this time were at risk.

There were Haitians who did not flee and went untouched by the wave of terror. Those Haitians lived in U.S.-owned sugar bateyes during the massacre and were not killed. Trujillo was not about to provoke the wrath of the American business interests by eliminating their cheap source of labor. Therefore, Dominican soldiers stayed clear of all U.S.-owned sugar mills. According to Vega, another reason why Haitians in the bateyes were unharmed was their isolation from Dominican society. They were mostly single men who were not "cattlerustlers", an underlying rationale for the killings, and were less likely to mix with the overall population. Vega writes that those Haitians living in these "batey-ghettos" were subject to strict controls for entering and leaving the country. Furthermore, because these Haitians lived far from the border, their presence did not undermine Trujillo's border plan.⁵⁸ Furthermore, and ironically, during the month of November, as the massacre waned, the Dominican government imported more Haitian and West Indian workers to its cane-fields.

⁵⁷ I am indebted to Ricardo J. Bogaert and his mother for sharing this information with me concerning their humanitarian participation during the massacre. E-mail Correspondence with Ricardo J. Bogaert, March 3, 1997.

Authorization was given to two sugar mills in San Pedro de Macoris—Ingenio Porvenir and Ingenio Santa Fe—to import 300 and 1,200 “non-caucasian” workers, respectively, from Haiti and the English-speaking Caribbean.⁵⁹

By late October, several weeks into the massacre, the international media picked-up on the story. The New York Times first ran the story, but it made no mention of a massacre. Instead, the brief article described a “border clash between Haitians and Dominicans in which several of the former were shot.”⁶⁰ But the truth would slowly be known to the world. A few days later, The New York Times ran another brief article this time saying that more than 300 Haitians were, in fact, killed along the border.⁶¹ Reporting from Port-au-Prince, the New York Times correspondent wrote that the killings provoked anger among many in the Haitian capital. Dominican-Haitian relations, which for the last seven years had been warm and cooperative, took a turn for the worse. Already in Port-au-Prince, Haitians were threatening reprisals against Dominicans. “As a result all public demonstrations were forbidden. Police squads patrolled the cities to disperse all gatherings.”⁶² Once the international newspapers and their readers focused their attention on the massacre, Trujillo went on the defensive denying that his army had perpetrated a bloody

⁵⁸ Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, pg.398-399.

⁵⁹ Letter from Mayor General Jose Garcia M.M. to Secretary of State of Foreign Relations, Nov. 11, 1937. AGN. Besides Haiti, workers came from “St. Kitts, Tortola, St. Martin, Martinique, Antigua, Virgin Islands, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and the nearby islands.” See Secretaria de Estado Interior y Policia. Chronologico Nov.1 to 15, 1937. AGN.

⁶⁰ “Haitians Reported Shot by Dominican Soldiers,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1937, pg.17.

⁶¹ “Hundreds of Haitians are Reported Slain for Seeking Work in the Dominican Republic,” *The New York Times*, October 25, 1937 pg.1. See also “300 Hundred are Reported Slain in Dominican Border Uprisings,” *The Houston Post* October 25, 1937, pg.13.

⁶² Ibid. Dominican officials were well aware of these articles. A telegram from the Dominican Ambassador in Washington, Andrés Pastoriza, informs Santo Domingo of this article in the American press. See Relaciones Exteriores Leg.232, 1937. October 25. Along the border, Haitians also tried to

massacre. The diplomatic offensive had begun. Foreign Relations Minister Joaquín Balaguer presented an official version of the events in a confidential letter to all Dominican foreign service members abroad in which he recounted Trujillo's trip to the border, his shock at the large presence of Haitians throughout the border, and his military order to begin deportations of Haitians: "Armed patrols were sent all along the border and immigration officials backed by army forces began to carry out, in the strictest way, the martial law, which had been applied without difficulties of any kind, and in a peaceful and normal way."⁶³ Through Balaguer, the government now suggested, despite previous denials of any knowledge of the killings, that the army was in the vicinity during the massacre undertaking a border army operation intent only on the deportation of Haitians. He suggested that the so-called massacre perpetrated by the army was in fact a spontaneous outburst of rogue and vindictive Dominican civilians who harbored virulent anti-Haitian feelings after years of being victimized by Haitians thieves.

In some cases, however, civilians who are residents of that [border] zone and who had been victims of robberies and other acts of vandalism perpetrated by Haitians, also residents of the same zone, and no doubt emboldened by the presence of army patrols spread throughout the northern border to protect Dominican interests, committed bloody acts of retaliation, even perpetrating various inhumane acts that our government has hurriedly condemned in the most energetic means, imposing on the guilty parties the most severe sanctions.⁶⁴

resist this wave of violence by "using machetes and injuring some Dominicans that were installing a telephone line." See Ejercito Nacional Leg.31, Exp.182 Oct. 31, 1937. AGN.

⁶³ RE Leg.216 1937. Correspondencias recibidas de Sept. a Dic. AGN.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Although such information might exist, I was not able to find any information on the distribution of army soldiers throughout the border. We still do not know how many many, military and civilian men, participated in this project of extermination.

Not surprisingly, Balaguer failed to mention that the massacre was a collective and mostly civilian operation with civilians serving as crucial guides and assistants for the army in their search and destroy missions of Haitians. All participated in the slaughter. Many in the international community were skeptical upon hearing Dominican denials of complicity in the massacre. One group that could not be persuaded by the official version of the events that came from the Dominican Republic was the Dominican exile community. They intensified their attacks on Trujillo and his dictatorship with new fodder. In a letter to President Vincent, a group of Dominican exiles condemned the Haitian massacre and called for a complete investigation of the murders:

In the good name of the Dominican people, we consider our unavoidable duty to declare to the Haitian people through you [President Vincent] that we are convinced that the Dominican people did not participate and repudiate the massacre of Haitians perpetrated by President Trujillo who for seven years has assassinated and jailed thousands of Dominicans and also is assassinating and jailing hundreds of foreigners.⁶⁵

Even African-American groups in the United States rallied behind Dominican exile demands for justice. In a letter to the Dominican Ambassador in Washington, the National Negro Congress made it clear that they were in solidarity with Haiti and expected a full inquiry into the Haitian massacre by the dictator Trujillo:

Your Excellency cannot ignore that the National Negro Congress is an association representative of the people of color of the United States. The

⁶⁵ The cablegram was signed by several prominent Dominican exiles, such as Dr. Angel Morales, former Vice-President of the League of Nations; José Manuel Jiménez, former Minister of Land and Finance; Persio Franco, former Chief of Business Affairs in Washington DC; Jaime Sánchez, ex-Senator; Dr. Ellis Cambiaso; Dr. Jiménez Grullón, and Gustavo Estrella Ureña. See RE Asuntos Varios-Micelaneus, Correspondencias Recibidas, Leg.229, Nov. 9, 1937. AGN.

organization is interested, quite naturally, in the affairs that affect the people of color in this country and the rest of the countries. With the fact that a great number of citizens of Black origin live in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, your Excellency will find this the principal reason why the National Negro Congress wants to throw the most possible light over these deplorable events.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, the Dominican legation in Washington was not concerned with the opinions of an African-American organization. The state of race relations in the United States at the time made it clear to them that the African-American lobby had little influence in either Washington D.C. or American foreign policy circles. Being challenged by the Black press in the United States of its complicity in the crime was one thing for Dominican officials, but it was quite another when the white press began to inquire about the killings in the Dominican Republic.

As early as November, President Roosevelt was publicly addressing questions concerning the massacre and having meetings with Dominican and Haitian diplomats. Asked if he was following closely the diplomatic crisis in Hispaniola, Roosevelt replied: "Yes and no. I am familiar with it as it goes along."⁶⁷ But Roosevelt knew much more than he let on. Ever since Ambassador Norweb informed him of the bloody killings, Roosevelt was very concerned for the stability of that region. During this time, war raged on in Franco's Spain and Japan was expanding throughout Asia. In Hitler's Germany imminent European invasions were being planned and Latin American alliances, albeit informal ones (like the Dominican-German Institute), were

⁶⁶ Letter from Max Yergan representative of the National Negro Congress to Ambassador Andrés Pastoriza. Dec. 9, 1937. RE Asuntos Varios. Micelaneus Universidades y Colegios, Leg.229.

⁶⁷ Complete Presidential Press Conferences of F.D.R. Vol.9-10, 1937. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), pg.330. Roosevelt had recently met Haitian Foreign Minister George Leger at the White House for tea.

being accumulated. Thus, it was imperative that Roosevelt assist both countries by finding a peaceful solution and show the world that the Western Hemisphere was united against Fascism.⁶⁸ This effort proved to be a major test for Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy of non-intervention.

Trujillo's Recalcitrant Stance Against International Mediation

The diplomatic initiative to reach a settlement began when Vincent asked the government of Cuba, Mexico, and the United States for assistance. In a letter to F.D.R., Vincent acknowledges both the killings and the Dominican government's intransigence at reaching a settlement. Vincent writes, "I do not hesitate in the name of my Government to have recourse to the good offices of Your Excellency's Government to aid in a just and prompt solution of the sharp difference now existing between the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic."⁶⁹ Roosevelt quickly responded to Vincent's request in the affirmative and wrote to Trujillo. In the letter to Trujillo, FDR informs Trujillo that the United States "and the Governments of Cuba and of Mexico stand ready to tender their good offices if Your Excellency feels disposed to accept these friendly services."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ According to Roosevelt's ambassador in Santo Domingo, Ellis O. Briggs, "Although Trujillo's dictatorship represents the negation of many of the principles to which the United States subscribes, promotion of his overthrow is not the responsibility of the American Government nor would such action be consistent with our present commitments with respect to non-intervention." See "From the Second World War to the Cold War: 1944-1954," in *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America, Themes and Issues* ed. by Abraham F. Lowenthal (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 49.

⁶⁹ Official File No.162 Haiti 1935-1938, Correspondence between President Vincent and President Roosevelt. F.D.R. Library.

⁷⁰ See Telegram from Roosevelt to President Trujillo Nov.14, 1937. *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers 1937. Vol.V The American Republics.* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), pg.136.

By that November, the international press and governments were paying close attention to the massacre. Hence, Trujillo had no choice but to confront the accusations leveled against him. In Dominican newspapers, editorials began mentioning the massacre and blamed anti-Trujillo exile groups for fabricating stories suggesting that Trujillo, with Hitler's support, wanted to invade Haiti.⁷¹ Initially, Trujillo would not accept arbitration. He, as well as his diplomats, insisted that no massacre had taken place on the Dominican-Haitian border. The pressure kept mounting and Trujillo's government was repeatedly forced to publicly deny the Dominican government's involvement in the "incidents" along the border. Dominican Ambassador to Washington Andrés Pastoriza went as far as to send a telegram to the New York Times absolving his government from any wrong doing.⁷²

Controlling the press in one's own country was easy. Manipulating a foreign press hungry for a gruesome news story, however, would prove to be very difficult for Trujillo. After weeks of confidential meetings in Washington, an investigative commission composed of Dominican, American, Mexican, Cuban, and Haitian representatives was proposed to visit Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haitian officials accepted the proposal for the commission on December 3. Everyone waited for the Dominican officials to accept the proposal.⁷³ Knowing full well that accepting an international commission on Dominican territory would expose the bloody

⁷¹ See *Listín Diario* Nov. 5, 1937, pg.2

⁷² Pastoriza writes, "The Dominican government has not mobilized troops nor has had any reason to do so because the incident at the border is considered as closed with the exception of the investigation that is customary in incidents of such a nature where guilt is presumed in order to establish responsibilities and to determine judicial sanction against the guilty parties." See *The New York Times* Nov.7, 1937, pg.36.

⁷³ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1937, pg.139.

massacre, Trujillo stalled for several days. He was buying time to play his next card, which would allow him to avoid responsibility for the massacre.⁷⁴

On December 11 the Dominican government rejected the Commission and, instead, issued a lengthy memorandum reaffirming the October 15 communiqué. The communiqué prevented all representative governments except Haiti and the Dominican Republic from participating in the investigative process. In reality, Haiti too was excluded from the investigation of their murdered fellow Haitians. The Memorandum urged for the “Continuation of the investigation already begun and greatly advanced by the Dominican government”⁷⁵ and included a series of guarantees that required the Dominican government to establish a judicial process with the necessary magistrates and matching funds.⁷⁶ Although clearly in opposition to the document, the Haitian government failed to give an audible response to the memorandum and remained silent. However, by then the Haitian government was prepared to sever all diplomatic ties to the Dominican Republic for dragging its feet. The decision to break all relations would dramatically escalate the already tense

⁷⁴ Dominican government officials like Balaguer, also who publicly denied the massacre, were converting this border violence into a patriotic defense of the nation. Congratulating Ambassador Pastoriza, Balaguer wrote that Trujillo was “pleased by his valuable, timely, and intelligent manouvers in favor of the country’s international image in the face of the abusive and slanderous campaign that determined Haitian officials have been making.” See RE Leg.216, Correspondencia Recibidas de la Secretaria de Estado de la Presidencia. Letter from Secretary of State of the Presidency Joaquín Balaguer to Ambassador Andres Pastoriza, Dec.2, 1937. AGN.

⁷⁵ Memorandum de los Ministros Plenipotenciarios de la República Dominicana en Washington, a los representantes diplomáticos de los Estados Unidos de América, Estados Unidos de Méjico, Cuba, y Haití, relativo a las medidas que pueden adoptarse para evitar rozamientos entre la República Dominicana y la de Haiti con motivo de la solicitud de mediación hecha por el Gobierno Haitiano el día 12 de Noviembre, 1937. (Ciudad Trujillo: Imprenta Listín Diario, 1937), pg.20. The Memorandum was also published in Dominican newspapers. See “Memorandum Dominicano a los representantes de los E.E.U.U., Mexico, y Cuba en relacion con el caso fronterizo,” Listín Diario, Dec. 14, 1937. pg.1-7.

⁷⁶ Ibid. pg.20.

relations between the two nations and undermine F.D.R.'s Good Neighbor Policy.⁷⁷

In the midst of a debate that was nearing climax in Washington, killings of Haitians persisted, albeit on a smaller scale, throughout the border. In the meantime, Trujillo drafted a memorandum demanding the arrest and trial of the "guilty" parties instead of identifying himself, his army, and guilty civilians as the agents who had actually participated in the killings. Trujillo ordered several men to be recruited from the border to pose as the perpetrators of the massacre. These men were called *reservistas* and were reputable members of their communities. They were told what to say during the trials and imprisoned in Monte Cristi for six months. But as one interviewee told me, this charade was "for the international community...those people in jail were treated with all the care; including some money every month to send to their families. The day of the verdict, when they left free men, every one of them was given a sum between 50 and 100 pesos"⁷⁸: a small price to pay in the mockery of justice and the deaths of thousands of innocent Haitians. Anti-Dominican demonstrations continued in Port-au-Prince and along the Haitian border. According to one diplomat in Haiti, there was widespread fear that the Dominican Republic would invade and widespread anger against Dominican Republic. Hearsay of Dominicans being killed in Cap Haitien circulated in the international press.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ RE Leg.232 Cables sent from special envoys Pastoriza and Troncoso, Dec. 9, 1937. AGN.

⁷⁸ Interview with Professor Mameito, Jan. 20, 1999, in Loma de Cabrera. Following the massacre, Trujillo sent judges to the border in preparation for the upcoming farcical trials that ceremoniously convicted the "alleged killers" to 15 and 20 years of prison. Needless to say, the "accused" were released soon after. See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, Vol. I. pg.433, #86; and Cuello's *Documentos del conflicto Dominico-Haitiano de 1937*, pg.38.

⁷⁹ See *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1937, pg.18. Reports of an Army Captain Flores and Consul Paulino (both Dominicans) being killed by a "riotous demonstration" Haiti circulated at the time. However, other sources cite that the deaths of Flores and Paulino was a spurious charge by enemies of the Dominican government. See Cuello's *Documentos del conflicto Domnico-Haitiano*, pg.337.

Trujillo, nevertheless, continued to deny any participation in the killings. The Dominican government along with the Dominican press reported that rumors of a massacre were untrue and that the only ones responsible for the “bloody clashes were Dominican farmers and Haitian thieves.”⁸⁰ As Haiti pushed even further for a multi-country-run investigation, the Dominican government felt more threatened. Slowly, Dominican official opinion—especially encouraged by the press—moved towards the right and began to define the border in “us” versus “them” terms. As early as December, the first signs of an official anti-Haitian ideological propaganda that had remained minimal in the last seven years of the regime emerged:

The majority of these ‘Dominicans’ [read Haitians] who effectively are so because of the Jus Solis, in reality do not have the habits, customs, nor the spirituality of a traditional Dominican, has Spanish ancestry and by the look of things anyone could affirm that these individuals are of Haitian nationality. And to make matters more confusing these individuals are carriers of two tongues, handling better the patois (Haitian Kreyol): the language in which they developed when they were children inside the home.⁸¹

Before things escalated even further, the Haitian government invoked the 1923 Gondra Treaty and the 1929 Convention of Conciliation on December 14. These two inter-American treaties required the diplomatic assistance of several Latin American countries to resolve disputes. To prevent international inspectors from entering

⁸⁰ *Listin Diario* Dec. 8, 1937, pg.1.

⁸¹ *Listin Diario*, Dec. 10, 1937, pg.6. Dominican press was now writing that Haitians were “slaves that multiply under the sensual sun of Ecuador in celestial promiscuity without limits of any type; from here comes the brutal population increase and also the brutal bloody fetichism of those people.” See *Listin Diario*, Dec. 28, 1937, pg.6. Haitian invasions of Dominican territory were not only substituting Dominican native labor but were now also “impoverishing our race.” See *La Opinion* March 17, 1938, pg.7.

Dominican territory, Trujillo was forced to accept arbitration on December 18.⁸² However, Trujillo never apologized or accepted responsibility for the massacre that had been committed. With the assistance of the Papal Nuncio in Santo Domingo, Trujillo was able to settle out of international court, paying an indemnity of \$750,000 to the Haitian government.⁸³ This figure was reduced to \$550,000 and was paid to Haitian officials. None of the Haitian victims or their families ever received direct monetary compensation for their suffering.⁸⁴ The Haitian government did, however, establish several agricultural colonies to resettle the survivors of the massacre. Many of the survivors who arrived in Juana Mendez were resettled in the colonies of Gran Bassin. This rural hamlet is two and a half hours west of Dajabon. Several of the survivors interviewed lived in the colony since their arrival after the massacre in 1937. One stated that “after [the massacre] the government with the money paid by Trujillo for each head of person who died became property of the state. Then the [Haitian] government gave a small house and three hectares of land,” to the survivors.⁸⁵

The enormous international pressure and well documented stories of the massacre served to discredit Trujillo and forced him to step down as the presidential

⁸² Foreign Relations, 1937, Vol.V, pg.140. Trujillo never acknowledged his guilt and the agreement only referred to people of Haitian nationality who “lost their lives or received injuries, contusions or wounds of another nature.” See signed copies in French and Spanish in RE Leg.241. Correspondencia recibidas de la presidencia, Jan. 25, 1938.

⁸³ See George Pope Atkins, “The United States and the Dominican Republic During the Era of Trujillo,” Ph.D diss., The American University, 1966, pg. 109.

⁸⁴ Crassweller, Trujillo, pg.159. Some of these monies were used to establish colonies (in the hills of Commissaires, Dosmond, Biliguy, between Maissade and Saint-Michelle d’Atalaye) on the Haitian border to maintain this region populated. But there was no mention of any survivors who received cash monies from the settlement. See Juan Manuel García “Mediación de la iglesia resuelve conflicto origina matanza de haitianos,” (3) !Ahora! No.934 (19 October), 1981, pg.64.

candidate in 1938. Yet, nothing in the speech as he declined the presidential candidacy referred to the massacre—the very event that forced his resignation in the face of world condemnation. “First, I desire to reiterate formally and categorically, my intention, already made public on several occasions in the past, to renounce public office in order to enjoy once more the peaceful quiet of private life. In the next general elections, therefore, I will not be a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic,” he said.⁸⁶ Hence, Trujillo escaped punishment from a genocidal act that should have been settled in a court of law and exposed his crimes to the world. On 31 January, an agreement between Dominican and Haitian governments formally and peacefully settled their differences. Even within the writings of the settlement, Trujillo refused to accept responsibility or governmental complicity in the killings. “The Dominican, government which for its part does not admit that the Dominican State is in any way responsible, but will on this point abide by the findings of the judicial inquiry, which is not yet concluded, agrees to terminate by a settlement all dispute.”⁸⁷ This settlement absolved Trujillo of all responsibility for the crimes and

⁸⁵ Video Interview with Leonor Foronn. And Jacqueslain: 50 years old whose grandparents were survivors and grew up in the colonie of Colonie near Gran Bassin and Terra Rouge; see als Vega, *Trujillo y Haiti*, Vol.II, pg.366.

⁸⁶RE Leg.247. AGN. “Presidente Trujillo Molina Declines to Be a Candidate for Reelection. Important Message to the Dominican People,” Jan. 8, 1938. pg.3. Trujillo would remain the power behind the scenes, even recommending his successors: President Dr. J. B. Peynado and Vice-President Dr. M. de J. Troncoso. Trujillo exclaimed, “These are my candidates and as such I recommend them favorably to my fellow citizens.” pg.6. They both won.

⁸⁷ League of Nations Treaty Series. Treaties and International Engagements Registered with the Secretariat of the League of Nations. “Dominican Republic and Haiti, Agreement regarding Frontier Questions and the Settlement of all Disputes resulting from the Events which have occurred during the Last Months of the Year 1937 near the Frontier between the Two Countries.” Signed at Washington, January 31st, 1938. Vol.:CLXXXVII, Nos.:4328-4349, 1938, 176. The agreement also “liquidates and terminates definitively by means of a settlement all claims whatsoever on the part of the Haitian Government or persons of Haitian nationality against the Dominican Government or against persons of Dominican nationality.” Four years later the Dominican government continued to avoid responsibility for the massacre, stating that it was “caused by bands of Haitians marauders that have always roamed

protected him and his government from any potential future lawsuit concerning the massacre.

Why the massacre in 1937?

Several factors help explain why the massacre occurred by late October and November of 1937 and not earlier in 1933 or 1935. By 1937, Trujillo had finally resolved a border agreement that establishing, once and for all, fixed territorial boundaries between the two nations. The Dominican government had spent years protesting Haitian border settlements believed to be illegally encroaching Dominican soil and, thus, violating Dominican sovereignty. The Haitian government, on the other hand, had maintained that because Haitians had settled this region for years without Dominican interference the land was assumed to be an extension of the Haitian Republic. The 1936 border settlement gave Trujillo the legal justification to deport and then massacre Haitians. Trujillo could then claim that by illegally residing on and stealing in Dominican territory, the Haitian settlements were in clear violation of the treaty. Another reason that helps explain the timing of the massacre was the outrage Trujillo experienced during his trip to the border in late 1937. During his visit to the border in the months of August and October, Trujillo witnessed the high proportions of Haitians living and working in this area and realized that his project to simultaneously Dominicanize and de-Haitianize the border through agrarian colonies and deportations had not been successful. The sight of a large Haitian presence along

around the border regions, raiding Dominican territory and depriving native farmers of the fruits of their toil." See the Consulate of the Dominican Republic's, "Bulletin of Information on Dominican-Haitian Border Incidents," New York City, 1941, pg.2.

the border after the border settlements; the high incidence of a contraband trade (during this trip Trujillo was constantly told of Haitians stealing cattle and selling them in Haiti); and the increased autonomy of border military personnel who profited from illegal Haitian immigration, confirmed Trujillo's fears that the territorial agreement was only good on paper.

Two additional reasons help explain why the massacre occurred in 1937: the 1936 deportations of Haitians in Cuba and the 1934 U.S. withdrawal from Haiti. The deportations of thousands of Haitians from Cuba through "compulsory repatriations" resulted in higher number of people in Haiti who were unemployed and searching to integrate themselves back into Haitian society.⁸⁸ Many of the repatriated Haitians migrated to the Dominican Republic. By 1937 the Dominican Republic was feeling the strain of Cuba's deportation policy. Along with the increased number of persons crossing the border, the U.S.-Marines withdrawal from Haiti in 1934 essentially removed the major stabilizing force on the island that had checked Trujillo's power for the past seven years. By 1937, with the Marines no longer physically patrolling and controlling Haiti and Haiti's military weakness in the face of a better-equipped Dominican army, Trujillo was able to carry out a genocidal policy without fear of direct American or Haitian retaliation.⁸⁹ Like Cuba, Trujillo could have continued Haitian deportations without resorting to violence. However, Trujillo realized that throughout the years the border had become so integrated culturally and economically

⁸⁸ See Marc C. McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba, 1912-1939," *Journal of Social History* Vol.31 No.3 (Spring 1998), pg.607.

⁸⁹ Vega, Vol.2. There was also the racist Nazi ideology and National Socialism which influenced Trujillo (kissing the flag, dominicanizacion ect).

that only through state violence could he begin to fundamentally Dominicanize this region. Thus, the killings were really a declaration that the border was less Dominican and more Haitian than what Trujillo had originally envisioned. For Trujillo, collective violence was a feasible and low risk strategy to undertake in this case. Not only did Trujillo control his nation through the repressive state institutions, he avoided destabilization by the massacre by capitalizing on his countrymen's historical memory of Haitians as the enemy.⁹⁰

Once Trujillo ordered an end to the killing of Haitians, the project of incorporating the border region into his expanding and modern state began. After seven years of friendly relations between both countries, the massacre became the turning point for the Dominican state to project a new image of itself and of Haiti. The massacre would, as Benedict Anderson has written, become the catalyst for re-remembering and reinventing the Dominican past.⁹¹ Under Trujillo, the state reclaimed the border as a region to be modernized and protected from Haiti. No longer would the border be neglected and considered a problem zone, as had been the historical view by government officials in the capital of Santo Domingo. Following the massacre, the border project accelerated the ongoing Dominicanization of the border that had begun back in the early 1930s with the agricultural colonies and deportation policies. The difference between pre-1937 and post 1937, however, was the violence of the massacre, which officially transformed Haiti and its culture into a

⁹⁰ According to Turits, anti-Haitianism "does help to explain how the Haitian massacre could be organized and political stability maintained", by Trujillo's authoritarian government. See Richard Turits' "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed," pg.44.

⁹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 202.

threat to Dominican sovereignty and identity. A radical shift in policy, from the strengthening of political ties with Haiti and Trujillo's acknowledgement of his Haitian heritage to a policy where Haiti came to represent a cultural, racial, and religious threat to the Dominican nation, took place. Indeed, most persons interviewed expressed that, prior to the massacre, Haitians and Dominicans along the border mostly got along well with each other.⁹² There was no official Dominican propaganda that either demonized Haitians or incited Dominicans to hate or fear their western neighbors. In fact, according to scholar Bernardo Vega, anti-Haitianism was absent from the political discourse. "We have not been able to find any anti-Haitian publication of a racist or political type in any newspaper, Dominican magazine or book during the first seven years and nine months of the dictatorship. On the contrary, the official propaganda was always pro-Haitian."⁹³ The massacre, then, came to justify the state's program to Dominicanize the border against Haitian encroachment through a project of modernization.

Thus, the massacre set the tone for a new official discourse that portrayed Haiti as the Dominican Republic's historical nemesis. Capitalizing on a shared collective memory of the various nineteenth-century Haitian invasions, the state absorbed the border and transformed it from a rural, illiterate, and diseased region to a place where new and modern hospitals, schools, and cultural centers could be found. The official plan of nationalizing the border could now begin. One year after the

⁹² Most of the people I interviewed on both sides of the border recalled that collaboration and tolerance was the norm prior to the 1937 Haitian massacre. My interviews also confirm earlier oral histories narratives conducted by Richard Turits and Lauren Derby.

⁹³ Bernardo Vega, "Variaciones en el uso del antihaitianismo durante la era de Trujillo," *Listin Diario* October 24, 1995, pg. 1.

massacre, the state project to Dominicanize the border as a way to impede Haitian immigration had begun. In September of 1938, an article appeared in a Dominican newspaper that anticipated Trujillo's plans to contain the increasing flow of Haitians crossing the border into Dominican Republic and the acceleration of a state-building project underway:

The Haitian people have a population twice our number, in a territory that is half our size; circumstances that place pressure from them on us...We cannot oppose another remedy to that pressure besides the material and geographic border, another remedy that we could call an ethnic border destined to prevent that advance of people determined by the growth of that country, prolific by race and temperament.⁹⁴

New Dominican border provinces were created and the Haitian names of towns and villages were substituted with Spanish names. A construction boom followed and government and municipal offices were built to unequivocally demarcate the state's presence along the Dominican border. The role of the military and police was intensified to primarily control the population and secondarily to serve as an immigration security force limiting Haitian penetration. Religion was used by the state as a mechanism to Christianize and convert Dominican border residents into Catholic citizens who would combat the equally popular Haitian religion of Voodoo. Catholic clergymen would travel throughout the border performing baptisms, confessions, and marriages while preaching the virtues of Christianity and its correspondence with being a good Dominican. Moreover, irrigations canals and roadways were constructed to raise agricultural production and allow for easier access to this remote region.

More than any other single event prior to it, the massacre changed forever the dynamics of Dominican-Haitian political relations. This well-organized government military orchestrated genocidal policy changed how Dominicans and Haitians border residents viewed each other as well as their relationship with the central government in Santo Domingo. Most Dominican soldiers, often sharing similar complexions as their Haitian victims, carried out the massacre mainly with machetes. Although the written sources were not available, there are indications that most soldiers participating in the massacre were not from the border region.⁹⁵ October 1937 marks one of the earliest examples of refugee migration prior to World War II. Thousands of Haitians and/or Dominicans of Haitian descent fled to Haitian territory to avoid being killed by Trujillo's soldiers. Unlike survivors of other genocide and/or ethnic cleansing crimes today, Haitian and Dominican survivors have not filed suit against Trujillo or the government for the past acts. Many survivors have died and most who remain are too old, too sick, or senile to offer their testimonies let alone testify. Even if they could testify, litigants must exhaust all legal remedies in their home country—Haiti—to be heard in the regional Inter-American Court of Human Rights.⁹⁶ Their continued silence shows Trujillo's success in avoiding culpability for this crime against humanity. Furthermore, the killings ushered in the modernization of the border. For the first time in the history of the Republic, Trujillo initiated a nationalistic plan to fully incorporate the border region into the Dominican nation. The border region would become integrated with the rest of the country and lose

⁹⁴ Listín Diario, Sept. 11, 1938, pg.6.

⁹⁵ Turits, "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed," pg.36.

⁹⁶ See David Padilla, "A House for Justice in Costa Rica," *Americas*, (Jan.-Feb. 1996), 56-57.

much of its historical autonomy and remoteness. Following the massacre, the border became the site for the emergence of state institutions that would lead the way in educating residents about their new role as Dominican citizens.

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Chapter 4

Reoccupying the Borderlands

Once the killings had ceased, Trujillo ordered the most extensive colonization of the border ever seen in Dominican history. During the next twenty-five years, the border went from being a neglected and underdeveloped region beyond the control of the Dominican state, to a region of newly demarcated provinces and towns. The active role pursued by the Dominican state, through the creation of new provinces and the renaming of old towns with Haitian names to Spanish ones, to the proliferation of agrarian border colonies, all represented a government policy which sought to eliminate the Haitian presence. In this regard the post-1937 project to Dominicanize the border was an extension of the massacre. The region most closely linked and viewed as an obstacle to the nation's progress would now be the site of a nationalistic crusade by the Dominican government intent on undoing almost five hundred years of interdependent relations. The growth of urban towns along with the establishment of government and cultural institutions that spread the ideals of Dominican nationalism and anti-Haitianism became the focal point of Trujillo's state-building plans along the border. This chapter examines the workings of border colonies, which became the part of the foundations employed by the state to Dominicanize the border. By utilizing a variety of archival documents from the Dominican Army to the Department of Agriculture, I show how the state created new border provinces to officially demarcate its territory and strengthen its jurisdiction throughout this region. This chapter also presents a portrait of life within these colonies and how it often contradicted the official government's propaganda that portrayed these settlements as idyllic and isolated bastions of the new border life. I also show how the border's ethnically diverse local population and its insistent economic and social relations with Haiti undermined the state border project.

Despite the enormous investment by Trujillo's government to eliminate the

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Haitian presence from the border, geography made it difficult for the state to police the border. Moreover, the state confronted a local economy and familial linkages that made it difficult to sever ties between Haitians and Dominicans. It is this economic and cultural fluidity, which I argue, and as the government's own documents confirm, made it very difficult for the Dominican state to fully Dominicanize this border region.

The Creation of Provinces

One of the first things Trujillo did after the massacre was to re-map the border through the creation of new provinces. Nationalizing the border region meant increasing the administrative importance of these once marginal territories. Prior to the massacre there were three Dominican border provinces: Barahona in the south, Azua in the center and Monte Cristi in the north.¹ The names of the provinces, like many monuments at the time, directly or indirectly referred to Trujillo, who was called the "Benefactor" or "Liberator". For example, in 1938, a year following the massacre, the first border province was given the name Benefactor in the name of Trujillo.²

In the northern part of the border, in towns such as Dajabón and Loma Cabrera (where intense killings of Haitians had taken place), the state created a new province in the name of the dictator: "The Province of the Liberator was created by the National Congressional Law number 1521 encompassing the towns of Dajabón, Loma de Cabrera and Restauración [and] inaugurated January 1, 1939."³

¹ See José Chez Checo, *La República Dominicana y Haití: Síntesis histórica de su problema fronterizo*. (Santo Domingo: Colección Historia Total, 1997), 32.

² Vicente Tolentino Rojas, *Historia de la división territorial 1494-1943*. Edición del Gobierno Dominicano. (Santiago, RD: Editorial El Diario, 1944), 366. The small towns of San Juan de la Maguana, Las Matas de Farfán, Villa Elías Piña, Bánica, and El Cercado all comprised this new province. Later, on Sept. 16, 1942 these towns, along with El Llano, were absorbed into the newly established province of San Rafael.

³ *Memoria Que al honorable Presidente de la Republica Dr. M.J. Troncoso de la Concha Presenta el Mayor General José García, M.M. Secretario de Estado de lo Interior y Policía Relativa a las labores realizadas en el departamento a su cargo durante el ano 1939*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Editorial La Nacion,

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These new border provinces were created as a bulwark against Haitian immigration and were seen by many Dominican officials as a new cure-all for the endemic chaos associated with the frontier. It was not enough for Trujillo to eliminate physically Haitians along the border. The space that separated both nations had to be demarcated to demonstrate territorial sovereignty. As one Dominican scholar in the early 1940s wrote, the creation of new border provinces was meant to reverse the many years of Dominican cultural and economic interaction with Haiti.

The creation of the border provinces in Dajabón and Benefactor is the most intelligent [step] toward the peaceful solution of the problem that constitutes for the Dominican Republic the obligatory vicinity of a people that with distinct customs with a population double in number and with a rudimentary agriculture and lack of means of production has the tendency to overflow toward the Dominican half with great danger to our ethnic and economic improvement.⁴

After these first new provinces were created, Dominican political officials praised the success of the project in a language reminiscent of the ethnic cleansing that took place during the massacre. The border was now:

A region completely clean of foreign invasion, its lands purified, its customs sanitized, enlarged and dignified for the Republic. Everything has bloomed like a work of wonder because everything good comes from itself. The cattle rustling that before was an uncontrollable scourge in all the northwest border has disappeared with great speed, since cases are barely registered and those that are, are isolated and sporadic.⁵

1940), pg.384.

Prior to this, the Libertador province was called Dajabón. It would lose the name of Libertador only after Trujillo's death, when the province and its provincial capital were renamed Dajabón.

⁴ Vicente Tolentino Rojas, *Historia de la división territorial*, 1492-1943, pg.282.

⁵ Ibid. 385.

In 1942, a new border province of San Rafael was created and named after Trujillo.⁶ In that same year, another border province to the south named Bahoruco was created. Unlike prior to the massacre, where there had been uninhabited stretches of land or towns beyond state control with Haitian names the landscape became increasingly demarcated by “legal municipalities, district municipalities, provincial capitals and provinces.”⁷ Throughout the early 1940s the Dominican state elevated the legal status of many rural hamlets and villages across the border. The status of many border towns was raised to signify the change in government policy and show that rather than be relegated to back-water hamlets border residents would receive the same serious attention as other regions in the interior.

In order for the nationalization of the borderlands to be successful the border had to project the presence and strength of the Dominican state. Yet, many border towns that were now incorporated into the Dominican Republic after the 1936 treaty and the subsequent 1937 massacre retained their historic Haitian Creole names. Therefore, Trujillo, cognizant of this irony, and with the help of the Congress, passed laws that replaced the Haitian names of southern border towns with Spanish-sounding Dominican names. More than a score of towns had their names changed from Creole to Spanish. Some of these towns were in the southern communities of Neiba whose names were changed from “Jean Sapit to Agapito; in Barahona, Cailón was changed to Caonabo; El Yimbí to La Altagracia; in the region of La Descubierta, Calingá to Joaquín Puello; Toussaint to Granada [and]...In Pedernales: Bucá Creol to El Cercado; and Madam Jean to Doña Juana.”⁸

⁶ Ibid. 438-439. Even in the late 1940s, Trujillo continued to consolidate the border region through the incorporation of more lands that were beyond the administrative reach of the state. In 1948, following Trujillo's request, the Dominican Congress voted to “create a great extension of our southern border territory in the San Rafael Province.” The law was to take effect in 1949. See *La Nación* Oct.24, 1948, pg.5.

⁷ See *La Nación* March 5, 1947, pg.9.

⁸ See Colección de leyes, resoluciones decretos y reglamentos de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de la república de enero a diciembre de 1943. Vol.I. Poder Legislativo: No.150 al No.473. (Ciudad Trujillo: Imprenta J.R. Vda. García, Sucesores, 1945), pg.404-405. This was not the first time a Dominican

Interestingly, not all state-building initiatives to transform the border came from political elites in the capital of Santo Domingo. Perhaps in the spirit of patronage some local border community leaders were also vigorously supporting Trujillo's nationalization border project. In a letter to the Secretary of the Interior and police, the President of City Hall in Enriquillo, Eural de Terrero Jr. wrote:

In the course of the past year this town hall submitted to this honorable high office a list of the sections of this locality for the ends of changing exotic names...[,] a requisite that was not fulfilled thoroughly since various places were left with strange names which conflict with the Dominicanization of the border implemented by the distinguished Chief of State, Generalísimo Dr. Trujillo Molina.⁹

The move to name new provinces and rename old ones was but the first step in reclaiming the border. Once Trujillo had replaced the Creole names of border towns with Spanish names and, simultaneously, created new provinces along the frontier, he intensified the policy of establishing *colonias agrícolas* (agrarian colonies), which had originated back in the mid-1920s under President Horacio Vásquez. Back then, a study had been conducted to examine the feasibility of establishing agrarian colonies along the border for immigrants. This study singled out ten border sites as potential locations of future immigration colonization by "white" Dominicans to reclaim the borderlands.¹⁰

government changed the names of border towns. As early as 1884, during Ulises Heaureaux's presidency, the town of Petit Trou or Petritú was renamed Enriquillo after the the great Cacique Taíno leader. See Mario Concepción, "Nombres primitivos de pueblos dominicanos," *Eme-Eme Estudios Dominicanos* #16 (Jan-Feb, 1975), pg.101. pgs.99-108.

⁹ See Secretaria de Interior y Policía, 5/16-5, 1944. AGN. The townhall authorities suggested changing the names of Materesa for Maria Teresa; Caletón for Las Delicias; Juancho for Bucaral; and Chene for El Progreso."

¹⁰ The names of the colonies were Capotillo; Carrizal-Tabernó; Guayajayuco; El Guayabal; La Jagua; Guayabo e Isidro Martín; Hondo Valle; Hatico-Pedro Alejandro; Los Pinos de la Descubierta; Banano. See *Informe que presenta al poder ejecutivo la comisión creada por la ley num. 77 para estudiar las tierras de la frontera y senalar los sitios en que se han de establecer las colonias de inmigrantes*. (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de J.R. Vda. García, 1925), pg. 8-17.

By the time Trujillo came to power however, these colonies were languishing on the frontier. The worldwide depression of the 1930s forced the Dominican government to underscore the colonies' importance to the agricultural production of the nation rather than to see them as strictly buffers to Haitian immigration.

In the early 1930s, the worldwide depression forced Trujillo to promote these colonies as a way to increase the country's agricultural production. According to scholar Orlando Inoa, these colonies under Trujillo (called *Colonias Agrícolas Penales*) were controlled by the military and relied on forced labor, usually prisoners, to carry out the project of Dominicanizing the border.¹¹ Moreover, unlike the Vasquez government, the objective of these colonies focused on productionist goals rather than pursuing a strict racial policy to "whiten" the border with white immigrants.¹² The goal of the colonies was to increase agricultural production at a time when a worldwide depression debilitated many economies, including Hispaniola's. Taking this argument further, scholar Richard Turits also believes that the major reason that explains border colonization during the Trujillo regime was not ideologically racial, but the pursuit of land reform. Turits writes that:

While longstanding racial and nationalist discourses remained present throughout the Trujillo regime, becoming virulent in exceptional periods and in moments of conflict with Haitian presidents, agricultural colonies were established largely in pursuit of the regime's broad, frequent, and somewhat successful efforts at agrarian reform.¹³

¹¹ See Orlando Inoa's *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la era de Trujillo* (Santo Domingo: Librería La Trinitaria, 1994), 164. Inoa writes that in 1933 Trujillo decreed that the "Army should produce for the nation no less than 50% of what it invests in its maintenance."

¹² See Orlando Inoa, *Estado y campesinos al inicio de la era de Trujillo*. (Santo Domingo: Librería La Trinitaria, 1994), pg.164. Inoa writes that even during Vásquez's term in office, aside from the colonies away from the border in Bonao and Pedro Sánchez (El Seibo), the majority were located on the border "with predominantly Dominican farmers." pg.160.

¹³ Turits, "The Foundations of Depotism: Peasants, Property, and the Trujillo Regime," pg.434.

Some scholars have also seen establishing agrarian colonies as centers of agricultural production as a buffer against Haitian immigration by the Trujillo government. For example, scholars like Bernardo Vega, argue that the agrarian colonies were part of a larger program to Dominicanize and “whiten” the border and not necessarily established as a project of agrarian reform.¹⁴ Conversely, Richard Turits writes that the main reason for establishing agrarian colonies along the border was an agrarian reform project “largely in pursuit of the regime’s broad, frequent, expanding agriculture, and ‘modernizing’ the peasantry.”¹⁵ I believe that both arguments are valid and they do not have to be mutually exclusive from each other. The Great Depression forced many countries including the Dominican Republic to implement drastic measures such as agrarian penal colonies to increase agricultural production.¹⁶

Yet aside from the possibility of state profit, anti-Haitianism prior to the massacre was evident in the immigration policies of the Dominican Republic. Like other Latin American countries, the Dominican Republic had promoted white immigration, while attempting to the influx of black laborers. However, as we have seen, the problem with the whitening argument is that the Dominican sugar industry’s need for cheap Haitian labor at this time, which effectively neutralized any anti-black immigration legislation.

Following the massacre, the colonies’ role was transformed from one of agricultural production to one of barriers against Haitian immigration. The army continued to transport prisoners to the border but not all were forced laborers. In some colonies, prisoners were free of military supervision and lived and worked as seemingly free persons.¹⁷ And not all of these prisoners that were transported to the border were men. A year after the massacre, Dominican army records show clearly the itinerary

¹⁴ Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haiti* Vol.II (Santo Domingo: Fundacion Cultural Dominicana, 1995), 24.

¹⁵ See Richard Lee Turits, “The Foundation of Depotism: Peasants, Property, and the Trujillo Regime (1930-1961),” Ph.D. diss. The University of Chicago, 1997, pg.434.

¹⁶ Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, pg.174.

¹⁷ Ibid. 179.

involved when delivering a prisoner to the frontier colonies but unfortunately without specific reference to the crimes committed. According to one army private, the military “will be responsible for the custody of the prisoner Justina Jiminian and will proceed via railroad from this city [Puerto Plata] up to Santiago, and upon her arrival will deliver this prisoner to the official in charge of the public jail of the ‘San Luis’ Fort, who has been transferred to be sent to the border colony.”¹⁸ Aside from controlling the movement of prisoners, the army served as an institution that regulated the behavior and morality of border colonists. Sexual behavior under Trujillo’s border project had to coincide with the image of how the new Dominican border resident should behave. During the Dominicanization of the border, those women, whose sexuality did not conform to traditional roles of patriarchy, were seen as dangerous to the colony. Moreover, their behavior as we shall see was so much more subversive and threatening to the new national identity being created because it was associated with what was considered a lascivious Haitian culture, which Trujillo was trying to eliminate.

For example army documents also reveal how certain individual behavior, particularly by women, warranted banishment from the agrarian colonies. Alicia Montero and her four children represent several cases where the state expelled or attempted to expel families or individuals from the border region because they undermined local authority. In this case, Alicia Montero and her children were sent to the colonia Pedro Sánchez in the east because her lifestyle was perceived as threatening to the army’s authority in the border: “This woman has always found the way to live in concubinage with members of the Army or the Police. With her withdrawal from Hondo Valle, we can avoid possible [embarrassing] contact with strangers who find themselves outside of the

¹⁸ Letter from Capt. A. Mota Commanding Officer 8th Co., 7 Sept. 1938. EN 1938 Leg.277 exp.81. AGN It seems Santiago was the gateway city for prisoners being transported to the border. The military was clearly responsible for this operation, as seen by the conclusions of these letters that say, “according to the orders of the army’s Chief of State.”

country.”¹⁹ Although the documents did not reveal Alicia Montero’s final outcome they do allow us to see how the state attempted to enforce the state’s prescribed gender roles by prohibiting (excessive) monogamy by female concubines.

Another threat to the border colonies, despite the obvious rupture caused by the massacre, was the persistent contact between Dominican and Haitian border residents. If success in Dominicanizing the border depended on severing inter ethnic and economic relations, then as early as 1945, it was clear that this project was not succeeding. Military orders were given to prohibit Dominicans in the colonias agrícolas in the southwestern most province of Pedernales from entering Haitian territory “no matter the reason they allege to justify their crossing.”²⁰ However, the cultural and especially economic linkages throughout this region proved more powerful than any military or administrative policy of exclusion. For centuries, Dominican and Haitian border residents had collaborated in extensive trading relationships, which, in spite of Trujillo’s attempts to destroy these economic ties, continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s and even to the present. And, despite the army’s attempts to control this trade, Dominicans continued to patronize Haitian markets. In an attempt to control and regulate the border trade, the military asked its members to ask:

All Dominicans who will cross the border to make purchases in the Haitian markets to leave their cédulas [identity papers] in the hands of the designated Army’s agents and that they will not be returned until they return from the Haitian markets at which time the military authorities will inspect the purchased articles in these markets in order to confirm if what they can bring can be brought into the country without paying customs duties, confiscating as contraband those articles

¹⁹ A report from Lte. Col. F. E. Caamaño C.O. of the Northwest Department to Trujillo, 21 August, EN Leg.47 Exp.101 1943. AGN. As we can see the movement of people who went to these colonies (voluntarily or not) was not only east to west but also from west to east. The colonia Pedro Sánchez was located in what is today the Province of El Seybo (Seibo) in the eastern part of the island. See “Report written by Capt. Amable A. del Castillo to the Jefe de Estado Mayor.” EN Leg.24 exp.64, 1941, pg.3. AGN.

²⁰ Letter from Mayo General Federico Fiallo. EN Leg.59 exp.101 23 May, 1945. AGN.

that are brought illegally.²¹

Controlling the border was extremely difficult for the Dominican state and the army. The state was attempting to control and regulate a fluid circulatory migration that had existed for hundreds of years through settlements of Dominicans and Haitians. Between 1930, when Trujillo came to power, and 1945, forty colonies (not all limited to the border) had been established along with 9,211 colonists out of a total population of 2,135, 872.²² Much was at stake: the success of Trujillo's border project and its goal to limit, if not eliminate, all Dominican-Haitian contact; the potential for an exile invasion from Haitian territory; and the clandestine contraband trade, which undermined the State's objective to control the border's economy. All of these made border security paramount. Therefore, Dominicans, depending on where they were along the border markets were prohibited from entering Haiti to visit the markets before six in the morning and could not return on the same day after six in the afternoon.²³

Dominican authorities could not control the contraband trade. Despite Trujillo's plan to curb Haitian influence throughout the Dominican border, many Dominicans chose to visit the more than a dozen Haitian markets as their best and closest alternative to obtain goods.²⁴ One government report clearly outlined Dominican dependency on Haitian food markets. According to the report, other food crops barely reached the levels

²¹ EN Leg.31 exp.66, Suministro de recopilación de leyes y reglamentos. Tráfico en la frontera del oficial leyes Carlos Gatón Richiez to Commandant in the Northern Dept. in Elias Pina 28 Dec. 1942. AGN. This law was based on the 1942 Protocol Agreement Article 2 requiring those who crossed the border to visit the Haitian markets to only buy and not sell.

²² Inoa, *Estado y campesinos*, pg.173. For Population figures see Tercer censo nacional de poblacion de 1950 Direccion general de estadistica Ciudad Trujillo, 1958, pg.xiii.

²³ EN Leg.31 exp.66. Suministro de recopilacion de leyes y reglamentos.

²⁴ Ibid. By the early 1940s, there were 16 Haitian border markets servicing their Dominican clientel. These markets were in Fort-Liberte, Ferrier, Ouanaminthe, Capotillo Haitiano, La Miel, la Melchora, Castilleur, Tomasique, San Pedro, Belladere, Cornillon, Glove, Fond Verettes, Tete a L'eau, Banane, and Anses-a-Pitre. The document also stated that at the time the two major crops that were exportable beyond the border region were rice and peanuts (*mani*).

of regional consumption, yet most of these crops came from Haitian markets.²⁵ Second there were colonias, such as Mariano Cestero, which were not self-sufficient because they relied on exported food from the interior. One government inspector underscored this problem, describing how every two weeks an army truck would supply the military soldiers and penal colonists, but that the businessmen of this colony were excluded from these dealings. The inspector recommended that a supply truck from Santiago visit the colony weekly and that the merchants be allowed to purchase these goods from the colonists, then sell them to other towns throughout the border.²⁶ Although we will never know if this plan was carried out because the documents do not reveal this, life in the colonias was as difficult to control as the interborder trade.

The state's control of movement among border Dominicans extended to those who lived in the colonias. All colonias had an *encargado* who was in charge of administering activities and movements, like granting permission to leave the colonia. Penal colonist Felix Valbuena asked his encargado de colonia for permission "for ten days to go over to the city of Santiago to see his mother who, according to his own declaration, is sick in that city."²⁷ Valbuena knew all-too-well the consequences of not asking for permission--arrest. Two individuals who left their respective border colonies without permission were Antonio Vargas and Bruno Sánchez. These two residents of Monte Cristi became fugitives and faced arrest orders.²⁸ But why did they leave without permission? Most elderly Dominicans interviewed never mentioned colonists running away from their colonies. Eighty-four-year-old colonist Fidel Bennings had only good and favorable memories of the colony under Trujillo:

²⁵ See EN Leg. 31 exp. 67, Sept. 5, 1942. AGN.

²⁶ EN Leg. 31 exp. 67, Sept. 8, 1942. AGN

²⁷ See Secretaria de Agricultura Industria y Trabajo Leg.419 exp.1909-1910. AGN.

²⁸ Letter from Governor of Monte Cristi to Police Capt. Delio A. Fernández R., Dec. 20, 1937. See Gobernación de Monte Cristi #80 exp. 83. AGN.

When I arrived here everything was about Trujillo. He gave us everything: Plants to grow and seeds. He gave us subsidies. Listen, subsidies came here bi-monthly; there were tractors; there were machines; there were implements for the tractor to work the land. That was the help that Trujillo gave us...They used to give us twenty-five pesos twice a month. They brought it to us here, to every house.²⁹

Aside from the prisoners who had no choice in the matter, there were Dominicans who, with the promise of free (state) land in government-sponsored colonias, asked the authorities, often in writing for parcels of borderland. There were many people like Argentina Villalona (Ninina) who wrote to Secretary of Agriculture Huberto Bogard asking for between “10 to 15 hectares to guarantee the sustenance of my five small boys that weigh upon my shoulders and without means with which to take care of them at the present time.”³⁰ There were as many women as men who took the initiative to write to the Dominican government authorities and plead their cases. Some were not interested in land, but in basic necessities of life like comfort through the night. Ana Joaquina Jiménez of Capotillo was one person who depended on alms and asked the government officials to help her, since she didn’t even have a blanket to cover her “nor anything to sleep in; I would appreciate it if you could give me as a gift a bed equipped with a blanket and a little mattress, two sheets, one pillow, two mosquito nets and three chairs.”³¹

Many applicants were *campesinos* or farmers but unable to secure land to cultivate their crops. José Arias from Santiago, a farmer and a painter, married, and father of eight children, asked the department of agriculture for “a parcel of land in one of the agrarian border colonies...[and this] opportunity to return to the farm would resolve a

²⁹ Video Interview in the Colonia Mixta between Neiba and Duverge, June 1999. I asked Fidel Bennings if he had to sign anything to receive the money and he responded that he did not. “No sir. Money in cash. Cash.”

³⁰ Sec. Agriculture Leg. 16 1945, Nov. 23, 1945. AGN. Others were bolder in their requests. Carmen de Acosta de Alvarez asked the government for “100 hectares so I could work them with my husband and children.”

³¹ Sec. Agriculture Leg. 223, 1952, 27 May, 1952. AGN.

great wish that I have always had and had not found due to lack of land.”³² The government granted many requests to prospective farmers but despite the free land, according to frustrated officials, some colonists abandoned their lands and thus defeating the purpose of the colonies’ existence and Trujillo’s goal to make the border more productive. One official in this colony, Mayor Andrés J. Monclus, suggested that a written order should stipulate that if the amount of land assigned to a person was not cultivated or being prepared for planting that the land should be “automatically forfeited and his right over it would revert to the colony’s administration.”³³

What makes these documents so important is that they show how poor rural Dominicans wrote letters to the state, replete with grammatical errors, but nevertheless exercising their right to seek and maintain a better life through the colonies. Often the letters were frank and assertive, reflecting self-assuredness on the part of the writers, as in Manuel Jiménez’s letter to the Secretary of Agriculture. In the letter, Jiménez, who had suffered from a chronic hernia for the last seven years, had his ten hectares of land taken from him and given to his supposedly slanderous enemy, Domingo San Jiménez. He defended himself and asked the state authorities to disclaim negative rumors against him by speaking to the colonia’s respected men about his impeccable honor.³⁴ Thus we can see that, although Trujillo’s dictatorship was repressive, it did allow Dominicans to voice their concerns, as long as they were not directed in any way against the regime. Yet life in the colonias was difficult. Despite the great deal of government propaganda portraying the colonies as a successful example of border colonization, things on the ground were

³² Ministry of Agriculture 10 Bis, June 11, 1944. AGN. The farms, unlike the large U.S.-style ranches, were really parcels of land distributed to the colonists. Although there were prisoners who comprised part of the colonias’ population, in most cases they had freedom of movement and were integrated with the rest of the colonists. Colonias were settlements of houses that adjacent to farm lands where colonists/farmers cultivated their crops. Many of the colonias’ status today have been elevated to municipal towns.

³³ EN Leg31 Exp. 67, Sept. 4, 1942. AGN. Thus when “a new aspiring colonist arrives to these [abandoned] lands [the colonists] allege beforehand to the administrator: ‘acquired rights’ prohibiting this official to give an opportunity to this new colonist so that he can work these lands.”

³⁴ Sec. of Agriculture Leg.32, July 6, 1946. AGN. The respected men in the Colonia Benefactor were Francisco Díaz [sic] Pancho, Ramón Reinoso, Pedro Molla [sic], and Bentura [sic] Perarta.

much different.

Hard Times in the Colonias

Many of the colonists along with prisoners who arrived at the state agrarian colonies were unprepared for the difficulties that were involved in living and working at these sites. As in cases of land reform such as homesteading, many colonists believed a government propaganda that portrayed the colonies as a paradise. Moreover those colonias along the border provided an even more difficult challenge because of the regions isolation and arid climate. One investigative military report on the border concluded that,

I convinced myself that the penal colonists as well as the colonists go there [to the border] blindly believing that they will find tranquility in their misadventures and a peaceful, secure future and prosperity. The inhabitants dreamed that the border colonization was an obvious source of enrichment for its people and hard-core Trujillistas, like in a god, wait for the pardon of their sins as a blessing from heaven.³⁵

A surprising dynamic to the border colonies was that prisoner and non-prisoner colonists lived together. Essentially prisoners started many of the border colonies. Elderly border residents I spoke with told me that many of the border towns were founded by prisoners who were transferred to the border as part of Trujillo's colonization scheme. One man even told me that many prisoners brought their families with them to live in the border.³⁶ These prisoners enjoyed freedoms otherwise denied to them in a regular prison

³⁵ Información sobre la situación de colonos y de presos en la frontera. EN Leg.31 exp. 67, Oct. 26, 1942. AGN.

³⁶ Interview with "Juanito" in the Caribe Tours bus station of Dajabón. June 1999. The town near the provincial capital of Dajabón, Loma de Cabrera, and the outlying and smaller rural municipalities of La Joya, Capotillo, Don Miguel, and La Peñita were all founded by prisoners.

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or colonies in the interior. One freedom and perhaps the most important one for prisoners was being able to move freely in their new surroundings. Prisoner border colonists were not constantly monitored or isolated from the rest of the general population. Moreover, they received the same benefits as other non-criminal colonists from the government. According to one eighty-five year Fautina Andujar, whose husband managed a store in Loma de Cabrera, the colonists from the nearby colony would arrive every Saturday to obtain food supplies. She remembered that “Trujillo ordered the construction of houses, he sent a bed, a cow, a pig and one mill to every prisoner’s little house; the prisoners had their liberty; they could leave to where ever they wanted.”³⁷ As in most colonies, the government to facilitate the transition to border life subsidized the residents. Once a week the colonists in Loma de Cabrera went to town to obtain goods from Faustina Andujar’s husband’s store. The colonists, among them prisoners, would “purchase” their goods with a special ticket. The store manager would then send the receipt to the authorities in Santo Domingo for reimbursement. Then a check from Santo Domingo would be sent to the storeowner for the costs incurred by the colonists.³⁸ But not all colony experiences were alike. The supervision of the colonies still remained under strict and authoritarian control of the military and there were accounts of abuse and violence.

In the early 1940s, prisoner/colonist José Polanco from San Francisco de Macorís said how he was transferred to a colonia in the northern border, where he was paid a ration of six pesos “and in the morning what they gave us for food was one boiled corncob, at noon another corncob, and at night they gave us nothing.”³⁹ Aside from surviving on limited food rations, prisoner/colonists were also subject to physical abuse at the hands of the military guards for crimes such as robbery. For some these colonies quickly became nightmares. Despite the idyllic government portrayal of the colonies,

³⁷ Interview with Angela Andujar January 1999 in Loma de Cabrera.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Información sobre la situación de colonos y de presos en la frontera. EN Leg.31 exp. 67, Nov. 7, 1942.

violence was ever present in the form of interrogation and tortured. Some of these colonists' testimonies were recorded by the Dominican military. Abuse at the hands of the military was not surprising since the colonies were an extension of a dictatorial state, which forcefully enforced its laws and controlled its citizens through repression. One declaration from Army Captain Aquiles Ramírez Romero tells of how a Captain Cocco punished both penal and non-penal colonists:

They used to bring prisoners from the colonies accused of robbing chickens, kettles and other things they are used to stealing, and the same ex-Captain Cocco took a rubber whip nicknamed the "German Soldier" and punished them with it. Besides giving them a whipping, he used to lock them up for ten to twelve days and afterwards sent them back to their lands.⁴⁰

Perhaps as a way to ameliorate tensions that most emerged among the colonists and deflecting frustration aimed at either the border project or the state, was the way in which government allotted special recreational privileges to the colonies. Trujillo allowed the penal colonists to participate in entertainment activities on the weekends that were prohibited everywhere else. Writing to Trujillo's brother Secretary of State, Hector B. Trujillo, Secretary of State for the Presidency Arturo Logroño wrote that by President's Trujillo's orders:

In the state's agrarian colonies located in the border region, the army, like the National Police and the rest of the authorities of all classes, must abstain from pursuing the diverse games of dice, cockfights, and dances (because neither the cockfights nor the dances are subjected to taxes) from Saturdays in the afternoon until Sundays at nine in the evening, as long as these diversions always take place within the referred agrarian colonies.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid. Nov. 23, 1942. In another case of robbery Manuel Jiménez Firpo was "cancelled as a colonist in the Colonia Benefactor not for intrigues but for misconduct in selling a certain quantity of peanuts that he borrowed for planting." See Sec. of Agriculture Leg. 32, July 6, 1946. AGN.

⁴¹ According to Logroño, Trujillo allowed "this tolerance" for border colonists because it was easier to monitor dissent within an enclosed area such as a colonia than have them roaming around the border and, perhaps, into Haiti. Without the colonias, the colonists "would surely go and find in other places" diversion of any kind. See Sec. of Agriculture Leg.93:362, exp.581 Jan. 20, 1938. AGN.

These activities represented a small but significant part of daily life on the border. The official government position never mentioned these incidents but promoted an image of border colonization as a system “comprising measures that assure a maximum protection of those who are assigned sufficient lands according to the size of the family.”⁴² The geology of the region also contradicted the government’s image of the border as a land of plenty. One of the first things you notice as you enter the border region is the abundance of goats, rocks, and speed bumps. The borderlands are the country’s most arid regions, which is why it posed such a serious challenge to the colonists as they tried to grow food. Although the government initiated a campaign to construct an irrigation system throughout the border, farmers vented their frustrations on Trujillo, blaming the heat and lack of rain for their periodic crop loss.

In a letter to Trujillo, a frustrated farmer, Manuel María Morel (Tolán) writes: “Generalísimo: the drought in this region of the northwest line has tortured us in an incomparable way, burning the articles of primary necessity that we had planted, since we live at the mercy of the waters and it has not rained for several months.”⁴³ And it was not only peasant farmers who found it difficult to survive let alone thrive, but also upstanding colonists who embodied the success of the government’s colonization program. Many, as some did, considered leaving the colonies. In order to convince these colonists not to leave for greener pastures, one colonial administrator wrote Trujillo and suggested that these individuals receive a small check from the Dominican Party.

Moreover I understand that this help would result in a great political propaganda which I believe to be very necessary in this part of the border, if every time that

⁴² Cumplimiento del gobierno Dominicano a las resoluciones de la III Conferencia Interamericana de agricultura reunida en Caracas, Venezuela, Sec. Agriculture Industry and Labor Leg.18, 1945, pg.35. AGN.

⁴³ Sec. of Agriculture, Leg.7, April 27, 1944. AGN.

these good friends leave because their situation here is bad, many will follow them despite that I help them equally with the purpose of maintaining this region with the most number of people.⁴⁴

It was not easy to live on the border and it was not cheap. Food prices as well as the cost of living were comparatively more expensive. Food was imported into the border from the interior of the country. Transportation was expensive due to the poor road system. Moreover, World War II inflated food prices everywhere. Colonial administrators addressed the economic crises gripping the border during these years in their official writings. In 1945, one of these administrators wrote that the

Economic situation is one of this colony's most fundamental problems since the new colonists do not know anyone and I have to use my salary in many cases to encourage them; and also the small store (bodega) that exists almost always maintains its doors closed for the fact that it has its capital in the street in the hands of the colonists, who most of them do not want to pay [the store].⁴⁵

Some colonists, however, said that the storeowners, instead of selling the customer an entire pound, worth of food for one peso, were in reality only selling three-fourths of a pound, thus forcing the customer to pay more for less. According to the report, there were no regulations or controls, at least in this colony, to monitor abuses by merchants, prompting government regulations to regulate prices in all the colonies. The following is a list of materials and their cost before and after the authorities stepped in to lower and control the prices: In 1945 in the Colonia Mariano Cestero near the provincial

⁴⁴ EN leg.31 Letter from First Lieutenant Camilo Suero Heureaux in Pedernales to Trujillo, August 1, 1942. AGN. Maintaining the colonists in their colonies was part of Trujillo's larger goal of, not only increasing agricultural production during the depression of the 1930s, but also as a mechanism to control the social mobility while limiting rural to urban migration. Indeed Inoa suggests that during Trujillo's first fifteen years in power there was "an ample and sustained tendency towards pesantazization." See Inoa's *Estado y campesino*, pg.229.

⁴⁵ Confidential report of Colonia Mariano Cestero by Alvaro A. Caamano Mella. Sec. of to Secretary of Agriculture. Agriculture Leg.18 April 25, 1945. AGN. Alfredo Espin President of the Dominican Party's Comunal Junta wrote Trujillo saying that in a local meeting at the agrarian colony of Hipolito Billini he wrote that out of all the inhabitants the majority "lacked economic resources." See Sec. of Agriculture Leg.384 exp.695 July 4, 1939. AGN.

capital of Restauración in the province of Libertador, rice was 15¢ a pound reduced to 13¢; sausage 40¢ to 35¢; sugar: 10¢ to 9¢; cigars 65¢ to 3¢; chocolate: 2¢ to 1¢; Soap 12¢ to 10¢; herring 40¢ to 35¢; matches 3¢ to 2¢ 1/2; and cigarettes: 15¢ to 10¢.⁴⁶

In another penal colony, this time in the southwestern border region the problem was not price regulation for food staples and provisions, but the exportation of border cattle to other parts of the Dominican Republic. Local officials wrote to the agricultural ministry to prohibit the exportation of cattle outside of their region because it reduced the amount of meat being consumed by the border's residents. The message, which asked for government intervention and the implementation of price controls, stated that "sometimes even three days pass without meat and presently in the Francisco del Rosario Sánchez agrarian colony it's been ten days that there is none."⁴⁷

Ever since Trujillo's rise to power, the state policy to increase agricultural production along the border to export to the interior affected traditional patterns of Dominican farming. No longer just subsistence farmers, these colonies forced many Dominicans to plant more export crops such as rice and beans and fewer traditional crops such as plantains, sweet potato, and yuca. One military official in the northern border was blunt in his observation that "colonos and their families are hungry and malnourished due to the lack of traditional crops, passing a great deal of their time that they should devote to the Colony, going outside of it and looking for other provisions", to eat.⁴⁸

Aside from the colonies there was a concomitant project after the 1937 massacre (discussed in chapter five) to develop a military, religious, educational, and cultural curtain against Haitian immigration. Several months after the massacre, the Dominican Secretary of Agriculture called for a reorganization of the border agrarian colonies' functions. By 1938 there were five agrarian colonies established throughout the border.

⁴⁶ Sec. of Agriculture, Leg. 18, April 25, 1945. AGN.

⁴⁷ EN Leg. 47 exp.101. Sept. 2, 1943. AGN.

⁴⁸ EN Leg. 31 exp. 67, Sept 4, 1942, pg.2. AGN.

They were Juan Pablo Duarte, Mariano Cestero, Trinitaria, Capotillo, and Hipolito Billini all with plenty of land for multi-crop agricultural cultivation. There the government funded and planned churches, schools, a post office, civil and government houses, butcher shops, commercial houses, sanitary brigades, a military outpost and even an airstrip for planes in Juan Pablo Duarte near Enriquillo.⁴⁹ By the next year, the government was conducting surveys in the southern border for the creation of more border colonies. But like many parts of the world, the success of border colonization depended on securing and maintaining a consistent supply of water.

Securing Water to Secure Colonias

One of the most important criteria for selecting the location for the colonies was securing and controlling water supplies and its accessibility particularly the southern border, which has the lowest level of rainfall in the entire country. In the southwestern colony of *La Florida*, the lack of a water supply temporarily halted its construction. According to the government inspection team leader for southern colonization: "My opinion, with respect to this colony, is to annul it for its complete lack of water. The nearest water is found at a distance of 8 kilometers in the site called Atesusí. This colony's installation should wait until it is determined where it will get its water supply."⁵⁰

Trujillo's border plan could not succeed without to irrigate the agricultural fields that grew the crops to sustain a local and regional market, while sustaining a population whose presence was to presumably stop or at least limit the flow of Haitian immigration. The Trujillo government even contracted international consultants to examine the

⁴⁹ Sec. of Agriculture Leg.241, exp.395, August 12, 1938. AGN. Each colony had its own farming equipment, farm animals and their share of colonists. The number of colonists in these five colonies were 607 including women and children and foreign nationals as well but most were Dominican.

⁵⁰ Sec. of Agriculture Leg.396 exp.842, March 21, 1939. AGN.

possibilities of increasing water supplies along the border. One such consultant was Howard A. Meyerhoff, who surveyed the southwestern border region of what is today the province of Pedernales. Meyerhoff surveyed the region both by land and air, and suggested that increased water quantities along this section of the border could be obtained and thus “this large area could be transformed into a veritable garden.”⁵¹ By 1945 there were eleven irrigation canals along the border that supplied water to the various provinces on the frontier.⁵² Once the water supply was secured, the surveying team recommended the construction of modern houses.

For Trujillo, transforming the border was very much about infrastructure and creating an architectural border, so to speak that clearly demarcated both nations. The first border was the international boundary demarcated by stone markers and military posts. But these dividing points were too sparse for such an extensive border to clearly delineate both countries. How could one tell they were in Haiti or the Dominican Republic without these visual markers?

One way to mark the territorial limits of the Dominican-Haitian border was through the construction of houses. For Trujillo, the Dominican border began when wooden houses replaced the traditional rural palm-roofed bohío dwellings common throughout the island but now associated with Haiti as a symbol of backwardness. Never mind that the bohío was also common in the Dominican Republic, Trujillo viewed the border as a site of contestation where his engineers would oversee the construction of wooden and cement houses with zinc roofs to underscore the difference between a primitive and modern countries. As one Trujillo sympathizer from Spain remarked during

⁵¹ Sec. of Agriculture Leg. 32 Aug. 14, 1944. AGN.

⁵² Most of these canals received their water from nearby rivers. Their capacity ranged from 300 liters per second, irrigating 3,000 hectares to 30,000 hectares to 3,000 liters per second, irrigating as much as 20,000 hectares. The eleven canals were in Pedernales (Provincia Barahona), Jimaní (Provincia Bahoruco), El Llano (Provincia San Rafael), Olivero (Provincia Benefactor), Matayaya (Provincia Benefactor), El Cercado (Provincia Benefactor), El Pinar (Provincia Benefactor), Carrera de Yeguas (Provincia Benefactor), Dajabón (Provincia Libertador), La Granja (Provincia Libertador). See Sec. of Agriculture, Leg.47, May 8, 1945. AGN.

a trip though the border in Elias Pina: "For a long time the struggle for the Dominicanization of the border will be the fight between the wooden house and that sad bohío of 'tejamaní' thrown in the middle of uncultivated desert."⁵³

Along with the growth of colonies there was an increase in the size of the border population. By 1950 the Dominican border population counted for 75,000 people, out of a total population of 2,135,872, while ten years later in 1960, that number increased to 125,000.⁵⁴ As individuals or entire families arrived, newly constructed houses were assigned for them on the border. Small wooden houses complete with kitchens and latrines were constructed for the new colonists.⁵⁵ Through an internal kitchen and external latrine, the government would modernize the border, which had long existed beyond the control of the Dominican state.⁵⁶

Historically, Haitians had occupied Dominican territory because of a lack of Dominican presence. Under Trujillo, and especially after the massacre, the border no longer was neglected but was transformed by a state subsidized project to reclaim the border. One report filed by the military *patrullas* (squads), which periodically patrolled the country during Trujillo's reign, referred to this institutional presence along the border. According to the report, in the Colonia Trinitaria, there was

An average of 50 small houses all constructed of wood zinc roofs and painted white. It has a [Catholic] Church constructed of wood and painted gray and adorned of white. There is an Emergency School constructed of wood and zinc roof giving it an aspect of order and cleanliness. [The colony] is endowed with

⁵³ Baltasar Miró, *Cartones de la frontera*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Editorial La Nación, 1945), pg.18.

⁵⁴ John P. Augelli's, "Nationalization of Dominican Borderlands," 33.

⁵⁵ One Dominican newspaper wrote that "33 families arrived at the Flor de Oro colony. 53 houses have just been constructed there; 33 of these have been appointed to the recently arrived families to the colony." See *La Nación*, July 28, 1943, pg.4.

⁵⁶ EN leg.67 exp.101. AGN. Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Miguel A. Casado in Elias Piña to his commanding officer on June 19, 1947. According to one report, the cost of one house constructed in the agrarian colony in 1939 was \$60 pesos. Sec. of Agriculture Leg. 396 exp.842, 1939. AGN.

communication routes by telephone and road.⁵⁷

In just a few years the border went from being a region of state neglect and abandonment to the creation of population centers complete with the essential institutions. For Trujillo, the border was an integral extension of the Dominican nation, with all its institutions and economies linked to the capital of Santo Domingo. As mentioned in chapter two, the number of border colonies in the early 1930s was less than ten. But by the end of the 1950s, border colonies would increase to thirty-two.⁵⁸ A decade prior to this crescendo, the Dominican government celebrated its 100th anniversary independence from Haiti by issuing a report evaluating its agrarian colonies. The 1944 report cited the growth and expansion of state institutions and businesses that functioned throughout the border and within the colonies.⁵⁹

Trujillo's policy to modernize the border through cement buildings was to culturally and architecturally dichotomize the border between Dominican and Haitian territory. Since both sides of the border were relatively underdeveloped, Trujillo sought to divide the two nations even more by contrasting his border as modern, progressive, and institutionalized vis-à-vis a Haiti that was backward, antiquated, and unregulated. Trujillo, through his ever-expanding state, sought to literally illuminate this "dark" region in more ways than one.⁶⁰ Following the massacre, most Haitians were *persona non grata*

⁵⁷ EN Leg.67, exp.101, Report filed by 2nd Lieutenant Enrique A. Cabado Saldia in Restauración, April 26, 1947. AGN.

⁵⁸ Out of these thirty-two colonies, nine were deactivated meaning they no longer held colony status. See "John P. Augelli's "Nationalization of Dominican Borderlands," *The Geographical Review* Vol.70 No.1 (January 1980), 29.

⁵⁹ "These colonies at the end of 1944 depended on 69 official schools, 12 mail and telegraph agencies, 28 military and national police officers, 23 sanitary brigades and dispersed doctors, 189 kilometers of roads and highways, 246 commercial houses, 6 pharmacies, and there were 1279 work oxen of which 439 were official property and 840 belonged to the colonos." Sec. of Agriculture Leg.18, 1945. AGN.

⁶⁰ One of the symbols of progress under the nationalization project was bringing light to the border, as was the case in the colonia agrícola El Llano (in San Juan de la Maguana) when an electrical power plant was inaugurated and donated by Trujillo. See the Elías Piña's border newspaper *Ecos de Cachimán*, itself an instrument of state-building in August 30, 1948, pg.1.

in the Dominican Republic, except for those who lived and worked within the American-owned sugar mills. The success, or at least the illusion of success, of Trujillo's nationalization project depended upon the absence of Haitians. Therefore, military officials who were responsible for monitoring everything throughout the border, at times wrote to their superiors that no Haitians lived in their province. Captain Rafael A. González, for example, wrote to his superiors saying that, "in the Benefactor Province there are no Haitians because, according to the prison commanders of Las Matas de Farfan and El Cercado, respectively, in the colonies that are under their control, there do not exist individuals of Haitian nationality."⁶¹

It was important to Trujillo to project and present an image of a border free of Haitians. After the massacre in 1937, the Dominican government viewed not only Haitians but Dominicans of Haitian descent as a threat. Haitian culture and intermixture was anathema to the Dominicanization of the border. The goal was to eradicate all Haitian presence from the border and, as we shall see in chapter five, the government's various state institutions initiated a campaign to define in opposition to and protect themselves from their western neighbor. But the Haitian presence must have been considerable, judging by a confidential letter written by the Dominican administrator of one of the border colonies. According to this official:

We have in Tierra Sucia, 8 colonists and in Carrizal 6, which are descendants of Haitians or, in other words, Dominicanized Haitians in terms of the rights that they enjoy in this country, but of customs and ideologies, of their race, this nucleus constitutes the most difficult problem of this colony because, since they are natives of this sector, when they are submitted for vagrancy or theft upon completing [their sentences], return to the same place and neither advice nor healthy measures are worth anything. In other words the only way that I could count on and that could be done for the good of the colony's cleanliness is

⁶¹ EN Leg. 64 exp.96. Letter from Capt. Rafael A. Gonzalez to his superiors. May 3, 1946. AGN.

‘remove them’ or transfer them to Saona Island.⁶²

This request also reflected the state’s desire to eliminate contact between Haitians and Dominicans, which it was unable to achieve since, in this case, despite a massacre and an institutional border project that controlled and monitored the border residents’ lives, both peoples continued to interact with each other. In spite of the increased Dominican state presence, crime existed especially in the illicit contraband trade that had existed for more than two hundred years. Prior to and following the massacre, contraband along the border, like contraband between many international borders, flourished. Dominican government documents throughout the 1940s record robberies by Haitians along the border, especially the agrarian colonies. This could be interpreted as either the persistence of trading relations between both communities and/or or bureaucratic excuse for missing goods. The following example also reveals in contradictory fashion that colonization of the border was not as it was portrayed by government propaganda. There were people, as previously mentioned, that wanted to leave the colonies. One official believed that the robberies in his jurisdiction were so frequent that the inhabitants “were thinking of abandoning the [Angel Feliz] colony for this reason now that they have no arms with which to defend themselves and carry out patrols.”⁶³ According to this Dominican official, Haitian robberies were so frequent and easy to carry out that he used humor to drive home the point: “These Haitians are so proficient in these types of villainous acts that not only do they steal animals, but they go as far as stealing the pillows and clothes underneath the head of those who are sleeping, and steal the cédulas (personal identification cards) from the men who have inside them the money to renew

⁶²Saona Island is off the southeastern Dominican province of La Altagracia. See colonial administrator Alvaro A. Caamaño Mella in the Mariano Cestero agrarian colony of Restauración to the Sec. of Agriculture, Sec. of Agr. Leg. 18, April 25, 1945. AGN.

⁶³EN Leg. 67 exp. 96, Letter from Ernesto A. Caamaño administrator for the Angel Feliz colony to the Secretary of War and Navy, April 28, 1947. AGN. Ironically, during the massacre, there were colonists that had firearms but they were distributed temporarily by the Dominican army.

them.”⁶⁴ These examples of Haitian criminals crossing the border and stealing cattle had always represented been a real concern for farmers along the border even up until today. Most elderly Dominicans interviewed agreed that stealing cattle was common throughout the border, particularly before the massacre. Therefore these documents reflect a reality that border Dominican residents, particularly farmers who owned cattle, experienced during these times. Many Haitians that were caught stealing in Dominican territory were sentenced, jailed, fined and imprisoned. Surviving court records from 1938 in the northern border town of Monte Cristi show that most Haitians were arrested for minor theft called *robo simple* (simple robbery).⁶⁵

Most of these crimes of robbery that were listed in the court records for Monte Cristi were committed by Haitian nationals on Dominican territory, and several of those arrested were women. Most of the Haitians arrested were sentenced to four months in prison and fined between \$15 and \$25 pesos for their crimes.⁶⁶ These crimes contrasted greatly with Dominicans who were arrested in the same year. Dominican crimes were much more serious and ranged from arson, defamation, and voluntary homicide to gambling. Many of the crimes were punished from a \$10 peso fine for arson to 15 years of public labor for homicide.⁶⁷ But Dominican criminals did not run the risk of either deportation or repatriation to Haiti. But Haitians, once they completed their sentences, were usually repatriated.⁶⁸ Archival records also contradict the regime’s propaganda that Haitians on Dominican territory and not in Haiti only committed robberies. Cattle was also robbed from Haitian territory and transported across the border by Dominican thieves. A military border inspector commented in his report that a “Haitian named Clert

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ An excellent study would be to examine the entire process from Haitians being arrested their treatment in Dominican courts, and the types of punishment they received.

⁶⁶ See Resumen de la labor realizada por el Juzgado de Primera Instancia del Distrito Judicial de Monte Cristi, durante el mes de abril del año 1938. Gobernación de Monte Cristy Leg. #75, exp.53. 1938. ANG.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Leg.#75 exp.54.

⁶⁸ EN Leg.258-A exp.76. AGN.

had introduced himself at his office and denounced that the night before he had lost two mounts (two mules) and according to reports he possessed, those mounts had passed to the other Dominican side and the one who had taken these mounts was a Dominican guard.”⁶⁹

Obviously, the Dominicanization of the border did not stamp out the contraband trade, which had existed since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both Haitian and Dominican civilians and authorities participated in both legal and illegal forms of trade throughout this time when the Dominican state promoted a post-massacre ideology of anti-Haitianism. Like Haitians, Dominicans also robbed. Yet, often for propaganda purposes, Dominican crimes were minimized in the government documents so as not to contradict the government’s portrayal of border Dominicans as the vulnerable victims of Haitian thieves.⁷⁰ The market for the Dominican contraband trade inevitably centered in Haiti, and those Dominicans caught stealing animals were punished with three months of prison and a \$15 peso fine.⁷¹ Moreover, when Dominicans conducted business either among themselves or with Haitians along the border, chances are that the money transactions were in Haitian currency.

Haitian Currency throughout the Border

Like today, Haitian and American currency floated throughout the border during the 1940s. According to some residents, they remember that the Haitian *gourde* was so widespread that its circulation went from the northern border in Monte Cristi all the way

⁶⁹ EN Leg.291 exp.24. July 24, 1939. AGN.

⁷⁰ According to one confidential report written by 2nd Lieutenant Julio A. Conde on travels near El Cercado, Dominican crimes were not as important. “Robberies committed by Dominicans, these have been of little importance, like the theft of yucca, chicken, banana and goats, which have been submitted to the Law and sanctioned.” See Sec. of Agriculture Leg.10, June 10, 1944. AGN.

⁷¹ Gobernacion de Monte Cristi Leg.75 exp.52. AGN.

east to Santiago (Navarrete).⁷² Haitian currency was so entrenched in the border region that even several months after the massacre--at a time when tensions remained high between both countries--the Dominican government continued to conduct certain transactions in Haitian money. For example, various branches of the Dominican government near the border collected taxes in Haitian money. The Secretary of the Treasury and Commerce made this clear in a letter to a tax collector in the southwestern province of Azua when he wrote:

I wish that you advise immediately the municipal treasurers, the postal agents, and the other offices that are used to make deposits in Haitian money...that they can continue to do it under the conditions already expressed and that these measures have been taken with the interest of facilitating the commercial exchange of the border regions.⁷³

According to one eighty-one-year-old Román Mateo Cuevas, Haitian money circulated more than any other currency along the border. Moreover, as bilingual residents, people on the border referred to their currency in more than one language: Spanish and Kreyol. "There were various types of currency. There was a Haitian cent, ten cents, fifty cents and a peso. Five cents were called cenco; fifty [cents], they called them cencat-cop; and the tens [cents] a disco."⁷⁴ Several of those interviewed recall how

⁷² *Ahora!* No.936, Nov. 2, 1981, pg.46. 42-47.

During one of my visits to the border in Jimaní, I was surprised to see that American dollars, Dominican pesos, and Haitian gourdes circulate freely around town. Moreover as soon as you arrive in Jimaní there are many persons with small pouches who will gladly exchange these three currencies.

⁷³ See *Cronológico de correspondencia de inmigración del 2629 to 3327*, #35, Jan. 1, 1944. Letter was written on May 25, 1938. AGN. Dominican authorities, through their intelligence reports, confirmed all the interborder exchange, but seemed to do nothing to stop it. One Army Major Pedro Andujar, Inspector General of the Primary border-crossing town of Dajabón wrote: "In the Haitian border there is currency of this country circulating, which shows that some Dominican border residents sustain commercial relations with the Haitians;...and yesterday a Gendarme (Haitian border guard) stationed at Haitian Capotillo showed up in the Dominican consulate in Juana Méndez to exchange \$4.75 in Dominican national currency. EN Leg.59 exp.101 Jan. 12, 1945. AGN.

⁷⁴ Interview with Ramón Mateo Cuevas, 81 years old. Resident of Neiba. June, 1999.

routine it was to cross the border to purchase things that were cheaper in Haiti than in their own country, and how Dominicans visited the Haitian side to visit their clientele and vice-versa. Again Mateo Cuevas recalled: "Look, being an auxiliary messenger in Las Lajas [northwest of the border town of Jimaní], I used to go to Tomasó [Haitian border town] to buy from the Haitians for the [Dominican] guards, who sent me to buy. Well I used to buy a lot of soap, salt, oil, rice, because it was cheaper there."⁷⁵ Eventually the Dominican government established its national currency in 1947.⁷⁶ In keeping with his state-building project, Trujillo's creation of a national currency attempted to unify the Dominican nation and supplant the utilization of Haitian currency along the border.

The long tradition of interborder exchange between Dominicans and Haitians made it easier for these two groups to unite in an enterprise such as stealing cattle. It was easier to separate two countries through a border treaty than to effectively sever familial ties that encompassed centuries. Dominican authorities realized this when they attempted to enforce a border project, which, in essence, denied family members who lived in both countries access to one another. Moreover, the linkages between Haitians and Dominicans along the border were so close, and thus so threatening, to the nationalization of the border, that officials even considered reversing the plan for agrarian colonies and relocating Dominican families to the interior of the country. According to one official:

There exists on the same border facing this town [Elías Piña] a Dominican family with the surname Poché. On the other [Haitian] side there is twice the number of the same family, but Haitians. This means that the people on this side are constantly being condemned for violating the passport law and those on the other side for violating the immigration law. We have not been able to find a way to avoid contact between these people. Because they are many, they have not been sent to colonies in the interior of the country, but sooner or later we will have to

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900-1937," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 1994, pg.516. Common currency like systems of weights and measures are crucial to state-building. See Eugene Weber.

do something similar.⁷⁷

The expansion of the Dominican state into the border showed that the border residents were less Dominican and perhaps more Haitian than expected. Years of intermarriage and interborder trade had created a bicultural border, and many Dominican towns and even agrarian colonies were composed of multicultural families. On this note, one Dominican official, addressing the situation in the Colonia El Llano (Las Matas de Farfan) remarked: “The colony’s greatest population and the nearby region’s is the result of the union and living together between the Dominican and Haitian populations, and that *mestizaje* (race-mixing) requires the military’s forceful hand to obligate them to abandon their Haitian customs.”⁷⁸

This reality went against the ideological bombardment by the Dominican government, which denied the fact that Dominican culture, in many cases, particularly along the border, shared more with Haitian culture than the Spanish culture it so much espoused. Dominican newspapers perpetuated the intelligentsia’s pro-Spanish line in celebratory articles praising the Dominicanization of the frontier. The border project was meant “for the conscious Dominicans who love purely the immaculate native soil without infiltrations in the wealth of their legendary traditions and their noble Spanish customs.”⁷⁹

One of the unforeseen obstacles by Trujillo’s state-building border administrators was precisely the presence of bicultural families and their place within the border project. Surely the Dominican authorities had the option of repatriating Haitians, but when Haitians married or cohabitated with Dominicans, it proved more difficult. Repatriating the Haitian spouses of Dominicans or punishing Dominicans for living with Haitians

⁷⁷ Letter from Lte. Col Fausto E. Caamaño, commander of the northwest border department, to President Trujillo. EN Leg.47 exp.101, August 21, 1943. AGN.

⁷⁸ Letter from Maj. Andres J. Monclus, Chief of the Military Assistants, to the President. See, EN Leg.31 exp. 67, Sept. 4, 1942, pg.2. AGN.

⁷⁹ *Ecós de Cachimán* Dec. 14, 1948, pg.12. This newspaper was published in the bordertown of Elias Pina.

would have had a very negative effect. Splitting up of families could have created a potential backlash against government authorities thus perhaps undermining the state's legitimacy and its programs to Dominicanize and control the border. Many Dominican officials confronted this problem in the Colonia Trinitaria when a report underscored the prevalence of children of Dominican-Haitian unions. Some had the required national identity papers, others did not. But all were described as being "sons of Haitians and Dominicans; all are black and their speech is Haitianized."⁸⁰ Dominican authorities considered these unions a threat to their project of creating a new reality along the border. Despite the fact that many of the Dominicans in these unions possessed identity papers, officials saw them as Haitian since, culturally, they were not Dominican (i.e. they also spoke Kreyol). Thus in some cases, military officers recommended that these families not be separated, but relocated to the interior of the country. "It would be convenient that this family, pure Haitian, is taken out of this place and taken to the interior of the Republic. I personally visited the house of those people and confirmed the veracity of this report. The place where they live is near the territorial boundary and, because some of the daughters are linked with Dominicans, I consider that this is the only solution."⁸¹ There was obviously a contradiction in policy since Dominicanizing the border meant eliminating the Haitian presence from Dominican territory not transferring Dominican residents who possessed a complex culture that contradicted and undermined the government's vision of a new national identity. Haitian-Dominican unions were not just confined to the border. Gracita Mercedes, a thirty-two-year-old illiterate Black Dominican woman from San Pedro de Macoris, is an example of the futility of state doctrine over ordinary citizens. While Trujillo and his ideologues were constructing a racial vision of what Dominicans were (i.e. Spanish, white, and Catholic), Gracita Mercedes, perhaps oblivious to the propaganda in the national discourse, fell in love with a Haitian and left her country to

⁸⁰ EN Leg.46 exp.101. Colonia Trinitaria, Loma de Cabrera, April 27, 1943. AGN.

⁸¹ Ibid.

join him. She was interrogated on the border by Dominican officials and charged with entering Dominican territory (her own country) illegally. In a report filed by the border authorities, she tells her story, the story of a woman who struggled to survive on both parts of the island:

In this last [sugar] harvest, finding myself in the Marchena *batey* in the Santa Fe *ingenio* visiting, I met a Haitian *bracero* (sugar worker), Metelis Pierre or Pie in this ingenio. He courted and conquered me to go with him to Juana Méndez [in Haiti]. Since I had a sister who lived there for many years called Lelita Mercedes, I had an interest in seeing her, because it was many years since I had not heard from her. Incidentally, when I arrived, I didn't find her because it had been three years since she died...there [in Juana Méndez]. I was with him for a period of almost two months, and he abandoned me. Not knowing where he went, I then started to sell part of my belongings so I could eat. I ran out of money and I found myself going very hungry, for which I decided to come to my country, crossing the border any which way because I was dying of hunger in Juana Méndez.⁸²

The irony is that the Dominicanization of the border was carried out partly by these bicultural Dominican-Haitian families in agrarian colonies that were supposed to represent a bulwark against Haitian encroachment into Dominican territory. The general perception that one gets from the traditional historiography is that during Trujillo's border project, the border was closed and contact with Haitians was minimal. For example, indicative of this portrayal during this period was a magazine article during the 1940s that underscored the image of the Dominicanization border project as being free of a Haitian presence. "Colonization became quickly a fact. All along the borderline, like the north and the south there was formed a restrictive chord that constituted the most effective of

⁸² Interrogatorio adicional practicandole a la Señora Gracita Mercedes; con relación al hecho de haber cruzado la frontera clandestinamente, procedente de Juana Méndez, en Nov.13, 1947, Restauracion, EN Leg.67 exp.96. AGN.

our defenses...[and] puts a boundary to the [Haitian] infiltration.”⁸³

In reality the border, as it is today, remained porous. One example of the border's continued accessibility was that it only took one year or so for Haitians to return to the Dominican Republic following the massacre. And this was a time when Dominican-Haitian relations were restrained due to the state violence 1937. But despite the massacre, and Trujillo's institutional and ideological campaign to denigrate Haiti and its people, the Dominican government was not able to stop the flow of people traveling to and from each other's countries. During the 1940s (the apogee of the Dominicanization of the border), Haitian and Dominican contact and travel between countries was apparent and consistent. It seems that ordinary Dominicans, in spite of the anti-Haitian national rhetoric emanating from Santo Domingo, traveled freely to Haiti. Perhaps one of the most important documents that contradict the objectives of the border project was the Certificates of Exemption of Deposit to Leave the Country. These documents are a rich source of information because they show Dominicans seeking and receiving permission to visit or to return to live in Haiti--just a few years after the massacre. Complete with black-and-white photos, the person's occupation, complexion, and motive for travel, these documents are proof that, the government's goal as portrayed in the documents or press was not successful.

Dominicans in the 1940s were traveling to Haiti for a number of reasons. For example, after some time in Ciudad Trujillo (Santo Domingo), Buenaventura A. Fernández, a housemaid, returned to her residence in Port-au-Prince.⁸⁴ Other persons, too,

⁸³ See Juan Bta. Lamarche, "El patria en la frontera," *Souvenir* Vol.2 No.22 (November 1945), 78. Part of the government's success of Dominicanizing the border relied on linking border progress with the separation of Dominicans from Haitians. As we now know there was less isolation and more interaction between Haitians and Dominicans on the ground. Yet much of the historiography represented the Dominicanization of the border a Trujillo invention as "blinding and detaining the neighboring subterranean exodus." See Ramon Fernández Mato, "En la gran estela de Trujillo: Palabras a la Juventud Universitaria Dominicana desde la frontera," *Juventud Universitaria* No.2 (April 1945), 10.

⁸⁴ Cronológico de Interior y Policía. Correspondencia de certificado de exención de deposito para ausentarse del país, Dec. 1941.

like Fernández had homes and family in Haiti. There were others, like the professor Angel María González, commercial tailor Maria Francisca Reyes de Beltrán and her three children and María P. de Mota, who returned to Haiti to check on their homes while also visiting family members.⁸⁵ Another group of Dominicans who traveled to Haiti were the cattle ranchers who had livestock in Haitian territory because their grazing lands were divided by the 1936 border treaty. Their livestock now grazed in Haitian territory, so their owners were forced to travel to Haiti to oversee their property. Men such as Hipólito Pérez, Timoteo Pérez, Uladislao Mejía Bautista, Isidro Aquino, Joaquin Lapaix, Saturnino Terrero, and Juan Baustista Rodríguez Herrera all were given permission to travel to Haiti and tend to their cattle.⁸⁶ Still others went to Haiti strictly for business reasons.

Regardless of the reasons behind these visits, Dominicans were traveling to Haiti regularly and interacting with their neighbors at a time when their government was pursuing a policy of isolationism and detachment. Even Dominicans who were on the eastern end of the island, far from the border, had a connection with Haiti. A report filed by a Dominican diplomat in Haiti highlights the disparity between government officials and ordinary people on the ground. The report also suggests that anti-Haitian government propaganda was not as strong among many Dominicans, especially those who had ethnic ties with Haiti. Forty-eight-year-old Victor Espinal (Victor Lespinasso) was born in Haiti and moved to the Dominican Republic when he was fourteen years old. He spent fifteen years in the Dominican Republic as a tailor. Espinal left the Olivares colony near the eastern port city of the San Pedro de Macoris Olivares for Port-au-Prince with his mother. He remained five years in Haiti after which his mother refused to return with him to the

⁸⁵ Cronológico de Interior y Policía. Certificado de exención de deposito para ausentarse del país. Feb. 1942. Oficios 00116-00224. Feb and June 1942.

⁸⁶ Cronológico de Interior y Policía. Dec. 1941. AGN. Others like Abraham Alfonso George Pichering, from San Pedro de Macoris, went beyond Haiti and instead, travelled to New York to secure his home.

Dominican Republic in order to stay with her daughter.⁸⁷ He wanted to leave Haiti because, as the Dominican Consul points out, “business is poor here and he is not doing anything here and wishes to return to the Dominican Republic which is his homeland.”⁸⁸ Espinal did not come to see both nations in the nationalistic bi-polar isolationist fervor of the time but often, as did many on the island, but lived their lives with economic and familial preoccupations.

The worldwide depression at the time forced many countries like the Dominican Republic to find alternative ways to increase their agricultural production and self-sufficiency. This meant that in the border the state would initiate quasi-agrarian reform by distributing lands to peasants. An example of this land distribution was the countless of petitions by Dominicans and some of Haitian descent asking the government for land to cultivate crops. These colonies were subsidized by the state and colonists received cash, farming equipment and materials from the government. The government’s desire was to see these colonies produce their own crop for domestic and perhaps international consumption. Although the main goal was agricultural productivity, the government also inherited a historical fear of Haitian immigration across the border.

It was understood that these colonies also represented the most visible vestiges of a state border presence against Haitian immigration. However, with the massacre of 1937, the colonies assumed an even greater role than that of agricultural sites. One example of this transformation was the significant rise of colonies along the border after 1937. The massacre led to the institutionalization and intensification of border nationalization which not only saw the establishment of more colonies but also a concomitant an infrastructural growth that included the development of more provinces, buildings, paved roads. Following the massacre the border became more than just another site for agricultural

⁸⁷ EN Leg. 46 exp. 101. Report by the Dominican consul in Fond Verrettes, Haiti Ladislao Ernesto Martínez to his Foreign Secretary July 8, 1943. AGN.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

colonization. The killing of thousands of Haitians transformed relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic where the latter began an official campaign to Dominicanize its border. New border provinces were created while the names of small villages and towns were changed from Haitian to Dominican sounding names. While government authorities and the press championed in documents and newspapers the separation of both nations and its people, reality at the local level, was quite different. Border officials encountered a bi-cultural and bi-lingual border that made it difficult to successfully Dominicanize the region. Many Dominican residents spoke Haitian Creole, in the same way their parents, grand parents, and great-grand parents had done before them. It seemed that neither the massacre nor the subsequent project to nationalize the borderlands stopped Dominicans and Haitian from interacting with each other. In this case, border markets continued to attract a steady stream of Dominican clients that went to Haitian to purchase good that were often more accessible and cheaper. Despite the government rhetoric of Dominicanization, Dominican border residents contradicted official policy in their daily lives. From intermarriage to the use of Haitian currency throughout the border, Dominican border residents lived their lives saturated by Haiti and her culture perpetuating years of historic interaction. But even though border residents in general felt culturally, if not always economically comfortable in both societies, they did confront the force of state expansion.

The challenge for government officials was not only to create new provinces or construct modern buildings, but also to incorporate border residents into the Dominican nation. How could the state induce, convince or indoctrinate Dominican border residents in such a way that they could in fact see themselves as different and even better than their Haitian neighbors? Through various institutions, such as the church, schools, and the political Dominican Party, the state disseminated its anti-Haitian ideology throughout the border. Young and old were exposed to government propaganda that attempted to reduce

the resilient interaction between border residents. State institutions therefore became the indispensable and critical delivery systems for the government to carry out its border project. And as we shall see in chapter five, these institutions were vital in absorbing, converting, or reconverting border residents into a new nation as modern Dominican citizens.

Chapter 5

Becoming Spiritually Virtuous, Physically Clean, Lawful, and Patriotic on the Dominican Border

Once the new border provinces were created and the towns renamed, the Dominican government began to carry out its policy of nationalization through the establishment of institutions. Schools, churches, and hospitals became the delivery systems that brought the government propaganda of Dominicanization to the border. Under Trujillo, schools along the border became one of the major components of the state project to nationalize the border region. By establishing border schools complete with musical and literacy schools and a comprehensive curriculum along with a large-scale bureaucracy, the state began the process of turning once-marginal border residents into full-fledge Dominican citizens. Border schools became the places where children were introduced to the Dominican nation and exposed to the state's nationalistic state-building rhetoric. Along with schools, the Dominican government initiated various hygiene and cultural campaigns aimed at "cleansing" the border from all that which it thought to be Haitian and impure. During the 1940s, scores of hospitals were constructed throughout the border as symbols of modernity. They were not only places where Dominican border residents could go for medical attention, but they underscored the state's larger mission to distinguish itself from Haiti by offering health services such as vaccination programs.

The institution of the church also became an important factor in incorporating the border. Since the state had linked Dominican national identity with Catholicism, the state strove to spread its doctrine through churches and missions (particularly) roving priests who traveled throughout the border to have border residents participate in Spanish-speaking religious activities. According to the government, this was yet another way to limit Dominican border residents from crossing the border and participating with Haitians in anti-Christian church ceremonies. These institutions became the heart of the program

to Dominicanize the border. Without the institutional role of the church, hospitals, and schools the border project to Dominicanize the border would have been limited to a series of isolated agricultural border colonies and military posts. Through the institutions of religion, medicine, and schools, Dominican border residents were incorporated into the larger community of the nation where everyone shared the same language and traditions.

Education and Culture in the Border

The establishment of schools along the border had begun two years prior to the 1937 Haitian massacre. The killings did not immediately provoke the initial construction of border schools but only intensified it. Prior to the massacre there were schools established in the northern and southern section of the border. In one of his many speeches, Trujillo wrote that by 1935 there were already ten schools established throughout the border, which indicated that this region had already become a priority for the Dominican state long before its campaign of ethnic cleansing against Haitians.¹ As part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Trujillo's reign, the government published a multi-volume collection in 1955 that addressed various themes from the nineteenth-century wars with Haiti to invaluable bibliographic information. In one of these volumes, Manuel M. Báez writes that in 1935 a few schools were in the north but that most of the schools centered throughout the southern border region. All were named after past national leaders or Trujillo. Some of these ten border schools were named Juan Pablo Duarte and José Joaquín Puella in Elías Piña or José María Cabral in Jimaní and the Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in Bánica.² Nonetheless, the late 1930s and 1940s saw a flurry of construction

¹ Rafael Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes y proclamas*. Vol.II (Santiago: Editorial El Diario, 1946), pg.257.

² *La era de Trujillo. 25 años de historia Dominicana. La dominicanización fronteriza*. Manuel A. Machado Báez, Vol.3. (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955), pg.235. All students of Dominican history, especially those specializing in the Trujillo period, are grateful to the prolific historian E.Rodríguez Demorizi. Although he is considered part of the dictatorship's intelligentsia of promoting nationalistic and pro-Trujillo historiography, he, among other things, compiled an entire bibliographic volume containing

activity where schools were built not just on or near the border, but throughout the country. By 1938, the ten schools that had been established by 1935 had now risen to “seventy four schools with 119 teachers.”³ By 1941 the number of schools throughout the border that were reported by the government increased to approximately 185, out of a total of 959 schools in the rest of the country.⁴ Under Trujillo’s Dominicanization plan, the number of border schools, teachers, and students would all continue to rise well in the decade of the 1950s. Thus, by the mid-1950s, the number of border schools had risen to 251 and there was a total of 305 teachers for a student population of 20,552.⁵

One of the government’s objectives was to bring literacy to the border. Therefore many of the schools that were constructed during this time were literacy schools called *escuelas de emergencia*. What better way to instill nationalism among border residents than to teach children how to read and write in Spanish as a shield against Haitian Kreyol. Many literacy schools were constructed in the towns closest to the territorial boundaries separating the two nations. Towns such as Macasias in the province of San Rafael and near its provincial capital of Elías Piña; Guayabal (Pilón); Hato Viejo (Sabana Larga); Sabana Quemada (Nicolás); and Las Lajitas (Guanito), were all constructed very near the Haitian border.⁶ Government documents show party officials asking their superiors in Santo Domingo for grater investment in the border schools. In a handwritten note, a member of the Partido Dominicano (the Dominican political party at the time) wrote to

newspaper articles and book sources on topics that ranged from Trujillo’s personal speeches and writings, the family, foreign policy, electoral suffrage, Communism, Trujillo’s travels, to the armed forces and public health. See E.Rodríguez Demorizi’s *Bibliografía de Trujillo. La era de Trujillo: 25 años de historia Dominicana*. Vol.20 (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955).

³ Ibid.232.

⁴ The northern schools were located in and around the border towns of Dajabón, and Monte Cristi. In the south the schools were located in Barahona, Duvergé, Neiba, San Juan de la Maguana, Las Matas de Farfan, and El Cercado. See Revista de educación. Órgano de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación Pública y Bellas Artes. Year: XII, No.#63 (Santo Domingo: “La Nación”, Has no page number.) 1941.

⁵ Manuel A. Machado Báez, *La era de Trujillo*, 232.

⁶ One school in Carrizal (Juan Felipe) was only 200 meters from Haitian territory. Sec. Edu. Leg.1588, exp.7, Letter from Public Instructor of District School #7, Dr. Carlos Gonzalez-N. to Sec. of Educ., June 7, 1943. AGN.

the Secretary of Education notifying him that his school district had “more than 100 children” and yearned to receive more “benefits that our dear and beloved Chief Generalísimo Trujillo Molina offers us.”⁷

Once the schools were constructed, the national scholastic curriculum was introduced. By examining archival documents and, specifically, copies of classroom subject matter and daily itineraries we can reconstruct a picture of how this educational project was implemented. The Secretary of Education in Santo Domingo created the curriculum of classes and even the schedules of subjects taught down to the minute. In the border schools, classes began at 9:00 am with the singing of the national anthem and an attendance count until 9:10; from 9:10 to 10:10 there was agricultural class; between 10:10 and 10:15 there was a short break; at 10:15 through 10:40 there was reading and writing; at 10:40 there was another short break until 10:55, when arithmetic class began, which ended at 11:25; from 11:25 to 11:30 there was yet another short break and then, from 11:30 to 11:50, there was History or Instruction on Civics and Morality; and from 11:50 to 12:00, the anthem was repeated, whereby the students then left for the day.⁸ Like today, daily class sessions were divided into morning and afternoon sections. Primary school children whose educational schedule ran on three trimesters were given report cards detailing their progress.⁹ Along with the traditional course on reading, writing, and arithmetic, school children also received a grade for good hygiene and etiquette.¹⁰ Schoolchildren in the border were now participating in the same rituals of education as their counterparts in the capital of Santo Domingo.

⁷ The school was in Carril Arriba near the northwestern town of Guayubín. See Sec. Educ. Leg. 1572 exp. 5, Nov. 1, 1943. AGN.

⁸ *Revista de Educación*, Year IX, No. 41, Sept. and Oct., 1937, pg. 55. Children were not the only ones attending school. The office of the Secretary of Education also created classes for adults. These *Escuelas Nocturnas* (Night Schools) offered all-men and all-women evening classes between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm, Mondays through Fridays. According to the Secretary of Education both men and women were taught the same subject matter, which ranged from Reading and Writing, Geography, to Arithmetics and Geometry and Design. *Revista de Educación*, No. 42, Nov. and Dec., 1937, pg. 34.

⁹ See copy of *Enseñanza Elemental Graduada*.

¹⁰ See *Informe Escolar*.

The state under Trujillo in its quest to control the border also forced border residents to conform to state mandated levels of hygiene. Student report cards show the state's heightened concern to regulate the sanitary conditions of its border residents. Moreover, border officials were cognizant of the poverty and lack of hygiene they encountered and the dilemma it represented for the overall success of the border project:

In my recent inspections to various sections of this locality and of Loma de Cabrera, I have been able to certify personally that the students' attendance in the rural schools is very good but the disastrous state in which numerous pupils present themselves is truly distressing. Many go almost naked and others extremely dirty, a situation that neither fits well with the blossoming prosperity of the region nor the interest that is deployed by the Government and the policy of our Illustrious Benefactor and Chief Generalísimo Trujillo Molina, and I estimate that a campaign is needed so that these school children attend classes dressed more decently and with greater hygiene.¹¹

It was not easy for the Dominican state to incorporate this region, which, for centuries, had been ignored by both colonial and national governments. To be sure, state building on the Dominican-Haitian border entailed enormous resources and restructuring of society. Border residents were urged to relearn new concepts and forget others, all in the name of Dominicanizing the frontier. Thus officials took pride in declaring that schools were succeeding against illiteracy, thereby transforming the region's children into literate and articulate Dominican citizens. Their statements also reveal clearly the state's goal of using schools to promote the Spanish language, therefore forcing a type of monolingual policy on a region, which had, for years, been bilingual.

¹¹Informe Trimestral Abril, Mayo y Junio por Gobernador de Provincia Libertador. Leg.40, June 8, 1940. AGN. A few years later, the situation would remain the same for some border regions. In a letter from Sec. Interior y Policía Rafael F. Bonnelly to Sec. de Educación Bonnelly says about the Border Schools that "attendance was good despite the poverty of the parents, and the students many attend school naked from the waist up. It would be convenient to give them some help making it easier to acquire uniforms, as has been done on other occasions." See Sec. de Interior y Policía 6/75-78 Oct. 10, 1945. AGN.

Already the border child is not the shy boy of the past; he now reads small compositions in public, which he prepares and recites in school and ceremonies outside school and poems of national and international authors. The conversation of the children and adults of the region does not have a patois [Kreyol] accent; already he [the student] speaks a pure and clear Castillian like his Spanish ancestors.¹²

The idea was to promote Spanish as much as possible in the schools, and it condemned Kreyol as a “backward and primitive” language associated with Haitians. The objective of the border schools was to modernize and simultaneously indoctrinate students to believe that, in spite of their isolation; they were part of a larger nation, a republic they belonged to, something bigger than the border. Here language became a tool that the state utilized to organize people within a territory and convince them that they belonged to a larger community of Dominicans that transcended the border region.

The campaign to Dominicanize the border was a project of giant proportions. It implied modernization, yet according to education officials, the region’s overwhelming poverty and rural multicultural people impeded development. According to one education official:

The most notable deficiencies in this District are: First the extreme poverty of the residents that impedes the adequate distribution of uniforms and school supplies-- thank God for good nourishment [referring to school- sponsored breakfasts]; second, the school localities are in abominable condition; third the influence of the Haitian language in the diction of the rural children; fourth, bad preparation in the teaching personnel.¹³

Haitian influence along the border was ubiquitous, and school education officials

¹² Sec. Interior y Policía 6/75-32, 1945. AGN. See also *La Frontera*, which circulated in Elías Piña. Jan. 25, 1945.

¹³ Informe que presenta el Dr. Carlos González N., inspector de instrucción pública del distrito escolar numero 7-A, comunas de Elías Piña, Bánica y Pedro Santana, provincia de San Rafael, correspondiente al año relativo 1942-1943. Sec. Edu. Leg.1621, 1943. AGN.

were painfully aware of the physical and cultural presence of Haitians in Dominican towns. Northern Dominican border towns like Dajabón, Loma de Cabrera, and Restauración presented challenges because they were strongly linked to Haiti, from the economy to language. As the Secretary of Education, Victor Garrido, wrote in the early 1940s to his subaltern: “The Inspector will see by the attached work that is judged, that in this region the Dominican is most influenced by the Haitian spirit.”¹⁴

Following the construction of schools, the government appointed teachers. In one case, the Undersecretary of Education, O.Báez Soler, wrote to Trujillo and recommending a Mr. Rafael Apolinar Villalona Tavárez to serve as a teacher in a border school near Dajabón.¹⁵ Other times, schoolteachers who lived far from the border sought jobs in this region, petitioning directly to Trujillo.¹⁶

Public school teachers on the border were responsible for teaching at least eight and four-fifths hours a day. In the border school such as the Escuela Normal (high school) Generalísimo Trujillo, a teacher’s salary ranged from ten pesos a month for someone teaching a daily hour of algebra to seventy pesos a month for a principal who also taught two hours of class daily.¹⁷

Many teachers were enthusiastic about teaching in the border, but there were instances where complaints were levied against the school district. Despite the repressive nature of the dictatorship Dominicans particularly in the border, residents complained and criticized to their local government. On one occasion bordering on the ridiculous, parent

¹⁴ Sec. Educ. 1547-B exp.29, Cronológicos Oficios de Agosto-Sept., Sept. 6, 1943. AGN.

¹⁵ Sec. of Edu. Leg. 1547 exp. 29, May 28, 1943. AGN. The prevalence of Haitian Kreyol along the border was such that, among the themes discussed in Banica’s 6A school district meeting by the Inspector of Public Instruction, Santiago del Pilar Ventura, was “a list of Haitianisms with its equivalency in Castillian.” See *Revista de Educación* año, XVI No.80, Oct, Nov, Dec., 1945, pg. 88.

¹⁶ Letter from Alfredo Días Adams, resident and teacher of Jobo Dulce, Seibo, to Rafael Trujillo. As a rural teacher who had experience helping students against illiteracy, Días Adams wrote that, “It is because of this that I wish to cooperate with the Dominicanization campaign, working in a Special Border School in the recently created San Rafael Province or where you believe it convenient.” See Sec. de Educacion Leg.1547 exp.3, Feb. 6, 1943. AGN.

¹⁷ Distribucion de gastos en la escuela normal Generalísimo Trujillo en Monte Cristi. Sec. Educ. Leg.1489, March 11, 1942. AGN. The monthly budget for this school was \$250.00 pesos.

complaints about several school children in Dajabón's Colonia Trinitaria even reached Hector Trujillo in Santo Domingo. The parents accused the teacher, Mrs. Graciela Peña Morel de Santos, of:

Painting the lips, putting on rouge, and painting the nails of the girls who attend class, things which the girls' parents reproached the teacher, which has given reason for the teacher to become antagonistic with the parents and she does not take care of her obligations, instead is constantly in disputes and gossip. I have had to intervene and to get her attention.¹⁸

Border residents complained to school officials but the level of animosity as far I could detect from the documents never approached the level of acrimony that was taking places in other parts of Latin America at this time. In Mexico for example, particularly in Michoacán, pro-Catholic Cristero groups subjected teachers appointed by the anti-clerical revolutionary government to campesino boycotts of schools and even violent attacks.¹⁹ Although no schoolteachers were lynched during the Dominican border project examples of discontent among schoolteachers and between the surrounding border community reveals that resistance within Trujillo's authoritarian government and state-building project existed and was palpable.

Other cases show how the state controlled dissent even if the suspected dissenter was under the influence of alcohol. Jaime A. Lockward, a schoolteacher in the town of Imbert, was arrested for "uttering insults in a state of inebriation against the political regime of the Illustrious Chief of State."²⁰ Still other cases demonstrate how teachers ardently complained to the government when they felt their obligations were affecting their pocketbook. In its quest to control and monitor society, the state had obligated all

¹⁸Sec. Educ. Leg.1570 exp.5, Dec.4, 1943. AGN.

¹⁹In 1935, a school professor named J. Trinidad Ramirez, was lynched by Cristeros for demanding "that the local priest and two teachers who continued to celebrate Holy Week be thrown out of two." See Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire. Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University California Press, 1995), pg.125.

²⁰Ibid. July 29, 1943. Lockward was later fired.

teachers to meet at monthly meetings at the offices of the nearest school district. The costs and logistics of traveling to these meetings provoked constant complaints and criticisms about teaching salaries that were woefully low. In the border Emergency Schools of Trinitaria, Tilorí, Mariano Cestero, Los Cerezos, Cruz de Cabrera near Loma de Cabrera, teachers complained that:

The obligatory attendance every month in the school district's inspector's office has its seat in Dajabón; trips that they [teachers] must make on horseback for lack of transportation. They also complain that in this inspector's office in the month of July, one dollar had been demanded to buy a form, a demand that they consider unjust every time since they only earn \$15.00 of which salary, very little in my opinion, they pay to rent the horses used for these trips.²¹

Even Trujillo recognized that to live in the border throughout the 1940s was very expensive. Writing on the dictator's travel to the border, one of Trujillo's advisor's commented that he had "verified the need to make salaries of many public employees there better, reason being that the cost of living in those distant regions is rather elevated and [current] salary does not permit them to live with the decorum that their obligations impose on them."²²

The Dominicanization project also brought to the border a bureaucracy responsible for the maintenance and development of the region. Whether it was irrigation canals, churches, schools, agrarian colonies or foreign immigration, there were politically appointed government representatives who sent observation reports to superiors in the region and Santo Domingo. One of these representatives was the Agente Cultural Fronterizo (Cultural Border Agent). These individuals were often young and extremely intelligent urban professionals mostly from Santo Domingo who served as the cultural

²¹Letter from Capt. Jacinto Martínez Arena in Loma de Cabrera to Official Commander of 23rd Company. EN Leg. 47 exp.101, July 30, 1943. AGN.

²²Sec. Educ. Leg.1547 exp.10, May 7, 1943. AGN.

arm of the Dominicanization project. Their task it was to bring culture to the border.

One of the most notable border cultural agents was Ramón Marrero Aristy, who was a staunch Trujillista and the author of one the Dominican Republic's most famous novels: *Over*, a story about the sugarcane industry in the east and the treatment of workers.²³ Since their job was to disseminate culture throughout the border, border agents like Marrero Aristy worked very closely with the Secretary of Education. Marrero Aristy himself was placed in the Office of the Inspection of Public Instruction, where he worked to carry out the border project's plans.²⁴ Responsibilities for border cultural agents were varied and ranged from recommending new classes and shaping school curricula to modernizing schools, libraries and sponsoring cultural events. Ordinarily these events glorified Trujillo and his accomplishments, such as the Dominicanization of the border, while always distancing the nation from Haiti and Haitian culture. In one letter, Marrero Aristy displays this notion of separation during an exhibition of a Dominican Tradition and Art event. He denounced any Haitian influence on the musical genre of Dominican Merengue, writing that in "Cuba and the United States there is presently a rumor (of Haitian origin) spreading that our most characteristic [music] (the Merengue) comes from the neighboring country, a fallacy most ably crafted to damage our artistic prestige."²⁵

Aristy, like his other counterparts, wrote newspaper articles that espoused the Dominicanization of the border. His role as a government state bureaucrat and

²³ "The Executive Power has named Ramón Marrero Aristy Border Cultural Agent in Elias Pina and will depend on this Secretary [of Education]. His jurisdiction will comprise the provinces of Benefactor, San Rafael, Libertador." See Sec. Edu. Leg. 1591 exp.9, July 7, 1943. AGN. Freddy Prestol Castillo was another border agent who later became famous for writing the now classic *El masacre se pasa a pie*. (Santo Domingo: Biblioteca Taller, 1973), the fictional and problematic account of his border experiences during the 1937 Haitian Massacre.

²⁴ Aristy was installed in the office of Inspección de Instrucción Pública del Distrito Escolar No.7 A de Elías Piñas-Bánica y Pedro Santana. See Sec. Educ. 1547-B exp.29, August 17, 1943. AGN. These Border Cultural Agents also collected pedagogical booklets and distributed them to poor school children in their sectors. See *Ecos de Cachimán*, Dec. 1947, #1.

²⁵ See Sec. Educ. Leg. 1743 exp.12, April 24, 1944. AGN. During this event, Aristy listed several types of Dominican musical dances including Pambiche, Mangulina, Carabiné, and Palos or Atabales, which at times "have a marked African influence."

government intellectual was to promote the policy of separation and difference between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The message was clear: keep Haitians out. “And it has been this solitude the cause which today there is an outcry in the face of the distressing [Haitian] problem for the creation of a human barrier. Something like a racial dam rose before the shady threat of absorption that we Dominicans have felt suspended over our heads for centuries. A human barrier! An impenetrable barrier!”²⁶ Cultural agents in the border also could propose new books for the schools. Marrero Aristy himself had sent a proposal to the government for the introduction of a new booklet about Dominican national history to be distributed throughout the border schools.²⁷

Language was another cultural strategy to Dominicanize the nation. Whether it was to increase relations with the United States or Brazil is not certain but there was a movement in the Dominican schools to teach both English and Portuguese as a second language. Yet these two languages were far less relevant in the lives of average Dominicans, especially those in the border, than Haitian Kreyol.²⁸ In other countries that shared borders, people were bilingual in each other’s languages and this often allowed for a more fluid exchange between countries. In Trujillo’s Dominican Republic, Kreyol was synonymous with retrograde culture and spoken by a “barbarous” people who had, on several occasions, unsuccessfully invaded Dominican territory. Dominicans along the border were not only expected to speak Spanish well and abstain from speaking Kreyol, but they were also expected to be cultured citizens.

How did border Dominicans learn to absorb the Dominicanization project’s propaganda? Through several institutions, such as the cultural border agents, secretary of education, and the Dominican Party, Dominicans were exposed to educational programs

²⁶ Ramón Marrero Aristy, *La Nación* Dec. 12, 1943, pg.3.

²⁷ Sec. Educ. Leg.1547B exp.29 August 2, 1943. AGN. At this time Marrero Aristy was stationed in Elías Piña.

²⁸ Ibid. “With the recommendation of taking the necessary measures for the good progress of the Portuguese booklet that functions in this city under the direction of José Almoina.” Letter from Sec. of Education Garrido to the Southern Department’s Superintendent of Teaching.

and cultural events intended to transform them into urbane citizens like their counterparts back in Santo Domingo. Border agents, like farmers planting seeds, traveled across their provincial jurisdictions distributing books, inaugurating events, and spreading the word of Trujillo's border project. An example of this state educational proselytization was when one border cultural agent had distributed "8 Moral and Civic booklets in the province [and] 994 diagrams of the 'Trinitarians' Oath.'" ²⁹

Those Dominicans who secretly conspired against the Haitian unification of the island and declared independence in 1844 originally recited the Trinitarian oath. The dissemination of the oath aimed to instill patriotism for the nation in border residents and to remind them that the oath represented a declaration of separation and difference from Haiti. In distributing these booklets, state officials hoped to transform the way border residents viewed themselves in relation to the state and to Haiti.

Transforming border residents into civic-minded and town dwelling citizens also meant exposing them to government-sponsored events aimed at their cultural formation. In many border towns, the central square, usually a park was the site of meetings and concerts to draw many listeners. These concert events were conducted to create a sense of a Dominican community in the border, where patriotic songs like the national anthem was played and people sang in Spanish. ³⁰ Like the music classes and musical academies, in the border, border officials to connect the border with Santo Domingo also utilized musical bands. Border residents did not have to leave the border to experience the extracurricular activities like concerts that were associated with the more urban city dwellers in the capital. It was very important to have a local musical band because it showed that the town was progressive and modern. In Elías Piña, town officials were very

²⁹ This information was taken from the minutes of one of the countless weekly meetings held on Saturdays with the local authorities of the province of San Rafael. See Sec. Interior y Police in Provincia San Rafael 6/15-2, Dec. 10, 1945. AGN.

³⁰ "Concert in the Park, José Trujillo Valdéz, dedicated to the students in general, who will sing in chorus and the national anthem." See Sec. Interior y Policía 2/26-1, Día de la Independencia en Elías Piña, Provincia San Rafael, Feb. 25, 1946. AGN.

aware of the status that an orchestral band brought to a town. They recruited musicians from other parts of the Dominican Republic who usually played patriotic marches and as well as the obligatory national anthem during national and religious activities. The Provincial Governor of Elías Piña, Francisco Matos, was aware of this when he took steps so that “with the municipality’s appropriation, or in its budget, to secure the services of eight or ten musicians that I could attract from Baní as soon as possible.”³¹

At other times, musical bands existed but produced no music. A case in point is the small town of Bánica in the northwestern border, which claimed to have a musical band; however, as one visiting official pointed out in frustration, its existence was useless because there were no instruments, because the town officials, who had enough money in their budget, failed to buy any.³² Throughout the 1940s, a proliferation of pianos and musical academies sprang up throughout the border in response to Trujillo’s Dominicanization plan. The Director of the National Conservatory, Juan Francisco García, wrote to the Secretary of Education, saying that in “every school there should be a good piano and be tuned every three months and a music professor who directs the chorus.”³³

Public school libraries and celebratory books on Trujillo were not the only things used to create or recreate the imagined Dominican nation on the border. Border culture agents, the Inspector’s Public Office of Instructors, and the Partido Dominicano (Dominican Party) were all instrumental in seeing that the border became “civilized” through different cultural programs.³⁴ One such program was the government’s interest in increasing the musical levels of border residents. Bringing music to the border was not

³¹ Sec. Educ. Leg.1547 exp.25, Feb.9, 1943. AGN. Letter was written to Secretary of Education Victor Garrido.

³² Sec. Interior y Policía 6/15-18, July 11, 1945. AGN.

³³ Plan de enseñanza musical para las escuelas fronterizas, June 1, 1999. Sec. Educ. Leg.1744, exp.1. AGN.

³⁴ “Conferences: there is no week that goes by without the celebration of some type of political activity. Now there is added the cultural lectures that the Cultural Border Agent holds.” Informe, See Sec. Educ. Leg.1621, 1943, pg.5. AGN.

cheap, and the long journey for pianos from Santo Domingo to the frontier was arduous. Delivering an instrument as delicate as a piano to the border was made considerably more difficult by the absence of railroads and good paved road between regions and towns.³⁵ According to one government statistic, the cost of several pianos and transportation to the border reached the staggering sum of \$12,500 pesos.³⁶

Music, particularly through the grand European instrument associated with Chopin, Mozart and Rachmaninoff, and the musical academies, symbolized European culture and modernity in a region viewed as heavily influenced by Haitians. Through music schools, concepts such as Dominican patriotism (as in the national anthem), religion (Catholic hymns), and popular songs (stories of the ancestors) were easy to grasp and internalize through melody.³⁷ By the mid 1940s, there were already at least ten musical border academies, each with their own resident director.³⁸

When it was not the marching bands at the town square, there were art exhibitions that were presented at various towns throughout the border. Often, and at times in conjunction with the border cultural agent, the Dominican Party was influential in organizing these events: "One of the services that the Dominican Party lends to the Dominicanization of the border consists in the distribution of a great number of booklets elaborated especially for the teaching of adults, the creation of libraries and the

³⁵ "Inconvenient road is not finished for the fast transportation of piano corresponding to the Hondo Valle's Academy of Music." See Sec. Educ. Leg.1651 exp.2. Oct. 19, 1944. AGN.

³⁶ Sec. Educ. Leg.1758, exp.10. April 8, 1944. AGN.

³⁷ As Enrique Rivas Escoto, President of the Dominican Party branch in Restauración, said, Trujillo created "these music academies in all the border towns, endowing them with the necessary instruments for the diffusion of culture in these regions which in other times were neglected, a work that complements his grandiose work of Dominicanizing the border." See Archivo de Trujillo, Restauración Archivo A-1 exp.71 Partido Dominicano, Junta Comunal, April 2, 1954. AGN.

³⁸ See Sec. Educ. Leg.1746 Feb. 2, 1944. AGN. Monthly costs paid by the state for the Dajabón academy of music was \$40.00 pesos. See Sec. Educ. Leg.5 exp.1, Cronológicas de oficios Jan/Feb. Feb. 13, 1943. Moreover, by the mid-1940s, the Dominican government had created five official positions for Choral Masters in the border, each earning \$60.00 pesos a month. See Letter from Secretary of Education Telesforo R. Calderón to Inspectors's Office of Public Instruction, Sec. Educ. Leg.1742, March 14, 1944. AGN.

organization of cultural acts, patriotic conferences and artistic expositions.”³⁹

Indeed, the Dominican Party was an integral institution that carried out the state’s border project. For the most part, because the Dominican Party was a political party, it organized political events. More often than not, events were held at party headquarters, either receiving an out-of-town politician and/or coordinating political and cultural conferences.⁴⁰ For example, the Dominican Party was known to organize and sponsor cultural activities in border towns that were aimed at exposing border residents to the arts. “On the 14th of May in this city the Traveling Exposition of Paintings opened, which traveled the South and Northwest region of the Republic, having taken the appropriate measures together with the Dominican Party’s Communal Junta to provide a locale and all that is necessary for its installation.”⁴¹ As the only political party during Trujillo’s regime, the Dominican Party wielded tremendous power and influence across the country. It had chapters in all the towns, and every adult was required to carry on his person a copy of his membership card stating that he belonged to the organization.

The Dominican Party card was part of a mandatory triad set of ID cards that each citizen (basically men) had to carry at all times. The other two cards were the national identity card or *cédula*, and last card that confirmed one’s participation in the Obligatory Military Service or *Servicio Militar Obligatorio*.⁴² Combined, these three identification cards were called *los tres golpes* (the three hits) that the military and police frequently demanded to see from citizens to maintain control of the population. There was a

³⁹ Manuel A. Machado Báez, *La Dominicanización fronteriza*, pg.239.

⁴⁰ See *Ecos de Cachimán* No.20, Oct. 1949, pg.1.

⁴¹ See Sec. Interior y Policía 6/15-34. AGN. Informe que de las labores realizadas durante el segundo trimestre del año 1945. Rinde la gobernación provincial de San Rafael a la Secretaría de Interior y Policía.

⁴² The national identity card was created soon after Trujillo seized power. In 1931 the Dominican Congress passed law No. 247 which created the Personal Identity Card, which “required all Dominicans older than sixteen years of age to carry this document which was obtained through the payment of one dollar.” See Franklin J. Franco *Historia del pueblo dominicano* Vol.II. (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1992), 510. One sixty-nine-year-old respondent, Luis Feliz Polanco, who is now blind, recalled his days in the Service by reciting, nearly fifty years after his training sessions, the thirteen points that each member of the Obligatory Military Service had to memorize. Video interview with Luis Feliz Polanco, born in Paraíso in Barahona, and residing today in a senior citizen’s home in Neiba. June, 1999.

resounding acknowledgement from the majority of the elderly persons I spoke with that most adults carried these documents wherever they traveled. These official documents were part of a larger state project of indoctrination that sought to control movement of citizens with the nation and monitor their actions.

By sponsoring and organizing political and cultural events, the Dominican Party created a space where border residents could meet and interact with each other while they absorbed their weekly or monthly ideological propaganda usually Trujillo's border accomplishments. The Dominican youth of the border also actively participated in the organization of these events. One example is the Juventud Trujillista (The Trujillo Youth Party) in the border province of Libertador. The Youth Party collaborated with the municipal government to hold:

An interesting political act in the Halls of the Dominican Party with the assistance of a selected audience with intentions of making the necessary agreements for the celebration of an uproarious political manifestation the first day of January to decidedly endorse the Dominicanization border project that is triumphantly carried out by the Distinguished Supreme Chief Generalísimo Trujillo.⁴³

Dominican youth was not the only segment of the population being used by the state to increase its support. At this time, the government, in an attempt to democratize its party, allowed some women to participate actively in politics. Whether it was decorative or not the Partido Trujillista (The Trujillo Party: a smaller party within the larger Dominican Party) had a female section with a woman president named Estela R. de Jiménez.⁴⁴

Dominicanizing the border also meant certain highbrow notions of culture of transforming the border to reflect the modernity of the capital Santo Domingo. In Dajabón, the Dominicanization of the border prompted one provincial governor with the

⁴³ Letter from Anselmo A. Paulino Alvarez, Provincial Governor to Sec. of Interior y Policia. See Partes Diarios Leg.4-144, Nov.30, 1942. AGN.

⁴⁴ See Sec. Educ. Leg.1650 exp.11, April 5, 1944. AGN.

assistance of the Catholic Church, to install what he called a:

Cultural and recreative center where the ladies and gentlemen could meet, inspired in an ideal of progress and culture being born there the 13th day of December, the Casino Generalísimo Trujillo, comprised of one hundred and four members... To this cultural work is joined... most splendidly by the Catholic Border mission which cannot be more transcendental and efficient.⁴⁵

The need for books and the construction of libraries throughout the border was also a critical component of Trujillo's Dominicanization plan. In many cases, border agents worked in conjunction with the Office of Inspector of Public Instruction with the goal of "endowing all the district schools with small libraries with books, magazines and pamphlets by soliciting altruistic persons and friends of the work of education."⁴⁶ During the 1940s, the Dominican border region experienced a significant increase in the number of libraries that were constructed. Some were public libraries constructed and then distributed by the government, sometimes personally by Trujillo, to small border towns and municipalities.⁴⁷ But most often in the border many of these new libraries were school libraries created for the education of young students. There were children's libraries constructed within primary schools, which only went as far as the fourth grade.⁴⁸

For Trujillo, books represented progress and enlightenment in a region, which was seen as illiterate and backward. Libraries could link Dominicans from all parts of the Republic; especially border residents, because they now could form part of the literate nation. Government officials understood this when donating books to the libraries,

⁴⁵See Comisión especial del gobierno de Dajabón, Oct. 1946. Informe trimestral correspondiente a Oct., Nov., y Dic. 1940. AGN.

⁴⁶Sec. Educ. Leg. 1641 exp. 9, May 8, 1944 School District #74, Elías Piña, San Rafael Province. AGN.

⁴⁷"Installation of public library donated by the generous disposition of the Honorable President Trujillo to the town of Neiba." Sec. Educ. Leg. 1757 exp. 15. 1944. AGN.

⁴⁸In this particular school, every grade had a library and "one small museum of indigenous, historical and instruction subjects. Very useful things for the teacher." See Acta de Reunión 20 de Julio 1940. Informe Trimestral Correspondiente a julio, agosto y septiembre, Comisionado especial del gobierno de Dajabón, Leg. 40. Oct. 1946. AGN.

especially those in the border, and explained why they donated certain books. Thus it was no surprise that many of these donated books glorified Trujillo and his role as the nation's savior along with Dominican independence from Haiti.⁴⁹ The state utilized elementary school books to instill loyalty among children. Like Nazi youth, young Dominican children were also taught to report any anti-Trujillo activities, even about their parents.⁵⁰

If the government was not sending pianos to the border, it was technology that it used to draw this region closer to the capital. An example of this was the Dominican government's desire to have a border school receive a radio so that the children would not miss the country's latest news and developments emanating from Santo Domingo. According to one official, Trujillo "considered that it is of patriotic interest and civilization that the Jimaní school should be provided radio with batteries...so that the students of this school could get a sense of the national life during hours that do not conflict with their schoolwork."⁵¹

The objective of the border project was more than school children listening to Santo Domingo radio broadcasts or learning to play the piano. Incorporating the border region was an attempt, using Dominican state institutions through the Spanish language, to transform residents into new Dominican citizens, despite the fact that border residents were historically accustomed to a more autonomous existence and less of a state presence. Haitian Kreyol, the accepted lingua franca of the border was now disdained by the government and relegated as a being a "dialect" inconsistent with the state's new definition of national identity. The state feared that bilingual border residents would be

⁴⁹ Among the donated books going to Elías Piña were *Cartilla Cívica*; *Historia de Santo Domingo*; *Trujillo, primer maestro de la república*; *Biografía del generalísimo*; *El condor bajo los cielos de América*; *La independencia efímera*; *La conspiración de los Alcarrizos*; *Pensamientos a Trujillo*; *La personalidad integral de Trujillo*; *Del lenguaje dominicano*; and *Poesía popular dominicano*. See Sec. Educ. Leg.1557 exp.5, June 20, 1943. AGN.

⁵⁰ Daniel Charles Spitzer, "A Contemporary Political and Socio-Economic History of Haiti and the Dominican Republic," Ph.D. diss University of Michigan, 1974, 383. Spitzer writes that indoctrination also extended into higher education. University professors had to be members of Trujillo's Partido Dominicano.

⁵¹ Sec. Educ. Leg.1547 exp.8, May 7, 1943. AGN.

less patriotic and more hesitant to accept centralized authority from Santo Domingo. This was an underlying factor that accelerated the development of border schools. According to one government magazine's editorial praising Trujillo: "From there the great number of school-homes that were built, by your arrangements even in the most distant places far from the great urban centers and your farsighted measured wisdom to impede the corruption of the language and the national customs through a new type of schools situated in the same place where your creation was carried out in the border."⁵²

Within the state incorporation of the border, there was also a push to elevate the levels of hygiene and sanitation. Aiding the "sick" Dominican body became an important project for the Trujillo government on the national level. For the state, the border became the most important part of the diseased body, which needed special attention and care. Here, like other parts of the country but within the ever-so-complex dynamic of the border, the government began to promote health education by visiting people in the countryside and administering vaccinations and public information on documenting diseases.

Incorporating the border region into the expanding and modern nation also entailed that the medical problems of Dominican border residents be addressed. In addition to the construction of schools, Trujillo's border project underscored the importance of hygiene and raising sanitary conditions throughout the border region. One way of insuring better health was the state's pre-marital medical examination, utilized as a practical method for reducing disease and defects among children. According to the government: "The care of the child in the Dominican Republic begins much before its conception: an ample medical exam and a certificate of good health are indispensable to every contributor as a prenuptial requisite."⁵³ The goal was to have healthy citizens throughout the nation, and this meant trying to decrease the infant mortality rate through

⁵² See *Revista de Educación* "La política educativa de Trujillo, Year: X, Nov.-Dec., No.48, 1938, pg.6.

⁵³ Sec. Educ. Leg.1828 exp.6. AGN.

various health programs. Like other Latin American nations at the time, the Dominican government implemented sanitary programs to improve the health of its citizens. To reduce the risks of future hereditary “racial degenerations” in the unborn, the state implemented a series of sanitary programs to improve the nation.⁵⁴ According to the government’s own propaganda, “today the Dominican child is born not only alive and viable in the classic legal demands but also healthy in the strict sense of eugenics.”⁵⁵

Undoubtedly the border’s impoverished conditions and remote location made health issues in this region represented more of challenge vis-à-vis other parts of the republic. The Dominican government made every effort to invest money and labor into the border to fulfill its goal of bringing progress to this dry and extremely hot region. But it was a difficult task. This difficulty is reflected in the government’s attempt at recruiting doctors to work in the border. According to a letter from Dr. L.F. Thomen, Secretary of Health and Public Assistance, to Governor Joaquín Garrido Puello of San Rafael province, the government was willing to send

Medicines to the border places with a quota superior to that of other places, having also special care in choosing to cover the positions of that region the most apt personnel that could be made available, we find ourselves, however, with the grave inconvenience of the doctors’ scant interest in lending their services in some of the posts of that sector.⁵⁶

Many Dominican doctors, obviously were not excited at practicing in one of the

⁵⁴ See Nancy Leys Stepan’s *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 101.

⁵⁵ Sec. Educ. Leg. 1828 exp. 6. Although the Dominican state did provide medical services to Dominicans in the countryside, it failed to completely eliminate mortality for maternal post-labor. My mother, who grew up during the Trujillo years still remembers hearing of many women in the countryside who seemed fine after delivering their babies but died soon after. In isolated hamlets, there was usually a woman who she says, “was brave enough” to assist in the delivery. A study on infant mortality rates during Trujillo’s years could help us understand if, indeed, his health programs had an impact on border and rural populations.

⁵⁶ Sec. Interior y Policía 6/15-39 August 1, 1945. AGN. Dr. Thommen goes on to say that several medical posts were vacant in provinces like Bahoruco and Barahona, which “until this date we have not been able to send a doctor to Bánica whose assignment has for a long time been figured into our budget.”

Dominican Republic's most inhospitable and depopulated regions. One government official grasped the irony of trying to bring health to a region where the land was uninhabited. He writes, "The state of sanitation is good not because of a lack of diseases, but for the lack of human beings, a lack of settlers. All that is immense is waste lands."⁵⁷ In other words, despite the government's propaganda trumpeting the border as a flourishing economic, social, and political region, on the ground many Dominicans were not convinced.

The poor condition of the border residents' dwellings was also a target of the new health policies along the border. These dwellings, constructed from wood, with palm tree roofs and dirt floors, were a preoccupation for officials, who viewed these homes as an ideal environment for disease. In Elias Pina:

Hygienic conditions of the majority of the houses are poor; all of this makes an alarming situation in most of the tenants...In my observations, I have been able to see that many farms and houses are in very bad condition and in the main streets, which gives a bad image above all in this city, which receives daily foreign visitors [among them Haitians] who come to touch and feel up close the gigantic work of this border's reconstruction, initiated and brought to a happy conclusion by our Excellency [Trujillo].⁵⁸

In schools, officials found the ideal conduit to disseminate knowledge to its citizenry on better hygiene and public health. More than a place where Dominicans could learn reading, writing and arithmetic, or become cultured through piano class, schools

⁵⁷ Acta de Reunión Sabatina de Funcionarios de la Común Cabecera de Dajabón. Leg.40 Informe Trimestral Correspondiente a Enero, Febrero, y Marzo. Feb. 10, 1940. AGN.

⁵⁸ Sec. Interior y Policía, Letter from Sec. of the Presidency to the Sec. of Interior y Police Rafael F. Bonnelly, Leg.21, exp.4/85, Sept. 7, 1945. AGN.

became the site where children in the border, for the first time, received medical attention and prevention. The Colegio de San Ignacio de Loyola in Dajabón was at the forefront of the Dominicanization of the border. Founded by Jesuits and run by a Spanish priest named Father Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the school became a model for educating students and farmers on the importance of personal hygiene and productive agricultural methods. The school did not charge its students, who were between 12 and 16, and were interned on the school grounds. The children wrote to their parents weekly. A report by father Santa Anna shows not only the measures taken to promote public health measures along the border, but also offers us a partial glimpse of daily life in this border school:

Believing that in order to obtain good students and good agriculturalists, before anything, it is necessary to have a healthy and strong body since the first day we have placed major concern on hygiene and physical education, a necessity in this region in which the children appear undernourished. With this end, we have adopted the following measures: healthy and abundant food and varied if possible; water of recognized potable conditions; daily gymnasium; soon mosquito nets will be installed in the dormitories like an essential prophylactic against the endemic malaria; all have been treated by the orthodontist who has extracted the cavities; they bathe daily or take a shower; as a recreational trip and at the same time instructional Sundays, we use the truck provided courteously by that Ministry so that the students could have an excursion to the coast or to the agrarian colonies or to other places of interest.⁵⁹

If Dominican officials at this time were overly concerned with the hygiene of border residents they were as equally preoccupied with the health of the Dominican body. In Dominicanizing the border, government officials confronted many challenges dealing with public health issues. There were vaccination campaigns in border schools aimed at limiting the spread of disease in school-age children. At the Loyola school in Dajabón,

⁵⁹ Sec. Agricultura, Leg.51 Bis, March 26, 1946. AGN. Although, comparatively speaking, these schools were modern, most, like the Escuela Mixta Graduada (Mixed Graduate School) in Elías Piña, had latrines instead of toilet bowls. See Sec. Educ. Leg. 1595 exp.5. AGN.

vaccinations shots for antitífica (anti-typhoid) and antivariolosa (anti-small-pox) were given, while one child was hospitalized for typhoid after he contracted it during a visit back home with his parents.⁶⁰ Vaccination campaigns were conducted throughout border schools in the hopes of limiting particular diseases that plagued the region. Health officials administered either in the schools or outside of them vaccination shots. These were usually representatives from the Health Brigade department, who visited remote locations to meet and to treat people who were beyond the reach of hospitals, clinics or medicine.⁶¹

Many of the border residents were afflicted with a number of diseases and ailments. These maladies were diverse and often ranged from common ulcers to sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis. Not surprisingly, the military experienced high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Being alone and far away from highly populated centers, Dominican soldiers participated in the developing prostitution economy of the border. In fact many of these soldiers contracted syphilis and a host of other diseases like anemia and sinusitis.⁶²

In its quest to bring for greater state control, the Dominican government kept many records even of sick campesinos that lived near a particular border town. These documents contain valuable information on border life during this period and reveal the various diseases confronted by these people at the time. These *informes* or reports contained the person's age, town or hamlet, ailments, number of schools in his locality, and proximity to the territorial boundary. According to the documents, many of these Dominicans suffered from bocio (goiter), tracoma (eye infection), tubercula

⁶⁰ Ibid. May 1947. "There is currently taking place a vaccination campaign of infantile diphtheria in this city [Dajabón] and 'La Vigía', 'Libertador', and 'Capotillo' Colonies." See "Actividades de la oficina sanitaria provincial," in *Beller*, May 22, 1953.

⁶¹ Letter from Dr. Julio A. Isidor S., Provincial Health Doctor, to Secretary of Education. See Sec. Educ. Leg. 1570 exp.5, June 8, 1943. AGN.

⁶² Report from Office of the Medical Dispensary of the 23rd Army Co. in Loma de Cabrera. See EN Leg. 293 exp.32, 1939. AGN.

(tuberculosis), rampano (ulcer), and malaria. No information is given either on treatment or on mortality rates. The document also lists whether or not these villages used latrines.⁶³ If the state promoted the cleansing of the physical border and the corporal diseases that afflicted border residents, it was the Catholic Church whose role it was to clean its soul.

The Catholic Church and the Border

The Catholic Church and its role as a religious and cultural institution became a strategic partner in consolidating the nation creating patriotic Catholic Christian citizens particularly along the border. The church, along with priests and pianos, was to promote the religious aspect of Dominicanizing the border. Under Trujillo, the Catholic Church's spiritual role on the border began with the mission in Dajabón. This mission was established in 1936 under the direction of the Jesuit Order. By August 8, 1936, a year before the fatal massacre of thousands of Haitians, the Jesuit mission was established in the northwest, and its authority stretched from Restauración to Copey.⁶⁴ The mission was established to increase the power of the church in what was considered a "pagan" (read Haitian) region, as well as to educate its children through the instruction of priests.

The mission, along with its church, expanded into two schools named the *Instituto Agronómico San Ignacio de Loyola* and the *Colegio la Altagracia*.⁶⁵ The school,

⁶³ Informes de la Sección de la Común de Bánica, Elías Piña, San Rafael y del el Gobernador Nestor Febles: Informe de Campesinos: Sección Guroa, Bánica. Sec. Educ. Leg. 1571 exp.12, Nov. 8, 1943. AGN. In the tradition of the Orwellian state and authoritarian dictatorships, the report also contains a category for those who had a picture of Trujillo in a visible place in their house. Not surprisingly, everyone's house contained a picture of Trujillo.

⁶⁴ *Misión fronteriza apuntes históricos sobre la misión fronteriza de San Ignacio de Loyola por los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús 1936-1957*. (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora "Arte y Cine," 1958), pg.21. This book was written by one of the mission's founders to commemorate the presence of the Catholic border mission in Dajabón.

⁶⁵ Sec. Educ. Leg.1572 exp.5, Oct. 20, 1943. AGN. In 1943 a *colegio* was installed in Dajabón, but supervised by Catholic religious sisters. Although the documents fail to mention the name of the school, it is mostly likely the *Colegio Altagracia* since the *Instituto Agronómico San Ignacio de Loyola* was already established at the time of the Jesuits' arrival in 1936.

in the Jesuit tradition, was self-sufficient, in that the government had provided the mission with enough land to grow their own crops. Here students from the outlying rural areas worked, studied, and learned with and from the Jesuit Fathers. The mission, aside from its religious obligations, provided its students with a host of activities ranging from health, sports, and culture.⁶⁶

Under the leadership of Father Santa Anna, a Spaniard, the mission was used as a base to send out priests throughout the surrounding areas. The apparent contradiction of an international religious institution such as the Catholic Church leading a nationalistic crusade to Dominicanize the border did not matter to Trujillo. For the state, the priority was to Catholicize the border through the Spanish language so as to decrease the Haitian presence and influence along the border. Thus as one Dominican border newspaper recalled: "The missionaries, with interesting and fixed itineraries, cover the distance of all the [Libertador] province celebrating the holy mass, confessing people, assisting the very sick, baptizing and marrying."⁶⁷ In an interview with Sabina Ulloa, daughter of Santa Anna's former assistant and personal mule handler, Jorge Ulloa, she said that the Jesuit father personally went to remote villages and held mass monthly. Since many localities lacked a church, mass was given by the visiting priest only once a month instead of weekly. According to Sabina, during the 1940s her father accompanied Father Santa Anna on his many ministerial trips. "He (Jorge Ulloa) was a man that always carried the cornet when Father Santa Anna arrived anywhere he was going to give mass...They went to a small hill and played the cornet so that the people could know that he now was going to give mass."⁶⁸ Sabina remembers that during her childhood masses were conducted half in Latin and half in Spanish. She recalled seeing Father Santa Anna participating in yearly

⁶⁶ See "La mision fronteriza de Dajabón-Libertador," *Beller*, Feb.25, 1952, pg.2. In the documents I examined, I was unable to find a figure showing numerical student enrollment for the school.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview with Sabina Ulloa in Barrio las Flores near the towns of Loma de Cabrera and Capotillo on Jan. 22, 1999.

street processions marking particular religious holidays, such as Holy Week and Easter, and as also being a strict adherent to Catholic orthodoxy.⁶⁹ But despite the Church's benign role in conducting baptisms and marriages in isolated rural areas it also played a palpable role in perpetuating the anti-Haitianism that comprised this border project. This official complicity was evident from the church's deafening silence as it and the Jesuits of the border mission failed to protest publicly against the genocidal killings that occurred in 1937.⁷⁰ Their silence makes them accomplices to the criminal act perpetrated by the state and just as guilty.

Much like the Catholic Church during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, the Dominican Church's refusal to condemn the Haitian Massacre, while collaborating with the government to seek a settlement (through the Papal Nuncio) with Haiti, is shameful.⁷¹ In addition, the Church's muteness concerning the massacre and its tolerance of such violent acts of anti-Haitianism is revealed in one of their publications documenting their presence in the border. The Jesuit author writes that:

Trujillo observed, with vigilant gaze, that the Frontier border was losing its national features. The invading presence of Haitian people with unwelcome language, foreign money, exotic customs, religious rites of Vodou and Protestants, was undermining, little by little, this bulwark of the Fatherland, and was converting it into a dangerous beachhead.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid. During these public activities The mission also collaborated with other institutions such as city hall, the fire department, and the armed forces in sponsoring religious celebrations. See Dajabón's *Beller*, Dec. 20, 1952, #39 IV.

⁷⁰ The Vatican must have known about the massacre since the Haitian bishop of Cap Haitien told President Vincent of the carnage. "My opinion is that in the relatively small region that surrounds Juana Méndez no less than 3,000 Haitians have been assassinated." See Bernardo Vega, *Trujillo y Haití (1937-1938)* Vol.II. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1995), pg.74.

⁷¹ Further research is needed to document the extent of the Church's response in Haiti to the massacre. Did priests in Haiti denounce the massacre in their sermons? Did they protest to their superiors? Did these superiors, i.e. bishops in Haiti, in turn, protest to the Vatican?

⁷² Taken from *Misión fronteriza apuntes históricos sobre la misión fronteriza de San Ignacio de Loyola dirigida por los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús, 1936-1957*. See William Louis Wipfler. Power, Influence, and Impotence: The Church as a Socio-Political Factor in the Dominican Republic. Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, Ph.D. diss., 1978, pg.136. To this day the Dominican Catholic Church has not publicly apologized for its silence during the massacre, even in the face of world

The government was well aware of the Church's value to its plans along the border. Consequently, state and religious institutions such as the army and the church worked together seeking to fulfill mutual goals. One example of this is how army chaplains traveled throughout border towns to perform religious rites, such as confessions, otherwise missed by rural people living in very isolated areas. In their quest to Dominicanize the border from as many angles as possible, the military ordered its army chaplains to travel the border area and spread the word of God, but with an underlying nationalistic and propagandistic subtext. Trujillo's brother Hector, who was Secretary of War, and carried out, by the Army's General of Brigade gave the orders:

The army chaplains should celebrate incessantly all of their priestly acts: baptisms, mass, novenas, sermons, religious classes; they should promote the formation of religious associations and brotherhoods; they should preferably wear their priestly robes; in their sermons they should comment and in their conversations with the residents of those places, the importance of all the measures that within the redeeming policy that the Most Excellent President Trujillo directs, to see that in those places agriculture, industry, and commerce will prosper and that the endemic diseases disappear, and that schools will multiply and in general the well-being and progress that characterize the Trujillo Era can be reached.⁷³

In their mission throughout the border, two army chaplains, First Lieutenants Carlos T. Bobadilla U. and Eulogio González Salazar, administered baptisms to both boys and girls, and presided over countless of marriages. Interestingly enough, the army chaplains did not just limit themselves to religious proselytization. Their message was also part of the larger objective to convert Dominican residents into being "Dominican" according to Trujillo's government. The report notes: "Our preaching was constant, we

events such as the French Church apologizing for its role in the Vichy government and as cases of human rights abuses abound and continue to increase in the Dominican Republic, particularly directed at Haitians.

⁷³ EN Leg.46 exp.101. Feb. 12, 1943. AGN.

did not limit ourselves only to religious preaching, indoctrinating the people in the sacred principles of the moral gospel; but we also utilized a systematic preaching of prudent advice in the patriotic, in the political, in the health and even in the agricultural [realm].”⁷⁴

Despite the enormous task being undertaken by the state government, hand in hand with the church, to Dominicanize its border residents, the Haitian presence remained strong and its cultural and religious influence over the region was profound. This presence along the border did not escape the chaplains’ observations and final report. Under the heading of “superstition” the chaplains observed that:

It is very frequent and somewhat entrenched in the border campesino and even in some of the inhabitants of the population to give credit to the ridiculous beliefs emanating from the Haitians, such is the case with the men. They never or almost never give their real names when they are asked; they use more than two or more names and, according to them, they do this so as not to be sold to the *Alcagé* if they give their real names, and with the power according to them practiced by the bad spirits or geniuses who they call *Sombi*.⁷⁵

Supporting Trujillo on his Dominicanization border project, however, was not just limited to priests on the local level. The Dominican government also recruited high-ranking members of the church to promote its border project. One example was Monseñor Ricardo Pittini, the Archbishop of Santo Domingo. Pittini, who must have known about the atrocities committed against Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent during the 1937 massacre, embraced Trujillo’s project. Five years after the massacre, Pittini traveled to the region where Haitians were assassinated in veritable killing fields. Writing to his superiors in Santo Domingo, one government official who

⁷⁴Ibid. Report written by First Lieutenants Chaplain Carlos T. Bobadilla U. and Eulogio González Salazar in Elias Pina to Commander of the Northwest Department, April 12, 1943. pg.2. The chaplains administered 10,481 baptisms, 88 weddings, and four burials during their visits to Pedro Santana (Cercadillo); Bánica; El Cercado; Hondo Valle; and Las Matas de Farfán.

⁷⁵Ibid. pg.3.

hosted Pittini's reception wrote that the people of the border town of Dajabón:

Received with full religious patriotic joy the holy pastoral visit of the Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Santo Domingo, Monsignor Ricardo Pittini, who immediately after arriving preached in clear, precise, and eloquent form about the Dominicanization of the border with the neighboring country of Haiti, which is being happily carried out and with healthy results by the Excellent and First Citizen of the Homeland, the Honorable President Trujillo.⁷⁶

The archbishop's presence in the border not only represented the union between Church and State in Dominicanizing this region. It also served to solidify its presence as the legitimate religion throughout the border and the nation. It was partly due to this reason that drew Archbishop Pittini to the border to increase the numbers of Catholic priests throughout the border and as a counterweight to other rival religions. Even though the government promoted Catholicism as a cultural marker of national identity, Trujillo was unable to recruit or import adequate numbers of priests to the border. Thus, as one scholar wrote, during the twentieth century the Dominican Republic "has consistently been among the three or four countries in Latin America with the least favorable ratio of priests to people."⁷⁷

In their daily lives, Dominicans had little contact with priests, and many, like those in the border, were limited to seeing priests once a month at mass or at special religious occasions. Although the Trujillo regime utilized the Catholic Church in its construction of a new border and national identity it did not play a significant role in Dominican politics. Aside from religious activities, the Catholic Church was a neutral player in its political involvement with the state. As the Basque scholar and once resident-

⁷⁶ Partes Diarios Leg.4-144. Letter from Anselmo A. Paulino Alvarez, Governor of the Libertador Province, to the Sec. of Interior and Police. Gobernación de Nov. 12, 1942. AGN.

⁷⁷ William Louis Wipfler, "Power, Influence, and Impotence: The Church as a Socio-Political Factor in the Dominican Republic," pg.139. According to Wipfler, in 1912 there was one priest to every 10,000; in 1945 th ratio decreased to 1 out of 17,300; in 1950 it dropped to 13,500 for every priest; in 1955 it was 1 for 10,500; and in 1960 11,000 to 1.

refugee Jesús de Galindez in the Dominican Republic wrote in the mid-1950s before being kidnapped and assassinated by Trujillo “the influence of the church in the public life of the Dominican Republic has been small.”⁷⁸

Despite the separation of church and state, Trujillo was so intent on defining Dominicans as “true” Catholics and transforming his country into a bastion of Roman Catholicism, that in 1954 he signed an historic agreement with the Vatican. This Concordant made Catholicism the nation’s official religion, now recognized by Rome. The Concordant required the Dominican government to construct and pay for new technical schools and Catholic churches, which the Catholic clergy would control, but the State would in the end be responsible for their salaries.⁷⁹ But Dominican citizens under Trujillo were not all Catholic and definitely not all of them were Christian. Protestant Churches, which underscored a more pastoral and less hierarchical system of educating people about their religion, led a small but growing religious movement. Although, for the most part, the Protestant minority’s right to worship was respected, it was able to make enough inroads to spark Archbishop Pittini’s wrath. The official journal of the Santo Domingo Archdiocese warned its readers about Protestantism, while simultaneously advocating a tolerant and non-violent attitude toward the non-Catholic Church: “In our campaign, which should be constant and vigilant against the propaganda of Protestantism and of the secret societies, we need to keep always Christian moderation, avoiding not only acts of violence but also expressions of rudeness and improprieties.”⁸⁰

Expressions of violence against Protestants during the Trujillo Era never reached

⁷⁸ Jesús de Galindez, *The Era of Trujillo: Dominican Dictator*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1973), pg.176. Galindez goes on to say that “Neither in the Dominican party nor in any of the other organizations has any ecclesiastical participation or doctrine of Christian inspiration been observed; neither has there been any antagonism. It would seem that the Catholic church had not been a factor in the Trujillo regime, either for good or for bad.”

⁷⁹ Ibid. pg.52.

⁸⁰ *Boletín Eclesiástico* Vol.I. No.44, 1944, pg.681. Despite the constitutional guarantees of freedom of worship there were laws, like the one passed in 1943, made it illegal to practice voodoo or lwa. See Galindez, *The Era of Trujillo*, pg.124.

the level of religious riots. Yet it was not surprising for the regime to condone a campaign of low-scale disruption by its followers in these churches. Thus, according to Protestant historian David Wayne Dyck, "it was not uncommon to have public services purposely interrupted by noise or flying objects."⁸¹ It was in Trujillo's interest to allow the Protestant presence in his country and the on border in order to project a semblance of religious equality and democracy abroad.

Despite the official propaganda that all Dominicans were Catholic and Haitians were not, the reality was quite different. Both groups practiced Catholic, Protestant, and Voudou religions. Trujillo's intelligentsia created this ideological fallacy that Haitians were not Christians. It was even obvious to officials working in Trujillo's government, who witnessed first hand the similar religious faith practiced by their neighbors. One of the weekly reports sent by a Dominican diplomat near the border in Haiti noted that Haitians were just as religious and similar in faith as Dominicans:

In terms of religion, there is here liberty for [the practice of] cults but two churches; the Catholic and the Baptist, are the ones that are most rooted. The Catholic Church has a temple of ample masonry that was constructed, according to public opinion, by the Spanish conquistadors. The Protestant Church also has a great masonry temple of the most modern construction. Seeing that the Haitian is very religious, both temples are constantly being visited by the faithful. The Catholic Church, of course, counts on a major number of followers, but the Baptist Church sees its numbers of believers grow every day.⁸²

Here is a report that basically contradicted the entire ideological underpinnings of the Dominicanization border project that identified Haitians and Dominicans as (in this

⁸¹ David Wayne Dyck, "The Missionary Church in the Dominican Republic," Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, M.A., 1975, pg.49. According to Dyck, the missionary church first arrived in the Dominican Republic in 1945. As of 1972, there were thirteen North American missionary churches in the country in Monte Cristi; Manzanillo; Dajabón; Loma de Cabrera; San Juan de La Maguana (Evangelical Mennonites); Barahona; La Isabela; Mao; Santiago; San José de Las Matas; La Vega; Cotuí; and Santo Domingo.

⁸² Weekly Report by Dominican Consul Homero Hoepelman S., in Hinche, Haiti. Sec. Relaciones Exteriores, Leg.46 exp.101, June 7, 1943. pg. 6-7. AGN.

case religiously) different from each other. It was this difference that allowed the state to define itself through exclusion. In spite of constant state ideological bombardment demonizing Haitians, Dominicans on the ground level, living on the border, knew full well that across the river there existed people who prayed and often spoke like them. The linguistic fusion was evident in one official's observations: "One of the things that has most powerfully called my attention is the fact of having found several Haitians who, without being in the Dominican Republic, speak a lot of Spanish. Some have even told me that they are Dominicans, but later I have proven their claims to be false."⁸³

The Dominican-Haitian border, like many borders, was a region where cultural fusion had taken place throughout the years. It was this amalgam of Dominican and Haitian culture, in a historically semi-autonomous region, that most threatened government intent on incorporating and controlling the entire region, even if it had to resort to genocide. But Trujillo could not simply separate the two borders, with barbed wire, as if separating the head from the trunk of the human body. Newspaper articles of the 1940s confirmed the ease with which Haitians and Dominicans in the border region continued to intermix for religious and other social events, well after the massacre:

The churches used to get congested with that [Haitian] race which carelessly invaded it with chairs and benches and the ones who ordered them were Haitian, and it was the custom of many border inhabitants to attend the patroness parties of the most closest Haitian towns and there the fathers, godfathers, and godmothers would meet to celebrate the baptisms without taking into account the future disadvantages that this could cause for their children in the future who many were by birth and blood completely Dominican.⁸⁴

The border project not only attempt to sever ties between these two groups but it

⁸³ Ibid. pg.4

⁸⁴ According to the article, this religious interconnectedness was "because of the lack in that region of parish priests, forgotten by the governments that had paraded through our history." See *La Nación* May 24, 1943. pg.3. For the concept of barbed wire as a metaphor to understanding borders see Gloria Anzuldúa's *Borderlands, la frontera: the New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

also intended to convince Dominicans, most of all those in the border, that the genocidal act of 1937 was really a struggle between Dominicans defending their property and Haitian marauders. The state used churches, schools, and agrarian colonies in an attempt to disrupt this cultural exchange and destroy it. But contrary to the traditional historiography, which paints a romantic, idyllic, and peaceful picture of a border region filled with Catholic missions and agrarian colonies, there was resistance to this state project. Although government official's often-skewed reality with their hyperbolic praise in their reports to superiors, their observations also show a different story of the border as a place where there was much resistance to state encroachment into their daily lives. Despite all the praise and optimistic reports published depicting the border as a new and golden frontier for hard-working Dominicans struggling together for the good of the nation, the state encountered its share of challenges. Among these challenges was the need for social control among border residents. The need to secure this marginal region had long been a concern of Santo Domingo elites who viewed the border as chaotic. For the Dominican government to create order, it needed an institution that could provide political stability while monitoring the civilian population to discourage dissent. This institution was the Dominican Army, whose origins date back to the US occupation, and would become one of the most important factors in colonizing and securing the border.

Since the Horacio Vásquez government, the army had been limited to small garrisons sprinkled throughout the border. Trujillo transformed the role of the army along the border. The very first year Trujillo seized the presidency; he also ordered the creation of the Guardia Fronteriza (Border Guard). On September 17, 1930, the general headquarters was established and located near the border in the town of Las Matas de Farfán.⁸⁵ Under Trujillo, the army was more than a military organization, whose purpose

⁸⁵ José Miguel Soto Jiménez, *Las fuerzas militares en la Republica Dominicana. Desde la primera Republica hasta los comienzos de la Cuarta Republica. Ensayo sobre su evolucion.* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Grupo 5, 1996). pg159. For the role of the military see Danilo de los Santos, *Visión general de la historia dominicana.* (Santiago, RD: Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, 1983); Valentina Peguero's,

was limited to national security and the monitoring of the border. It was an integral part in the colonization of the border. Its responsibilities ranged from administering public prisons and their prisoners to overseeing penal colonies and to the supervision of the new agrarian colonies established throughout the border.⁸⁶ It was the army that was in charge of monitoring penal workers on the public works projects that gave the government a free source of labor to create its vision of a new and transformed border society. This was the most visible symbol of state encroachment into the everyday lives of border residents, for the military patrols were the state instruments of surveillance. These military patrols monitored cities and small rural towns as a way to control the populace and reduce the probability of dissidence. The border was no exception, except that patrols along the border had to deal with an international boundary where the management of custom houses and monitoring of Haitian immigration was an essential priority, in a region seen as a traditional hot-bed of insurrection and anti-government conspiracy. Among the unique responsibilities that set apart the border patrols from others in the interior of the country were:

Coordinating military visits to Haitian territory and hosting Haitian military delegations to Dominican territory; reporting on Haitian forces and Haitian residents in Haiti; general activities of Haitians and vigilance of Dominican residents on the border; [monitoring] contraband of every kind; vigilance of the international highway, and [monitoring] the introduction of Haitian braceros through border places of their jurisdiction.⁸⁷

The patrols were a novel technique employed by the Trujillo dictatorship to control the population. Their role in maintaining the regime in power for so long cannot be overstated. They were the eyes and ears of the government and, through their daily,

"Trujillo and the Military: Organization and Modernization, and Control of the Dominican Armed Forces, 1916-1961," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Leg. 46 exp.101, June 14, 1943. AGN. Other responsibilities included the Army's role in facilitating the sale of tobacco and the search for pardoned prisoners who escaped the agricultural colonies.

weekly, monthly, and yearly reports, they informed Santo Domingo of each region's state of affairs. The patrols' importance is evident in a confidential letter written from one high-ranking military officer to another. In his brief communiqué, the officer writes: "If there is a service that cannot be neglected in this [military] organization and that is done regularly, it is the Patrol, as much along the Border as the sections of the Towns."⁸⁸

Dominicans came to fear the patrols because they had arbitrary power and could arrest you if they "looked" suspicious. Many border residents still vividly recall that the patrols wielded a lot of power. They were composed of army soldiers who were armed with rifles and guns.

There was another organization that monitored Dominican citizens and reported suspicious activity to the authorities. Members of this group were called *calies* (informers). These individuals could be anywhere and they were the military's eyes and ears. They were mostly male and reported anything suspicious to their superiors, who were usually police and army personnel. *Calies* were recruited from the community and represented a wide range of professions, from sharecropper to doctor.⁸⁹ This added to the fear and paranoia on the part of most Dominicans during Trujillo's reign in power to be verbally spontaneous in public. It was dangerous to be sincere and share your intimate thoughts on the current state of affairs, because anyone listening could have been a potential *calie* and inform on you. The *calie* system was an efficient network of spies whose jurisdiction spanned the entire country. Individual *calies* were designated certain towns from which to monitor and report any unusual activities.

⁸⁸ Letter from Commanding Officer of the 23rd Co. in Loma de Cabrera to Commanding Chief of the Army. See EN Leg.47 exp.101, Dec. 25, 1943. AGN. There was, according to this official, "a daily system of connections between the Company Posts and that even the Officers go out many times to see the countryside ect."

⁸⁹ At times, the identity of some of the *calies* was known to the larger community. Most being members of the Dominican party. However the *calies*' effectiveness as spies depended on their surreptitious nature. Anyone could be a *calie*. The grocer, the butcher, the young or old man standing beside you in a park. Since you could not be sure of the person's political affiliation, most Dominicans were conscious of what they said in public. This was a unique repressive tactic by the state to control potential anti-government discontent.

Although most people in a community could speculate on the identity of an informer, their identity was confidential and anonymous. Nonetheless, I found a government document with a list containing more than a dozen names and towns where government informers spied. The list is a valuable source of information because it shows the extent of spies along the border and the specific towns and places they were responsible for monitoring. Always under the orders of an army officer, *calies* had no territorial limits, even to the point of spying in Haiti. Dominicans such as Eladio Méndez, Ulises Mateo, Elias Ramón, and Alcibiades Ogando (alias Quiquí), were all government informers and all spied throughout the Dominican-Haitian border from Elias Pina, Carrizal, and Bánica to the Haitian towns of Los Cacaos and Veladero.⁹⁰

Combined, the network of spies and the visible presence of the military made it very difficult for Dominicans to either voice any anti-government sentiments or organize successful protests.⁹¹ According to Dominican intelligence reports, the lives of the people under surveillance were meticulously documented. The confidential information included suspects' names and whether they were enemies or indifferent to the government; their place of residence; close family friends and acquaintances; economic status; previous and present political affiliation; who they visited and who visited them; political antecedents; and previous conduct.⁹²

The job of the military and spy network was to root out all forms of subversive or potentially subversive behavior before it reached a collective wave of protest against the

⁹⁰ *Calie* jurisdiction also included food and clothing markets in Haitian territory. According to this document, *calies* (perhaps just those in the border) were paid \$20 pesos a month to spy on their fellow citizens. Radiogram from Commander of the Border Department Lte. Col. Fausto E. Caamaño to Army's Commander-in-Chief. See EN Leg. 46 exp.101, Feb. 24, 1943. AGN.

⁹¹ Despite the repressive censorship of the regime, there were moments of collective protest, such as the unprecedented labor strike of 1946, which stopped production in many important sugar mills in the eastern part of the Dominican Republic. As a result of the strike, salaries in the sugar industry were raised substantially but, as to be expected, the government retaliated violently against many of the labor leaders such as Mauricio Báez. See Franklin J. Franco *Historia del pueblo dominicano* II. (Santo Domingo: Instituto del Libro, 1992), pg.548.

⁹² See Reportes de Inteligencia--Datos Confidenciales, EN Leg.244 exp.59, Oct.20, 1937. AGN.

regime. Trujillo was very paranoid about anything that threatened or even questioned his authority. Indeed, his government personnel routinely interrogated people (informally and formally) with respect to subversive propaganda. In one case, two men near the border in El Cercado were arrested for possessing a photograph of Trujillo stained with red ink so “that it appeared that the author of this treasonous act wanted to give the impression that these red stains were blood sprouting from the eyes, nose, mouth, etc.”⁹³ Quite naturally, this state-induced paranoia under Trujillo to monitor its citizens spread to the calie practices which, as in many cases of spies in authoritarian regimes, were always willing to report what they believed the authorities wanted to hear.

Trujillo’s government demanded conformity from its citizens, and free thought was not welcomed. The government was sensitive to the ramifications of individuals who vented their anger in public. In the Dominican Republic of the 1940s and 50s, anyone could be arrested for the slightest thing considered subversive. For example, in the border town of Monte Cristi, two men were arrested by the police for “uttering obscene words in public and the second [man for] driving his public car with excess passengers.”⁹⁴ Many elderly Dominicans interviewed about crime during Trujillo’s government invariably repeated the same thing. They nostalgically remembered how it was safe to walk the streets at night or sleep on the side of a road with money in your pocket without worry of getting robbed. If things seemed comparatively safer back then, it does not mean that the nation or the border was crime-free. Robberies did occur, despite the presence of a ruthless dictatorial apparatus. Both Dominicans and Haitians committed crimes such as robbery, and participated in the contraband trade. Whether it was stealing chickens or assaulting someone and stealing \$48.00 pesos from them, robberies occurred during this period.⁹⁵ Although Dominicans committed many crimes and were arrested for them it was

⁹³ EN Leg.47 exp.101 Sept. 21, 1943. AGN.

⁹⁴ Letter from First Lte. Fabio Patxot in the National Police to Gov. of Monte Cristi Castro Mteety. See Gobernación Provincia Monte Cristi Leg.6 exp.22, Jan. 1, 1939.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Feb. 18, 1939. AGN.

Haitians who were branded as the major cattle thieves. For government officials, there was a clear distinction (at least on paper) between Dominicans robbing chickens in their country, and Haitians stealing cattle and taking their prizes back to their country. In one ironic letter, a military official who was sworn to uphold the nation's ideals (i.e. thou shall not steal) minimized Dominican crimes of theft. He wrote: "Robberies committed by Dominicans, these have been of little importance, like the stealing of yucca, chicken, bananas, and goats, and have been submitted to the Law and sanctioned for these acts."⁹⁶

The border had always been a site for contraband, and the stealing of cattle in the twentieth century was no exception. But under Trujillo, a Haitian incursion into Dominican territory was more than just an illegal entry. It became more significant. Every time Haitians stole Dominican cattle, it was a blow to Trujillo's state-building project along the border, revealing that state was actually quite weak in controlling this region. There were gangs of Haitians thieves (including some Dominicans) that stole animals from farms owned by Dominicans. One official wrote: "This gang of thieves has thrashed the Section of 'El Limón,' because in the last twenty days of the current month they have robbed a quantity of thirty-eight hogs and four cows; 25 pigs and two cows from Mr. Efraín Pérez and 13 pigs and 2 cows from Eliseo Pérez."⁹⁷

Officials knew that most of the Haitian activity on Dominican territory, going back hundreds of years, was inter-border trade, yet theft was underscored consistently in the documents. The contraband trade was a major focus of the government authorities along the border. Many frustrated and anti-Haitian Trujillista officials wrote of the Haitian's "biological need" to steal. One official alluded to the economic causes of Haitian migration and theft in the Dominican Republic, but reminded his readers that Haitians were "inherently prone" to steal. Writing about the nightly Haitian raids on

⁹⁶ Letter from Barrack's Army Commander 2nd Lt. Julio A. Conde to the Commander of the Northern Army Department in Elías Piña in La Rancha, a hamlet near El Cercado. See Ministerio de Agricultura Leg.10, June 10, 1944. AGN.

⁹⁷ Informe Confidencial EN Leg.49 exp.56, Jan. 27, 1944. AGN.

Dominican farms across the border and the remains of dismembered animal parts that thieves left due to sloppy disposal of the evidence, one official commented:

This is due more to the innate tendency in all Haitians to rob than to the great shortage of food that is felt more each day in the neighboring country. On market days here [Dajabón] like in Loma de Cabrera, Haitians purchase great quantities of provisions, cassava, butter, etc. and asking a woman why they bought so much, she told me that the Americans have taken all the lands and destroyed the sowing of the plots and that in Haiti there is much hunger, that she sold in Cap Haitien a load of plantains bought in Loma de Cabrera at the rate of three cents for every plantain.⁹⁸

This is one of the reasons why the government at this time gave so many border cattle owner's permission to enter Haiti, so that they could "see cattle that he (the farmer) has in Haitian territory."⁹⁹ But not many government officials would recognize (at least not on paper) that the loss of cattle went beyond robbery along the border. Most of the documents examined did not offer any other explanation than that Haitians stole the cattle. Only one document I found acknowledged that cattle were not being stolen, but were following their traditional grazing patterns. This official seemed to have become tired of Dominican border residents "crying Haitian wolf" when their cattle were missing. He wrote:

I noticed the grave error that occurred in that...that every time that some animals disappear it is referred to as a robbery; well it has been shown that in times of drought [cattle] are accustomed to... cross the Haitian border where...they are "lost" but not stolen from their place of origin; it is good that everyone take note of this in order to avoid bothering the authorities with false accusations...making it look that there exists many robberies where in really there

⁹⁸ Letter from Border Observer Marco Antonio Cabral in Dajabón to Sec. of Foreign Relations Manuel A. Peña Batlle, EN Leg.47 exp.101, Nov. 29, 1943. AGN.

⁹⁹ See the Cronológico de Interior y Policía. Correspondencia de Certificado de Exención de Depósito para ausentarse del país. Dec. 1941. AGN.

are none.¹⁰⁰

Trujillo's project to transform the border and modernize it targeted the way Dominicans lived down to the most intimate details of their daily lives. One example was the state's concern for the border tradition of courtship between men and women. Young men would "kidnap" their girlfriends (*raptar*) in a type of rural elopement: a custom that was very common and accepted by most border residents. The state viewed this ritual, as undermining their role as well as the church's role in creating what it believed was the ideal procedure for Dominican courtship and marriage. This meant that the Dominican couple had to get state recognition and Catholic acceptance for their marriage to be deemed acceptable before the government. Yet in the Dominican Republic, common-law marriages were very common, not just along the border, but throughout the country. This type of arrangement undermined the government's ability to know how many of its citizens were single or married. This loss of control was evident in a report written by the Jesuit mission in Dajabón in 1944.

There continues extensively the practice of young women being kidnapped, the majority under age and even girl students from school, and not only persons of the lowest social scale but also among the highest category...The Law of the Republic that imposes on the kidnapper either prison or matrimony needs to be applied here .because the kidnapper accepts matrimony immediately to avoid prison and very quickly [thereafter] abandons his consort, who lacks the economic means to negotiate her divorce; [she] remains neither single nor in reality married [although legally she is] nor a widow [living] in an anti-social condition that takes her almost irreconcilably to prostitution; we could make a very sad list, unfortunately too long, of these kidnappings which are solved with a purely negotiated marriage and which attempts to go against the consolidation of the traditional family.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Gobernación de Monte Cristi Leg. 15 exp.106. Asambleas Provincial nominas de empleados públicos y municipales etc.. Acta de la Asamblea Provincial de Autoridades Celebrada en el Común de Guayubín, March 2, 1941. AGN.

¹⁰¹ Transcripción de la parte final del informe trimestral. Por la misión fronteriza en Dajabón. EN Leg.48, Jan. 3, 1944. AGN. In an interview with my seventy-year-old aunt Josefina Ortiz, she explained that as a young woman this practice of "kidnappings" was very common and widespread in young couples who could not afford the costs of a wedding. "The boyfriend, with the consent of his girlfriend, would 'kidnap' his partner and take her away to his house during the night. In the morning, the boyfriend's parents would support this union, and the couple would then visit the judge and priest, but you did not have to spend

At a time when the state's mission was to incorporate and control the border region and culturally homogenize its autonomous population, the widespread practice of kidnappings directly challenged the government's own version of what the institution of marriage should be and its ability to control the population. Control, after all, was the main objective for a dictatorial regime intent on extending its power over a region that had for years been resistant to government authority. But marriage was not the only aspect of border life where the state felt threatened by local traditions. The state viewed the proximity of Dominicans to Haitians and the cultural activities they shared as retrograde. "The night parties that last until dawn in unhealthy, badly ventilated places, to the dim light of footlights or of a fragment of lighted mahogany, are witty incentives of immorality and drunkenness...The Lights to the Saints are the remains of customs from the other side [Haitian] of the border."¹⁰²

State control and presence in the border meant that cultural celebrations, like kidnappings, had to be eliminated because they represented the worst cases of what the government believed was another example of Haitian influenced immorality. In reality, the government saw these events as examples of parents and families undermining state control and its ability to regulate society.

As in the rest of the country, the government sought to control border residents by arresting those who violated newly established laws against vagrants, public inebriation, and gambling sites.¹⁰³ But, unlike the rest of the country, these illegal activities were

[extra] money-- there were no guests." My aunt remembers that the practice of non-legal marriages was so widespread and detached from state intrusion and supervision, that in the mid-1940s Trujillo ordered a drastic measure to reverse this phenomenon. Called *El Jubileo*, "Trujillo created this: that everyone go to the Justice of the Peace and priest, and they would marry them for free. I remember because Miguelo [her brother] used to say 'Mama is getting married, mama is getting married,' because Mama [her mother] was only married by the courts. At that time it was an obligation for couples living together to get married by the courts and the church." Telephone interview with Josefina Ortiz, Nov. 26, 1999.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ According to one government official, gambling (principally dice) was seen as a "delightful vice." See Gobernación de Monte Cristi, Asambleas de Provincia nóminas de empleados públicos y municipios, carta informe trimestral correspondiente a los meses julio, agosto, y septiembre que rinde la alcaldía comunal de

taking place at a time where the state imposed its own set of laws intended to reduce the historic autonomy associated with this region.

The quest to Dominicanize and modernize the border was always portrayed as a contrast to poor and backward Haiti. This led Trujillo's government to expose Dominicans to cultural programs such as public concerts and socio-cultural lectures by the government's political intellectuals. Musical bands, art exhibitions, and political meetings were all active symbols that were used to attract Dominicans into the expanding state. A new culture and protocol along the border developed as the state permeated all levels of society in the name of progress and modernity. But transforming the border was a difficult enough task, which, along with creating institutions, had to contend with local reaction against state encroachment. An ideological barrier that justified Trujillo's border crusade also, therefore, supported the state institutional Dominicanization "fence". After the 1937 Haitian Massacre, Dominican intellectuals created a discourse that sought to justify Trujillo's genocidal act by branding Haitians as invaders and carriers of both disease and a retrograde culture. The amount of anti-Haitian publications was staggering. Newspaper articles, books, and government documents were written extolling the virtues of Trujillo's border project, while vilifying Haiti and the Haitian people. This literature gave a moral voice to the institutional transformations that were occurring on the ground, while convincing Dominicans both in the border and those far removed from it, that the nationalization of the border was a patriotic endeavor necessary for the nation's defense. The intellectual anti-Haitian and racist discourse of the Dominican intelligentsia that followed the 1937 Massacre was more than the ideological underpinnings of Trujillo's fascistic imagination. It was created by ordinary Dominican intellectuals who, out of fear and extreme sycophancy to the regime, published xenophobic propaganda that would influence the way Dominicans viewed Haitians long after Trujillo's assassination in 1961.

It was these writings that made the massacre more insidious because it justified the separatist policy to nationalize the border after 1937 and something glorious rather than a state-building project carried out atop a genocidal massacre. The next chapter addresses the role of this discourse and its impact in promoting the new Dominican national identity on the border.

Chapter 6

Anti-Haitian Discourse and the Border

The Dominicanization of the border through the establishment of state institutions following the 1937 Massacre became the foundation for the official intensification of the historic Dominican prejudices of Haitians. Dominicanizing the border was official state policy and it became an extension of the massacre, which aimed to erase the widespread Haitian presence throughout the Dominican border. Along with the institutionalization of the border, the state therefore, also promoted an ideological campaign to convince Dominicans that the massacre was justified for the good of the nation. This justification came in the form of an ideological bombardment from the government depicting Haiti as a bastion of evil and retrograde culture, and of its people as “invaders” of the Dominican Republic; people who were viewed as inferior and as enemies of the state. In this chapter I examine how following the massacre Dominican officials solidified a traditional anti-Haitian sentiment and transformed it into a national ideology. Trujillo intellectuals capitalized on the Dominican collective and negative memories of nineteenth century Haitian invasions to promote a new nationalism that was simultaneously anti-Haitian and xenophobic. Thus by doing this Trujillo portrayed the massacre as part of a historic struggle against Haitian encroachment into Dominican land and in essence able to justify the genocidal policy. By examining the writings of several key Trujillo ideologues and comparing it with government reports from the border I show just how difficult it was for the state to Dominicanize this region.

The Trujillo government used all its institutions to convey this message of hate. According to historian Frank Moya Pons and as we have seen from the primary documents in the last chapter, “Dominicans received a daily bombardment of this nationalist ideology in the schools, in the newspapers, on the radio, in political

speeches, in cultural acts, and on television.”¹ The massacre was turned on its head and, instead of being portrayed as a genocidal policy that killed thousands of innocent civilians; it was transformed into an essential unapologetic act of ethnic cleansing to save the nation. Yet official anti-Haitianism as state ideology was a strong but inconsistent policy during the Trujillo regime. Although the regime was characterized generally as hostile with Haiti, anti-Haitian and racist propaganda was limited to two periods during Trujillo’s regime: between 1937-1941 and 1942-1946. The first period of anti-Haitianism was a Dominican response to President Vincent’s solicitation of international mediation for the massacre. Trujillo felt humiliated because Vincent disregarded Santo Domingo’s October 15 diplomatic communiqué, giving both countries nominal authority to investigate the massacre. The year 1941 brought a respite from the anti-Haitian propaganda when Haitian President Elie Lescot (Trujillo’s personal friend) came to power.² Relations between the two leaders became strained, however, due to Lescot’s unexpected independent leadership, which eliminated an important Trujillo ally in the Haitian government. From 1942 until 1946, when Lescot was overthrown in a revolution, the Dominican government activated its anti-Haitian ideological machine to discredit the Haitian president through nationalist’s diatribes against Haiti, its culture, and its people.

Vega writes that although there were sporadic anti-Haitian publications after 1946, the Dominican government stopped utilizing anti-Haitianism ideology as official policy.³ For Vega, the major reason that explains Dominican anti-Haitianism from 1942-1946 was Trujillo’s animosity toward a Haitian President he could not control. Yet, if after 1946, anti-Haitianism ceased to be part of official government

¹ Frank Moya Pons, “La frontera política,” *Rumbo*, No.271 (April 12, 1999), pg.4.

² Aside from being friends, Lescot had been bribed by Trujillo in the early 1930s. See Bernardo Vega’s, *Trujillo y Haití 1937-1938* Vol.II. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1995), pg.359.

³ Bernardo Vega, “Variaciones en el uso del antihaitianismo durante la era de Trujillo,” *Listín Diario*, (October 24, 1995), pg. 4.

policy, it remained an important component of the nationalistic discourse through newspapers, books, and government documents. Even after 1946, therefore, the Dominican government under Trujillo would continue to resort to anti-Haitianism, even if it was not officially sanctioned. Yet Vega seems to not recognize that although it was no longer government policy after 1946, Trujillo anti-Haitianism had by this time become imbedded in the national discourse and as a result did not need official state sponsorship to function.

In the span of several months, Dominican government policy went from being cordial and very friendly, to racist and xenophobic toward Haitians. As early as 1938, books were published in Santo Domingo describing Haiti and its African-centered culture as a threat to the more Iberian- (European) centered Dominican Republic:

Racially, psychologically, historically, and idiomatically, the barrier is formidable. The primitivism of the customs in the popular masses; the savage interpretation from which those same masses adopt the religious material; the social restructuring; the language, which is the inferior French, for the common people in a semi barbarous patois; the ethnic ancestry elevated to a patriotic cult; the marked intolerance before racial elements of non-African origin...This is why the dangers and threats that come from the other side of that border are and will be dangers and common threats to all and everyone of the people of the [Caribbean] Archipelago whose origins, ideologies, language, customs, and race have been derived from the great Hispanic trunk. The problem is, then, a serious problem of Antilleanness.⁴

Many government publications gave tacit approval to the killings, often in very indirect ways. One such publication was the Dominican Political Party's official newspaper: the government's official voice of propaganda. In a series of articles, the party's *Boletín del Partido Dominicano* (BPD, Bulletin of the Dominican Party, described what it considered to be the scourge of the border: poor, Black and

⁴ V. Díaz Ordonez, *El mas antiguo y grave problema antillano*. (Ciudad Trujillo: La Opinión, 1938), pg.13-14.

paganistic Haitians. For this magazine, a fixed line on paper did not secure control of the border.

Let us return to the problem. The fact of having definitely resolved the question of limits between our country and the neighboring Republic of Haiti through a treaty is in itself a fact, but did not achieve the miracle of the Dominicanization of those lands. Sociology and Biology do not live on transcendental miracles. First the material line of demarcation between both countries. Afterwards progressive and integral Dominicanization of those territories.⁵

Dominicanizing the border especially after 1937 meant making it less culturally Haitian. Following the massacre and for the next few years until 1946, the state began a progandistic campaign attacking its neighbor for having a “backwards” culture. Articles released by the Dominican Party attempted to tacitly convince its readers that the massacre was in some way inevitable if the state was to “save” Dominican border residents, who were being exposed to the pernicious effects of Haitian culture:

Barbarous rituals inherited by the Haitians from their African ancestors made many Dominicans prisoners. The ominous ‘Voudou’; witchcraft in its many crude forms; [Haitians capitalized] on the ignorance of the [Dominican] peasantry, and the ‘Papa Boco’ master of the power of communication with the spirits from that necromantic jungle, absurd, paranoid, physically degenerated, also had fun [the Papa Boco] with caresses of Dominican women, falling in disgrace because of their lack of culture.⁶

The government saw the border as a dangerous place precisely because it had always existed and developed beyond state control. The border was in closer

⁵ *Boletín del Partido Dominicano* June 30, 1940. pg.5. AGN.

⁶ *Ibid.* July 30, 1943. pg.6. “The mathematical outline of a border line does not imply some division if it is not followed by a conscious restructuring of ideo-national division in which the constitutive elements of the nationality can enter amply.”

proximity to Haiti than to the capital of Santo Domingo, thus everything defined, as culturally Haitian was also associated with Dominican border residents. Government officials, who wrote about border crime dating back to the sixteenth and seventeen centuries, perpetuated the perception that crime was endemic to the border. As Freddy Prestol Castillo, a border cultural agent and later posthumous novelist wrote towards the end of the dictatorship:

Traditionally they [border Dominicans] have been beaten by thieves of the neighboring country. And when a man has killed several thieves, he is already hardened. The [1777] Aranjuez Border Line was stained with blood from the first day because over every landmark there was placed a homicide. In order to possess it [the border], it was necessary to kill.⁷

For Trujillo, the logic was simple: eliminate Haitians from the border and, consequently, crime would disappear; however, crime, especially in the form of contraband, continued and thrived despite the encroachment of state institutions. So too did interborder trade between both people, which by this time had been active for close to five centuries.⁸ The Dominican intelligentsia and, especially, the press also espoused racially and chauvinistic stereotypes of Haitians as a way to curry favor with the regime and to remain employed. Along with this anti-Haitian project there was the government campaign to create a national Eurocentric identity that was encapsulated in the ideology called *hispanidad*.

Under this ideological rubric, the state as Spanish, white, and Catholic now

⁷Freddy Prestol Castillo, "Delitos y delincuentes en la frontera," II *La Nación* April 4, 1959, pg.7.

⁸Despite its best efforts, the Dominican government was unable stop all trade between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. According to one scholar, socio-economic relations throughout the border region were so entrenched, that "when the [Dominican] state tried to repress the commercial activities, they continued in secret." See Michel baud's "Una frontera-refugio: Dominicanos y Haitianos contra el estado (1870-1930)," *Estudios Sociales* XXVI No.92 (Abril-Junio 1993), pg.63. This resilient informal economy has continued up till today where estimates of interborder trade reach into the millions of dollars. For contemporary socio-economic and informative journalistic review see the Dominican magazine *Rumbo* April 12, 1999, pg.37. pgs.37-45.

defined the Dominican nation, whose citizens were mostly of mixed race.⁹ In the 1940s and 1950s, the press perpetuated anti-Haitianism. The language used to glorify Trujillo's border project and, by extension, to deflect attention away from the massacre, was often outrageously racist. The Haitian language, religion, and culture, all came under attack and were used by the elite to distinguish between Black Haitians and Dominicans who now had become "white":

On the border the [Dominican] race was bastardized by the slow and pacific infiltration of the western neighbors which, installing themselves in this [border] region, brought with them their mode of primitive life, their customs, their ancestral superstitions, like the 'boudou,' the 'lua,' the 'gaga,' the necromantic practices for the use of cadavers with magical ends.¹⁰

For the state's new ideology of hispanidad, the influence of Haitian religion throughout the Dominican border undermined the notion that Trujillo's countrymen in this region were all Catholic; thus the push to promote the Catholic religion. In his many speeches, Trujillo himself waxed incessantly about how Dominicans were Catholic to the bone marrow. According to Trujillo, Catholicism became a marker of national identity as well as a distinguishing feature between Haitian and Dominican culture: "You have to be Christian and Catholic not by name but by deed and accept

⁹ According to one scholar, Trujillo's quest to transform the racial and ethnic make-up of the Dominican nation reached the point of absurdity as he convinced the National Congress to legally erase any doubts of his mother's Haitian ancestry by declaring her lineage (Chevalier) of French origin. See R. Michael Malek, "Dominican Republic's General Rafael L. Trujillo M. and the Haitian Massacre of 1937: A Case of Subversion in Inter-Caribbean Relations," *Journal of the Southeastern Conference on Latin American Studies* (Secolas), Vol.11 (March 1980), pg.151.

¹⁰ *La Nación*, Dec. 8, 1946, pg.4. Further study needs to be conducted as to the counter-folk traditions used by Dominican border residents vis-a-vis those persons who practiced Haitian cultural traditions and were identified as members of the latter group. Thus far my research has found that many Dominican border residents shared Haitian cultural traditions like the Dominican version of Haitian voodoo. Although and quite obviously, counter-Haitian folk traditions, like Catholicism, were promoted by the state, in the Dominican Republic, especially in the border, religion more often than not, "reflected a Christian-African syncretism originating in the colonial era." See Carlos Esteban Deive, "La herencia africana en la cultura dominicana actual," in *Ensayos sobre cultura dominicana*, (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano), pg.125.

in this world's critical hour the duty that is placed upon those groups of human beings appointed by history, by culture, by thought, and by the sentiments of Catholicism.”¹¹

The regime's propaganda machine was able to portray Dominican Catholics by contrasting their militant Catholicism to Haiti's rich and complex tradition of Voudou, which was portrayed as evil. Dominicans could define themselves in opposition to Haiti and its culture. This good Dominican vs. bad Haitian duality sustained the anti-Haitian discourse after the 1937 Massacre. This discourse was instrumental for two reasons: first it was relatively easy to apply, since most Dominicans were already Catholic. This made it easier for Trujillo to consolidate and control the nation, especially the border, through institutions such as the church and the roving, proselytizing priests. Second by elevating Catholicism to a state religion, and then seeking and obtaining Vatican endorsement, the Dominican Republic received international recognition and at least some type of validation from the Vatican: “From here a fraternal embrace with the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church, in principal for being religious, [for upholding the] creed of our tradition and the one that he [Trujillo] professes.”¹²

It was during this time that the Dominican nation was portrayed as more Spanish than the Spaniards. Denying the reality of everyday life in the Dominican Republic, particularly in the border region where neo-African and Haitian culture were just as strong as neo-Spanish culture. The Trujillo-Era discourse defined Dominicans as Spaniards or direct descendants of the conquistadors. The self-conscious, light-skinned mulatto dictator was the first one to espouse his Iberian heritage. His fixation on Spanish culture was clear in a speech he gave after being awarded the Decoration of the Order of Carlos III medal by the Spanish government.

¹¹ Rafael L. Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes, y proclamas*, Vol.7 (Santiago, RD: Editora El Diario, 1947), pg.181.

¹² Tulio A. Cestero-Burgos, *Trujillo y el cristianismo* 2ed. (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Librería Dominicana, 1956), pg.15.

Upon receiving his medal (one of the countless medals that proudly adorned his chest), Trujillo told his audience that, “Yours [Spanish] is our language, our tradition, our domestic ideas, [and] our culture is yours. Yours is the noble quality of the municipalities of our land, essence of democracy.”¹³

The official discourse of Trujillo’s government presented Spanish culture, from language to religion, as a major underpinning of Dominican national identity. It was as if the Dominican Republic were the most western province of Spain in the Caribbean. The pro-Spanish discourse itself was so staggering that anyone reading the newspapers or government speeches of the era would assume that Dominicans were Spanish, white, and Catholic. Trujillo himself would say that his people were interconnected “with the characteristics of the Spanish race, which was part of its own race, and with the most pure essences of the Hispanic culture.”¹⁴

This cultural connection, the Dominican elite’s strategy to remain close to Spain, preceded Trujillo’s rise to power. This was not the first time that Dominican leaders looked to Spain for guidance and support. The most dramatic example came in the nineteenth century when Dominican leaders who had fought against Haiti in the 1840s and 1850s chose to give up their independence and be annexed by Spain in 1861 rather than risk being invaded and controlled by Haiti. In a historical context, therefore, Trujillo’s zealous quest to embrace Spain as the cultural and racial progenitor of the nation shows a strategic pattern of Dominican governments to distinguish themselves from Haiti.

The Dominican intellectual Peña Batlle reminded his readers, that in the past, the Dominican nation, has had to forfeit its independence to European powers so as

¹³ Rafael L. Trujillo, *Discursos, mensajes, y proclamas* Vol.7, pg.254. During the Trujillo, there was no counter-rhetoric challenging Trujillo’s anti-Haitian and hispanic anti-Haitian doctrine. However it is important to remember that the official ideological discourse like the massacre before it, was a response to Dominican interaction with Haitians and absorption of their culture being played out daily throughout the border.

¹⁴ Ibid. vol.5, pg.175.

not to be controlled by Haiti: “Continuously we have seen ourselves obligated to go backwards--by way of conservation--so as not to lose our characteristics, permanently challenged by the imperialistic Calvinists [the United States], and the basic Africanism of the formation of Haitian society.”¹⁵

Under Trujillo, the Dominican nation was not subjected to military invasion by Haiti, but the latter’s presence and the government as a major threat to its sovereignty viewed influence. The border became ground zero in a state project whose goal it was to impose a reality that contradicted the bicultural and interdependent experience, which was characteristic of border life. The state perpetuated and spread negative perceptions of Haitians through the press as one way to convince Dominicans that they were superior to Haitians. Dominicans who already possessed long held prejudices toward Haiti were exposed to an anti-Haitian discourse that was re-inventing Haiti in the Dominican mind. On the border, residents had several local newspapers that echoed anti-Haitian articles published in the capital. One newspaper in Dajabón, for example, praised Trujillo’s border project, saying that the border was lost to crime and Haiti until Trujillo’s arrival: “[He] Dominicanized the border, considered geographically and socially separated from the rest of the country, a last redoubt of murderers and the discontented, whose customs and language were dangerously threatened by being displaced by the superstitious practices and customs of our archaic neighbors of the West.”¹⁶ Other newspapers described this region as a center of crime. They also spoke to the traditional lack of state control, which made it difficult for Trujillo to incorporate these marginal citizens.

¹⁵ Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, *El tratado de Basilea y la desnacionalización del Santo Domingo español* (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1952), pg.24. According to Peña Batlle unlike other Latin American nations, the Dominican Republic matured and fought toward independence “by never stopping to be Spaniards.”

¹⁶ “La constructiva labor de Trujillo,” *Beller*, Jan. 1960, pg.2.

Amoral men had previously resided in our border, entirely ignorant of the beautiful notes of our Anthem; their only work was the contraband trade with the neighboring country, but now, thanks to Trujillo and his immaculate patriotism, those malignant things have ceased at once and for always. There, since some time, you breathe the pure air of our Dominicaness.¹⁷

These articles usually addressed the ongoing work to Dominicanize or de-Haitianize the border, or praised effusively the achievements of Trujillo's state project throughout the region. The belief was that the Dominican nation began on the border and, therefore, had to be protected from further spread of Haitian culture. Because of its proximity, Dominican border towns were more susceptible to the encroachment by Haitian culture. This influence, such as being able to speak both languages, undermined tenets of the new national identity that portrayed Dominicans as monolingual Spanish speakers. "It is in the border where the mother-tongue begins to lose its purity and extension if farsighted measures are not adopted to stop the denationalized influx of the language with the bordering country... when the border is neglected the duty is to conserve it."¹⁸ The success of the Dominicanization border project meant that the less residents spoke Kreyol, the more Dominican they would become. For the press, the project was successful and according to Dajabón's newspaper: "The Castillian [language] is pronounced very well in the border!"¹⁹ But the reality was quite different.

Government officials were all too aware that the border was not a linguistic monolith. Border contact as we have seen in chapters four and five had produced

¹⁷"Trujillo y la frontera," *La Nación*, April 23, 1949.

¹⁸"La dominicanización fronteriza de la frontera y sus enemigos," *La Nación*, June 20, 1945, pg.3.

¹⁹"De Elías Piña a Dajabón," *El Libertador*, Feb. 10, 1945, pg.4. Today there are many border Dominicans who can speak and understand Kreyol. Many of them are older and can remember when relations with Haiti were very good and constant. Many of the younger border generation do not speak Kreyol, but there are some.

many unions between Haitians and Dominicans throughout the years. While newspaper articles and books praised the successes of the Dominicanization project in de-Haitianizing the Dominican border culture, official government documents from the region contradicted the propaganda. The government was not able to stop the interaction between both peoples, especially when those individuals were family members. A confidential army report confirmed these familial ties across the border and categorized it as a fundamental problem in the government's policy to Dominicanize the region:

There exists in this town [of Pedernales] and its outskirts a numerous group of Haitians [men and women] that by having Haitian family members such as fathers, mothers, sisters, sons, nephews, concubines, etc. all residents in Haiti, their sentiments, way of thinking, and behavior are absolutely Haitian. It is logical to assume that these people, in one way or the other, and valuing their tricks, communicate with their family members living on the other side of the border. It is my opinion that the permanence of these people here is a great obstacle for the development of the Dominicanization of the Border Plan that is taking place led by our Illustrious Chief Generalissimo Dr. Rafael L. Trujillo Molina, and is a threat to the national security. As a result of the aforementioned, I consider recommendable...that all these people should be ousted from this town and taken to live in other regions of the Republic far from the border.²⁰

Unions between Haitians and Dominicans undermined Trujillo's border project because they did not fit in the new definition of what the state viewed as an authentic Dominican identity. This so undermined government politics along the border that even army officials contemplated the resettlement of these bi-cultural communities. In reality, these Dominican border residents did not seriously threaten the government. Their culture was not going to destabilize or overthrow the Trujillo regime. The possibility of greater interaction between Haitians and Dominicans in the

²⁰Confidential Report by Army Captain Federico E. Castro, Commander of the Southwestern Command, to his Commanding Officer. EN Leg.60 exp.101, July 17, 1945. AGN.

border and the symbolism it represented to Trujillo's definition of Dominican nationalism, especially Haitian men (military officers) courting Dominican women, was threatening to the state, which felt that their women had to be protected from Haitians. Here was the state trying to limit the access of Haitians so as not to "contaminate" the nation, but its women were challenging the prescribed roles of what a good woman, a good Dominican, should be. The removal of women from their towns because they chose to be with Haitian men was a serious blow to the state's definition of national family and Dominican sexuality. Recalling the ease with which Haitian army officers could enter Dominican territory, one army officer wrote:

For a long time Haitian officers entered Dajabon at all hours and indefinitely. These visits resulted in a number of women and young ladies of that town entering in amorous relations with these Officers in such an unseemly way that it was necessary to remove these women from town and make them go and live in towns of the interior of the [Dominican] Republic.²¹

But women were not the only ones who the government believed should be relocated for conducting "inappropriate" relationships with Haitians. Men were also included in these plans, not because of their relationships with Haitian women, since the state never felt threatened by Dominican men forming unions with Haitian women, but rather for having close ties with family members in Haiti.

One of the consequences of an increased state presence along the border was its impact on the families living on both sides of the border. New regulations imposed by the state to monitor the flow of incoming and outgoing visitors now required them to have passports to cross a border that had been relatively open. But as one official wrote, both Dominicans and Haitians with family members on opposite sides of the

²¹EN Leg.46 exp.101, Feb. 12, 1943. AGN. Clearly the state viewed the Dominican family on the border as an extension of the nation. Haitians were seen as destabilizers of the Dominican family and by extension the nation. Yet the documents I examined never addressed the issue of consent by Dominican women or if these meetings ever result in "kidnappings".

border continued to visit each other and maintained their family linkages in spite of new government regulations against open border crossings. State laws were being so flagrantly ignored that officials seriously contemplated deporting entire groups of Dominican men and women away from the border:

There exists on the very borderline facing this town [Elias Pina] a family with the surname of Poché-- Dominican. On the other side there is double the number of the same family, but Haitians. This means that the people on this side are constantly condemned for violation of the passport law and those on the other side for violation of the immigration law. We have not been able to find a way to avoid contact between these people. Because there are many they have not been sent to the colonies in the interior, but sooner or later we will have to do something similar.²²

Here was a clear example of the failure of the Dominicanization program despite the institutional encroachments and ideological rhetoric to convince Dominicans to reject and hate their Haitian neighbors. Moreover, it demonstrates how the Dominican state was not entirely successful in controlling women and their bodies. Despite the ubiquitous army patrols and clandestine network of spies, they were unable to stop all together the mingling of both peoples. Government documents reveal that Haitians had no problem crossing the border into the Dominican Republic. Five years after the massacre, and at a time when Dominicanizing the border had become a government priority, Haitian access to the Dominican side continued unimpeded. The apparent ease with which Haitians, especially army personnel, could cross the border and socialize with Dominicans, especially women, forced the Dominican Army to curtail and monitor these visits. Furthermore, despite the anti-

²²Letter from Lte. Col. and Commander of the Northwest Department, Fausto E. Caamaño to Trujillo. EN Leg.47 exp.101, Aug. 21, 1943. AGN. There were even cases of Dominican soldiers whose parents lived in Haiti and could perhaps have been of Haitian origin themselves. "I respectfully inform you that I had news of a Dominican Army Private that serves in the 19th Company named Liriano Decena and that his comrades nicknamed 'Donsol'; he has his parents, who live in the Republic of Haiti." See Report written by Capt. Joaquín Ma. Montero Monteagudo, Commanding Officer of the 17th Co. in Pedro Santana, to Jefe de Estado Mayor, EN Leg. 52 exp.92, Jan. 14, 1949. AGN.

Haitian propaganda circulating in newspapers, it apparently had no effect on the behavior of ordinary Dominicans much less alter the good relations shared between members of the Dominican and Haitian army in the border town of Dajabón.

The absolute prohibition of visits of Haitian enlisted men to this (our) city was ordered. With respect to the Haitian Offices it was arranged that when an Officer crossed over to this side he had to be accompanied to any place he went to by Lieutenant Valencia or Lieutenant Martínez Gómez, Dominican Army. This will impede them from having private conversations with any person in Dajabón and also will impede them from dedicating themselves to courting Dominican women. I am sure that when this is done to every Haitian Officer, the visits will diminish almost totally without prohibiting their entry.²³

Reading the propaganda at the time, one would have thought that the Haitian presence along the border was tantamount to an invasion. Indeed the term “silent invasion” was cemented by the government to justify its project along the border against Haitian immigration: “From Dajabón to Pedernales until recently, we only contemplated abandoned countrysides, miserable hamlets, Haitians who resided in this vast region like owners and gentlemen invading and ousting with their strange customs our Spanish traditions and above all the wasted and sad picture of misery.”²⁴ But while the government continued its anti-Haitian campaign, reminding Dominicans of the nineteenth-century Haitian invasions and their neighbor’s “dangerous” customs to justify its border project, reality on the ground level was different story. For all the discourse warning Dominicans of Haitian cultural and military encroachments, the archival documents and oral histories reveal another story. For the most part, army officials who controlled the border on each side maintained peaceful relations, even though the border was a magnet for exiles fleeing

²³EN Leg.46 exp.101 Feb.11, 1943. AGN.

²⁴“El despertar de la frontera,” *La Nación*, Sept. 22, 1944, pg.6.

both countries and contraband. Furthermore, the Haitian army never really represented a military threat to their eastern neighbor.²⁵ Just two years after the massacre, Haitian and Dominican army officials were meeting together in the border. According to the Dominican army official who filed the report:

I had a cordial interview with the Captain of the Haitian Army in Ouanaminthe [Haiti], who was accompanied by two fellow Officers; this Officer was accompanied by Captain Juan J. Fortuna Valdez and two Officers of our army...[the meeting] was celebrated near the Massacre River in the neutral zone, in other words in the Center of the two Dominican-Haitian pyramids which occurred within [the context] of major harmony and friendship which should reign between the two neighboring nations.²⁶

Although at the level of official discourse Haiti's image in the Dominican press was of an aggressive and potentially dangerous foe, militarily at the local level one can see that it not the Trujillo regime perpetuated. Haiti was a vulnerable state. In a report filed by an army officer from the border town of Elías Piña, Haitian army officers are described in very casual and non-militarized terms: "The Officers, not even their chief, Major Polinisse, do not carry arms and once night falls they all dress as civilians. The soldiers only carry carbines or revolvers when they are on duty or transporting a prisoner."²⁷ Despite the fact that there was no tangible military threat

²⁵ The border itself undermined Trujillo's power because it was porous, and contraband could easily be shipped into the country, including weapons that could be used for an armed Dominican insurrection to overthrow Trujillo. A letter from Peña Batlle confirms this government concern: "The northern coast from Port-de-Paix to the Dominican border is being watched by small groups of armed forces who fear a clandestine landing of arms." See EN exp.96, March 29, 1946. AGN.

²⁶ Report filed by Captain Amable A. del Castillo, Commanding Officer for the 23rd. Co. in Loma de Cabrera, to Lte. Col. Manuel E. Castillo, EN Leg.24 exp. 291, Aug. 26, 1939. AGN. The report went on to say that, "After the introductions we had a magnificent exchange of impressions and the Captain of the Haitian Army promised all his efficient cooperation in the resolution of the border problems that could arise between the nationals of that nation and ours, which is of great usefulness for the farmers and [cattle] breeders who live in the border and have until now been harmed with the robberies that are committed illegally by some Haitians."

²⁷ Report by Secretary of State and Foreign Relations Arturo Despradel to Sec. of War EN Leg. 46 exp.101, June 14, 1943. AGN.

from Haiti, an ideological framework was created to convince many Dominicans that Haiti was a threat to their nation. But was Trujillo the intellectual mastermind behind this racist discourse that emerged as official state doctrine throughout parts of the 1940s and 1950s?

Trujillo was no intellectual and he had little formal schooling. In order to last thirty years in power and become one of the most feared and wealthiest men in all the Americas, Trujillo had to rely on his sense of instinct and survival. Since he could not himself articulate the vision he had for his nation, Trujillo threatened and co-opted many of the best Dominican minds of the day to serve his regime. He surrounded himself with an intellectual team that created an unprecedented body of anti-Haitian literature. It was the Dominican intelligentsia's acquiescence and their astonishing sycophantic support for Trujillo that was responsible for the emergence of modern anti-Haitianism, and one, which also explains his extended tenure in power.²⁸

Anti-Haitianism had existed in the Dominican Republic long before Trujillo came to power, which he used as the foundation for his more potent version. The nineteenth century contained the seeds of Dominican enmity toward their western neighbor. The Haitian unification of the entire island of Hispaniola between 1822-1844 and the subsequent unsuccessful Haitian invasions of the Dominican Republic (1844-1856) were the building blocks to construct a solid wall of anti-Haitianism in Dominican society. As Bernardo Vega writes: "Dominicans considered Haitians the enemy and the Haitian as black."²⁹ Anti-Haitianism was also built upon Haiti's

²⁸ According to ninety-year-old Mercedes de Castro who was interviewed as part of a Dominican newspaper's end of the century series, the intellectuals were partly responsible for endorsing and maintaining Trujillo. "Before Trujillo we lived in a peaceful society. People were good. With Trujillo's rise to power, everything changed. One group, the adulators, befriended Trujillo. The tyranny was worse because of the intellectuals, some of the distinguished people that surrounded him...If the elite and the intellectuals would have been strong with Trujillo and reject him, the regime would not have been secured as quickly as it did. But they became afraid." See *Listín Diario* February 7, 1999, pg.12-A-13-A.

²⁹ Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, Vol. 1, pg.25.

military advantage over its neighbor during the nineteenth century, when Haiti possessed a more superior military force. It should be remembered that the Haitian army composed of former slaves had defeated Napoleon's troops and were a formidable military threat on the island. The fear of being invaded once again by a larger and more experienced army caused a wide, negative Dominican nationalistic reaction against Haiti. Between the 1860s and the 1930s, anti-Haitianism and concomitant racism against blacks also existed. There were repeated government attempts to promote white immigration, and intellectuals espoused anti-Haitian/black writings. But anti-Haitianism, as official government policy, did not exist.³⁰

It was under Trujillo, particularly after the 1937 Massacre, that anti-Haitianism, (racism against Haitians as foreigners and people of African ancestry) supported by books and print media, was adopted as part of an official government campaign to promote and justify the state encroachment, which attempted to portray the massacre as an act of self-defense. At no other time in the history of the Dominican Republic had there been such a highly educated number of individuals that were dedicated to portraying Haitians in such demeaning ways. This select group of Trujillo ideologues were composed of men who one political analyst has represented the "Generation of 1920." These men (Juan Bosch and Manuel del Cabral were not Trujillo ideologues):

Were born between 1896 and 1910, some of them being Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle (1902), Tomás Hernandez Franco (1904), Joaquín Balaguer (1906), Manuel del Cabral (1907), Juan Bosch (1909), and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (1908). Know it or not, like it or not, the project of creating the Dominican society that exists today--its fundamental outline--was conceived

³⁰ According Derby there are three layers of anti-Haitianism which originate with the Spanish struggle against the French for control of the island; the development of two distinct racial hierarchies and economies on the island; and the 1822-1844 Haitian unification of the island. Derby correctly reminds us that anti-Haitianism does not only revolve around the phenomenon of racism but also "racialized nationalism." See "Haitians, Magic and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900-1937," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 1994 pg.495-496.

and elaborated by these men.³¹

Among these men, Peña Batlle, Balaguer and Demorizi became the most influential of the anti-Haitian intellectuals of the Trujillo dictatorship. Their highly articulated writings and fervent anti-Haitian tomes created a dominant ideology that came to saturate Dominican society. Out of all the Trujillo ideologues, Peña Batlle stands out as the most prolific and influential intellectual who justified the regime's existence and anti-Haitian policies.³² Trujillo's official policy to Dominicanize the border was crystallized in a famous speech given by Batlle on November 16, 1942, in the border town of Elías Piña. In this speech, Batlle explained why it was necessary to Dominicanize the border. His speech was clearly anti-Haitian claiming Trujillo's mission to transform the border was necessary to combat the entrenched Haitian presence. It is this speech that many historians point to as the regime's official declaration of its border project and the Dominicanization of the region, Batlle warned of the "silent invasion" of Haitians and its negative effects on the development of Dominican culture:

The Haitian that troubles us and that puts us on extra notice is frankly undesirable. Completely African, [this Haitian] cannot represent for us an ethnic incentive whatsoever. Dispossessed in his country of permanent means of subsistence, he is a load there. He does not count on acquisitioned power and cannot constitute an appreciable factor in our economy. Malnourished and badly dressed he [the Haitian] is weak although very abundant because of the depths of his level of life. For this same reason the Haitian that [inhabits the country] lives corrupted by numerous habits...necessarily tied to disease and physiological deficiencies endemic in the lower depths of that society.³³

³¹Pedro Delgado Malagón, "De brechas y generaciones," *Rumbo*, (March 10-16, 1994), pg.6.

³² According to the Trujillo historian E.M Demorizi Batlle "was the most important intellectual figure of his generation." Among the many offices he held were "President of the Dominican Congress Chamber of Deputies, Secretary of State of Foreign Relations, Secretary of State of Interior and Police, Secretary of State of Labor, Ambassador, and President of Construction." See M.A. Arturo Pena Batlle *Politica de Trujillo* (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1954), pg.7.

³³ Manuel A. Peña Batlle, *El sentido de una política* (Ciudad Trujillo: La Nación, 1943), pg.13. Batlle was clear on what type of Haitian was not welcomed in his country: the downtrodden. But Haiti's elite,

For Batlle it had been a long journey since the days where he worked as a member of the 1929 bipartisan Haitian and Dominican border commission that traced and demarcated the border. This commission was the foundation on which Presidents Vasquez and Borno signed the 1929 border Treaty and eventually led to the final border agreement in 1936. As perhaps the most recognized and intellectually gifted of all Trujillo intellectuals, Batlle had not always been a Trujillista. In the first ten years of Trujillo's government Batlle fell out of favor with the regime.³⁴ But when he decided to contribute to the regime he immediately set out to create an extensive historiography that ranged from well-researched history of seventeenth and eighteenth century Hispaniola to the more anti-Haitian writings. On his integration into the Trujillo fold, Batlle immediately set out to support Trujillo's border project. Trujillo would supply the material to construct the institutional curtain across the border and Batlle would supply the intellectual and ideological framework to justify this program. To do this Batlle had to forego his integrity but his positivistic training and beliefs that had influenced his generation not only in Dominican society but Latin American in general. Prior to Trujillo, the elites in the Dominican Republic viewed the masses in much the same ways as their counterparts in Latin America. Nineteenth century elites viewed the majority of their populations as non-white backward, and rural. For them the city represented progress rationality and modernity. It was the Puerto Rican Eugenio Maria de Hostos, and the one responsible for the foundations of the Dominican primary school system today, and a major influence on Dominican political thought, that promoted positivism in the Dominican Republic. Hostos "stated

who were as mulatto and as wealthy as their counterparts in Santo Domingo, posed no problem for the Dominican nation. According to Batlle, the Haitian that threatened his country "is not and cannot be the Haitian of selection who forms the social, intellectual, and economic elite of the neighboring country."

³⁴ See Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, *Previo a la dictadura. La etapa liberal* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1990), pgs.259. "Batlle had more than ten years of passive opposition to Trujillo."

that Spain was to be blamed for all the Dominican social maladies and that Catholicism was responsible for the Dominican educational backwardness.³⁵

This positivistic movement created a profound sense of pessimism in the Dominican Republic and among Dominican intellectuals trying to define their national identity. Under Trujillo, positivism would no longer influence how Dominicans defined themselves. Religion, as did race and language, became the linchpin in the construction of a new national identity that served to also distance itself from Haiti. By substituting positivistic rationality with religion, as an ideology to define Dominican identity, Trujillo and his intellectuals cohorts broke with their past by creating a new set of markers that reinvented how Dominicans were seen. This fundamental shift is evident, according to historian Roberto Cassá, who writes that Dominicans, especially the elite, did not always see themselves as white, Spanish, and Catholic. According to Cassá, prior to the 1937 massacre,

Everyone was in agreement that the Dominican people were in their immense majority black and mulatto, and it was seen as an evil but it was obvious. The harsh expression of the regime's justified ideology, which we have just seen, manifested itself in the racial problem requiring readjustments in the ideological base. For this to happen the prior ideological tradition was denied. The Hostonian [positivist] system of secular and rational teaching was eliminated. Religion took up a central place not only in teaching but also in all the mechanisms of the [new] ideology in the establishment of the association of race-culture-religion.³⁶

It is here under Trujillo, as Cassá reminds us, that a new and imagined community was created which had no precedent. This new nation would be grounded

³⁵ Frank Moya Pons, Occasional Papers #1 Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 1980, pg.30. Deposited at the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute Library.

³⁶ See Roberto Cassá "El racismo en la ideología de la clase dominante dominicana," *Ciencia* V.3 No.1 (1976), pg.75. paginas completas: 61-85.

in a vast ideological discourse of myths that would forever change how Dominicans would come to see themselves and Haiti. It was not enough to see the majority of Dominicans as backward black and mulatto primitives needing the assistance of modern elites that would elevate their status through progress and modernization. Through Trujillo's new ideology based on myth and historical justification (the nineteenth century Haitian invasions) "Dominicans," according to scholar Andres Mateo, "came to be a country of whites, Spaniards, and 'Indian'"³⁷

In the tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Dominican positivists who preceded him such as, Americo Lugo and José Ramón López and Guido Despradel Batista, Peña Batlle remained committed to the development of the nation through progress. However this new progress meant shedding his own positivistic convictions and adopting a new and anti-positivist ideology encompassing Catholicism, Hispanism and Falangism.³⁸ Batlle set out through his many books to underscore the centrality of religion particularly Catholicism in the historical development of Dominican society.

To show how the Republic was created as a Catholic nation, Batlle appropriated history by citing the 1844 Dominican Constitution, which stated that: "The Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the State."³⁹ Batlle laid the ideological groundwork that would make it easy to explain the racial, cultural, and religious differences between Dominicans and Haitians. This was at the core of Trujillo's anti-Haitianist and xenophobic policy of exclusion. Thus using the formula of religion and then language it allowed the regime a practical and familiar

³⁷ See Andres L. Mateo, *Mito y cultura en la era de Trujillo* (Santo Domingo: Librería Trinitaria e Instituto del Libro, 1993), pg. 141. Mateo reminds his readers that despite Trujillo's death his anti-Haitian ideological legacy has survived into the present as Dominicans continue to define themselves informally or formally (National identity cards called *cédulas*) as "moreno, lavado, clarito, mulato, etc.), except 'Black'".

³⁸ Peña Batlle, *Previo a la dictadura*, pg. 259.

³⁹ See M.A. Peña Batlle, *Cien años de vida constitucional dominicana* Colección #9 (Santo Domingo: ONAP, 1981), 15. This was the November 6th Dominican Constitution of 1844, article seven.

mechanism to indoctrinate its citizens to view Haitians as drastically different. For the regime, this formula was logical. Haitians and Dominicans were different because the former practice voodoo and speak Kreyol; the latter were Catholic and spoke Spanish. According to Batlle: "We continue to be a Spanish community, we speak Castilian Spanish, we praise God as Roman Apostolic Catholics and we feel especially united to the process of Spanish-American civilization that we initiated in the beginnings of the conquest and the colonization of the Continent."⁴⁰ The Dominican Republic as a bastion of Catholicism and Iberian stock played well on paper but as we have seen was not applicable particularly on the border. But Batlle also made it clear that the border and Haiti undermined the security of the Dominican nation. Ever since his racist 1942 speech in the border town of Elías Piña, Batlle sought to prioritize the importance and urgency of the Dominicanization of the border. For Batlle, years of border disputes from diplomatic to violent conflicts even the 1937 Massacre could have been avoided. As one scholar writes, Batlle, the apologist, blamed the massacre and the Haitianization of the border, in part, to the "historic irresponsibility of the previous Dominican leaders, and which Trujillo would in fact assume this responsibility."⁴¹

For Batlle, Trujillo was able to consolidate the nation and resolve the historic conflict that plagued the two nations. For Batlle the massacre was an act of self-preservation and the last recourse for a nation inundated with Haitians. Batlle even challenges those who condemned the Dominican Republic for its role in the massacre on the grounds of self-defense. In reference to Haiti and five years after the massacre Batlle writes that:

⁴⁰ Ibid. pg.18.

⁴¹ Mateo, *Mito en la era de Trujillo*, pg.172. Could intellectuals have manipulated Trujillo? I lack the evidence to prove this. But I maintain that if manipulation existed, that it's main objective and for personal preservation was to glorify Trujillo and espouse his goals.

There is no government in the world genuinely cultured and civilized that does not take decisive precautions against such a serious and significant threat. Is it possible that we Dominicans be censored, rushed by a simple law of self-conservation, in dedicating ourselves to combating subversive elements from our own national essence?⁴²

Batlle's call to Dominicans against not only the "invading" Haitians with clear reference to the nineteenth-century Haitian invasions but especially to references of the "undesirables" already residing in the country, echoed nationalistic pleas by fascist governments in Europe. At the time, Hitler's Nazi government and his Nationalist-Socialist idea of nation and national identity had an enormous impact on many Latin American countries especially the Dominican Republic. German Nazism along with Spanish Falangism appealed to Trujillo whose admiration for the Fuhrer went as far copying his style of dress and mustache. Moreover this fascination with Germany was also reflected in the establishment of the Dominican-German (Nazi) Scientific Institute in Santo Domingo prior to the massacre.⁴³

The massacre of Haitians revealed how much Trujillo believed in the Nazi Aryan view of the superiority of races. In Trujillo's case, the Dominicans were the German Aryans of Hispaniola and Haitians the "undesirable" Jews. This connection between Trujillo and the Third Reich was not lost on the many exiles that denounced Trujillo's plan of cleansing the Dominican nation of Haitians. In response to the anti-Haitian publications and in a rebuttal to Batlle's *El sentido de una politica* speech, Dominican exile Dr. J.I. Jimenes-Grullón in Cuba, charged Batlle of being a Nazi. He underscored the irony of glorifying a country like Spain Hitler would enslave that in the Nazi-end and who only accepted ethnic Germans as citizens.

⁴² Peña Batlle's, *Sentido de una politica*, pg.15.

⁴³ See Vega, *Trujillo y Haití*, Vol.1, pg.318-320. According to Vega, Trujillo even received a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kempf* via the German Economics Affairs Officer. For more see Bernardo Vega, *Nazismo, fascismo, y falangismo en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1986).

Peña Batlle appears within the dictatorship as a mixture of Goebbels and Rosenberg. Like these men he believes that the nation's expression of a pure race is an unchangeable entity that develops the specific substance of that race. He adopts this position unaware that for his Apostle Hitler--his master is Trujillo--the Spaniard forms part of a 'sub-race' condemned to act in the Germanic world in the subordinate role.⁴⁴

Most probably Trujillo knew that Nazi Germany regarded his country and its citizens in much the same way that Dominicans viewed Haiti. But as far as Trujillo and his intellectuals were concerned Haiti remained the enemy of the Dominican people and an obstacle towards obtaining an acceptable level of racial, religious, and cultural progress. The emergence of this new attitude towards Haiti began in earnest with the massacre. This rupture allowed Trujillo intellectuals like Batlle to use the massacre to justify and accentuate the differences between the two countries and its people. It is this exaggerated difference that served as the basis for a new but skewed national Dominican identity, which deflected attention from Trujillo's genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing and branded the Haitian as the historic Dominican nemesis. Furthermore, through his writings, Batlle was able to channel traditional Dominican anti-Haitian sentiment and justify it (and by extension the massacre) by claiming cultural and racial superiority.⁴⁵ Throughout his life Batlle was a prolific author and perhaps one of the nation's most brilliant minds. But although he did not outlive Trujillo, his legacy to the advancement of racism and anti-Haitianism has.⁴⁶

⁴⁴See J.I. Jimenes-Grullón *Dos actitudes antes el problema Dominico-Haitiano* (La Habana, Cuba: Unión Democrática Anti-Nazista Dominicana, 1943), pg.24.

⁴⁵See Alba Josefina Zaiter Mejía, *La identidad social y nacional en dominicana: un analisis psico-social* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1996), pg. 218.

⁴⁶Dr. Silvio Torres-Saillant writes that despite the revival of Batlle's racist ideas by contemporary supporters his anti-Haitian and anti-black ideology "has absolutely nothing to contribute to the serious dialogue concerning Dominicaness[.]" Indeed, Batlle's writings can only hinder the democratic development of a Dominican identity. See Silvio Torres-Saillant's *El retorno de las yolas: ensayos sobre diáspora, democracia y dominicanidad* (Santo Domingo: Librería la Trinitaria, 1999), pgs.78-82,

The other Trujillo ideologue who did outlive both Batlle and Trujillo was Joaquín Balaguer: *maquivellian extraordinaire* who after Trujillo's assassination went on to become President again from 1966-1978 and from 1986-1996. Balaguer was the oldest and highest-ranking former Trujillo official who has remained in power long after his mentor was killed. Aside from leading bloody and authoritarian regimes throughout the 1960s, 70s, 80, and 90s, Balaguer the intellectual, continued to perpetuate the anti-Haitian discourse he helped create and defend under Trujillo. The small and later blind nonagenarian man possessed a rare combination of political insight and intellectual depth that allowed him to remain in the highest echelons of power in Trujillo's government for thirty years.

Balaguer's political career spans more than seventy years. As a youth Balaguer was a fervent nationalist giving passionate stump speeches against the US military of the island. But his leftist anti-imperialistic political stance soon shifted in 1930 with the fall of President Horacio Vásquez and the rise of his future mentor Rafael Trujillo. 1930 marked the year that Balaguer would meet and for the next thirty years collaborate with Trujillo. Many of Balaguer's detractors point out that his sudden political shift from championing democratic ideals of freedom against the United States to an accomplice of authoritarianism was driven by his consummate need to obtain power. Balaguer is quick to deny this notion as he reminds Dominicans that it was Trujillo not Balaguer that approached him for an opportunity to support him in the 1930 Presidential campaign. According to Balaguer, Trujillo, during the course of the campaign, invited Balaguer to his chalet in the northern city of Santiago. It was here, according to Balaguer, that Trujillo said: "I wish for you to stay here tonight because I will need you in the political journey that we will make through out the country."⁴⁷

⁴⁷"Balaguer en el reloj de la historia," *Hoy*, June 2, 1999, pg.15.

Regardless of who asked whom for help, Balaguer remained a Trujillista for the next thirty years serving Trujillo. As early as 1932, Balaguer was already praising his mentor portraying the dictator as a savior of the Dominican nation. "His [Trujillo's] triumph so unforeseen like his apparition, so fast like his race shows that he has, in superior grades more than his predecessors all the elements of seduction that the public man needs to snatch away the crowds and bind them to his victorious car."⁴⁸ Balaguer continued to praise and support Trujillo and his regime throughout the 1930s. In 1937 during the massacre he headed the foreign ministry and participated in the active cover-up of the killings. During the massacre Balaguer defended his government from Haitian accusations that the massacre was a military driven and pre-meditated operation. In a letter to his counterpart in Haiti, Balaguer tried to convince the Haitian government that the Dominican military was not an accomplice to the killings. According to Balaguer, since surviving Haitians crossing into Haiti bore knife-inflicted and not bullet wounds the army which only used firearms could not be implicated in the crime.

It has been a point of surprise for the Dominican Government the affirmation that Your Excellency makes relative to the denunciation made by some Haitians and according to which the authors of such incidents have been members of the Dominican Army armed with machetes. According to our laws the members of the Dominican Army cannot carry, under penalty of severe sanctions, neither machetes nor any other type of cutting weapon...such charges seem to always be unfounded whenever it refers to members of the Dominican Army.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *La obra de un renovador*. Conferencias y disertaciones dictadas por varios distinguidos intelectuales, en la estacion radiodifusora H.I.X. de Santo Domingo, Republica Dominicana (Santo Domingo: La Opinion, 1932), pg.41.

⁴⁹ Letter from Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs Joaquín Balaguer to Evremont Carrie Haitian Foreign Minister in Puerto Principe, Oct.15, 1937. It was Carrie and Balaguer who would draft the famous October 15 diplomatic communique pledging mutual support in resolving the "border conflicts" that Trujillo would later use to limit an international mediation. See José Israel Cuello H. *Documentos del conflicto dominico-haitiano de 1937*, (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1985), pg.52.

During and following the massacre Balaguer defended the regime from international accusations that his government conducted a genocidal policy against innocent Haitian civilians. As a staunch Trujillista Balaguer defended his government's stance that the massacre saying it was a border skirmish between Dominican farmers and Haitian thieves. Balaguer's highly articulate and nationalistic rebuke of charges of state-sponsored massacres continued long after the decomposition of thousands of Haitian bodies. In a second letter to the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* in 1945, Balaguer repeated his denials of the Haitian atrocities. He writes:

The events of 1937 of which the enemies of the Dominican government have tried to paint overseas as a wicked massacre of unarmed Haitian masses, were the eruptions in the soul of our peasant of a sentiment of defense and protest against four centuries of depredations carried out in the northern provinces of the country by bands of Haitian thieves. [even] the government of Haiti recognized that those acts were provoked by bands of Haitians previously mentioned.⁵⁰

Balaguer argued that the massacre or border skirmish represented a larger and more serious problem to the Dominican Republic. The *problem* was Haitian immigration, which he and other Trujillo intellectuals coined as a "silent invasion". This phrase capitalized on the shared Dominican memories and connected it to the military Haitian invasions of the nineteenth-century. This comparison of Haitians invasions made the Dominicanization of the border and its concomitant anti-Haitian ideology imperative. Haitians were seen as polluting the Dominican nation with their retrograde culture and language.⁵¹ Since Haiti posed no military threat to the

⁵⁰Ibid. pg.505. See also "Balaguer y el problema dominico-haitiano," *Hoy*, June 8, 1999, pg.15.

⁵¹ Dominicans were not the only ones writing anti-Haitians texts. There were those like the Spanish refugee and personal aid to Trujillo, José Almoina, who referred to Haitians as an "immense majority, as

Dominican Republic anti-Haitianism centered on the cultural, linguistic, and racial Haitian attributes that were deemed inferior and explained why Dominicans were different from Haitians. "The clandestine infiltrations occurred daily. Little by little the Haitians introduced their customs, vices, their African witchcraft. The spread of Voudou not only conspires against the unity of religious feeling of the border region but also against the tradition, culture, and the history of the Dominican people."⁵² Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century Balaguer promoted the "silent invasion" thesis as the author of racist books and then as President of the Republic. Two years after he officially denied a massacre had ever taken place; Balaguer wrote a racist and anti-Haitian book, which laid out all of his ideas concerning Haiti.

La realidad dominicana revealed the extent to which intellectuals such as Balaguer viewed Haiti and citizens. For Balaguer, Haiti threatened the moral and religious fiber of the Dominican nation. Haitian culture and its religion, had spread throughout the border and threatened to engulf the entire country. According to Balaguer:

The entire region near the Haitian border had been invaded by exotic customs, which not only conspired against the morality of the Dominican people but also against the unity of religious sentiment. Incest and other practices not less barbaric contrary to the Christian institution of the family are common in the lower depths of the Haitian population and constitute a testimony of its tremendous moral deformations.⁵³

Balaguer realized that Dominicans on the border had absorbed much of the

sick human beings." Cites tuberculosis, malaria, helminthiasis, syphilis, and yaws, which he says are "endemic." See Jose Almoina's, *Yo fui secretario de Trujillo* (Buenos Aires: Distribudora del Plata, 1950), pg. 117. The author, ultimately left the Dominican Republic for Mexico, where, upon publishing an anti-Haitian book under the pseudonym of, Gregorio R. Bustamante, was killed by Trujillo's assassins. See José Almoina's *Una satrapía en el caribe. Historia puntual de la mala vida del déspota Rafael Leonidas Trujillo* (Santo Domingo: Editora Cole, 1999).

⁵² Manuel A. Machado La era de Trujillo: *La dominicanización fronteriza* vol.3 (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955), pg.196.

⁵³ See Joaquín Balaguer's, *La realidad dominicana* (Buenos Aires: Ferrari Hermanos, 1947), pg. 94.

Haitian culture. And no other part of this culture threatened more Trujillo's project to Dominicanize and Catholicize the border than Vodou. Balaguer tells his readers that without the Dominicanization of the border and the construction of churches and the proselytizing priests across the region, Catholicism would have disappeared. His pejorative descriptions of voodoo as a "diabolic ritual" and "one of the most monstrous manifestations of African animism" revealed the threat this religion and, by extension, the philosophy of its followers represented to Trujillo's state-building project.⁵⁴ It was bad enough, said Balaguer, that Dominicans practiced Voudou, but for Dominican parents to take their children to Haiti to be baptized was sacrilegious.

In this context, Dominicanizing the border meant trying to stop this palpable dependency on Haitian religious services. For Balaguer, offering free registrations of births served to limit Dominican interaction with and in Haiti but also, as he suggested, was a way to "control in those regions the demographic movements of the Dominican population."⁵⁵ Quite as a matter-of-fact, Balaguer tells his readers that he has no problem with citizens of his country being people of color, but he warned that they should not become the majority of the population. Balaguer like many of his intellectual contemporaries feared being absorbed completely by Haitian immigrants and believed that without state interventionist policies such as the border project, the Dominicans would become a nation of blacks--like Haiti. He recommended the preservation of the white minority in the Dominican Republic to buoy the increase in Haitian immigration. According to Balaguer:

What the preservation of the Dominican nationality requires is simply that the white and mestizo do not come to constitute, like in the neighboring country, an infamous minority, but that it is maintained, at least at actual levels, so that the differences do not disappear completely, differences that, from the somatic point of view, exist between both countries. Ideally, in other words, it cannot

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.97.

nor should it be that the white eliminate the black but also it cannot be nor should it be that the black eliminate the white and the mestizo.⁵⁶

Balaguer continued to write and publish books that contain a strong anti-Haitian content. But the rhetoric was not just limited to the thirty-year dictatorship. In 1984, Balaguer published *La isla al revés*, which contained many of the anti-Haitian/black strains, found in his previous *La realidad contemporánea*. In it, Balaguer perpetuates the Trujillo anti-Haitian ideology portraying Haitians as a threat to the Dominican nation. Balaguer spends several chapters reminding his readers of the nineteenth century Haitian military invasions which he uses to convince Dominicans of an historic Haitian propensity to invade their country. He uses this history to portray the Dominican Republic as a victim of continual Haitian aggression. But he also warns readers that Haiti continues to undermine the Dominican nation. "Haiti had ceased being a danger to Santo Domingo for reasons of a political order. But the Haitian imperialism continues being a threat to our country to a greater degree than before for reasons of a biological character."⁵⁷ Balaguer suggested that Haitian immigration, if unchecked, would lead to them outnumbering Dominicans.

In explicit and biological-racial language reminiscent of the nineteenth century, Balaguer suggests Haitian immigrants could overrun the Dominican Republic. According to Balaguer, the Haitian "if left abandoned to his instincts without the restraints that a level of life relatively elevated imposes in all the countries for reproduction purposed, rapidly multiplies almost similar to that of vegetables."⁵⁸ Balaguer's anti-Haitian pro-Spanish definition of Dominican identity had not changed since his defense of the Trujillo regime back in the 1940s. His argument rested on convincing Dominicans to fear Haiti because they were under attack by immigrants.

⁵⁶ Ibid.116.

⁵⁷ Joaquín Balaguer *La isla al revés* (Santo Domingo: Librería Dominicana, 1984), pg.35.

⁵⁸ Ibid. pg.36.

Balaguer reminded Dominicans that they risked losing their culture, which was in all its facets quasi-Spanish. For Balaguer “The clandestine penetration [of Haitians] throughout the border threatens the Dominican family with the disintegration of its moral and ethnic values.”⁵⁹

In other words, without restrictions of Haitian immigration, the Dominican nation would become black or blacker than it was. Although Dominicans were also black, the ideology espoused by Balaguer saw his countrymen at worst a mestizo nation and at best a tenacious bastion of white Spanish culture. It is no surprise then that Balaguer, in *La isla al revez*, included several color pictures of rural light-skinned Dominican peasants as a testament to Dominican Spanish heritage. This was after the objective of the massacre in 1937 and helps explain the subsequent Dominicanization of the border: the whitening of the nation. The policy never succeeded in either limiting cross-cultural contact between both nations or reducing Haitian immigration. Yet the official government discourses at the time continued to publish propagandistic information about the success of the border project. As late as 1952 Dominican newspaper editorials praised the transformation of the border under Trujillo. From an arid and desolate region the border was transformed into a modern area of progress that now had paved roads and increased agricultural production such as peanuts and rice.⁶⁰

People also sent op-ed newspaper articles expressing their views about the border project. They all contained the same obligatory praise for Trujillo and the same preoccupation to Dominicanize the border through Dominican colonization and Haitian exclusion. One border resident wrote obliquely that Dominicanizing the border entailed evolving “towards the true conception of a real Dominican.”⁶¹ Other

⁵⁹ Ibid. pg. 156.

⁶⁰ “La ruta fronteriza dominicana, la de 1930 y la de 1952,” In *Beller*, Dec. 20, 1952.

⁶¹ See “Viendo la Dominicanización fronteriza,” *Libertador*, Jan. 23, 1944. This “true conception” of a Dominican was seen as monolithic without any “ambiguities, without confusions, [and] without

articles were not as subtle. In these articles many writers spoke of how Trujillo's border project had transformed this region by incorporating it back into the Dominican nation. "What was yesterday an illicit vanguard of black hate or barbarous degradation is today a country of prolific activities truly Dominican."⁶² Despite ongoing celebratory articles of the border project and their anti-Haitian slant anti-Haitianism, as an official state ideology, was no longer practiced. Between 1946 until Trujillo's assassination in 1961, the Dominican state no longer used anti-Haitianism as a government policy. But the modern anti-Haitianism that emerged during Trujillo's regime continued sporadically in books and personal attitudes. One of the more controversial anti-Haitian books ever written and during the 1950s was called *La exterminación añorada*. Written by a former Dominican diplomat to Haiti, Angel S. Rosario Pérez, the book is an ultra nationalistic and racist text that perpetuated all the Trujillo myths about Dominican identity.⁶³

Perez wrote the book as a response to a tome written by the distinguished diplomat/historian Jean Price-Mars. Price-Mars' strove to revise certain Dominican misconceptions about the nineteenth century Haitian invasions and challenge Dominicans' self-perception of themselves as white. It was perhaps the strongest and most comprehensive challenge to Trujillo's ideological framework of *hispanidad* ever mounted during the regime. As a diplomat in Santo Domingo, Price-Mars had unique special insight into the Dominican society and the mindset of its anti-Haitian intellectuals. Price-Mars reminded Dominicans who waxed ecstatic about their

degrading mixtures." See "Manifiesto que dirige el ciudadano Carlos Adriano Muñoz candidato a diputado por la provincia Libertador, a los miembros del Partido Dominicano y a los ciudadanos de dicha provincia Gobernación de MC #80 #125 Oct.24, 1938. AGN.

⁶² See "Hoy y mañana," *La Nación*, July 4, 1943, pg.8.

⁶³ To drive home the point that Dominicans were if not white, less black than Haitians, Pérez writes that "Because if the real owner of the island is the Indigenous person, than the only ones who are endowed with titles over her are we Dominicans, who carry in our blood that Indigenous blood which would be useless to find in the Haitian." See Angel S. del Rosario Pérez's, *La exterminación añorada* (S.I.: S.N., 1957), pg.30. Pérez incessantly referred to Haitians pejoratively as "Ethiopians."

cultural affinity with Spain that it was Haiti, they're supposed "enemy", who protested against Spanish annexation of the Dominican Republic.⁶⁴ It was Haiti, wrote Price-Mars that offered its territory as a refuge for Dominican soldiers in its war against Spain. During the War of Restoration, Haitian authorities permitted Dominicans to plan and launch military attacks from the Haitian side of the border. This was yet another example of the long history of cooperation between Dominicans and Haitians. But the new anti-Haitian ideology could not admit that the same people it described as a mass of "silent invaders" now participated side by side with Dominicans to defeat and expel the Spanish colonial forces.⁶⁵

At this time in the Dominican Republic more and more books were being published on the nineteenth-century Haitian military invasions. These history books glorified Dominican valor against the invading Haitian armies, which served to reinforce the post-massacre constructed fear of Haiti. Trujillo intellectuals ignored the collaborative anti-colonial movements forged by Haitians and Dominicans during Spanish annexation. Writing about the bloody war against Spanish colonialism under Trujillo would have contradicted the prevailing anti-Haitian ideology of the time that repeated *ad nauseam* that Haiti had always been the enemy. Instead many historians such as Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi utilized the Haitian invasions of the 1800s to unify the nation through a collective past. Dominicans were all part of the nation because they shared the same experience of fighting together against Haiti. "Against the Haitian there were raised the highest and invincible walls of Dominican heroism."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "The government of Haiti therefore protests solemnly before Europe and America the occupation of Dominican territory by Spain." Letter written by Haitian President Fabre Geffrard in Jean Price-Mars', *La república de Haití y la República Dominicana. Diversos aspectos de un problema histórico, geográfico, y etnológico* Vol.1 (Puerto Príncipe: Industrias Gráficas España, 1953), pg.71.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Vol.3, pg.88.

⁶⁶ Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Santana y los poetas de su tiempo* Vol.XXV (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1969), pg.144.

Poems and songs that celebrated Dominican victory over Haiti were published in an attempt to convince readers of their noble and heroic past against their archenemy. Evensongs that were sung by Dominican soldiers during the invasions were published to convince the newer generations of Dominicans that Haitians were a constant and historic threat. "There is no mercy! The insolent Haitian, penetrating in the native homes, defiled our temples and altars; jurisdiction he dared run over; And the decency of the virgin, and the gray hair of the wretched old man; what is left sacred in humans he insulted with shameless pride."⁶⁷

Price-Mars not only revealed the hypocrisy behind many of these intellectual anti-Haitian writings but he also refuted the lie that the massacre was a spontaneous "border skirmish" perpetrated by angry Dominican farmers against Haitian thieves. He wrote: "But the repetition of the acts, at short intervals, offered, with everything, the impression of an orchestrated movement."⁶⁸ In his analysis he questioned how an atrocity of this massacre could have occurred when thieves were the only culprits. No one especially in Trujillo's country could have sustained an operation of this magnitude without being stopped by the myriad networks of spies and ubiquitous army patrols that spanned the border. If Haitian thieves were the motivating factor provoking a massacre than, concluded Price-Mars, what could be said for the Dominican institutions of law and order?⁶⁹ He then focused his attention to the post-massacre Dominicanization border project and its racial motives.

He deconstructed Peña Batlle's famous 1942 border speech considered the coming-out-party for the modernization of the frontier and presented it for what it was: a border doctrine to whiten the Dominican nation.⁷⁰ The fear of Haiti also led to

⁶⁷ See Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, "La poesía patriótica en Santo Domingo," *Cuadernos Dominicanos de Cultura* 1 No.6 (AGN, 1944), pg.77. paginas completas:47-92. Written by Felix Maria del Monte.

⁶⁸ Jean Price-Mars, *La República de Haití y la República Dominicana*, Vol.3, pg.217.

⁶⁹ Ibid.229.

⁷⁰ Ibid.237.

exclusionary anti-black immigration after the massacre, which Price-Mars showed, was geared toward the exclusion of Haitians. There were others who challenged Trujillo regime such as Dominican exiles. But Price-Mars' three volume work was perhaps the first comprehensive attempt to undermine the Dominican idea that Haiti was the enemy; that the massacre was an aberration; and that Dominicans were white. Price-Mars eloquently questioned, deconstructed and weakened Trujillo's fabricated national identity. According to Price-Mars, Dominican intellectuals who were writing propagandistic texts to convince their compatriots that they were white suffered from what he called "passionate subjectivism". Since race was a social construction Dominicans, according to Price-Mars, could be anything they wanted depending on their mood. He wrote: "the notion of race is a question of feeling."⁷¹ Despite Price-Mars' attempt to correct the distorted Dominican historiography two other works appeared toward the end of the 1950s perpetuating the anti-Haitian rhetoric. The first was Socrates Nolasco who in true xenophobic fashion and as another rebuttal to Price-Mars, showed how the concept of reunification was always and still was the goals of the Haitians. This imperialistic mindset, writes Nolasco,

Illustrates and keeps alive the memory of how the Haitians have believed it is vitally necessary to their development and free existence to extend and maintain their dominance over the territory of the entire island, marking the borders with the limits [only] of the encircling sea, rousing themselves up with the slogan of: *one and indivisible*.⁷²

Although anti-Haitianism as state policy had ended after 1946, Dominican intellectuals continued to perpetuate the idea of Haitians overrunning the nation. Much like Balaguer and Batlle, they stressed Haitian inferiority and the peculiar

⁷¹ Ibid. pg.240. In other words, race is a social construction.

⁷² Socrates Nolasco's *Comentarios de la historia de Jean-Price Mars* (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1955), pg.13.

differences between both peoples. Perhaps the last of the anti-Trujillo texts published during the Trujillo Era was by a professor in International General Public Law and American International Law at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD). Professor Carlos Augusto Sánchez y Sánchez wrote about the “inferior biological roots” of the Haitians. Yet ironically he respected Haiti’s “brilliant upper class” but not the “sub-social level” that “look for the complicity of night or in favor of assault to enjoy the fruit of their neighbors’ labor.”⁷³ For Professor Sánchez y Sánchez, race was very much biological. To prove that Dominicans were not descendants of Africans, he even cited official scientific analyses of blood groups by a Dr. José de Jesús Alvarez. The ludicrous study suggested that because 52.75% of Dominicans have low levels of “b”, high “A,” “Rh1,” high “O” and “factor M” levels, their color, therefore, comes from Indian and white mixture, not from Africans.⁷⁴ This need to distance itself from Haiti along racial and religious lines became the ideological linchpins for Trujillo’s anti-Haitian state doctrine.

Trujillo’s doctrine of anti-Haitianism, along with hispanidad, sought to underscore Dominicans’ cultural similarities with Spain. Yet in reality, Dominicans shared just as much with Haiti, as was evident in the rate of intermarriage and interborder trade where, a multicultural zone emerged among Dominicans and Haitians. It was this interconnectedness which undermined Trujillo’s policy of Dominicanizing the border and led to state violence (killing of thousands of Haitians); then the institutional transformation of the border zone by constructing Dominican schools, churches, hospitals, military posts and police stations and Party offices. Lastly, an ideology that crystallized and elevated historic Dominican prejudices to a finely tuned state ideology of hate promoting the exclusion of Haiti and her people

⁷³ See Carlos Augusto Sánchez y Sánchez’s, *El caso Dominicano-Haitiano* (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora Montalvo, 1958), pg.23-24. He also writes that the majority of Haitians are “dominated by sexual instinct...a brutality only combatted by education, patience and training.” pg.38.

⁷⁴ Ibid. pg.43-45.

was created by Dominican intellectuals. Through the intellectual discourse of the day, Trujillo's nation became white, Catholic, and Spanish. Moreover, it was through ideological propaganda promoted by Trujillo intellectuals such as Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, Joaquín Balaguer and a host of other minor and major thinkers that served to invite all Dominicans to share in a discourse of difference, contempt and fear of Haitians. It is a fear that long after Trujillo's assassination in 1961, remains entrenched in Dominican society.

Conclusion

No other topic in the Dominican historiography has received as much attention as the Trujillo dictatorship. The regime, which began in 1930 and ended with Trujillo's assassination in 1961, became one of the most brutal and totalitarian regimes in Latin America. For thirty years Trujillo embarked on a state-building project to consolidate and modernize this poor Caribbean nation, which had experienced years of foreign invasions, civil wars and economic turmoil. One of the most important of these projects was the consolidation and modernization of the border region. Under Trujillo the border became an important strategic and symbolic site where policies of national security were linked to a new Dominican national identity.

During the first twenty years of his regime, Trujillo placed the border at the top of his political agenda. For years prior to Trujillo's regime, the semi-autonomous border region had been a refuge for revolutionaries attempting to overthrow their respective governments in either Santo Domingo or Port-au-Prince. Moreover the political border that separated the Republics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic was undefined. Therefore Trujillo sought early on to make the border less fertile ground for his enemies.

He first achieved this through a series of official meetings with his Haitian counterpart President Stenio Vincent. From 1930 to 1936, the leaders met continuously in the border in the island's two capitals. The treaty negotiations focused on the territorial legal boundaries that divided both republics. It is during this time that Haiti and the Dominican Republic reached a historic apex in cordial relations. Treaty negotiations ended in 1936 with both countries signing a final border agreement definitively demarcating the border.

In his quest to transform the border, Trujillo began a colonization plan to Dominicanize the region and the nation. Several Dominican colonies were created throughout to serve as a buffer and to halt the expansion of Haitian settlement. In Santo Domingo, anti-Haitian legislation was passed to limit the entry of further Haitians in particular and blacks in general from entering the country. Both colonization and immigration projects failed because Haitians continued entering and residing in the Dominican Republic, lured by jobs in the Dominican sugar industry where they soon became the majority of the recruited laborers. 1937 became the year where Trujillo's policy of friendly relations with Haiti changed to genocidal ethnic cleansing. The killings of thousands of Haitian men, women, and children represented a break with the previous seven years of amicable relations between both nations. "El massacre" or "el corte" as it is known in the literature marked the beginning of a new policy against Haiti and served as the catalyst for a new definition of Dominican national identity. Killings Haitians on the Dominican side of the border made it clear that Trujillo would stop at nothing to Dominicanize the border and consolidate his nation. Having Haitians living among and intermarrying with Dominicans in the semi-autonomous border region, clearly, undermined Trujillo's power to control his country.

Trujillo capitalized on historic but diffuse Dominican anti-Haitian prejudice by creating the environment to institutionally demonize Haitians and convince his country that the massacre was an act of Dominican self-defense. After the killings, Trujillo and his cohorts embarked on an institutional and ideological project to transform the border. This was the first time in the history of the Dominican nation where the state in earnest made the border a national priority. No longer was this region seen as a backward and volatile place "uncivilized" and far from what was considered the modern and "civilized" capital of Santo Domingo. From 1938 through

1946, the beginnings of what was to become modern anti-Haitianism became official government ideology. After seven years (1930-1937) of mutual respect and friendly relations, Haiti became the official enemy of the state. It was demonized and portrayed as a bastion of evil, impoverished and diseased people whose sole intent was to invade and destroy the Dominican Republic and its culture. Therefore, the most sensitive, vulnerable, and the most logical part of the nation to defend was the border region. Thus under Trujillo, the border had to be fortified against not only a Haitian presence but also future immigration from the western part of the island. Even though anti-Haitianism as official state dogma only lasted until 1946, the institutional transformation of the border lasted until the end of the dictatorship. And, it is safe to say, that no other government since has done more to transform the border through collective violence and state building than under Trujillo's regime.

Prior to 1938 the Dominican government began to transform the border by incorporating it more into the Dominican sphere of influence. Historically, the state had maintained a relatively weak presence along the border region. But this all was to change. Starting with the massacre and subsequently thereafter, the Dominican state would make its presence felt in palpable ways. After so many years where the lack of a weak and unregulated border complete with polemical and unenforceable treaties, the Trujillo government set out to clearly demarcate its border with Haiti. For example, new provinces were created along the border. They were given names associated with Trujillo such as San Rafael or Benefactor. Many rural hamlets and municipalities, which for years had a significant Haitian presence, were given new Spanish names to replace the Haitian Kreyol ones. The Dominican state wanted no mistake as to what country you were in along the border.

Now that the new border provinces were created on paper they had to be physically demarcated to show that they were an extension of Dominican territory.

Above all, the infrastructure of the border marked the most profound change. Government buildings of all kinds were erected during the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. Most were government buildings that represented the extension of government bureaucracy along the border. These buildings ranged from provincial governors' offices, municipal and legal offices to those housing the official political party of the day: the Dominican Party. Government institutions extended throughout the border representing the nation's control over this territory. In almost every border town military and police stations were established to secure control of the region. It was these last two institutions that not only carried out the massacre but also, were responsible for security and order during the course of the Dominicanization project. (And they were to usher in the militarization of the border that has lasted until the present day). But the state not only erected institutions to physically control the region it also attempted to transform the landscape making it more environmentally feasible for Dominican settlement.

Due to the arid climate along the border irrigation canals were built that increased the yield of farmers. Paved roads connecting the border to the interior of the Dominican Republic were constructed which decreased the historic isolation that had separated this region for so long from being absorbed by the state. The border became a region that had to be rescued and modernized to distinguish it from Haiti. The transformation in infrastructure and political geography to consolidate the Dominican nation was just only part of Trujillo's search for complete control of his country. It was also motivated by Trujillo's need to limit Haitian immigration crossing the border and promote the ideology of hispanidad.

Under Trujillo and especially after 1937, the state promoted a Eurocentric identity where Dominicans were projected as being white, Catholic and Spanish. But culturally, the Dominican-Haitian border region did not reflect the government's new

image of itself. The border region was heterogeneous. In many instances, Dominicans and Haitians intermarried, reared and baptized their children together. For as long as anyone could remember, people crossed the porous border zone to trade with each other in various currencies, including the Haitian gourde which floated throughout the regional economy.

For Trujillo's state-building project these very strong and historical interethnic relations had to be destroyed. First through violent state killings and then the creation of a new border whose new existence emerged from the violent and murderous death of innocent Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. During this time, border Dominicans through various state and religious institutions were indoctrinated and expected to accept this new identity by ending their contact with their Haitian neighbors. The state used institutions as mechanisms to create a new Dominican citizen.

Many schools were constructed where for the first time border children were exposed to formal state education. Moreover, residents of this region were being incorporated as new citizens of a larger community: the Dominican nation. Since the border was considered backward, due to its proximity to Haiti, schools became one of several institutions through which the state molded Dominicans into culturally correct citizens. Music programs and musical academies were established in many border towns, which the state underscored as yet further proof that their side was more "civilized" than Haiti. Health programs were established among border residents to prevent and cure diseases such as tuberculosis. Hygiene was also taught, and stressed especially for the young school children. Religion, particularly Catholicism, became a tool for the state to incorporate border citizens into the nation. Roving priests were sent throughout the border to proselytize to rural communities often delivering a sermon whose message was a combination of biblical scripture and nationalistic

fervor.

At the local level, state cultural agents were responsible for transforming Dominican border residents (accustomed to significant Haitian influence) into becoming citizens of a country whose national identity rested on the total rejection of Haiti. These government appointed administrators, often highly educated, were sent to the border region to expose and teach Dominican culture to its residents. Musical bands and guest lecturers were but a few of the events coordinated by these state bureaucratic agents to expose and instruct border residents on the nationalistic criteria on being “Dominican”. Despite the enormous state effort by the Dominican government to separate its citizens from Haitians, inter-ethnic contact persisted. Government archival sources reveal that following the massacre in the early 1940s at the height of the border project and endless anti-Haitian diatribes in the press, Dominicans continued to associate with Haitians in more ways than one. On the ground level there were numerous examples that showed that Dominicans entered Haitian territory to visit family members or conducted business transactions despite government efforts to sever cultural ties between the two peoples. Ironically, the traditional Dominican historiography paints a different portrait of the border at this time.

During this period, Dominican intellectuals were intent on spreading the myth of Haitian (read black) inferiority along with a xenophobic attitude, which they justified as an appropriate defense against past and present Haitian aggression. Although Haiti had ceased being a military threat to its eastern neighbor, Dominicans intellectuals warned of a “silent invasion”: the escalating amount of Haitian sugarcane cutters migrating to the Dominican Republic. This allowed Dominican intellectuals to cleverly rewrite the massacre as a violent self-defense encounter reminiscent of bygone nineteenth century Haitian military campaigns.

My research on the post-massacre institutionalization of the border revealed that while the press and Dominican intellectuals were creating a discourse of separation and fear, inter-border cultural and economic exchange continued albeit under the gaze of the new state surveillance. My research also shows that although Dominican border officials informed their superiors in Santo Domingo of this persistent contact, the historic linkages created over centuries of trade made further state (violent) anti-Haitian reprisals unfeasible. Many elderly Dominicans I spoke with confirmed the archival documents. Most of them told me that initially the massacre had suspended contact and trade between Haitians and Dominicans. However, it only took a year or two before things stabilized along the border. Many border Dominicans recalled that at the height of the Dominicanization project it was normal to travel to Haiti and buy food in Haitian markets. The persistence in inter-border trade only a few years after a bloody genocidal campaign and during a period where the state was initiating an intense policy of state-building based on the rejection of Haiti, ultimately undermined and limited Trujillo's goal of Dominicanizing this region.

The refusal of many Dominican border residents to follow wholeheartedly anti-Haitian state ideology represents a resistance that is so characteristic of the history of this region. It also points to the failure of Dominican officials to either underestimate the historic and entrenched interethnic and economic relations in the border or the state's inability to reach and convince residents to stay away from Haiti or both. In the end, this historic semi-autonomous zone called the border, encompassing Dominicans, Haitians, and bilingual descendants of both groups proved stronger and durable than the killings 20,000 Haitians and the subsequent state policies intended to destroy this community.

The 1937 Haitian Massacre and the subsequent Dominicanization of the

border is also important in understanding the origins of modern anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic. Today there are thousands of Haitians who live and work in the country without any legal documentation. Many arrived as cane cutters in isolated sugar mills of the east in towns such as San Pedro, La Romana, and Barahona, while others migrated to the countryside or cities for agricultural and urban work. The growing number of Haitians in Dominican territory has provoked many nationalists to resurrect the rhetoric first institutionalized by Trujillo intellectuals sixty years ago. Phrases in the media such as a “silent invasion” or “invisible war” abound in Dominican newspapers and magazine articles. Many articles are blatant in their description of Haitian immigrants as being carriers of disease and even describing them as insects and rodents.¹ Moreover, as in many societies, where racial, ethnic or religious minorities are scapegoated and are often blamed for the deterioration of the host country, there exists a popular and significant strain in Dominican society that sees Haiti and its immigrants as a serious threat to the sovereignty of the nation. Many Dominicans blame the demise of their country to the significant and growing presence of Haitian immigrants. There is a Malthusian fear that the Dominican Republic will not be able to withstand the population pressure caused by Haitian migrants. Moreover, right-of-center politicians warn that a significant number of Haitian migrants are carriers of AIDS thereby exposing his country to a significant health hazard (as if Dominicans cannot be carriers of the virus).²

In a country where Haitians are seen as outsiders, crimes committed by the

¹ Reporter Santiago Estrella Veloz writes, “There are like flies because they are everywhere: in the marginal bateyes, in the affluent and poor neighborhoods; in the streets and avenues...it is about Haitians who multiply like rats without any need to subsist.” See Santiago Estrella Veloz, “The Haitians like Flies: they are everywhere.” *Canabrava* June 11, 1999, pg.9.

² Angel Lockward never mentions statistics for Haitians and their medical conditions in the Dominican Republic. Rather, citing Haitians in Cuba, he wants the reader to make the connection between “studies made in the Haitian boat people population which arrived in Guantanamo, in Cuba three years ago [1994] who have a 35% incidence of AIDS”, and those who are entering the Dominican Republic today. See *Asuntos de Migración: Haiti en las calles dominicanas*, *Listin Diario* July 20, 1997, 9A.

latter are frequently underscored. For example the rape of an unidentified woman by four Haitians in Santo Domingo made front-page news in one of the Dominican afternoon dailies.³ Although the newspaper article never disclosed the woman's nationality, shocking headlines feature crimes by Haitians which fuel even more Dominican fear and contempt for immigrants from Haiti. There is a palpable alarm in many xenophobic Dominican circles that Dominican sovereignty is being eroded by the presence of ever increasing Haitian enclaves. Some have even warned of the Balkanization of the Dominican Republic where Haitians residing in Dominican territory would in the near future petition the international community for autonomous rights.⁴ This fear of being overwhelmed by Haiti can be traced to the 1822-44 Haitian control of the entire island. Since then this historical event has become an unrelenting theme in the collective memory of Dominicans. Today anti-Haitianism in Dominican society has led many Dominicans to believe that Haitian immigration is a prelude to a reunification of the island. Many Dominicans feel Haiti maintains imperial aspirations to control the entire island as it once did in the nineteenth century by mentioning its constitution which supposedly states that the island is one and indivisible. Yet, as one imminent Dominican historian has written, after 1935, the Haitian constitution dropped the controversial clause and replaced it with: "Haiti is an indivisible, sovereign, independent, democratic and social Republic."⁵ Here historical myth as memory is stronger than fact. For many Dominicans, the overwhelming Haitian presence in various sectors of the Dominican economy confirms this fear: that

³ "4 haitianos violan mujer," See *Ultima Hora* April 30, 1997.

⁴ See "Kosovo y Haiti," *Listin Diario*, March 3, 1999, 8A. "When those 'independent communities' develop, surely we will have here the OAS, the United Nations, France, the United States, and Canada supporting the 'just demands' of the noble and long-suffering Haitian people." Also see "?Albano-Kosovares=haitianos-barahoneros?," *Rumbo* No. 271 April 12, 1999, 45.

⁵ Frank Moya Pons, ?una e indivisible?, *Rumbo* March 3-9, 1994, 6. Similar articles continued to appear five years after the previous article stating that "The Haitianization of the Dominican Republic is everywhere...it appears to be fate, a destiny or a calamity: 'The One and Indivisible.'" See Salvador B. Dajer S. "Francisco de Rosario Sanchez," *El Hoy* March 8, 1999, 6.

Haitians are once again taking over. Yet, economic conditions not hyperbole best explain why Haitians leave their country for brighter horizons across the border.

Dominican newspapers have echoed similar remarks by the World Bank describing Haiti's economic conditions of extreme poverty as war-like. In Haiti, infant mortality rate in the first year is 150 out of 1,000; life expectancy is 52 years. There are 30 students per 10,000 inhabitants and nine doctors per 1,000 persons leading one reporter to say that Haiti is "without armed groups confronting each other like in Africa, the ex-Yugoslavia or the Middle East. It is a war that is not seen if it weren't for the physical infrastructure, economic and institutional destruction of the country."⁶ But similar to the United States and Mexico, Dominicans shares a border with Haiti whose citizens comprise the largest immigrant group in the Dominican Republic. Haitians have been migrating to the eastern end of the island for years. Some migrate to work in the agricultural sectors, others in the field of construction far from the border. While others migrate twice a week to markets on the Dominican side of the border to buy and sell food and other items with Dominicans like their mothers and great-grandmothers before them only to return to their country at the end of the day.⁷ Despite state-building projects, Haiti has continued to have a significant economic and cultural impact on the border region. Haitian business and trade represent an economic lifeline for the sustainability of the region. But the anti-Haitian rhetoric emanating from the major non-border cities that demonize Haitians and support their deportations belie the local reality of Dominican dependence on Haitian trade and labor.

Throughout the deportations of Haitians in the 1990s, the Haitian embassy in the Dominican Republic voiced its complaints with the Dominican government. Haitian officials have called the periodic deportations of their nationals as arbitrary

⁶ See "Haiti, tan cerca y tan lejos," *Listin Diario* March 28, 1999, pg.3D.

⁷ Annet Cardenas Vega, "Portada," *Rumbo* April 12, 1999, 37-38.

and “excessive”. For example this arbitrariness in times of repatriations means that illegal and legal Haitians are not distinguished from each other and thus also risk being repatriated. These arbitrary measures, according to one Haitian Ambassador in Santo Domingo, Guy Lamothe, are reflected in cases when Haitian tourists possessing legal documents have also been repatriated.⁸ Repatriations also affect many Dominicans as well and challenge the very notion of Dominican identity and what criteria are required to fulfill it.

The official anti-Haitian discourse as official policy ended with Trujillo’s assassination in 1961 however the legacy of the modern anti-Haitianism his regime gave birth to during the last twenty-three years of his dictatorship has survived till the present day. Almost sixty years after state anti-Haitianism in the form of ethnic cleansing emerged it has remained entrenched in Dominican society. The same border where revolutionary Haitians and Dominicans together plotted against their respective central governments while shouting the battle cry of freedom against foreign US intervention has become a lightning rod for Dominican conservatives and xenophobes who see it as the nation’s exposed weak link of the Republic. Education is the key if current Dominican attitudes about Haitians are ever going to change. School curricula needs to rigorously teach students about the positive history Dominicans share with Haitians. Schoolchildren should be constantly shown through pictures, songs, lectures, and games of Haitians as their friends. Throughout K-12 Dominican history especially the period of the Haitian expansionism into the Dominican Republic should be taught without the antagonistic and nationalistic fervor that unfortunately underpins part of Dominican pedagogy on this subject. Teaching Dominican students about their wars of independence with Haiti does not have to be taught along anti-

⁸ Fior Gil, “Embajada Haiti denuncia deportan turistas haitianos,” *El Hoy*, March 27, 1999, 14. During the massive deportations of Haiti in the late 1990s, several Haitian congressmen proposed a complete economic boycott along with the closing of the border in response to the deportations. See “Piden boicot contra Santo Domingo,” *El Pais*, February 20, 1997, 7.

Haitian lines.⁹ For example, there is neither popular nor official anti-British sentiment on the part of the citizens of the United States today. The reason being that Americans from a very young age are not taught to fear or hate the British although the latter exploited the American colonists and stood in the way of their political independence. The same case can be made for the elimination of anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic. No Dominican is born fearing or disliking Haiti/Haitians. Dominicans as all human beings learn their prejudices as children. Dominicans are no different. They are taught to be anti-Haitian by familial and popular discourses, which are reinforced and influenced by state institutions.

Anti-Haitianism crystallized under Trujillo was taught and projected as an official ideology of the state. Only a similar campaign with official support, consistent, with wide coverage from the state can undermine fundamentally sixty years of racist and xenophobic indoctrination. Dominican children should be taught that although they might share a similar language with Argentina or Spain their historical struggles against colonialism shows they have as much in common with Haiti. Already as they travel more outside of their countries and as diasporic communities grow and come in closer contact with other societies in the United States and Spain Dominicans are becoming painfully aware of Trujillo's false racial identity as they confront their own place in the African Diaspora in such disparate cities as New York and Madrid.

Trujillo's doctrine of anti-Haitianism and hispanidad sought to underscore Dominicans' cultural similarities with Spain when in reality Dominicans shared just as much with Haiti. Teaching a less chauvinistic and more accurate (border oriented)

⁹ One example is a high school history book by Ruben Silie that attempts to offer balanced view of the infamous 1822-1844 unification of the island. Rather than focus on and exaggerate the evils of Boyer's control of the entire island, the textbook asks students to discuss "the positive and negative measures of Boyer." See Ruben Silie's *Ciencias Sociales*, Cuarto Grado (Santo Domingo: Sec. de Educacion y Cultura, 1997), pg.137.

version of Dominican-Haitian history may begin the transformation of Dominican attitudes towards Haiti and perhaps increase sensitivities toward immigrant rights in their country. A transformation in the curricula along with reinforcement by the popular media will also heightened the consciousness of Dominicans by protesting more vehemently whenever the government tries to deport Haitians.

The massacre must not be seen as an isolated incident or an aberration by a dictator and his band of soldiers in a remote region of the country. The massacre as history lesson must show how mostly ordinary Dominican soldiers and ordinary Dominican civilians participated willingly and unwillingly in the killing of thousands of Haitians men, women, children. Similar debates that other countries face in their participation in the destruction of a group of people must take place in the Dominican Republic. For example Germans today continue to understand why many of them participated in the killing of Jews and other minorities when they knew their actions were morally wrong. In the Dominican Republic a country much smaller in size and economic production and in many ways very different than Germany should be asking the same questions: how could Dominican civilians near the border who were familiar with Haiti and her people assist the army in hunting and at times themselves kill Haitians?

With all the talk of globalization in the Dominican Republic the government has failed to globalize the way it remembers its past. At a time when there is a global movement to remember genocides and other crimes against humanity the Dominican Republic has refused to acknowledge or commemorate the memories of the victims of the massacre, while simultaneously stripping Haitians of their basic human rights to live and work in a country.

Americans especially should be made aware of this massacre because

President Roosevelt through diplomatic correspondence knew that killings were taking place but failed to reprimand or punish Trujillo. For the sake of Latin American solidarity and the success of his Good Neighbor foreign policy President Roosevelt never scorned Trujillo or adopted a policy to isolate him. All would be forgotten when the United States entered World War Two against Germany and Japan and Trujillo declared his unflinching support for the allies. But Trujillo was never punished for these crimes against humanity. Nor were any of his ideologues many of which have since died, ever brought before a judge to be tried in a court of law. Others, like Joaquin Balaguer, have sadly gone on to become president several times and even publish racist books excoriating Haitians.

Today there are still many Trujillistas like Balaguer who occupy positions of power throughout Dominican society. Fortunately, one of the ways that Dominicans can begin rethinking the past and cleansing itself of Trujillo's political and racial residue on how history is presented is by actively remembering, as do societies throughout the world, their nation's mistake. Benedict Anderson writes that there is no shame in feeling ashamed of your country's past mistakes and the entire citizenry should condemn crimes committed by the state--past or present. Using the case of America's role during the Vietnam War, Anderson writes that Americans "felt ashamed that 'their' country's history was being stained by cruelties, lies, and betrayals. So they went to work in protest, not merely as advocates of universal human rights, but as Americans who loved the common American project. This kind of political shame is very good and always needed."¹⁰ Dominicans need to have shame as a collective group concerning not only Trujillo's genocidal policy against Haitians in 1937 but also other human rights violations that continued during the regime and that went well beyond his dictatorship. These crimes range from the 1937

¹⁰ See Benedict Anderson's "Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future," in *The New Left Review*, No.235 (May/June 1999), pg.18.

massacre, the murder of the Mirabal sisters, and countless political murders during Trujillo's regime to crimes under his protégé's-- Balaguer--government (1966-1978; 1986-1996) of which the most famous ones are the murder of journalist Orlando Martinez and university Professor Narciso Gonzalez. Commemorating the past through physical space such as a memorial or monument to the dead Haitians will begin the long overdue process for Dominicans to lift the numbing veneer of years of Trujillo politics. Dominicans themselves will have to reclaim their soil independent of politicians and the elite in order to establish monuments that truly present their past. As one scholar writes, "We can take back the landscape. It does not belong to the dead, but to the living. Monuments and markers are messages to the future, and the future does not belong to the rich alone but to all of us. We must not act in haste, but we must act to make the landscape ours. We must initiate a dialogue with the past from countryside to city square, which will also begin a dialogue with each other."¹¹ It will also mark a radical and sincere overture to Haitians that today's Dominicans repudiate all types of anti-Haitianism whether it be violent ethnic cleansing as in the past or forced and mass deportations of today.

Today more than ever the concept of remembering a nation's shameful past through various methods has become an extremely important tool in how nations learn to cope with uncomfortable parts of its history. In South Africa the government has created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the crimes committed against Blacks under the Apartheid government as a way to come to terms with the past. Swiss banks have agreed to pay more than a billion dollars to Nazi Holocaust survivors and their families whose accounts were hidden by the banks. Recently, Sweden's Prime Minister Goran Persson began reevaluating his country's role and collaboration with Hitler's army during World War Two. "Mr. Persson broke 60 years

¹¹ See James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), pg.453

of tradition by ending a defense of neutral Sweden, which, it has emerged, sold iron ore to Germany for munitions and let German troops cross its territory into Finland and Norway.”¹² Trials against those persons who masterminded the genocide in Rwanda have been conducted albeit at a very slow pace. Even former US President Clinton who almost apologized for black slavery in the United States during his trip to Africa became the first sitting US President to apologize to African-Americans for the painful and reprehensible government project called the Tuskegee experiment. If governments throughout the world can come to grips with their nation’s unspoken and shameful histories than surely the Dominican Republic can begin the painful but redemptive process of remembering the victims of the 1937 Haitian massacre.

¹²“Sweden: Admitting Mistakes,” in *The New York Times*, Jan.21, 2000.

USE FOR ARTICLE***

The most palpable example of contemporary anti-Haitianism was the racist campaign waged against the late Dr. Jose Francisco Pena Gomez by former Trujillo underling Dr. Joaquin Balaguer Ricart.

During the 1990s Pena Gomez the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano's (PRD) presidential candidate and the Vice-president for the Socialist International endured countless racial diatribes by Balaguer, his supporters, and Dominicans alike claiming that Pena Gomez was Haitian and thus did not qualify to be president of the Dominican Republic. Gomez, who was black, suffered humiliating attacks on his person. He was called Haitian because of his complexion and, his loyalty was questioned by many who believed his ascendancy to the presidency would usher in a torrent of Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic. For many Dominicans an excess of melanin revealed your Dominican identity and country loyalty. People flatly rejected Pena Gomez perhaps the best-qualified and experienced candidate during the 1990s because he was black and born to Haitian parents. Ironically, Pena Gomez's resume reflected unquestionable patriotic loyalty.

During the US invasion of 1965, Pena Gomez like the many Dominicans of his generation was outspoken and led many public gatherings denouncing the invasion. A man who had risked his life and participated in that noble dream of

creating a democracy in the Dominican Republic by standing-up with his fellow citizens against 22,000 Marines and an intransigent and fearful elite in the 1960s, was now the victim of a political and media campaign that questioned his nationality and allegiance and urged Dominicans to ““save”” the homeland from the Haitian threat.”¹³

Alluding to Pena Gomez Dominicans like Balaguer urged patriotic voters to protect the nation and elect the ‘Dominican’ candidate. Through fraud, the same Balaguer who denied that a massacre had ever taken place in 1937 and throughout the 1940s fanned the flames of Dominican racism and manipulated Dominicans’ traditional fears of Haiti to defeat Pena Gomez in 1994. During the 1990a, anti-Haitianism was alive and well through the countless indiscriminate repatriations and deportations of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. For years Haitians have been employed by the Dominican government to cut sugar cane in their fields. According to the contract when it expired the worker had to return to Haiti. Many remained and created their own communities in the Dominican Republic and raised families as well. The living conditions in the sugar plantations were and still are deplorable. Indeed many have compared the appalling conditions in these bateyes to modern slavery.¹⁴ Indeed the entire world discovered just how bad conditions were for Haitians in an anti-slavery society study conducted in the mid-eighties that exposed to the world the abuse and system of force labor on these sugar mills.¹⁵ Moreover the study also examined how Dominican officials particularly the army literally bought and sold Haitians and transported them to Dominican sugar plantations in the east. In its report on contemporary forms of slavery the United Nations also was very concerned about the conditions of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic. It stated that:

¹³ See Silvio Torres-Saillant’s *El retorno de las yolas. Ensayos sobre diaspóra, democracia y dominicanidad* (Santo Domingo: Libreria Trinitaria/Manati, 1999), pg.84.

¹⁴ See Howard French, “Consuelito Journal: Sugar Harvest’s Bitter Side: Some Call it Slavery,” New York Times, April 27, 1990, pg.4

¹⁵ Roger Plant, *Sugar and Modern Slavery: A Tale of Two Countries*. (London: Zed Books, 1987).

The committee on the Application of Standards of the 77th International labour Conference in June 1990, had noted with grave concern the continued failure of the Dominican Republic to eliminate serious deficiencies in the application of the Convention. As a result the country had been listed under the heading 'Continued failure to implement'. It was noted that the committee seldom lists countries under this heading. In the last 10 years it had done so on only three occasions with regard to two countries.¹⁶

The situation on the sugar plantations has not changed much for the Haitian worker. They remain within a system that is labor intensive and exploitative as ever in order to maximize its labor during the harvest. One of the major problems that further exploit and marginalizes Haitians in the Dominican Republic and contributes to the myth of the Haitian as the Other is that many of the children of Haitian parents born in the Dominican Republic are denied Dominican citizenship. The Dominican constitution states that everyone born in Dominican territory is a Dominican citizen. Yet for thousands of children born in on Dominican soil to Haitian parents the reality is that they are in effect nation-less. No country claims them as its citizens and they live without any official papers to identify them or confirm their legal existence. They lack legal and political rights and are subject to the wrath of repressive state policies depending on which way the political winds are blowing. The refusal to give Dominicans of Haitian descent citizenship also sets ups an excuse for the state to implement unjust and punitive anti-Haitian measures. Again deportations are implemented when the government deems it politically feasible.

The last twenty years has seen the Dominican government carry out massive deportations of Haitians with the excuse that they are illegal immigrants and have no identity papers. Many of the supposed Haitians that have been deported were as Dominican as the next person (born and raised) but because they were denied the right

¹⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission of Human Rights Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities Forty-second session, Agenda item 16, E/CN.4/SUB.2/1990/44, 23 August 1990, pg.10.

to belong to the Dominican nation (the nation of their birth) they were and are forced from the only home they have ever known by force. In 1991, 50,000 Haitians, along with several dark-skinned Dominicans, were deported under president Joaquin Balaguer who aside from his participation in covering-up the massacre has written widely on the racial inferiority of Haitians.¹⁷

Deporting Haitians has become a politically expedient strategy for the Dominican government during times of internal crisis. The Dominican elite has successfully used this strategy to shift the focus of internal dissent toward a familiar and easy target. Recently in November of 1999 President Leonel Fernandez ordered the deportations of thousands of Haitians for lacking documentation precisely because the government refused to issue identification papers. People were rounded-up without little notice or preparation and taken to the border for expulsion. There were human rights groups that protested such as MUDHA: an organization composed of Haitian and Dominican-Haitian women calling for equal treatment before the law for Haitians and their children in the Dominican Republic. Yet the deportations continued like they did in 1991 without any serious challenge to this policy. Meanwhile Haitians remain vulnerable to the whims of government officials who find it politically expedient to deport Haitians rather than address more fundamental issues such as a fair and consistent immigration policy toward Haiti, unemployment and extreme poverty that affects most Dominicans.

In order to protect Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans, the Dominican government must recognize each person born on its soil as a citizen. Often when a Haitian mother takes her newborn to the municipal offices to claim her citizenship papers she (poor, black, and unable to speak Spanish) is rejected by the ordinary

¹⁷ Joaquin Balaguer, *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*. (Santo Domingo: Librería Dominicana, 1984).

Dominican bureaucrats who reject them outright. According to one journalist: "There are testimonies available of hospitals where women who have come from the other side of the island give birth but because they lack [identification] papers they are not even offered a birth certificate there for her son or daughter by which the child is already marked; the child will have difficulties being inscribed to go to school and for everything else. In that very instant he/she begins to be excluded."¹⁸ No other immigrants that I am aware receive this treatment in the Dominican Republic. A United Nations study underscored the need for the Dominican state to politically emancipate this nation-less group. According to the report there needs to be a "regularization of the status of Haitians who have lived and worked in the Dominican Republic for a given period of time and the issue of identity papers to persons born in the Dominican Republic."¹⁹ But even with identity papers that allow people to legally reside in the country, government deportation of Haitians and its lure of being able to repatriate without provoking a policy-changing backlash among Dominicans will persist.

The human rights abuses are not just limited to Haitians. During many of the deportations carried out there are always Black Dominicans who suffer the indignities of deportation because they were black and mistaken for Haitian. According to one black Dominican, Frank Darling, who was almost deported: "They almost took me in the October raid. Because I am very black they swore that I was Haitian. Can you believe it: I don't even know how to speak that language! What would have happened

¹⁸ See "El racismo destruye la democracia," *Rumbo* No.277 May 24, 1999, pg.22 An example of this exclusion was the case of Claubian Jean Jacques an eighteen year old Dominican of Haitian parents who although an excellent student with a 99.3 GPA could not graduate because authorities in spite refused to issue him a Dominican birth certificate. See *El Siglo* April 6, 1999, pg.13.

¹⁹ United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery Fifteenth Session 30- July-3 August 1990 Eradication of the Exploitation of Child Labour and of Debt Bondage, Review of Developments in other Fields of Contemporary Forms of Slavery, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.2/1990/5add.4, 10 July 1990, pg.2.

to me! It's incredible: here in this part of the country [Santiago] the racial abuse is terrible. And the people are racist. I feel it. I receive a lot of violence. And I'm Dominican."²⁰

Some Dominicans have not been as lucky as Darling. There have been numerous complaints lodged against the government by human rights groups. The president of the Dominican Committee on Human Rights Virgilio Almanzar denounced the arrest and expulsion from the country of several dark-skinned Dominicans. In just one sugar mill housing settlement (Batey Nuevo) 15 Dominicans were deported to Haiti. "All being descendants of Haitians but born in Dominican territory."²¹

Deportations not only reveal the extent of Dominican anti-Haitianism towards Haitians by current and previous governments but they also show how they can similarly strip Dominicans especially black Dominicans of their presumed and unquestionable nationality falsely created during Trujillo's dictatorship but maintained till the present day by the country's elite. This is why the recent deportations of Haitians have made the issue of remembering the 1937 Haitian massacre more imperative than ever. At the turn of the new 21st century and the third millennium many Dominicans continue to see Haitians as the invader. The reason why Dominicans in general continue to perceive Haitians as a threat is because they have not been aggressively taught to see Haitians in a different light. Although Haiti attempted three times to invade unsuccessfully the Dominican Republic it is also true that relations between both countries especially along the border have been more collaborative than adversarial. Since the mid to late nineteenth to the early twentieth

²⁰ Ibid. "El racismo destruye la democracia," Rumbo No. 277, May 24, 1999, pg.22. "They almost took me in the October raid. Because I am very black they swore that I was Haitian. Imagine that: I who do not even speak the language. What would have happened to me?! It's incredible: here the racial mistreatment in this part of the island is terrible. And the population is racist."

²¹ See Jose Rivas, "Denuncian expulsan criollos negros a Haiti," *El Hoy*, March 22, 1999, 7.

centuries Haitians and Dominican border residents created an interdependent and mutual space where negotiation, understanding, and interaction was the norm.

In an informative 1997 report in a Dominican newspaper the five provincial border governors at the time addressed two realities. The first was their official duty to follow the government's deportation policy; the second contradicted the first, underscoring the importance and impact of Haitian labor in their economies and the counterproductive outcomes associated with such policies. One such governor of the southern province of Pedernales reflected his dual obligation to the *patria grande* and *patria chica* by supporting the deportations of undocumented persons but making exceptions for Haitians. "Anyone who is illegal in a country should be deported but with the Haitians what needs to be established is free trade where after selling their merchandise they return to their country."²²

There are many Dominicans who argue that placing a memorial or monument on the border as a commemorative symbol for those who lost their lives is unpatriotic. Many say instead that a monument should be erected to those Dominicans who fought valiantly against three successive and unsuccessful Haitian invasions into the Dominican Republic. I have no problem with these monuments however there is always room for a memorial. And what about Germans? Are they less patriotic because they acknowledge their country's role in the extermination of Jews? No. I believe that the Dominican Republic has not had a cathartic cleansing of itself, as do many other nations, which have undergone years of dictatorships and totalitarian regimes.²³

²² Jose Medrano, Governor of Pedernales Province "La frontera: no es final, es el inicio del pais," *Listin Diario* May 12, 1997, 6C. Provincial Governor of Elias Pina Miguel Mateo says, "I do not agree with the deportation with those who have made a life in the region and are legal but those who are illegal should be deported. When the deportations were being produced I fulfilled my obligations."

²³ I thank Dr. Silvio Torres-Saillant for helping me conceptualize how the Dominican national conscious should be healed.

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