

When they compromise in this fashion, or even declare their willingness to do so, they must have some other, more pressing interest in mind.

Later in the book, Domhoff offers a clue, without incorporating it into his fundamental definition. He exhibits a marvelous quote from Joseph P. Kennedy, talking about the Depression: "I am not ashamed to record that in those days I felt and said I would be willing to part with half of what I had if I could be sure of keeping, under law and order, the other half." The meaning Domhoff attaches to this revelation is that "a very wealthy upper class which makes concessions remains a wealthy upper class." But another meaning—generalizing Kennedy's personal greed to include the class as a whole—is that *the prior interest of the upper class is to retain the system—corporate capitalism—which makes it as upper a class as possible.* This seems obvious, but notice the consequence: the purpose of its control over key institutions (Domhoff's third criterion) is then to secure that system—by dampening and taming real or potential opposition, and by training new stewards.

Without making this point explicit, Domhoff is unable to explain the prevalence of counterrevolutionary ideology at the very core of the nation's political culture. Were he more a Marxist—and more a psychologist!—and not so bound to the terms and conventions of the academic wizardry he so neatly punctuates, he could have told us more about the ideological dimension of control. But he is caught (though wriggling manfully) in the American prejudice for compartmental knowledge and against unified theory—as if to say, I'm just talking about power; ideology is somebody else's bag.

But he needs it to fill his own bag. When he proceeds to document upper-class domination of the economy with a thorough review of the literature on concentration of stock ownership, director control over management and inequality of income, he is on firm enough ground. When, however, he looks for upper-class control over the institutions of philanthropy, education, the mass media and what are so disingenuously called "opinion-making" outfits (Council on Foreign Relations, Business Advisory Council, etc.), the flaw in his definition opens considerably. All he can prove is that these institutions are led by

upper-class members and that they "attempt to be influential."

Domhoff limits himself to proving upper-class domination of the key social outposts; he does equally well with the Executive branch of government, updating Mills' work on the control of key outposts—State, Defense, Treasury, the Presidency itself—by what Mills called the "political outsiders," men from Wall Street, the great corporations and the like. And he supplements Mills with some good hard data on big-business financing of both political parties.

The military, the CIA and the FBI are lesser outposts for the power elite—a sort of Marxian "executive committee of the ruling class" who *are* reliable by upper-class origin or *become* reliable after filtration through upper-class-controlled institutions. (Thus McNamara became an upper-class agent at Ford, Rusk at the Rockefeller Foundation.) This approach avoids Mills' *a priori* selection of the military as a pillar of the power elite, but lacks Mills' sensitivity to the nuances of Pentagon power via the military mentality and the dictum of the defense dollar. Domhoff here underplays military authority by paying too close attention to formal decision-making bodies (the National Security Council, from which the military are barred by statute), but in his own way buttresses Sweezy's notion that the military are subservient. The military's purpose is to protect and extend the realm of corporate property; they have their own means. As with the CIA, when the overall tone of policy is set by upper-class ideology, autonomous power is limited. When there are hundreds of agencies and foundations doing the work of the CIA and the Pentagon, some higher power, some surrounding and suffocating ideology must be involved.

An essential question, though, is left unconsidered. Foreswearing a Marxian theory of history, or even Mills' historical sweep, Domhoff is unable to say how the upper class and its power elite might be dislodged. Perhaps this is not his interest; he is not judging the *quality* of American rule, only describing its *workings*. He seems to believe, in fact, that policy differences in the ruling class (whether to bomb all of Vietnam or just the South) guarantee some sort of democracy, in a competition for the loyalty of passive masses. But a falling-out among thieves, while it may provide an

opening wedge for the cops, is no guarantee of the sanctity of property.

Finally Domhoff must face the question so movingly put to Mills: you have painted such a grim picture; you have painted the people into a corner; it is all so hopeless to think of cracking such a well-entrenched, self-reproducing oligarchy. In order to allow the possibility of a different order, a theory of the power elite must reckon with the elite's lapses—at least its ideological holes, its generation of insurgent blacks and angry, or "loving" youth, its shrinking legitimacy at many levels. If the theorist believes these are merely bubbles in the settling mold, or that ideology doesn't matter, he has the responsibility to say so. If, on the other hand, he sees signs of crackup, structural or ideological, he should pinpoint them. Political scientists have only studied the structure; the point is to subvert it.

Still, Domhoff has studied it well. The unjudged fact is still a blow, if a glancing one, against smug American mythologies.

Todd Gitlin has an M.A. in political science from the University of Michigan. He is working on a book about the white poor and community organizing in Chicago.

Movies:



A TRIANGULAR LOOK AT THE COMEDIANS

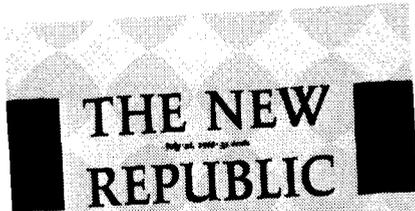
by G.M. Feigen

CHAITI IS THE CARBUNCLE of the Caribbean. Graham Greene walked around it in his novel *The Comedians*; MGM used it for color in its movie of the same name. The carbuncle remains, untouched by either. Papa Doc sits in his purulent palace, much more of a real-life terror than the shadowy figure of the book and the film.

I visited Haiti during the period described in *The Comedians*. I stayed at the

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same hotel, the marvelous, tired, Victorian Olafsson; I occupied the same suite as the Smiths; I was greeted with effusion by M. Jolicoeur, the journalist Petit-Pierre of the novel. I saw an authentic Voodoo ceremony in the mountains at Kenscoff, visited the hospital, the government buildings, and spent two hours with Papa Doc, the people's choice. I was driven around by a Tonton Macoute who owned an ancient taxi. I don't know why I expected an honest representation from either Greene or MGM. Maybe it was because the horrible reality of the island has a literary and cinematic punch. I had hoped for an honest treatment.

Misery has been normal for Haiti, but under the leadership of Duvalier, the island has subsided into a hopeless mess, stewing indolently because of total fatigue. There is no opposition, except in the minds of a few. There is no revolution, and no possibility for one. The Tontons Macoutes, so highly touted in the book and movie, are armed slobs who control by intimidation. They hang around the airport, the markets and stores, snooping. They act as if their "intelligence" work were moonlighting. The people have no weapons. All munitions are in Duvalier's basement; only the military, the Secret Police and the Tontons have guns. An occasional attempt at revolt by handfuls of men at the Dominican border are crushed by Papa Doc. He leaves none of them alive.

The coffee crop is failing, the market for sisal has slumped; there is no industry, no tourism, no new capital investment. Even the U.S., which usually tolerates a carbuncle if it is anti-communist, canceled a \$7.6 million aid program because they discovered that the money was being diverted to the construction of Duvalierville, the unfinished microBrasilia which is decomposing in the tropical sun.

Duvalier is a stocky man, less than totally negroid in color and feature. He is gracious, jovial and intelligent, and exudes charisma. He showed me his library, and several personal monographs on the eradication of yaws in Haiti. But in his dignity there is menace—the calm of the powerful, the gentleness of the ruthless. Duvalier is a pathological liar. He believes his lies. He told me he had given his people self-determination, and they had determined to elect him President for life. He hoped

that now that I had been there and seen how peaceful and inspiring Haiti was, I would be able to relay this to the American people. He is a downhill-hurting paranoid who will be stopped only when he hits bottom.

Now about the novel. Greene has fattened up a Maugham-like short story into an introspective book whose main character, a half-English former con man, muses about man's helplessness and the futility of causes. Greene must have visited Haiti, but he gives no evidence of using the island for anything but a dramatic background. He selects his Haitian material in smorgasbord fashion; his Duvalier could have been any dictator in any police state.

The introduction and development of the characters proceed on a cargo vessel bound for Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, the proselytizing vegetarians, are contrived "comedians" who emerge after all as enviable because they have a cause. Mr. Smith's having been a "presidential candidate" on the Vegetarian ticket in 1948 is well used in dealing with the absurd. Major Jones, the fraudulent phony, is skillfully drawn. He acts out his lies with the cyclic courage of a man with false credentials.

The main character, Brown, is dealt out in long first-person analyses of feelings and motivations. He comes to Haiti to take over the hotel from his never-married mother, the description of whose death *in coitu* at an advanced age is a literary and cardiac blunder. Brown has an affair with the wife of a minor South American ambassador; it is a sexual farewell to contention, a sullen mixture of fornication and querulous jealousy. The woman, Martha, is a German whose father was executed at Nuremberg. Brown belays her with her Germanism whenever, in his petulance, he has no other pin.

Out of Greene's "suspense yarn" MGM put together a movie which provides color, two hours of violence and inexcusable miscasting. Alec Guinness had to exhaust his dramatic talents to make his Major Jones believable. Elizabeth Taylor, as Martha, gives the character more depth than Greene did. She looks like a somewhat adipose voluptuary, too good an actress to be wasted on a two-dimensional character. Peter Ustinov as the cuckolded ambassador is the most virile and attractive male in the

group. Richard Burton as Brown can only smoulder, speak sarcastically to the overdressed and overplayed Macoute, and paw his mistress, as if at least in those passionate moments of interlocking he will not be altogether visible. Miscasting was not enough; Greene, who also wrote the screenplay, changed the script to eliminate the tragically whimsical redemption of Jones, substituting Brown. Instead of slinking off to Santo Domingo and becoming an undertaker, Brown becomes the rebel leader.

The movie deals quite frivolously with the tragedy of Haiti. It goes for violence as aphrodisiac, reddening the footage with blood. In the book, a Dr. Magiot is shot while fleeing the Tontons; in the movie his throat is slashed with a scalpel while he is doing surgery, and he falls dead over the anaesthetized patient. The operating room has been jazzed up to look like Johns Hopkins. The Tontons Macoutes are displayed in continual open violence, acting like a black Mafia. The Voodoo scenes are not saved by the *houngan* biting off the head of a rooster; there is too much light, the clothes are too clean, and the tribal frenzy is lost in an attempt to chunk in every bit of Voodoo-Catholic iconic and procedural material.

The whole thing is played for action—like so many TV and cinema plots. The film misses the whole point of Greene's novel—that we are all "comedians" helplessly playing out our fate, half hoping to find something to die for. If the film company had stuck to the book, there would have been more than enough action. If Greene had stuck to the reality of Haiti. . . .

Okay, they used Haiti merely for background. So what? Haiti is dying. Its beggars are not deformed as shown in the film. They are miserable, undernourished Haitian citizens slowly perishing from want of food and medical care, too tired to think, much less protest. There is no money; the International Fund credit is exhausted. The warehouse is closed. Duvalier is drawing his wagons into a circle, hoping to fight to the last soldier, unable to trust even his troops.

Only intervention from the outside can bring this carbuncle to a head and drain it. Who will do it? The OAS? The United Nations? There aren't enough communists there to bring intervention from the United States. The neighboring Dominican Republic frowns on Haitian

The first review is in on I. F. STONE'S *In A Time of Torment*

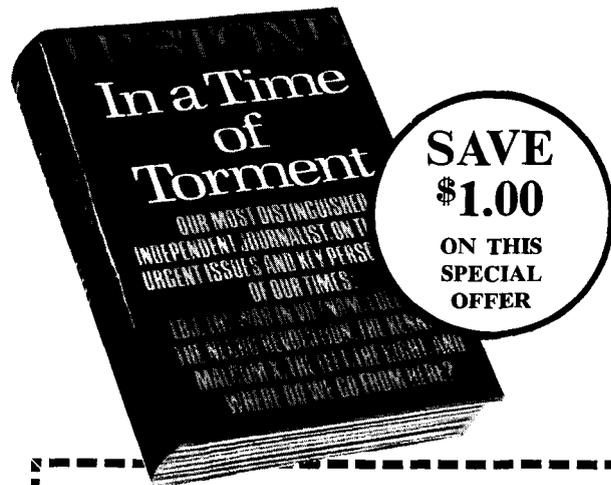
“America has never been blessed with a great many first-rate political journalists. It’s an ephemeral art, almost like that of the entertainer. ‘He was a New Dealer when that was the road to power, he became a conservative when that was the way to stay in.’ This is I. F. Stone on Johnson, and the remark combines Stone’s two gifts, accuracy of judgment and pithiness in phrasing. Stone began covering Washington during the Roosevelt years. He’s a seasoned performer, and though there’s been a marked mellowing in his own ideological stance, Stone remains basically a radical (‘One saw that for the lower third of our society, white as well as black, the search for answers must lead them back — though Americans still start nervously at the very word — toward socialism’) — but a radical quite without Jacobin sympathies.

“Indeed, engaged and humane as Stone is, what he finds truly upsetting is the moral muddle of our times, the inane chicanery of our leaders, the obtuseness of their vision. Like an enlightened conservative, he warns us of the deluge: ‘We are, let us remember, the rich man in a huge hemispheric slum’ — and the audience nods and does nothing. Malcolm X, Vietnam, China: the reportage is shrewd, lively, combative, completely readable. Yet there’s an underlying mournful strain, as if Stone doubted now the power of common sense or ‘facts’.”—*Kirkus’ Service*

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refugees. If ever there was a cry for Christianity as process, it is coming from Haiti. Somewhere out of the vast, confused outside, surely something can be done before this teeming little country drowns in its own suppuration. That is why I kept hoping as I read Greene's book, and saw the movie, that in these acts of creativity there might be social responsibility. I had no right to expect it. But I had the right to hope.



VALLEY OF THE DOLLS: A celebration

by Nancy Weber

THE DELINEATION OF national characteristics is properly the province of racists and sociology majors; but who would be so pure as to

dispute that, in addition to being uniquely incapable of producing a decent national bread, America is different from all other countries in believing that life is a serious business, that there is right and wrong, good and evil, white and black?

Ayn Rand, Mickey Spillane and Robert Heinlein celebrate this quality; most of us are embarrassed for ourselves and seek salvation in such nothing-is-better-than-anything-else games as pop and camp. But Mary Worth will outlive all parodies of Mary Worth. One of these evenings "As the World Turns" will be shown on prime time.

One might argue that soap opera is valuable only because, being junk, it is the true material for television, the junky medium. This is to miss the point. Soap opera is our Greek tragedy; it has its structural rules, its calculated effects, its clearly defined place among the arts. There is something to be said for Shakespeare and Lillian Hellman, but soap is the first perfect theatrical art form since the *deus ex machina* boys ran the show.

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