

How administration fuels repression in Haiti

It was a close call. It appeared that poor Haitians hungry for democracy would actually vote, in spite of a week of anti-election violence and murder carried out by the Duvalierist Tonton Macoutes. Finally, after the violence reached heights of staggering barbarity at the polls (with help from the Haitian army), the U.S.-supported government (itself riddled with leftover Duvalierists) canceled the election.

It was all foreseen, but Reagan administration officials earlier deflected criticism that the administration was not doing enough to protect the election process with the lame (and patently false) assertion that it would be naive to think that the United States can influence the election process.

The map shows a more likely reason for this benign neglect. Situated less than 60 miles from Cuba, an independent and dirt-poor Haitian electorate cannot be counted upon to adopt a vehement anti-Cuban attitude (demanded by Washington of its friends), especially in light of the growing movement to include Cuba in Latin America's economic planning.

Better simply to allow the Haitian government to act in its own best interest, which means U.S. support for an indeterminate time (so as to prepare for elections, as the government now says). The cutoff in military aid, announced by Washington as punishment, will be adequately offset by "anti-narcotics trafficking aid," which will continue to flow and will continue to repress the Haitian people.

By tolerating the barbarism of the Haitian government and its surrogates, the Reagan administration reveals itself to be cruel beyond belief. When will we say enough?

— Bill Becker
Woodland Hills