

# Haitian Analysis

*THE HAITIAN PEOPLE.* By James G. Leyburn. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1941. 342 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by HAROLD COURLANDER

JAMES G. LEYBURN has written a serious and superior social analysis of the Haitian people. It is one of the better pictures of Haitian life done in English in recent years, and helps to fill out a panoramic scene to which writers like Melville Herskovits, Rayford Logan, Price-Mars, and J. C. Dorsainvil have contributed much.

"The Haitian People" touches on ethnic and historical matters, on the religious roles of Vodun ("voodoo") and the Catholic Church, on problems of commerce and day-to-day living, and on the Creole language of the citizens. But running through all Haitian life there is an elemental caste-like differentiation between the peasantry and the "élite," and it is with this phenomenon, I think, that Dr. Leyburn is primarily concerned. Most of the important contemporary literature on Haiti has stressed Vodun, folklore, and the Revolution with its great men. It has unaccountably evaded or ignored the curious class, or caste, structure of Haitian society.

Haiti is the most densely populated nation in the New World, with 294.9 inhabitants to the square mile. Of its three million or more people, perhaps ninety-seven per cent are peasants and workers, the rest "élite." The "élite," by and large, are mulattoes, the peas-

ants mainly Negroes. The "élite" speak French and have basic educational opportunities, while the peasants are largely illiterate and speak Creole. The peasant is tied to his land, not through law but through social and economic pressures and rigid traditions. His ways are different. His folklore and his intellectual resources are different. He is less acceptable than a foreigner to the "élite." His standard of living is lower, and the economies of his life are agrarian. He is conservative—even apathetic, according to the author—and proud of his individual liberty. He feels an undercurrent of hostility against the "élite" that goes back to the days of slavery and the Haitian Revolution.

The "élite" are proud of their "culture" (which is essentially European), their professional aptitudes and inheritances, their light color, their legal marriages, their control of the political life of the Republic. They feel that peasant life is mainly degraded and even *sauvage*, vital though it is to their own welfare.

The patterns, Mr. Leyburn believes, were set early in the nation's history. Efforts to keep the freed slaves on the soil resulted in strong legal acts toward that end. The breakup of the great estates in the South at an early hour pointed toward an eventual peasant economy. And the struggle between blacks and mulattoes for power created color lines that now separate the mass of Haitians from the dominant "élite." Even today the peasants speak of the need for a "black president" who would have their welfare at heart. But because it is the mulattoes who have had education, professional training, and political experience, it is from their group that recent presidents have been recruited.

Mr. Leyburn acknowledges work on Haitian "castes" by John Lobb, but fails to mention "Haiti's Social Structure" and other articles by George Eaton Simpson that have appeared in *The Journal of Negro History*, *Social Forces*, and *The American Sociological Review*. The bibliography omits rather important recent work, like C. L. R. James's "The Black Jacobins" and Rayford W. Logan's "The Diplomatic Relations of The United States with Haiti," as well as novels of Haitian life by J. B. Cinéas and Pétion Savain. Certain chapters of the book, such as those on Vodun and religious borrowings, are restatements of already familiar material, but they are freshly done and serve to give a well-rounded view of present-day Haitian life.

Analysis of unique modern social institutions—*placée* marriage, caste, politics, etc.—in terms of their historical causes is Mr. Leyburn's special contribution to Haitiana.

## DIMENSIONS IN WAR

(Continued from page 7)

Mr. Cranwell, he arrives at the same conclusion:

Striking at the activities . . . that produce the machines for decisive warfare is a far more effective attack than the destruction of a few thousand lives.

At this point Mr. Marshall, with his clear view of military event rather than theory, goes on to a few warnings. It is not enough merely to build, or to order, thousands of tanks and airplanes.

The observer . . . has become so fascinated by Blitzkrieg's thundering chariots that he ignores . . . the extent to which the excellence of the coöperating services made possible victories seemingly won by the tank . . . The fighting in and west of Smolensk should be a landmark in mechanized history, for it was not until (then) that there was a defensive against tanks in this war which did not warrant the term makeshift.

Same thing with the air arm:

It was true of General Mitchell, and of his followers . . . that they were as limited in their grasp of the tactical usefulness of the airplane in modern war as they were expansive and over-zealous in defining its strategic horizons. They simply were not interested in exploring the subject of air-ground collaboration.

That is, by all means let us have tanks, airplanes, self-propelled artillery, and all the parade of mechanization. But let us also bear in mind that all these are instruments; that what really matters in modern war is fluid force, whose forms are subject to change overnight—which can only be valuable in defense or offense by keeping the intelligence as flexible as the weapons it wields . . . Or so much for the theory; but the special value of Mr. Marshall's book is that it is not an examination of theory but of practice, and that no one from a general to an air-raid warden but could benefit from the ideas he expresses, and those he suggests.

## THIS LAST DEVOTION

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## SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 403)

MALCOLM ELWIN:  
SAVAGE LANDOR

"I shall dine late," wrote Landor, "but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select." The world moves slowly toward enlightenment; fools, not merely illiterate but . . . of high places, ignore the light for fleeting shadows."

## CASSANDRAS AND ASTROLOGERS

(Continued from page 4)

He anticipated that the war would start with the Panama Canal being blocked by the explosion of a Japanese freighter; that the Philippines would be taken within a month; that a fortnight later Guam would be lost; that two months later submarines and airplanes would be off the California coast preying on commerce and bombing California cities. Two months after that a large proportion of our fleet would be lost, but the following year the United States would regain the initiative and Japanese defeat would be inevitable. Unhappily and happily, Mr. Bywater's timetable has been awry in certain respects. May it more happily be proved awry in other respects!

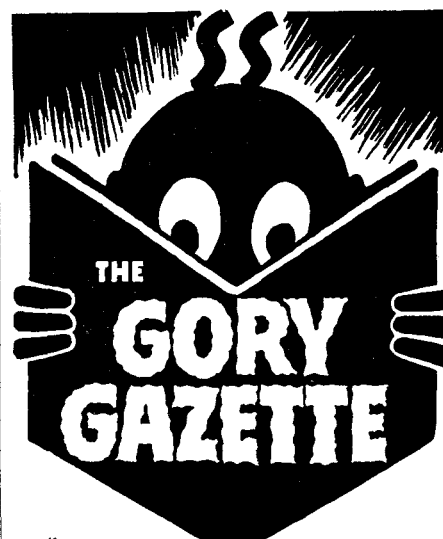
Expert and persuasive military and naval criticism in British newspapers and periodicals antedated similar criticism in American journals. Before the American public got to know fully who Hanson Baldwin, George Fielding Eliot, and Fletcher Pratt were, Colonel Charles a-Court Repington (during the last war) and Captain Liddell Hart (after the war) had wide audiences—not only in England but in the United States. Captain Hart is probably the best known of the lot. Our critics have devoted some of their space to discussing him and for the most part they think he has been wrong.

In his several books and many articles and particularly in "The Defence of Britain" which appeared in the summer of 1939, Captain Hart advanced theories which his critics have challenged. They were able to go after him as hard as they did because he made the error of letting the sincerity of his convictions and the unorthodoxy

of his opinions lead him to overstate a case which events of this war have not proved to be unsound. He saw British and French generals unwilling to admit that, in the last war, there had been useless, wholesale slaughter in offensives that had no chance of succeeding. He watched the generals prepare their plans with the apparent idea of doing the same thing over again. He did not make sufficiently plain certain qualifications to his "deduction from experience that the defensive has a great and growing superiority." Tie a cleric to a text (I think Renan said this but, if not, it was a lesser light) and he will escape in the exegesis. Liddell Hart, I suspect, thought that he could prevent such an escape by not giving many hints as to an exegesis that might be pertinent.

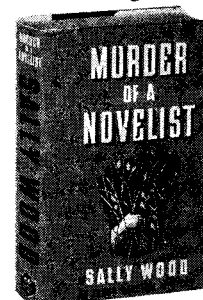
Moreover, and naturally enough, a military critic never likes to say that one of his confrères (and competitors) is right and rally to his support. Each must have a better theory even though he cannot excogitate it and get it talked about. There was something like a ganging up against Liddell Hart by military correspondents (not only American but English and continental) who differed among themselves, but not spectacularly. They at least agreed that he was wrong and when the German campaign in France succeeded so magnificently they said: "Ah, this proves that he *was* wrong."

But the fact is that Liddell Hart put a good many qualifications to his theory. He said that the offensive could succeed "in a campaign where the defender has no offensive counter wea-



Taking a gander out of our ivory tower the other day, we noticed a bit of holly hanging on the window sill. This wistful reminder had its effect. The Gory Gazette will now give out with Christmas gift suggestions. We'll confine our advice to something we know about, *all* about, to wit, Inner Sanctum Mysteries.

First of all, then, we advise *Murder of a Novelist* by SALLY WOOD, just published yesterday—for people who prefer Amontillado to gin fizz, crisp linen to sleazy silk, Noel Coward to Joe Miller. Also recommended as the perfect gift for that Inveterate Fan on your list who wants to lock himself away on Christmas day and have a beautifully tranquil time with the *latest* mystery. Remember, too, that the choice of victim in *Murder of a Novelist* will bring a vicarious pleasure to long-suffering readers.



In the Department of Sure Bets—for people who have everything, for people who have nothing, for people who ought to have some fun—is *Trial by Fury* by CRAIG RICE. Backing up our own highly prejudiced opinion are unanimous cheers from the nation's critics. *Time* Magazine says: "Triumphantly rowdy and dexterously plotted." And the New York *Sun* sums up with simple dignity: "Miss Rice Is Miss America."

For people who want to know the inside story wrap up *The G-String Murders* by GYPSY ROSE LEE. "Her novel is a rich and lusty job, brimming over with infectious vitality and a hilarious jargon of her own," says *Life* Magazine. And we add that *The G-String Murders* (printings now 30,000 copies) is on its way to being the best selling mystery of our time.

One last tip for Gory Gazette readers: give yourself a Merry Christmas (we'll take up the Happy New Year situation in our next issue) with the latest Inner Sanctum Mystery:

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## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE STRANGE DEATH OF MANNY SQUARE A. B. Cunningham (Dutton: \$2.)	Death of Southern farmer by mulekick arouses doubts in mind of Sheriff Jess Roden who excels at "lookin' around."	Canny Kentuckian builds up cases against numerous suspects with great skill—then breaks all down but the surprisingly right one.	O. K.
THE CORPSE IN THE SNOWMAN Nicholas Blake (Harpers: \$2.)	Suspicious "suicide" of tragic English girl followed by two disappearances makes more work for Nigel Strangeways.	Well constructed and rather horrifying opus from initial discovery by two youngsters to final disclosures of detective.	Among the best
A PINCH OF POISON Frances and Richard Lockridge (Stokes: \$2.)	Poisoning of girl in Manhattan hotel roof restaurant drags in Lt. Weigand, the Norths, and Sgt. Mullins.	Not quite the fine frenzy of first North story but better than opus 2 and generally ingenious, thrilling, and scatter-brainish stuff.	All to the good