

THE U.S. OCCUPATION OF HAITI: ECONOMIC

At the root of the occupation was a desire for the United States' economic domination in the Western Hemisphere. President Wilson relied on American businessmen for information on U.S. economic interests in Haiti. Fearing Haiti would default on debt payments - despite the Haitian government's consistent compliance with loan conditions - the businessmen sought to have control over Haiti's debt. Consequently, Wilson's administration removed \$500,000 in gold bullion from the Haitian National Bank and took it to the National City Bank of New York City in December of 1914.



The Haitian-American Treaty of 1915 authorized the U.S. to take control of Haitian finances. Haiti's National Bank was put under total control of U.S. forces. U.S. bankers set regulations to designate 40% of Haiti's national income towards the repayment of debts to America and France.

Many American businesses benefited from this exploitation; in conjunction with the new Haitian Constitution that allowed foreign entities to buy land, Haiti's lack of economic agency pushed their voices down. The North Haytian Sugar Co., the Haytian Pineapple Co., and the Haitian American Sugar Company all created monopolies for control of Haitian resources.

To conduct the massive infrastructure and agricultural projects that the Gendarmerie commanded, U.S. forces used forced labor. Thousands of Haitians were exploited, coerced, and abused in their own country.

After the end of the occupation, the U.S. retained substantial influence over Haiti's external finances until 1947. Anthropology professor Mark Schuller stated, "The occupation was a land grab, a power grab, and a resource grab for Haiti's...wealth."



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