

pipes, electric wires and air conditioners. They prefer to make their paths through broken windows and torn screens, and through the holes they gnaw in walls or floors.

These private runways can be blocked off by fitting three-eighths hardware cloth over the holes, and forcing the rats into the open.

Anticoagulant bait should be placed along their regular travel routes between nests and food supply. This bait, mixed with cornmeal or rolled oats, contains a basic chemical that thins the blood and causes an internal hemorrhage. It should be kept fresh

and in plentiful supply, for rats must feed on this for five to ten consecutive days before the chemical can have its full effect.

Another method of getting rid of the pests is to give the buildings and yards a good housecleaning. This means eliminating trash and junk piles, keeping weeds and unnecessary vegetation cut to the ground, repairing leaky water faucets, putting a lid on the garbage can, stacking unused lumber, baling empty burlap bags and properly storing machinery or equipment not in use.

• Science News Letter, 83:298 May 11, 1963

#### ANTHROPOLOGY

## Voodoo and Politics

Voodooism still widely spread among the Haitians, both in the city and rural areas, may be a powerful political weapon, useful to gain popular support—By Elizabeth Mirel

► **VOODOO DRUMS** are beating in the background as tensions rise and politics explode on the island republic of Haiti.

The Haitian peasants, nearly 90% of the population, keep up their practice of voodoo in the untamed Haitian countryside.

Throughout the history of Haiti, Christian priests have joined forces with the Government to wipe out the pagan religion. They said the spirits that came to possess the people were evil, and they took away the people's drums and other ritual objects.

During the mass political revolts, strikes, business shutdowns and incidents of mob violence that marked Haiti in 1957, Dr. Francois Duvalier, rising to power, was charged by his rivals with voodooism. Late in 1957 he became, as he is now, president of Haiti.

President Duvalier, a scholar of voodoo who has published many articles on the subject, turned against the church and removed many officials.

Fighting the church may have been a way to ally himself with the peasant masses, Dr. Erika E. Bourguignon, Ohio State University anthropologist, told **SCIENCE SERVICE**.

It is "entirely possible" for Duvalier to use his knowledge of voodoo for political ends, she said.

"It may easily be a way of trying to get rural support," she said.

But the picture is not clear cut, for there is more misery and more repression now than earlier in the Duvalier regime, Dr. Bourguignon said. The harsh conditions may nullify his appeal to the masses.

Many observers agree with this picture. Haiti is the poorest of the Latin American countries. It has a 90% illiteracy rate. The peasants live at a near-starvation level. The land is overpopulated: there are nearly 1,000 persons for every square mile of arable land. Malaria, tuberculosis and the diseases of malnutrition go unchecked. Medical services are scanty.

Often the peasants turn to voodooism to alleviate their misery. They seek out the voodoo priest or priestess, the hungan or the mambo, for cures. They ask for a successful crop. Although the priest collects

his fees, the peasant is not assured of health or success. But the peasant clings to his belief in the powers of the priests, for he has nothing else.

In traditional voodoo religion, power comes from the spirits, loa, that enter into a person's body when he is in a trance. They drive out one element of his soul, the *gros bon ange*, and take possession of his being. They do their work for good or evil through the body of the possessed.

The city dweller, as well as the rural peasant, has faith in voodoo. He finds it hard to shake off belief in what he would like to think is merely superstition. It is the lower class urban dwellers who spend the most money for voodoo, Dr. Bourguignon said, and their ceremonies are the most complex.

In the cities and in the countryside the military domination and police terrorism of the Duvalier regime are increasing. A poorly organized revolt against the regime was crushed in July, 1958.

Now, as uneasiness and unrest continue in Haiti, Dr. Duvalier, the voodoo scholar, may find religion is no longer an adequate outlet for the dissatisfied masses.

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#### SOCIOLOGY

## Family Trouble Can Hit Anytime, Anyplace

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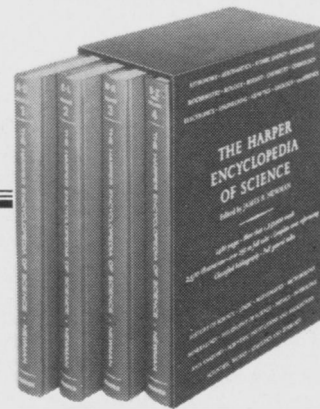
The causes of today's special problems and the various kinds of help available to families are reported in a new Public Affairs pamphlet.

The pamphlet, *When a Family Faces Stress*, is available for 25¢ from the Public Affairs Committee, a non-profit educational organization in New York. It was issued in cooperation with the Family Service Association of America.

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