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In: New West Indian Guide/ Nieuwe West-Indische Gids 62 (1988), no: 3/4, Leiden, 129-145

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THE 1937 RIOT IN INAGUA, THE BAHAMAS

The upheavals in the form of mass riots and strikes during the 1930s in the British West Indian colonies did not occur on a similar scale in the Bahamas. The Nassau Riot in 1942 during the following decade was a short-lived spontaneous outburst by a group of disgruntled laborers. Black Bahamian leaders failed to convert the riot into a political movement but an analysis of the disturbance (Saunders 1985-1986) showed that it occurred against the background of narrow socio-economic and political policies then rampant in the Bahamas.

Five years before the disturbance in Nassau, an incident erupted on Inagua, a remote island in the southern Bahamas. Following shortly after the Trinidad and Barbadian riots, the disturbance became known as the 'Inagua Riot.' This paper will explore the causes of the 1937 disturbance in Inagua. Such an analysis involves the examination of the disturbance and the events immediately prior to it.

To date no detailed examination of the Inagua disturbance has been published.¹ The incident is rarely mentioned in general histories (Albury 1983: 200; Craton 1962). Colin Hughes and Philip Cash (Hughes 1981: 19; Cash 1979: 239-240) contended that it was essentially a clash of individuals. Hughes gave the incident only a footnote and stressed that there were no similarities with the mass actions of the West Indian riots (Hughes 1981: 19). Cash devoted more attention to the event and concluded that the "events of the island of Inagua were given an importance unwarranted by the actual happenings..." (Cash 1979: 240). Margery Erickson, wife of Josiah (or Jim) who with his brothers revived the salt industry in Inagua in the 1930s, attributes the trouble to personal animosity of certain Inaguans "whose own livelihood was threatened by the new prosperity" and "who resented Jim's effort to improve Inagua" (Erickson

1987: 49).

Inagua² is about 596 square miles and is located within close proximity of Cuba and Haiti, with which territories it has traded from early times.³ It is the most southerly and third largest island of the Bahamas, lying 370 miles south of Nassau, the capital, which is located on New Providence Island. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Inagua was largely uninhabited, unlike most of the major Bahamian islands which were settled between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries. Inagua is believed to have been permanently settled between 1844 and 1849 when Matthew Town, its chief settlement, was laid out on the western end of the island.⁴

Like the other Bahamian Out Islands, Inagua was governed by an Out Island Commissioner appointed by the central government in Nassau. Over the years, the Bahamas' House of Assembly, dominated by a wealthy white mercantile elite, had gained its independence and control of the purse. Like Barbados and Bermuda, the Bahamas retained the Old Representative System. Theoretically, the Colonial Governors wielded great power but the lower house of the Bahamas' bi-cameral legislature was a wholly elected body. It governed the Bahamas, maintaining influence over the economy and politics by favouring propertied interest, by excluding half of the population and by ignoring for the most part the Out Islands⁵, where until the 1950s most of the population lived.

Being in the dry belt of the Bahamian archipelago, Inagua naturally produced salt, which soon became the island's staple product. Until 1848, however, the Turks and Caicos Islands were the leading salt-producing and exporting islands in The Bahamas. After their separation from the colony in that year,⁶ attention focused on the exploitation of Inagua's salt ponds and various companies were established during the mid-nineteenth century when the industry generally flourished.⁷ The success of Inagua's salt industry was reflected in the growth of its population from 172 in 1847 to 1,120 in 1871, as shown by the Blue Books between those years and the Census Report taken in 1871.

By the early 1900s, however, the industry had collapsed. This was due partly to increasing production of mined salt in North America which caused a decline in prices, and a United States tariff which made it increasingly unprofitable to ship to the United States, the main consumer of Inagua's salt (Albury 1983: 198). The economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was being sustained by the steamship labour business which provided work for the male population (Johnson 1986: 748).

Economic developments in Mexico and Central America needed much material and manpower. Steamship lines including the Hamburg-American

Line, the Royal Netherlands Lines and the Atlas Company (which stopped at West Indian and Central American ports) picked up stevedore labour and contract workers to load and unload cargos at the ports (Johnson 1986: 748 and Williams 1985: 9-12).⁸ By 1882, Matthew Town had outstripped its main rival Albert Town on Long Cay, having become the “main centre of labour recruitment” in the Bahamas (Johnson 1986: 748). Bahamian men from other islands gravitated to Inagua to find work.

At this time in the Bahamas most labourers were paid in truck. Initially steamship labourers were paid in cash but very soon the steamship companies reverted to the local system of paying in truck and allowing the labourers credit and advances in food and drink. This exploitative practice was to continue well into the twentieth century. As Howard Johnson has argued, “The credit system and the indebtedness which it induced became an effective technique for mobilizing and maintaining a stable labour force, and payment in truck served to perpetuate the indebtedness.” He further argues that these systems were methods of controlling labour and also for increasing the merchant’s profits (Johnson 1986: 750).

Despite the truck system, the stevedore trade, helped only marginally by the cultivation and export of sisal, sustained Inagua’s economy in the latter part of the nineteenth century and during the early years of the twentieth. In fact, Matthew Town was known as “a magic port” in which one could find new opportunities and earn money. Its general appearance and active commerce gave it a “booming atmosphere” (Albury 1983: 199).

The appearance of a newspaper was a reflection of the increased trade between Inagua and the other islands of the Caribbean. Matthew Town was one of the few settlements in the Out Islands to publish a newspaper in the early twentieth century. A.H. Meallet, a local Inaguan, began a printing operation in Matthew Town in 1898 and a decade later began issuing the *Inagua Record* which espoused the cause of the labourers. It was in print for five years but made little impact on the island’s social or political life (Pactor 1985: 307).

With the advent of World War I, shipping was interrupted and steamship companies ceased calling at Inagua. By the 1920s and early 1930s, Inagua, like most of the Out Islands in the Bahamas, suffered from acute depression. Out Islanders flocked to Nassau to find work. Inagua’s population declined by fifty percent between 1911 and 1931, dropping from 1,343 to 667 (Census 1931). Demoralized because of the lack of work, some families left to seek a living in Nassau while others migrated to the southern United States (Johnson 1986; Mohl 1987: 271-297; Granger 1970). On an Out Island tour in 1932, Governor Clifford described Matthew Town as “forlorn and

desolate ... suggestive of a partially bombarded village well behind the lines." He continued that the population, "a queer mixture of Turks Islanders, a few of Haitian stock" and the rest "Bahamian stock," found it difficult to feed and clothe themselves (Dundas 1938).

By the mid-1930s however, Inagua's stevedoring traffic and salt industry had been revived to a limited extent. Arthur L. Symonette, a local coloured merchant who was also Justice of the Peace, spearheaded both operations. He ran a store and served as agent for the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company (Clifford 1932). Evidence suggests that Symonette employed the truck system by which he kept the men indebted to him at his store. Margery Erickson wrote "No man could get a job on a southbound steamer except through Symonett [sic] and he employed only those whose families shopped at his store" (Erickson 1937: 49). When the stevedores returned to Inagua they found themselves in debt. Bills for goods that their families had "supposedly" bought at the store while they were away meant that their wages went to pay their debts (Erickson 1937: 49). This caused much resentment and the labourers claimed that to supplement their wages they were forced to steal from the cargo of the ship and to smuggle rum and tafia from Cuba and Haiti. In 1936 the Inagua-based stevedores struck for higher wages (Dundas 1938). Aware of Symonette's power and influence, a number of Inaguan men, who called themselves the 'Rulers' or 'Rock' of Inagua (Erickson: 1938)⁹, united against him and forced him to cooperate with them. According to John Hughes, Symonette was content as long as the bulk of the wages were used to purchase goods at his store (Dundas 1938).

Inagua, among the Out Islands, was unique in that it had a labour union (Dundas 1938) – the only one outside the capital. It had been organized in 1934 by Theodore Farquharson, son of an Acklins Islander who had migrated to Inagua. Having spent about 15 years in the United States, Theodore Farquharson had returned to Inagua in 1928 to take over his father's business, a general store. Described as "an orator of the Hyde Park tub thumper type, with somewhat more education than the rest of his coloured brethren in Inagua" (Dundas 1938), Farquharson was perhaps instrumental in causing several work stoppages, but was not the instigator of the violent incident which occurred in 1937.

It was into such an atmosphere that the Ericksons, a New England family headed by Josiah Erickson, made their debut at Matthew Town in 1936. Arriving in mid-January to revitalize the salt industry, Josiah and his brothers Douglas and Wentworth established the West India Chemical Company, employing about 50 men and a few women (Erickson 1937). The Ericksons, however, soon encountered hostility from the local

people. Some prominent Inaguans, including Symonette, felt threatened by the new wave of economic activity which brought prosperity and new jobs. Until the coming of the Ericksons, Symonette was perhaps the most powerful man on the island through his shop and his control of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company. With the revival of the salt business by the Ericksons, new avenues of employment opened up for Inaguans and Symonette or the other leading local families were losing their monopoly as employers and with it, their influence (Jarrett 1937). Moreover, a number of local Inaguans were suspicious of the newcomers, whom they saw as outsiders.

In December 1936 and early in 1937, a series of strikes, instigated by several of the leaders in the town including Nehemiah C. Alexander, a Baptist minister and shop keeper, occurred. Demands were made for higher wages.¹⁰ The Ericksons, already disliked by many of the inhabitants, thereupon retaliated by importing unskilled labour from Acklins, Long Cay, and Mayaguana (Jarrett 1937). Hostility towards them further intensified after they took over the steamship agency from Symonette. The influential group of men who called themselves "the rulers of Inagua" or "the Rock" and who had an uneasy alliance with Symonette were considered by Symonette to be his supporters. However they had intimidated and threatened him several times and he had been obliged to include two or three of them on all stevedoring voyages (Erickson 1937).

Shortly after the strike in December 1936, a fight over a trivial incident occurred between Charles Kaddy, a white American truck driver for the West Indian Chemical Company, and a local black stevedore, George Duvalier. When not employed, Duvalier loitered around Symonette's shop with his brother Willis. They had been born in the United States and had lived there for some time before returning to Inagua to live with their grandmother. They were believed to be among the so-called 'Band of Inagua Terrors' (Dundas 1938).¹¹ The latter, a group of lawless, reckless young men, many of whom had been charged with disorderly behaviour between 1934 and 1936 (Hughes Report 1938), was led by Reginald Alexander, son of Baptist preacher Nehemiah Alexander. The ensuing fight, which erupted when Kaddy drove his truck into the side of Symonette's shop, very quickly developed into a brawl involving Duvalier's supporters, including his brother Willis, against almost the entire white staff of the company. All the participants subsequently appeared before Commissioner Fields (Dundas 1938)¹² for disturbing the peace. Four members of each faction were convicted and fined two pounds each (Erickson: 1937). From that date it appeared that the Duvalier brothers continued to harbour a grudge against the Ericksons (Dundas 1938). It was said that Willis

MATTHEW TOWN

INAGUA

C. 1937

Scale: 1 Inch = 400 Feet

Prepared: JUNE 1987
Lands and Surveys Dept.

Duvalier, at the hearing of the case, threatened that if there was further trouble with the Ericksons, he would 'shoot to kill' (*Votes of House of Assembly 1937-38*).

For the next six months, Matthew Town was fairly orderly. In June 1937 however, Reginald Alexander, leader of the 'Band of Inagua Terrors', was found guilty by Commissioner Fields and fined five pounds for using obscene language to Euphemia Henderson, whose daughter he had courted.¹³ Almost immediately afterwards, Reginald Alexander returned to the Henderson house, and accused Euphemia's daughter Edna Henderson, of 'making a baby' for him. Mrs. Henderson thereupon sued Alexander for twelve pounds damages, claiming defamation of her daughter's character. Reginald Alexander's sister, Mabel Alexander, paid the fine on 27 June, 1937. Three days later, Euphemia Henderson's house was destroyed by fire. Arthur Ferguson, who was arrested on 10 July, admitted that he had set the Henderson house on fire for two pounds, on instruction from Reginald Alexander. Both were charged with arson. Alexander however, was granted bail. While in custody, an attempt was made to rescue Ferguson from prison. After a preliminary hearing, Commissioner Fields ordered both Ferguson and Alexander to stand trial in Nassau. The inquiry was completed on 18 August (*Votes of House of Assembly 1937-38*).

The next day, George Duvalier, a friend of both the accused, was arrested for assaulting Daniel Bain – the last witness to give evidence in the arson case. The Duvaliers disliked Bain because they believed he carried news to the Ericksons. While his trial was in session, Duvalier escaped from the courtroom. Corporal Edey, who had been sent to Inagua to investigate the arson case, and local constable Saunders, suspected by the Commissioner to be in collusion with the Duvaliers, ostensibly gave chase. While in pursuit of the suspect, Corporal Edey was attacked with a knife by Willis Duvalier, George's brother, and received a superficial wound over his right shoulder. Commissioner Fields, while attempting to leave his office later on, was attacked by Willis Duvalier and only escaped injury by sheer luck (*Votes of House of Assembly 1937-38*).¹⁴

Fields eluded Willis Duvalier, and hurried to the Wireless Station to telegraph the authorities in Nassau. Meanwhile, Willis's brother George had acquired a gun and he followed Fields to the Wireless Station. After forcing the operator to leave, he then shot the Commissioner in the left forearm at close range. Believing Fields to be dead, Duvalier, still armed, ran to the Erickson's store and fired at Josiah Erickson. Fortunately for Erickson, the gun misfired. While Duvalier reloaded the weapon, Josiah

and his younger brother Douglas escaped to their home (*Votes of House of Assembly 1937-38*).

Hearing of the attack on the Commissioner, the Ericksons, securing arms, proceeded to the Wireless Station along with two American employees. On leaving the station with Fields whom they were surprised to find not fatally wounded, the whole party was attacked by Willis Duvalier. Both Ericksons, and their employee, Kaddy, received minor injuries. In fear of their lives, the Erickson party and the Commissioner spent the night at the Erickson household. Meanwhile, the Duvaliers had sought out an employee of the West Indian Chemical Company, John Munroe, a black labourer who they considered a 'pimp' for the Ericksons, and shot him dead. They also set fire to the Commissioner's residence, the Wireless Station, the Erickson's store, and the Company's salt house (*Vote of House of Assembly 1937-38*).

The next morning, 20 August, the Ericksons, three of their employees, Dr. Fields, and Corporal Edey fled Inagua in the Erickson's motor boat. Their intention to contact an ocean liner order to relay a message to Nassau was frustrated when engine trouble developed. Drifting southwards, they landed in Cuba, and having no means of identification, were promptly arrested for possession of arms (*Votes ... Jarrett 1937*).

Left in control of Matthew Town, the Duvaliers terrorized the inhabitants for two days, though causing little further harm. Neither the 'Band of Inagua Terrors' nor the rest of the inhabitants actually abetted them. It was reported that a number of inhabitants left the settlement of Matthew Town after the shooting of John Munroe, and went to stay at North East Point until they heard the Duvaliers had left the island (*Votes ... 1937-38*, Hughes Report, and Dundas 1938).

Those who stayed had not made an effort to stop their rampage either. On Sunday, 22 August, after commanding the town for the weekend, the Duvaliers left Inagua in a small sailing boat. When the long overdue police detachment of eight arrived two days later, all was quiet (Jarret 1937).¹⁵

By 12 October, 1937, both Duvaliers had been arrested in Haiti and brought to Nassau for trial. Found guilty of murder in the Nassau Supreme Court on 3 November, 1937, they were executed less than three weeks later (*Tribune 1937*).¹⁶

When John A. Hughes visited Matthew Town early in 1938, he found no signs of unrest. It seemed that the truck system was no longer in operation. Smuggling, however, continued on a small scale. The new Commissioner, Mr. Malone, a white Abaconian, although disliked by Josiah Erickson for his alleged arrogance and colour prejudice, was said by Hughes, on the contrary, to have won the 'respect and affection' of the inhabitants

(Hughes Report: Dundas 1938).

Before a detailed investigation was made and a report compiled, the incident at Inagua in 1937 was blown out of proportion by the press within and outside the Bahamas. The British press, cognizant of the unrest in the West Indies, elevated the events to an importance on a par with the riots in the southern Caribbean (Jarrett 1937).¹⁷

Etienne Dupuch, editor of *The Nassau Daily Tribune* and then representative in the House of Assembly for Inagua, gave the disturbance headline and front page coverage. On 25 August, he actually referred to the incident as a 'riot' and likened it to similar outbreaks throughout the British West Indies. He hinted that the cause of the unrest throughout the Caribbean was due to Communist propaganda and had nothing to do with wages. Even after it was officially confirmed that only two men (the Duvalier brothers) were the instigators of the disturbance, Dupuch still seemed sceptical (*Tribune* 1937).¹⁸ Robert M. Bailey, a black tailor and political activist, expressed his scepticism in a letter to the *Tribune*. Exaggerating, he alluded to the seething unrest in the colony, specifically to the violence in New Providence, the "burglary and incendiarism at Bimini," and the rioting and murder at Inagua. He asked:

Can we believe that the Commissioner and fourteen heavily armed men, including five white Americans with large financial interests in the island, left a hilarious people only to try to get in communication with the capital, their wireless station being out of commission – burnt down – and there was no riot at Inagua?

Can we believe that the law abiding residents of Inagua looked on with folded arms, while two men ran amuck, doing all this damage and made no attempt to overpower them ... (*Tribune* 1937).

The mention of "white" Americans was of some significance. Racial tension may have contributed towards the disturbance. Discrimination towards blacks and coloureds was rife in Nassau but was not so marked in the Out Islands where there was less class stratification. However, some Inaguans, including the Duvalier brothers, had spent time in the United States where prejudice was blatant and the existence of Jim Crow attitudes and the Ku Klux Klan and its lynching parties were a threat to blacks. There is no evidence of racial discrimination practiced by the Ericksons, but is possible that the Inaguans may have encountered attitudes of white superiority displayed by the Americans, especially those employed in Inagua.¹⁹

Mary Moseley, editor of the *Nassau Guardian* on the other hand, believed that the alleged riot was just a "minor brawl," unconnected with labour

disturbances in the British Caribbean. She attached little importance to colour prejudice but hinted that "Erickson was a little suspect in consequence of his American nationality." She believed that the people of Inagua were far too sensible to indulge in any form of violence comparable to that which had appeared elsewhere in the West Indies. Moreover, in her opinion, the acts committed were "entirely unworthy of Bahamians or of any civilised people ..." (Robinson: 1937).

Who are we to believe? There is evidence which supports both sentiments. The argument that it resembled a mass riot is supported by Commissioner Fields' statement that at the time of his taking over the District it was "in a state of unrest" (*Votes of House of Assembly: 1937-38*). He mentioned several strikes, the Inaguans' resentment towards the Ericksons for importing labourers from neighbouring islands and the anti-American feelings harboured by some of the Inaguans. In fact during the years 1935 and 1936, cases of unlawful and disorderly behavior increased (Police Charge Book 1938-39).²⁰

Commissioner Fields also commented in his report on the events that Reginald Alexander, who had been charged with arson shortly before the disturbance, was the instigator of the activities and that his "'band of Inagua terrors' was on the war path." Fields implied that the local administration had no control over Inagua's population and could not even rely on the support of the local constable, Saunders, who seemed to be in collusion with the Duvaliers. After the murder of John Munroe, the Commissioner and the Ericksons spent a very uneasy night at the Erickson's house, keeping guard all night and fearing an attack by the 'band of Inagua terrors' (*Votes of Legislative Council 1937-38*).

Additionally, Fields' conclusions indicated that the under-currents at Inagua were more serious than the Administration admitted (Cash 1979: 247). While Fields acknowledged that "there was no actual riot," he added that "it is equally true that had the Duvaliers been killed or dangerously wounded there would have been a riot and the hitherto passive band of terrors would have suddenly become very active" (*Votes of Legislative Council: 42*).

Fields also remarked on the mainly passive participation of the Inaguans. He reported that the 'band of terrors' were active to a small degree. They helped to supply gasoline for the Residency, the Commissioner's home, tried to ascertain the strength of the numbers at the Erickson's house and intercepted a message from the Erickson's house to the Residency. As for the rest of the people, Fields was amazed:

Though there were but two men on the war path there was not the usual crowd of curious spectators, the inhabitants of the settlement had suddenly seemingly retired to bed as though everyone had previously known all about it and was neither surprised nor alarmed when George and Willis became outlaws.

He concluded: "While the rest of the inhabitants exhibited no willingness to help the Duvaliers, they equally made no effort and signified no willingness to stop them" (*Votes of Legislative Council 1937-38*: 42-43).

The argument that the Inagua disturbance was merely a clash of personalities and "the work of the two men Duvalier alone" which Jarrett, Colonial Secretary, and Acting Governor at the time of the disturbance, concluded in the official report, is also supported by strong evidence.

In Bahamian law, a riot occurs if three or more persons in a public or private place attempt or commit violence (*Statute Law Bahamas 1965* c. 48s. 78). In the case of the Inagua incident, the murder, the attempted murder and the arson were actually performed by the two Duvalier brothers. George and Willis Duvalier resented the Ericksons, perhaps for racial reasons but more because of their intrusion and also because they took away Symonette's monopoly. They refused to work for the Ericksons. They had held a grudge against the Americans ever since the fight with Kaddy, one of their American employees. The Duvaliers considered John Munroe (whom they killed) as an informer to the Ericksons and showed animosity towards Commissioner Fields, who according to Governor Clifford "failed to keep in touch with the local interest of the people and rather attached himself to the Erickson group" (Clifford 1937). Moreover, Fields had convicted and fined them for the part they had taken in the fight against Kaddy and the Ericksons. The burning of the Erickson store and the salt house was directed against the Ericksons personally, while that of the Wireless Station and the Residency seemed to have been directed against Fields.

As H.O. Dalke, a social psychologist, has suggested in a study on race and minority riots, the likelihood of rioting and violence is very high "in a transitional period, such as industrialization ..." (Dalke 1952). The fact that the incident occurred in an area of the Bahamas where there was slight industrial development was perhaps significant to a limited degree. However, the lack of united action on the part of the inhabitants of Matthew Town, and the failure of the Duvaliers and their supporters to work havoc on the salt pans or to kill more of the Erickson's employees were also meaningful.

The riots and strikes that swept through the West Indies in the 1930s were caused by many factors. Oppressive economic conditions brought

about by the Great Depression caused extensive unemployment, low wages and a high cost of living. Emigration outlets to North America were closed and labourers returned from South and Central America to join the unemployed (Spackman 1975: 32-33). These factors combined with dire poverty and squalid social conditions resulted in pent-up frustrations and distress which exploded in strikes and riots in the 1930s in the British Caribbean and in the early 1940s in Nassau, Bahamas (Saunders 1985-86: 117-146).

Conditions which brought about the riots and strikes elsewhere in the British Caribbean were present in Inagua in the early 1930s. The Out Islands, which until the 1950s contained the majority of the population, were generally neglected by the reactionary Nassau white mercantile elite and little was done to improve the welfare of most of the people. However, by 1937, because of foreign investment, there was an upswing in Inagua's economy with increased salt exports²¹ and a high rate of employment. As Neil Smelser, a sociologist, argues (1962: 242-48), hostile outbursts may erupt if certain factors cause enough strain on a given society. Such factors include recent migrants or population invasions and new kinds of cultural contacts, new expectations and specific dissatisfactions. These factors were present in Inagua's society of 1937 and made for new tensions. The advent of the Ericksons and their employees and the revitalization of the salt industry heightened expectations which were not altogether satisfactory.

Why then was there no mass uprising? Inagua was a part of the far-flung Bahamian archipelago and was isolated from the main centres of the Bahamian population. Communication was difficult and transportation between the islands was often irregular. This made it hard to organize a national movement. The migration of Out Islanders into Nassau which began in the 1920s began to bring together the elements of dissatisfaction. It was not until the numbers were sufficient and the leaders available that there was a real demand for change.

In 1937 most Inaguans, at least the men,²² were employed and were faring better than they had been in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although there was some dissatisfaction and resentment towards the Ericksons' "take-over" of the salt industry and the stevedoring trade, the feeling was not universal. The fledgling trade union was extremely weak and no leader emerged. Additionally, the influential citizens at Inagua had ambivalent feelings towards Arthur L. Symonette, potential leader and most prosperous merchant at the time of the Ericksons' debut. They despised the truck system under which his labourers operated.

The Ericksons were seen as "outsiders" and may have been resented

as such. However, it must also be remembered that Matthew Town was quite a cosmopolitan settlement. Its inhabitants had traditionally been exposed to Europeans, other West Indians and Haitians. Many Inaguans had travelled to other West Indian islands, Central and South America. Some had lived and gone to school in Haiti.²³ Others had lived and worked for some years in North America. Inaguans had learned to mix with, and to tolerate, foreigners of both races.

The disturbance in Inagua in 1937 resulted from a personal vendetta. It occurred in a potentially explosive atmosphere but failed to develop into a political or labour riot. The causes of the Inagua incident were perhaps more deep-rooted than the Government admitted. However, the isolated community of Matthew Town, although sympathetic towards the perpetrators, was unpoliticized and had no committed leadership. Moreover, it seemed content with the new wave of prosperity offered by the American investors.

NOTES

1. The riot in Inagua was examined in detail in Saunders 1985: 369-74. This article is an expansion of the account given there.
2. Inagua's earlier name was Heneaga, probably derived from a compound Spanish word meaning "water is found there." But it may instead be derived from the Arawak language (Moseley 1926: 87-88).
3. Inagua is 65 miles north of Cuba and 82 miles north of Haiti. As far as can be determined, no literature exists on the trading relationship between the Bahamas and Cuba or Haiti. However, oral interviews indicate that Inagua and Haiti traded on a regular basis.
4. Matthew Town is said to be the best laid out town in the Bahamas. It takes about half an hour to walk around the town (Stark 1891 and Moseley 1926: 88).
5. The Out Islands are all those Bahamian islands outside of New Providence where Nassau, the capital, is located. Women were legally given the vote in 1960 but did not vote until the 1962 General Elections. For a discussion of how the white elite maintained its power, see Saunders: 1985-6.
6. An Act for the Separation of Turks Island from The Bahamas, 25 December, 1848.
7. The Heneagua Salt Pond Company, a Bahamian owned joint-stock company was formed in 1849 to cultivate the salt ponds in Inagua. During the next year, the Inagua Salt Pond Company owned by several inhabitants of Inagua was established. Later in 1865 a group of New Providence businessmen led by the Hon. Timothy Darling formed a joint-stock

company that constructed a tramway to transport salt and also wharf facilities at Matthew Town. (*Archives Exhibition Booklet* 1980: 26-27).

8. Stevedore labourers usually worked on voyages lasting 10-18 days. Other labourers were being hired on contracts lasting from 9 months to a year. They were involved with the cutting of mahogany in Nicaragua and Guatemala, with railways in Mexico and Panama and with the iron mines at Daquiri, Cuba. (Williams 1985: 9).

9. The so called 'Rulers' of Inagua included among others, George Pickering, Albert Augustus, John Steele, James Baker, Charles Wildgoose, Maurice Daxon, Kenneth Williams, Bruce Mortimer and I.K. Palacious.

10. Men earned two shillings a day, women earned one shilling and six pence a day (Erickson 1937).

11. George Duvalier was 21 or 22 years of age in 1937 and Willis was 20.

12. Commissioner Fields was a coloured Trinidadian, who was a physician by profession. He had been stationed at Inagua since 1926 and was well-liked by the Ericksons (Dundas 1938).

13. Reginald Alexander had several previous convictions, ranging from discharging dynamite to using obscene and filthy language.

14. Willis Duvalier apparently rushed at Fields with a knife. The Commissioner claimed to have talked him out of using the weapon.

15. A telegram was dispatched from Commissioner Fields, reporting the Inagua 'riot' and calling for police assistance. A police detachment was sent by a local steamship which developed engine trouble and was forced to put up at Rum Cay, another Bahamian Out Island. Another boat was dispatched on the 20 August to pick up the party. It reached Matthew Town on 24 August, five days after the 'riot' occurred (Jarrett 1937).

16. On the night before the execution, Commissioner Fields was staying with his friends, the W.B. Norths, who lived in Prison Lane, nearly opposite the Prison. He swore to the family that he saw someone at his window that night (North 1984).

17. The Inagua incident received much press coverage in England; accounts of the incident were published in the *Daily Express*, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Evening News* on 25 August, 1937. It also appeared in the *Daily Express* on 26 and 27 August, 1937 and also on the latter date in the *Evening Standard* and *Manchester Guardian*.

18. Dupuch ended his article on a sceptical note. "No Uprising, No Riot, No Nothing!"

19. For a discussion of race and class relations in Nassau and the Bahamas generally see Saunders 1985: 209-217, 281-289, 355-358. Inagua was a mainly black community but had quite a number of white and coloured families. Each group generally lived at the same economic and social level, although leading families were recognized in the community.

20. In 1934 there were 22 cases of disorderly behaviour or similar offences. In 1935 and 1936 there were 43 and 42 cases of disorderly behaviour respectively.
21. Between 1933 and 1937 salt exports from Inagua increased from 80 bushels valued at £12.0.0. to 118,470 bushels valued at £1371.0.0. in 1973 (Dundas 1938).
22. The well-to-do women were housewives while some of the labouring class women worked in the salt ponds and on public works.
23. One example is the Ford family. Vera Ford Cartwright who is presently the Court Interpreter, was educated in a Roman Catholic School at Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

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