Flag Sparks Haiti Protest

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—Haitian students thought dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier’s flag had left the country with him Feb. 7, and when they saw it still flying Tuesday, some turned out in protest.

Officials of the new government had announced that the pre-Duvalier flag, blue and red, could be flown Tuesday and would be in use officially one week later. There were not enough to go around, however, so some schools and government buildings ran up the black and red of the Duvalier regime.

The Haitian flag was changed by Jean-Claude’s father, Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier, who founded the family dynasty in 1957. He said he put a black stripe through the flag to honor Haiti’s black people.

After the black and red flag was hoisted over some buildings Tuesday, about 150 students demonstrated outside the National Palace and then marched to the U.S. Consulate.

from: The Oregonian

Vexillology at the United Nations

by Nathaniel O. Abelson

The following article was originally delivered at NAVA 13 in Salem, Mass., as a banquet address. It has been slightly altered by being updated; its discussion of the origins of the United Nations flag will be published separately in THE FLAG BULLETIN.

Part 1 of 2

I am a geographer, librarian, and a professional Naval Reserve officer. My knowledge of flags, prior to joining the United Nations Secretariat in 1946, was limited to the Pledge of Allegiance which I was taught at the John Ward School in Chestnut Hill and at the Alexander Hamilton School in Brighton, both in eastern Massachusetts. During my active service in the United States Navy in World War II, I learned quite a bit about naval flag etiquette. These experiences were part of my education and they planted a seed that germinated at the United Nations.

I arrived at the United Nations in October 1946, about a year and a half after the San Francisco Conference. Flags of the member states were already in use, but the United Nations had neither a flag nor an official coat of arms. The need for the international organization to have its own flag had been recognized before its formal creation. The League of Nations had never had an official flag although a number of attempts were made to create one.

My real involvement with flags at the U.N. began rather innocently in July of 1948. The mission of the Republic of China made inquiries in the Secretariat about obtaining the exact specifications of the flags of all the member states of the United Nations as well as their national anthems, including both words and scores and also recordings. This query eventually worked its way, logically, to the library. Some flag plates were found in dictionaries, but little progress was made and someone approached me to see if there were any flag plates in our atlases. There were a few, but as I got involved it became obvious that not all the flag plates were in agreement, that most were out of date, and that none provided exact specifications.

Through the U.S. Navy we obtained blue-prints used for the manufacture of flags flown by naval vessels, but these were incomplete and some of the flags were either out of date or in error.

I suggested to my director that a sure solution would be to send a circular note under the name of the Secretary-General to each member state requesting all the flag, anthem, and—for good measure—emblem data we could obtain. This idea was accepted and I was asked to execute it. Some two months later note number 309/10/2/NOA of 29 September 1948 was dispatched and I, unknowingly, became a vexillologist. With the exception of a handful of states, the responses were painfully slow in arriving. In fact, to this date we have not obtained all the information we requested from each member state. Nevertheless, I was authorized to set up files and to store the information in the Map Room.

As the collection grew so did my involvement. One of the first public information posters issued by the United Nations was a flag chart: the earliest one in my files is dated January 1947. These charts were published by the Department of Public Information.
Notes from Grace Rogers Cooper NAVA President

CACAPON, WV We hope all the NAVA members are planning to attend annual meeting, NAVA XX, in Trenton, New Jersey, October 10-12. Have you remembered to send your registration to Don Healy, NAVA XX Host? Registration this year is $55, which includes Friday evening reception, two Continental breakfasts, a Sunday Lunch and Sunday afternoon bus tour and the big Saturday night banquet. A late registration fee will be charged for registration after August 10. Have you remembered to make your room reservations at the Sheraton Inn, Bordentown, New Jersey? Doreen Braverman, Program Chairman, has put out a “Call for Papers.” If not already in the mail, send a brief description of your presentation to Doreen with the equipment needed immediately. The information is needed to complete the program and prepare the publications. Remember the Driver Award, sponsored by the National Flag Foundation and presented to the member whose presentation is judged the best. We need quality papers of original research to compete for the eighth presentation of this generous award. We also need all the members who like to sit and listen, learn and share. Those of us who attended the meeting in Kansas City last year had great times sharing flag interests... Come and join us in Trenton. Share the responsibility attending the Annual Meeting and reaping the benefits of a program of flag research papers.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS FLAG

HON. RON de LUGO OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1986

Mr. de LUGO. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to bring to the attention of my colleagues the following transcript by Mr. P.W. Sparks of St. Thomas, which is a history of the U.S. Virgin Islands flag. The flag was commissioned in the year 1921 by Rear-Adm. Sumner E.W. Kittelle, U.S. Navy, who had just been appointed civilian Governor of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Sparks, the author of the following piece and a young shipman at that time, was also the designer of the flag. I have found his comments to be a very poignant recollection of the young shipman’s sense of duty and idealism in undertaking this task. That is why I take particular pride in bringing this historical and most informative description of events to the attention of my colleagues today.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS FLAG

Rear-Admiral Sumner E.W. Kittelle, U.S. Navy, was appointed Civilian Governor of the Virgin Islands, succeeding Rear-Admiral J.W. Oman on April 26, 1921. Captain William Russell White, U.S. Navy, was Captain of the U.S.S. Vixen, and Chief of Staff to the Governor.

The U.S.S. Vixen was stationed at St. Thomas to serve as the Governor’s flagship. Rear-Admiral Kittelle served in a dual role. As Rear-Admiral he was the officer in command of all Naval establishments, ships, and personnel in the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. As Civilian Governor he was the head of the officials set up to administer the civilian government of the Virgin Islands.

I served as Captain’s Yeoman on the U.S.S. Vixen from February, 1920 until the ship was decommissioned in Norfolk, Va. in October 1922, having relieved Chief Yeoman Barta, when he was transferred ashore.

At staff meetings at the Government House, where Captain White would preside as Chief of Staff, it was one of my duties to attend the staff meetings and take notes pertaining to the military activities.

Morris de Castro was a civilian stenographer at the Government House at this time, and one of his duties was to be present at the staff meetings and to take notes pertaining to anything concerning the civil government.

Sometime during the latter half of the year of 1921 the Governor decided that the Virgin Islands should have Chief of Staff, to present some ideas.

During the year and a half that I had served as Captain’s Yeoman on the Vixen, I had demonstrated a certain degree of artistic talent, lettering, sketching, painting, etc. I developed and printed rolls of film, not only for myself, but for other members of the ship’s crew.

So it was that when the Governor asked his Chief of Staff to come up with some ideas for a flag, the Chief of Staff, in turn asked me to come up with some ideas.

The Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary which we had in the Captain's office on the U.S.S. Vixen, had as a prefix, flags of all nations, and also the Great Seal of the United States.

Whether silhouetted against the sky on a rocky pinnacle in Alaska or soaring majestically overhead in Florida, the bald eagle is admired as one of nature's most spectacular creatures. To catch a glimpse of this majestic raptor is to understand why the Found continued on page 3

Letters to the Editor...

It would be of interest to members to know where all the museums and exhibits are located around the country that have flags on display so that members can visit these places when on vacation. Ask members to send [information] about exhibits in their area that have important flags on display.

DON KLETT, Oregon. Tumbling Waters Museum of Flags in Prattville, Alabama and the Quartermasters Museum near Philadelphia, PA are two that come readily to mind. Any others? — Editor.

The amount of disinformation on flags which has been published is staggering as evidenced in the Mar-Apr 1986 NAVA News. The NEW YORK TIMES article (pg 4) reproduces the current Afghan national flag but the one below it is not the flag of the regime overthrown by the current Afghan government as claimed. The flag shown...is in fact the current party flag of the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party of Afghanistan [and] is similar to the 1978-80 national flag of Afghanistan which the TIMES intended to illustrate.

On page 1 of the same issue of NAVA NEWS the newsletter of the Texas 1986 sesquicentennial commission is quoted. The information reproduced there clearly derives from “The Romantic Flags of Texas” by Mamie Wynne Cox. Although Ms. Cox had a substantial amount of research on Texas flags, her documentation on foreign flags was poor and the Spanish and French flags illustrated in the newsletter—which NAVA NEWS reproduced— are erroneous. Worse still, the “Banner of the American Indians” shown is a complete fabrication... The best discussion of the question is in the master’s degree thesis “Lone Star: The History and Development of the Texas Flag” written by NAVA member David Ott. WHITNEY SMITH, Director, Flag Research Center, Massachusetts. Due to the nature of NAVA NEWS, material sent for publication is deemed accurate until proven otherwise — Editor.
ing Fathers chose it to represent the Strength and Courage of our great nation.

I used the eagle shown in the Great Seal as my model. The eagle grasps 13 arrows in one claw, representing the 13 original states. I changed this to 3 arrows to represent the 3 islands, St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

In the other claw the eagle clutches an olive branch. In the eighth chapter of the book of Genesis we are told that Noah sent a dove out from the ark to see if the floodwaters had receded and, we are told that the dove returned bearing an olive leaf.

To this day, the dove is a symbol of Peace, likewise is the olive branch. And so, the olive branch in the claw of the eagle is symbolic of Peace.

We have here in the claws of the eagle a general desire for Peace with no world, but in the same breath, so to speak, the arrows denoting the determination to defend our rights to Freedom, Happiness, and Independence.

These attributes in the eagle depicted in the Virgin Island flag show the right to enjoy the Peace and Tranquility one finds in the Islands, plus the Independence and Freedom guaranteed every U.S. citizen.

The design was submitted to the Governor and it was he that added the letter “V” on one side of the eagle and the letter “I” on the other.

He approved the design and sent it to the Navy Department in Washington, who then forwarded it to the Philadelphia Navy Yard where a supply of flags was made up in the sail loft at the Yard.

In the meantime, the Governor told Captain White to have a flag made up by the quartermasters on the U.S.S. Vixen. The Vixen was a very small ship and the flag supply was limited, and the quartermasters had no facilities for making such a flag.

It was then that I took the design home with me. I had only just a short time before that married Grace Joseph and she and her sister Blanche (now Blanche Sasso) were expert in needlecraft. I had not only sketched in the outline of the eagle, but drawn the feathers in the wings and tail, and these they embroidered on the sample flag they made.

This was used by the Governor until such time as the manufactured flags were received.

At the time this took place, the Island government was in a state of flux with the slow transition from Danish rule to U.S. supervision and the making of the flag was no big deal. Consequently, no official recognition was ever made and a diligent search of official archives, both in St. Thomas and in Washington failed to turn up any records on the matter.

Although this took place over sixty years ago, I was at a very impressionable age, and my memories concerning the flag are quite clear.

I am setting forth these facts to clarify the history of the Virgin Islands flag as well as to furnish some authentic evidence for the public in general, for Grace Sparks and her sister, Blanche Sasso, and for our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren both now and in the years to come.

So be it. 

from: Congressional Record, April 30, 1966

Vexillology at the U.N. cont’d from page 1
EDITOR'S NOTES

THANKS: to Woody Ridgway and the All Nations Flag Co. in Kansas City, MO for their kind hospitality during my visit last May ...to Nick Artimovich and family for their invitation and picnic at the Flag Day celebration at Ft. McHenry in Baltimore, MD - a great show...to NAVA members Grif Morris of Minnesota, Bob Coykendall of New York, and Woody Ridgway of Kansas for mentioning NAVA in articles done about them and their flag collections...and to Corinne Deretz of the flag manufacturer Doublet Festitube Inc. for the use of a Statue of Liberty flag during Liberty Weekend....NAVA XX; Remember, conference registration is $55, not $45 as printed and is due by the end of August. Come on, send it in!......THESIS: NAVA XIX Driver Award winner Scot Guenter of Maryland successfully defended his dissertation entitled "The American Flag 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification." For a copy, write Scot at the University of Maryland, Division of Arts and Humanities, Dept. of American Studies, College Park, MD 20742.....FRANCIS HOPKINSON: NAVA member Bob Coykendall recently co-founded the Francis Hopkinson Society which is dedicated to "historical research and education" of the designer of the first US Naval ensign. For details, write Bob at 29 Main Street, Youngstown, NY 14174.....CONGRATULATIONS: Married July 13th in San Francisco, NAVA member Jim Ferrigan and his bride Eniko .....THE CONFEDERACY: Sent by NAVA member Hugh McClellan of North Carolina, an article asking whether general use of the Confederate battle flag is a "Symbol of Cultural Pride or Racism?: The Flag That Wears Two Faces" by Mark Price (Fayetteville Times, Jun 11, 86). Interested in a copy, drop me a note......HALF STAFF: NAVA member James Marill of New Jersey, designer of the Glen Rock, New Jersey city flag and vexillologist par excellence died while on diplomatic duty with the US Foreign Service in Chad last April...NAVA member E. Jane Burkett, an active member since 1973, died in Massachusetts last December. Sincere condolences to their families.