

# **EMERGENCY HAITI OBSERVATION MISSION**

**March 23 – April 2, 2004**

*Coordinated by the Quixote Center*

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, the first volunteer observation team on the ground after the coup d'etat of February 29, 2004, was alarmed to discover that the violations of human rights taking place in Haiti were far worse than had been reported by the mainstream press. Since the coup d'etat there has been a dramatic increase in terror and a disruption of Haiti's fragile peasant economy, having deadly consequences for the impoverished majority of the population. Recent events remind us that the divisions in Haitian society exist within a two hundred-year old tradition of class warfare, and we observed that the poor are once again paying the highest price.

Only days after the removal of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an illegitimate government was created from Haiti's private sector and the political opposition, backed by United States with the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS). This interim government has not even attempted to create the illusion that it is inclusive and has gone beyond just excluding *Fanmi Lavalas* members to compiling a list of Lavalas leadership that must not, under any circumstances, attempt to leave the country. In addition, this interim government appears to be implicitly supporting violent criminals-at-large, and resurgent military and paramilitary groups. In its actions and in its words, the "interim" government is condoning a large violent faction that is committing human rights violations.

Disturbingly, few organizations in Haiti are willing to investigate the widespread abuses that are reported. These include targeted disappearances, beatings, and murders of Lavalas supporters. The National Coalition for Haitian Rights has been notably biased in its investigations. This is especially unfortunate because the NCHR is widely quoted in mainstream media and historically, has been relied upon by policy circles throughout the hemisphere. Although they have not reported it, we found the level of terror in the country is pervasive. Each day, radio stations read the names of those who are being hunted for their alleged crimes and connections to Lavalas. Our observation team met with people whose names are on the list, and learned that several of the individuals who were identified on the radio have already disappeared or are in *marronage*, hiding.

The presence of the Multinational Interim Force, or MIF, is NOT creating a greater sense of security. Although the U.S. Embassy explained that disarmament is part of the MIF's official mandate, it does not appear to consider the escaped criminals and human rights abusers currently controlling northern Haiti to be a threat to its mission. In fact, disarming so-called rebels, many of them known criminals, is not part of the MIF's mission. Perhaps most unsettling for our team were the consistent reports that U.S. Marines had shot and killed people in poor neighborhoods and then removed their bodies in body bags.

We experienced the terror the U.S. Marines inspire in Port-au-Prince. Helicopters circled parts of the city including Bel Air, Cite Soleil and Carrefour (Kafou), notoriously poor areas and strongholds of support for Lavalas. At night they circled, dipping in close to the ground, with their lights turned off. We were unable to discern any purpose to this kind of patrol other than the inspiration of terror. Several times we encountered members of the population running towards our car as a group of Marines rounded the corner behind them. The U.S. troops and the MIF have failed to provide security to the largest and most vulnerable sector of Haitian society.

In addition, Haitian democracy has received a blow that could signify a return to complete consolidation of power in the hands of the wealthy few at the continued expense of the needs of

- equipment by the United States to the Dominican Republic and the subsequent distribution of those supplies;
  - The role of U.S. agencies and/or operatives in the creation of the Cannibal Army of Gonaives and the Northern Opposition Front of Cap-Haitien;
  - Whether, as is alleged, there have been serious human rights abuses, including murder, by the foreign occupation forces;
  - Any and all violations by the U.S., France, and Canada, of international treaties and covenants pertaining to democracy, national sovereignty, human rights, and refugee rights; and
  - Any and all violations of Haiti's Constitution by the establishment and empowerment of the "interim government."
- III. We call for the immediate replacement of the Multinational Force led by the United States with a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission that does not include the U.S., France, or Canada. Pending the removal of U.S. Marines from Haiti, we demand Creole translators for every unit, the immediate removal of helicopters, tanks and artillery. Lastly, we call for the U.S. to adopt France's rules of engagement: to not fire unless fired upon.
- IV. We demand that any government claiming legitimacy in Haiti immediately arrest the so-called "rebels", including their leader Guy Philippe, for their violent crimes. We call for the prompt re-capture and re-imprisonment of convicted criminals, in particular, convicted human rights abusers Jean Pierre Baptiste (alias Jean Tatoune), Jean-Claude Duperval, Carl Dorelien, Prosper Avril, and Louis Jodel Chamblain, who are notorious human rights abusers.
- V. With regards to United States foreign policy towards Haiti, we unanimously demand:
- That the U.S. respect the sovereignty of the Haitian Republic, including the territorial sovereignty of Mole St. Nicolas;
  - An immediate end to punitive U.S. policies, including embargos, towards Jamaica, for acting as host to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; and
- VI. The arrest of convicted human rights violator Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, living in Queens, NY. We condemn human rights abuses committed by all sides and all parties, before and after the events of February 29, 2004, and we call for the establishment of an independent truth commission.

## UNANIMOUS STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We condemn U.S. treatment of Haitian refugees, and we call for an immediate change in U.S. policy. We demand that Temporary Protective Status (TPS) be granted to all Haitians facing political persecution, including those whose names are read daily on Haitian radio stations.

We condemn the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) in Haiti for not maintaining its impartiality as a human rights organization.

We condemn the statement made by the de facto Haitian Prime Minister in Gonaives on March 20, praising Louis Jodel Chamblain, Guy Philippe, Jean Pierre Baptiste alias Jean Tatoune, and other convicted or accused criminals and human rights violators as "freedom fighters." We also

condemn the impression of agreement with this statement by OAS Ambassador David Lee who accompanied the Prime Minister and was present with him at the event.

We call for an end to the practice of funding and aid that includes neoliberal conditionalities such as structural adjustment programs because of the disastrous effects these conditions have on developing countries throughout the world. In addition, we call for complete cancellation of the odious debts of Haiti, especially the debts accrued by the Duvalier family dictatorships. Odious debts, according to international law, do not have to be repaid.

We demand an immediate investigation within the Canadian Parliament into the Canadian role in supporting U.S. policy and the Haitian intervention.

We demand that Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide be free to speak to the press and move freely. In addition, we urge the United Nations to invite President Aristide to address the UN General Assembly as soon as possible.

In order to encourage an environment where human rights are respected, we call for independent, on-the-ground human rights investigators.

We call on the international solidarity community to mobilize for:

- An international day of solidarity and/or prayer for the Haitian people;
- Solidarity and support for countries suffering from imperialistic U.S. policies;
- Accompaniment programs for the many Haitians who are now in hiding within their own country; and
- A renewal of the Haiti solidarity movement in response to U.S., Canadian, and French policies.

## II. Introduction

From March 23 to April 2, 2004 a twenty-three-member Emergency Haiti Observation Mission visited Haiti. The Mission was coordinated by the staff of Haiti Reborn, a program of the Quixote Center.

The purpose of the Mission was to engage representatives of different Haitian and international organizations and gain their perspectives on the current situation. Using analysis, interviews, testimony, first-hand information, and historical context, the team has prepared this report to share their findings with a larger audience. Although participants volunteered for the Mission for various reasons they are unified in their desire to bear witness to events in Haiti in solidarity with the Haitian poor.

Haiti Reborn, a program of the Quixote Center, works in the United States on behalf of the Haitian people to build an active grassroots solidarity movement and to advocate for a more just U.S. foreign policy. Haiti Reborn acts as a center for dissemination of information to combat negative stereotypes, and provides in-depth political, economic and social analyses. To complement this work at a structural level, it funds community-based initiatives that empower Haitians at the grassroots. The Quixote Center is a multi-issue justice and peace center founded in 1976. It is a non-profit organization whose mission is to work for structural change in church and society. The Quixote Center provides housing, incorporation, tax-exemption, legal status, accounting and technological services for a wide range of social justice programs, including Haiti Reborn.

All participants in the Emergency Haiti Observation Mission traveled to Haiti as volunteers. The observers were: Elizabeth Lownik (Student, University of Wisconsin), Robin Lloyd (Director, Green Valley Media, Burlington, VT), Susan McLucas (Activist, Somerville, MA), Susan Liebold (Photographer, New York, NY), Lyn Duff (Journalist, Pacifica Radio's Flashpoints), Shari Silberstein (Co-Director, Quixote Center), Sr. Kay Coll (Haiti Solidarity Network of the Northeast), Nancy Bennett (Santa Fe, NM), Debra Armentrout (Office of Congressman Robert Wexler, FL), Patrick Tortora (Peace Activist, Cape Cod, MA), Tom F. Driver (Witness for Peace, NYC), Tom Reeves (Journalist, Montreal and Boston), Joe Wilson (Public Welfare Foundation, Washington, DC), Anthony Fenton (Journalist, Vancouver), Rev. John Lemnitzer (Bethel Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ), Dale Stitt (Journey Into Freedom, Portland, OR), Figaro Joseph (Public Welfare Foundation, Washington, DC), D'Wanna Lee (Student, University of Maryland), Jacob Kurtzer (Office of Congressman Robert Wexler, FL), Myles Duffy (Washington, DC), and Joe Duplan (Hyattsville, MD).

Haiti Reborn/Quixote Center staff members Melinda Miles and Eugenia Charles co-coordinated the delegation.

The Observation Mission visited two geographical departments in Haiti and gathered information from more than thirty interviews, meetings, and personal encounters. The ten-day investigation included travel to Port-au-Prince (West), and Jacmel (South). Security concerns prohibited the team from traveling anywhere north of Port-au-Prince. Travel throughout Port-au-Prince and to Jacmel on Haiti's southern coast allowed the team an opportunity to observe the Haitian people in both urban and rural areas - from professionals, to politicians, to peasants; -from those living on one side to the other of the dizzying economic gap between the small community of extremely wealthy and powerful, to the disempowered and desperately impoverished millions.

Our group met and discussed the current situation with the Confederation des Travailleurs Haitiens (Confederation of Haitian Workers, CTH, which includes several unions and the Commission Haitienne pour le Respect des Droits Humains, the Haitian Commission for the Respect of Human Rights, or CHREDHU), the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), The Civil Society Initiative (including the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, the Franco-Haitian Chamber of Commerce and the Foundation for a New Haiti, among others), the Lambi Fund of Haiti, FONKOZE Haiti, Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (International Lawyers Office), Antwan Izmyer Projects, National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights (including SOFA-Haitian Women's Solidarity Organization, ENFOFANM, Fanm Yo La and Kay Fanm), PAPDA (The Haitian Platform to Advocate for an Alternative Development)/Jubilee Haiti, *Batay Ouvriye* Workers' Rights Organization, members of the *Fanmi Lavalas* political party and Human Rights Commission, Zanmi Lasante (Partners In Health), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), U.S. Embassy, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Organization of American States (OAS) the International Red Cross, the Regroupement Democratique Populaire (RDP, the Popular Democratic Coalition), members of DOA/BN, Coordination of Women Workers (including FOPEP, the Federation of Feminists of Petionville), members of Jacmel organizations and cooperatives including: The Association of Students of Jacmel, or AJEH, The Group for Political Surveillance and Reflection, or GRESPO, Society Makaya, or SOMA, journalists, and the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Foundation (victims of the 1991-94 coup d'etat, residents of impoverished areas).

Many individuals also shared their perspectives and testimony with the observers. They include: Ron Voss (Antwan Izmyer Memorial Projects), Father Michael Graves (Greek Orthodox Church in Haiti), Patrick Elie (Former Secretary of State for Public Security - 1994), Interim President of Haiti Boniface Alexandre, Former Deputy Bolivar Romelus, Kevin Pina (journalist and documentary filmmaker), Kenneth Cook (Canadian Ambassador) and Father Gerard Jean-Juste. We conducted additional interviews with French soldiers taking part in the Multinational Intervention Forces, residents of Bel Air, U.S. Marines policing the Port-au-Prince international airport and the Presidential Palace, and journalists in hiding (whose names must remain off the record).

The findings presented in this report are limited due to insecurity in Haiti. Our team was not able to travel north of Port-au-Prince and safety concerns limited our travel even within the capital. Some of us visited Bel Air and other communities in smaller groups, but it was logistically impossible to bring the entire team of twenty-seven into the most tense areas.

### III. Current Situation in Haiti

#### A. Human Rights Abuses and a Campaign of Terror

The insecurity in Haiti has several components, including: the resurgence of military and paramilitary forces, freed criminals and human rights violators walking the streets and controlling large areas outside the capital, the integration of resurgent paramilitary and military into the Haitian National Police, weapons proliferation, and armed gangs. Of most grave concern is a systematic campaign of terror which targets mainly the poor who have supported President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the *Fanmi Lavalas* party, and participatory democracy. The Haitian press presently plays a key role in the persecution. The interim government is not only allowing this campaign to proceed, it is actively participating. According to nearly all the testimony, eye witness accounts, and reports by family members of victims, U.S. Marines have also taken part in the terrorist campaign.

Many testify that those being targeted throughout Haiti are supporters of Lavalas. Jacob Jean Francois, a teacher and union member from Cap-Haitien, shared this story:

"I am a teacher and I was arrested on Monday, March 15 at 10:45 am. My friends from the CTH (Confederation of Haitian Workers) came to get me on March 16. [Those who arrested me] accused me of giving guns to 30 people, burning tires and houses. I am a teacher and I am certified in Law. The accusations were false and used just to hold me. They reproached me because there is a movement to remove all Lavalas... All these former soldiers are pointing fingers and arresting people. Anyone with Lavalas is hiding in the north."

Jacques Belzin, a lawyer and the coordinator of the Haitian Commission for the Respect of Human Rights (CHREDHU) explained, "They are against us because we asked for reconciliation among political actors."

Members of Haiti's largest human rights organization, the *Fondasyon Trant Septamn* (FTS) are in hiding throughout the country. FTS held a weekly vigil in the Plaza of Martyrs, across the street from Haiti's National Palace, each Wednesday for more than ten years. They work for justice and an end to impunity, and members are predominantly urban slum dwellers who were victimized during the 1991 coup d'etat. Additionally, FTS coordinated a campaign to prevent the Haitian Army from being re-established. A photo exhibition of the victims and criminals of the coup period traveled to each of Haiti's nine geographical departments and members of FTS gathered 150,000 names on a petition calling for a Constitutional amendment to outlaw the Haitian Army. Their leader Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, a psychologist with a long history of working with torture victims, went into exile on March 2.

Representatives of FTS in Port-au-Prince came out of hiding to meet with our delegation, and they must remain anonymous for their safety. They testified about why they have gone into hiding:

"Human rights have been violated and we need justice. We are asking you to help us with the violations and find justice. Many people are dying, particularly in popular neighborhoods where they are dying by the dozens."



"In Kafou, about thirty militants disappeared. In Cap-Haitien, they dropped Lavalas members into a hole and killed them. In Port-au-Prince, young militants were killed and buried in the city because they were part of Lavalas... We are in hiding. There are graver cases than what you see here today, but they couldn't come and are in hiding." (journalist and FTS member)

"We have been victimized many times because we are ones who fight and speak out. All of us women here had a petition sent around the country to remove the military. Now we have to hide. It took a lot for us to come here today. Everyone knows us and is looking for us. We are part of Bush's deck of cards... They are looking for all members of the FTS. We have to move around constantly."

"People are dying. Everyday in Kafou, they are finding bodies everywhere."

"If anyone today says they are Lavalas, they are persecuted."

"Those who raped us before are now forcing us into hiding again."

"We are here today; tonight you never know. Two, three, or four of us could be kidnapped. They put a bag over your head and you're gone. 2004 is worse than 1991 because there are a lot of different factions killing people. In the Central Plateau, when they arrest Lavalas supporters, they dig a hole, put dry leaves in the hole, and then burn him alive. Former military take away the bodies after they kill people, or from the hospital, and you will never see it. I was hit in the head with a revolver. They beat me so much that today I can't hear well. I never know when they'll pick me up. Once they do, I'm dead. They know us [FTS members] very well, they're looking hard for us, and we are all in hiding."

Radio stations read the names of people who have been blacklisted each day at 4pm. One of the FTS representatives gave the observation mission a copy of the list, with stars next to the names of those who have disappeared already. Names are read randomly throughout the day, as well. Former Minister of Security during Aristide's first term, Patrick Elie, explained, "There is not a single prisoner left in Haiti, except those Lavalas members who have recently been arrested. Haiti is in total chaos, and a very scary one. Names are being listed on the radio, and the political climate is one of a terror campaign against *Fanmi Lavalas*." Father Edner DeValcin of *Fanmi Lavalas* also talked about the use of radio, "There should be no arrests without a warrant, but when the radio says your name, you are arrested."

Our observation mission met with a student leader who went into hiding after his name was read on the radio. Fratz Elie Legros, a student in Kafou, was included in a weekly list of alleged human rights abusers compiled by the CARLI hotline. Pamela Callen, deputy director, explained that the CARLI hotline is supported by her agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development. Unknown accusers called the hotline and claimed Legros was handing out weapons in Kafou. It was this charge that put him into hiding initially. According to the *Agence Haitienne de Presse* (AHP, or Haitian Press Agency), CARLI issues a list to the press each week of all those that anonymous callers accuse through the hotline. This hotline has become a key element in the terror campaign.

It has been reported that Radio Caraibes repeatedly informed the public that Legros was being held at the Faculty and asked that the police be sent there to arrest him. This incited violence, and other students from other parts of the university campus went to join those waiting for Legros at the Law Faculty. There have been many interventions of this kind. Many times those intervening on the radio serve as informants.

Who are the perpetrators of this terror campaign? In the north, there is little distinction between the former paramilitaries, former military and criminals-at-large who are acting as police and the judiciary. Some of the most notable figures are:

- **Louis Jodel Chamblain:** Human Rights Watch reported that he was a sergeant in the Haitian army (FAd'H), and a member of the elite Corps des Leopards. He left the army in 1989 or 1990 and reappeared in 1993 as one of the founders of the Revolutionary Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti, FRAPH). He was FRAPH's second-in-command. Chamblain was sentenced "in absentia" to life in prison for the 1993 murder of activist Antoine Izemery, as well as for involvement in the Raboteau Massacre, a notorious 1994 slaughter in Gonaives. He was also linked to the 1993 assassination of Justice Minister Guy Malary. The NY-based Center for Constitutional Rights obtained a 1993 CIA Intelligence Memorandum that stated, "FRAPH members Jodel Chamblain, Emmanuel Constant, and Gabriel Douzable met with an unidentified military officer on the morning of 14 October to discuss plans to kill [Justice Minister Guy] Malary." Chamblain escaped to the Dominican Republic in 1994, after the U.S. military intervention in Haiti, and returned to the country in the late 2003 or early 2004.<sup>1</sup>
- **Jean Pierre Baptiste, known as Jean Tatoune** led anti-Duvalier mobilizations in 1985 that forced Jean-Claude from power. but later became a leader of the FRAPH death-squad in 1993-1994.<sup>2</sup> Tatoune was convicted of participating in the 1994 Raboteau Massacre. He escaped from a Gonaives prison in July 2003. Tatoune emerged as one of the leaders of the Cannibal Army on September 22, 2003 following the death of Amiot "Cubain" Metayer. He has terrorized government officials and supporters in Gonaives with his Cannibal Army gang since September 22. There are reports that residents involved in the Raboteau trial fled Gonaives because of threats from Tatoune's gang members. The Cannibal Army violently took control of Gonaive on February 5, 2004 to start the armed revolt against Aristide.<sup>3</sup>
- **Guy Philippe:** Self-proclaimed head of the Haitian Army. Haitian as well as U.S. government officials have accused him of involvement in drug trafficking and three coup plots in 2000 and 2001. (Miami Herald, 2/28) He was one of 10 former army officers trained by the U.S. in Ecuador and given top posts in the new Haitian National Police Force. Known as 'the Latinos,' these men are recognized by western diplomatic sources as heavily involved in the drug trade and in fomenting political upheaval (San Francisco Chronicle, 3/4/04). According to Human Rights Watch, between 1997 and 1999, he served as police chief in Delmas, on the north side of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. During his tenure there, the UN/OAS International Civilian Mission learned that dozens of suspected gang members were summarily executed.<sup>4</sup> (C. Arthur, Haiti Support Group)
- **Carl Dorelien** was convicted and received a life sentence for his role in the Raboteau massacre. He also faces a civil lawsuit filed in Miami courts. The family members of a victim of the Raboteau massacre are seeking compensation. US immigration authorities arrested him in June 2001. He was sent to Haiti in January 2003 and detained at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince. He was freed from prison on February 29<sup>th</sup> during the massive prison break.<sup>5</sup>
- **Jean Claude Duperval:** Haiti's Chief of Police in 1990 and 1991, a time when police were known to commit extrajudicial executions. He served as deputy commander in chief of the FADH from 1992 to 1994. He did not participate in the Raboteau massacre, but he knew of the violations and took no steps to punish those involved. US immigration authorities returned Duperval to Haiti in January 2004 where he was detained at the National Penitentiary. He was freed in the February 29<sup>th</sup> jailbreak.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/02/27/haiti7677.txt.htm> April 21, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/02/27/haiti7677.txt.htm> April 21, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAMR360132004> April 22, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/02/27/haiti7677.txt.htm> April 21, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAMR360132004> April 22, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAMR360132004> April 22, 2004.

Since the observation mission returned from Haiti we have heard reports that section chiefs are also returning to their former positions in some rural communities.<sup>7</sup> Even in the capital, it is not clear if the Haitian National Police (PNH) are truly police, or if they are resurgent military and paramilitary who joined the force after President Aristide's departure on February 29, 2004. According to Privat Precil, former Director General of the Ministry of Justice, "We have concerns for human rights, and we know that former soldiers have taken police uniforms in different parts of the country."

Precil also talked about a student leader who since the coup has visited the ministries to root out Lavalas supporters:

"I am the General Director of the Ministry of Justice. I normally have four guys who work with me but no security. On Wednesday morning (March 24) a student, Herve Saintilus, came to the office. He started a student movement against Aristide. He asked the minister to arrest my assistants. The police came, and they (my assistants) said they worked for me. The police came into my office to ask how I know my assistants, how long I've known them and where they live. They fled while I was talking to the police. They did this with all the ministers, because none of the ministers are from the Lavalas party."

Approximately a week after the delegation left Haiti, Precil was replaced as director general and went into exile in the United States.

The student movement founded by Saintilus is called the FEUH, or the Federation of Haitian University Students. This student group has a questionable history. According to Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, who offered this information from exile in the U.S., Saintilus used to be a security guard for the Haitian Parliament when it was controlled by the OPL (Organization of People in Struggle, a member of the Democratic Convergence) between 1995-1999. Lovinsky explained that the OPL gave Saintilus a job as a security guard at their office when their parliamentary terms expired in January 1999. He then registered as a university student to create a student opposition movement, and traveled to the Dominican Republic as a member of the Group of 184 to participate in training program conducted by the International Republic Institute (IRI). The role of the IRI is discussed in more depth below. Camille Chalmers also noted the U.S. connection to Saintilus' group: "The IRI has a relationship with the FEUH student movement, but these weren't the leaders of the movement overall."

The current interim Haitian government has implicated itself in the terror campaign in many ways. Rev. Edner DeValcin of *Fanmi Lavalas* claimed, "When the invading terrorists were taking over cities in the countryside they killed a lot of people, civilians and police. The government put in place by the U.S. is collaborating with these terrorists." There are three main issues which support DeValcin's claim:

- (1) On March 20, interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue traveled to Gonaives. While there he praised the rebels there as "freedom fighters." A brief treatment of the evolution of the Gonaives Liberation Front exposes these so-called "freedom fighters" for what they really are.
- (2) The interim government has issued a list of the key leaders of the *Fanmi Lavalas* political organization and the former Aristide government. These names are read regularly on the radio, and those named are not allowed to leave the country. The first arrest from this list occurred on April 5 when former Minister of the Interior, Jocelerme Privert, was taken into custody. He is being held on charges of

<sup>7</sup> Robert Maguire, Trinity College, at the Inter-American Dialogue's Discussion on Haiti's New Government, held at the offices of the IAD, April 9, 2004

involvement in a massacre of fifty people that supposedly took place in St. Marc just after the coup d'etat. However, no independent journalists have been able to find evidence of more than five killed that day. The fact that the warrant for Privert's arrest provides no names or numbers of his alleged victims, creates further questions concerning the basis for his detention.

- (3) General Herard Abraham, in his role as interim Minister of the Interior and Security, has already moved to include resurgent military in the Haitian National Police. He has also indicated his intention to re-establish the Haitian Army.

In addition, interim Prime Minister Latortue has publicly commented that it is not a priority of his government to re-capture criminals from the 1991 coup d'etat; his priority is the struggle against the Lavalas *chime*, a term explained in detail below.<sup>8</sup>

According to many, U.S. Marines are taking part in the campaign to find and arrest, and in some cases execute, members of *Fanmi Lavalas* and their supporters. Damas Glomere of the CHREDHU described the U.S. Marines and the French as "patrolling in the strongholds of *Fanmi Lavalas* and Aristide."

One incident that has escaped any real scrutiny by the international press is the alleged massacre of as many as seventy-eight people in the *katye popile*, a heavily populated poor neighborhood, Bel Air, in Port-au-Prince. According to reports from almost every individual and organization the observation mission interviewed, the deaths came at the hands of U.S. Marines. "The Marines have sophisticated weapons. They shoot in the air to blind people," Glomere (CHREDHU) alleged, "and then shoot people with silencers. Seventy-eight people have died... this has taken place especially in Bel Air."

Anne Hastings, Executive Director of FONKOZE, declared that some of the employees of her organization told her "our troops have killed far more than the six people reported in the press. Many, many more." Camille Chalmers, Secretary General of the Haitian Platform to Advocate for an Alternative Development (PAPDA), said that he had heard "that sixty people died in one day in Bel Air," adding that "the multinational forces cannot provide security. They increase insecurity with their tanks and their missiles." Sorel Francois of *Fanmi Lavalas* claimed, "The Marines have a list and are looking for militants. If you go to Kafou now you will see a lot of cadavers under the bridges. We can interview at least fifty parents in Bel Air whose children have been taken by Marines."

Our observation mission questioned U.S. Embassy staff about the nighttime raids in popular neighborhoods. According to Conrad Tribble, a political advisor at the U.S. Embassy, disarmament isn't "explicitly in the [U.S. Marines'] mission, but implicit." Tribble elaborated that the Americans are confiscating any weapons they see in Port-au-Prince, but this "isn't a significant part of the action." Working hand-in-hand with the PNH, they are conducting an "intelligence-driven process" of home raids. The raids aren't extremely successful. Tribble compared the searches to similar maneuvers in Iraq: "There is one successful raid for every six house searches in Iraq; it is even less successful here."

When asked specifically about the incident in Bel Air, Tribble replied that "it is ridiculous to say that sixty to seventy people have been killed in Bel Air." After sharing the testimony we had

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<sup>8</sup> Agence Haitienne de Presse, April 19, 2004.

gathered, we asked Tribble if he would consider a small-scale investigation into what happened there. "There is nothing to investigate," was his response.

The campaign being carried out by U.S. Marines is not successfully disarming any segment of the population, and hasn't even begun to touch the "rebels" and resurgent military that are ruling large parts of the country. At the same time the Marines have successfully created terror in the poorest communities in Port-au-Prince. Anne Hastings, Executive Director of FONKOZE, explained that

"in the popular neighborhoods (Cite Soleil, Bel Air, etc.) the helicopters circle with no lights on. Radar detection devices are used to locate caches of arms – they find them and attack. Disarmament means if you have to kill someone to get the gun you do it. Many of the people with guns are young people who deserve the option of another life."

Weapons proliferation in Haiti has reached astonishing heights, and armed individuals and street gangs are involved in violent activities. Many refer to these actors as *chime*, but this term has many meanings and is often used to stigmatize people from impoverished neighborhoods or slum areas. It is important to understand not only the spectrum of ways *chime* is being used, but the frequency with which it is used. The word literally refers to a fire-breathing monster. These are some of the ways it was explained to the mission:

Father Edner DeValcin of *Fanmi Lavalas* offered this definition: "Members of popular organizations are called *chime*. Aristide didn't create them, they have been here since 1986. They identified with Aristide as their leader. After the coup in 1991 these people were persecuted most, like eight to ten of them in a hole, buried alive. This made them frightened. Their defense tactics they learned from the army. In 1994, an entire neighborhood in Cite Soleil was destroyed in an arson attack. Those people formed an organization, and you find a lot of pockets of people like this. Without Aristide they knew they would have to hide."

Privat Precil, former Director General for the Ministry of Justice, described it this way: "We don't have *chime*, we have popular organizations and *Fanmi Lavalas*. *Chime* is a pejorative name given by the bourgeoisie to the poor in society. They are always hungry, poor, unemployed and aggressive. They are not just aggressive to the bourgeois, they are aggressive to everyone! If you meet them on the street they will ask you for money, they will become aggressive." Precil continued, "Misery makes them *chimeric*. They are not an organization Aristide made, but they saw Aristide as the only hope they had. When Titid spoke they understood. These are the people being killed now."

CONAP members believe that "Aristide... demobilized the popular movement and turned them into *chime*." PAPDA and the Haitian Women's Solidarity Organization (SOFA, a member of CONAP), along with the national peasant organization *Tet Kole Ti Peyizan*, are both part of the new Popular Democratic Regroupment (RDP). A representative of RDP claimed that "Lavalas is not a political party. They are gangs and should be put behind bars... We want to organize a government where no *chime* exists."

Spokespersons for the Coordination of Women Workers declared: "They call everyone who speaks out *chime*." Another member of FTS agreed with this, saying, "The people speaking against Aristide didn't want the poor people to speak, and he was our voice. The criticisms of Aristide come from very racist people who won't dance in the same room as the poor. They call us Big Toes, Kinky Hair, Dirty Feet, *Chime*."

Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste, pastor of a Catholic church in a suburb of Port-au-Prince, underlined his concern that "when something happens in the street, they say it's Lavalas or opposition."

But the criminals have no party, they want money and action and they just follow after that... These criminal elements make it dangerous for all."

In addition to these definitions, testimony was offered about attacks perpetrated on peaceful demonstrations by *chime*. One example was shared by both Chalmers of PAPDA and members of the CONAP. According to Chalmers, after a student from the university was killed in her home in October 2003, the "CONAP and PAPDA did a sit-in at the Palace of Justice to condemn insecurity and violence, to protest the absence of security for civilians. At 1pm *chime* attacked and threw bottles of urine at us to destroy the sit-in." After that, according to CONAP, the *chime* were "more aggressive than usual and continued to throw rocks at us after we ran into the ministry to get away."

CONAP declared that they were "systematically faced with attacks by *chime* every time they went to demonstrate in the street," referring to opposition demonstrations which called for the overthrow of President Aristide. Seeming to contradict their previous statements, CONAP claimed that now "the *chime* are working hand-in-hand with the United States." In southern Jacmel, Haiti's fourth largest city, members of local cooperatives stated, "The *chime* scared people to prevent an anti-Aristide movement from developing."

It's important to note that testimony regarding *chime* attacks is about events from before the coup d'etat only. This supports evidence that violations and abuses since the coup have disproportionately affected the poor and supporters of Lavalas. In fact, according to Chalmers, meetings of his organization "would have been attacked by *chime* if Aristide was still in power, consequently we have a greater freedom to express ourselves without fear of attack now."

Chalmers' statement also points us toward the fact that it is Lavalas and Aristide supporters who are the target of today's violence. Poor individuals from the slums of Port-au-Prince, secondary cities, and rural areas are being forced into hiding. Meanwhile, members of the opposition and non-governmental organizations who advocated Aristide's overthrow experience what they feel is a greater freedom of expression. While members of the Fondasyon Trant Septamn (FTS, Haiti's largest human rights organization) met with our observation team while in hiding, members of the PAPDA, CONAP (National Coordination for Advocacy on Womens' Rights), *Batay Ouvriye* (workers organization), NCHR and the Civil Society Initiative met with us in their offices.

*Fanmi Lavalas* members met with the team at the Aristide Foundation for Democracy, and unions who supported reconciliation and the democratic process (Coordination of Haitian Workers, or CTH, and the Coordination of Women Workers) met with us at the offices of the CTH, but explained that they are in hiding. Paul Loulou Chery declared that Jacques Belzin "is a lawyer with the human rights commission but he cannot sleep in his own house because of threats. Our friend from Cap-Haitien was arrested and beaten and is now in Port-au-Prince, hiding in *marronage*."

Members of *Fanmi Lavalas* also maintained that being on the streets put them in danger. "There is more misery now, and the people have no one there to help them because Aristide is gone and Lavalas is in hiding. We are not free to circulate in the streets." Father Manno Eustache of Lavalas shared that he hadn't slept in his bed in a month, even though he lives in a rectory.

Finally, although Tribble of the U.S. Embassy assured us that "there are very active Haitian human rights organizations that the U.S. funds to deal with abuses on both sides of the spectrum," the current systematic campaign against members and supporters only of Lavalas is not being

widely reported inside Haiti or out. The most heinous crimes are going undocumented, for a many reasons. Chalmers (PAPDA) stated, "Human rights organizations here must document what is happening. The reprisals and tortures committed by those criminal and international forces." According to union member Jinette: "Every human rights organization belongs to a political party."

Our team of observers met with Fito Esperance of the National Coalition of Haitian Rights (NCHR), the human rights organization most widely relied upon by U.S.-based policy makers. Although NCHR claims to be an impartial organization, the team heard repeated testimony concerning their silence in cases where Lavalas supporters have been the victims. NCHR, for its own part, talked about what they called "systematic human rights violations" which occurred during Aristide's administration. They do not believe what is happening now can be considered systematic. Esperance claims that the abuses and violations in the north are happening under the control of "employees of the former region who are still holding power... prisons were burned, so prisoners were kept in containers. A lot of former soldiers and criminals are in the north. There are isolated cases, but not systematic."

When the team asked if the NCHR planned to investigate the alleged killings in Bel Air by U.S. Marines, Esperance responded, "You must understand that just before Aristide left, he and his government armed a lot of people in the population. Almost the entire country was armed." He did admit that, "there is a rumor of an attack against the occupation forces in Bel Air. They said a lot of people [Haitians] died." But he came back to blaming the Haitian victims, and continued, "Bel Air totally supports Aristide and there are a lot of weapons there."

Esperance explained, "You have to understand that the multinational forces are trigger-happy. A lot of people have suffered and we are clear that must end." The first step to ending the terror campaign is investigating the events. However, the NCHR will not investigate in Bel Air:

"Even though we are a human rights organization, that area is not accessible to us, so we just hear the reports... Haiti has areas that are inaccessible to certain human rights organizations. People the former government exploited [the people in Bel Air], in their misery, so they could believe those human rights organizations are opponents. They believe we are their adversaries. It is a long process to explain that we are neutral."

When the team members asked Esperance if there were other places that are inaccessible to the NCHR, he listed some of the most impoverished and highly targeted neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince: Maritssant, Bois Neuf and Cite Soleil.

People from FTS whom the campaign of terror targets and those whose names are read daily on the radio feel that they cannot turn to any human rights organization. "These systematic human rights violations have been happening since February 29 and human rights organizations haven't said anything. We know these human rights organizations' funding comes through USAID and the IRI (International Republican Institute)." Another added, "I have no human rights organization to turn to because they are bought off by the bourgeoisie."

The NCHR may proclaim it is impartial, but the people most in need of a human rights advocate do not believe it. We found that NCHR has a clear bias. We interviewed Esperance in the NCHR conference room, where a "WANTED" poster hangs behind the conference table. The first name on the poster is Jean-Bertrand Aristide and is followed by other high-ranking members of the *Fanmi Lavalas* party. No supporters of Aristide or *Fanmi Lavalas* would feel safe or protected in the offices of the NCHR.

## B. Humanitarian Crisis

Haiti is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis unparalleled in our hemisphere. Even though it was not the main purpose of the delegation, the observation mission learned first hand of the challenges that face all Haitians as they attempt to find food, water, and employment each day. A USAID-commissioned Gallup Poll in 2002 found that four out of five Haitians cannot find enough food to eat even once each day. The statistics on Haiti paint a bleak picture:

- Haiti ranks 146 out of 173 on the Human Development Index.
- Life expectancy is 52 years for women and 48 for men.
- Adult literacy is about 50%.
- Unemployment is 70%.
- 85% of Haitians live on less than \$1 U.S. per day.
- Haiti ranks 38 out of 195 for under five-years mortality rate.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Lambi Fund of Haiti, a foundation that works with the Haitian grassroots, recent events have affected their work in two ways. First, the humanitarian need in Haiti is heightened even beyond its previously tragic levels. Second, the crisis has made it impossible for staff located in Port-au-Prince to travel into areas where the programs exist, such as the Artibonite region, which they haven't been able to visit for five months.

Another aspect of the crisis, according to the Lambi Fund, is internal migration. "What concerns us most is the strain that people fleeing the city put on those in the countryside. For example, it is estimated that 200,000 people lived in Goniaves and nearly half of them fled to the countryside during the violence. This raises concern because there is already a shortage of water, food, and other resources in these small communities. The influx of people further exacerbates the strain and lowers the standard of living conditions."

FONKOZE, which offers a full-range of micro-credit services in Haiti, also talked about the effects of violence on a fragile rural economy:

"The impact of the coup on the *ti machann* (market women) is that there has been a disruption of the fragile economic chain. One example: a *machann* buys rice from a wholesaler, paying half the price up front and putting the rest on credit. When she sells out, she goes back and pays what she owes, and then buys another supply. The break in the supply chain of goods occurred when the wholesaler couldn't buy rice from the city. Trucks were stolen, people were robbed, etc. When the *ti machann* went back to get a new supply of rice to sell, she discovered the wholesaler didn't have any rice. So, she did not go in and pay off her bill. Now that the roads are open, the wholesaler doesn't have any money to go and buy a new supply."

Even though the break in the economic chain added to the severity of the crisis, Anne Hastings of FONKOZE warns against free food aid from the U.S. "Dumping free food on a country where people make their living from the sale of food is not a good idea," Hastings explained. "It only makes the problem worse. We need to fix the situation without putting everyone out of business, so food aid would be the worst thing." Unfortunately, Provisional President Boniface Alexandre told the observation team the aid Haiti needs most "is humanitarian, medicine and food." The already fragile peasant economy is about to sustain another crushing blow.

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics taken from UNICEF "State of the World's Children", the UNDP HDI Rating and the CIA World Factbook.



Father Gerard Jean-Juste offers some social assistance at his parish. He explained that "people are hungry, there is no electricity, and schools just opened after a month when the students weren't getting food. Misery has doubled and we haven't been prepared for that. More elderly are dying from shock, heart attacks, and high blood pressure."

Dr. Wesner Lambert of *Zanmi Lasante* (ZL), Partners In Health, discussed how the aid embargo of 2000-February 29, 2004 (explored in more detail in VI) had tripled the patient load at the ZL hospital in the Central Plateau. Between December 2002 and 2003 the hospital saw 400,000 patients. All ZL sites combined now treat approximately 1,000 patients daily. ZL has pioneered a successful public-private partnership with Haiti's Ministry of Health and hopes the program will continue under the interim government. Substantial funding from the United Nations Global Fund for Malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS is at stake. Dr. Lambert asked for solidarity to release loans from the Inter-American Development Bank for healthcare. "We are spokespersons of the poor. We are the ones who see what is happening before our eyes – there is an urgency to assist and help these people," Dr. Lambert said.

Our observation team fears that the only vehicle seeking to support Haiti's economy is a free trade bill being advanced in the U.S. Congress today. Though many in Washington are promoting Senator Mike DeWine's HERO (Haitian Economic Recovery and Opportunity) Act, the deputy director of USAID in Haiti, Pamela Callen warned: "It is short-sighted of anyone to think free trade zones and mass production is a long-term solution." She explained, "The HERO Act would only be a short-term fix until we can figure out some land tenure issues."

The HERO Act has multiple flaws, beyond offering only a "short-term fix". The legislation, roundly rejected by the *Batay Ouvriye* workers' movement, is based on the African Growth and Opportunity Act. It lacks any substantive benefit for Haitians. It was conceived in consultation with Haitian factory owners and lacks any labor rights provisions. The legislation may allow Haitian assembly factories to also cut and treat fabric, as opposed to just assembling it. This benefit for Haiti pales in comparison to the benefits that U.S.-based corporations receive who use Haitian factories for assembly work.<sup>10</sup>

### C. The Coup d'Etat, the Occupation and the State of Haitian Democracy

#### *The Coup D'Etat*

Our team of observers has heard the official U.S. version of the events that transpired on the night of February 29 when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left Haiti. Political advisor Conrad Tribble gave us what he called the "short story since what happened a month ago":

"The president resigned and the constitutional process was followed to get a successor... At the time Aristide resigned it was clear there would have been serious fighting in the streets of Port-au-Prince if he hadn't. Armed rebels on one hand and armed Lavalas partisans/gangsters on the other hand. In response to his request we helped facilitate his departure and defuse what could have been a bloodbath. The transition was overseen by Prime Minister Neptune."

<sup>10</sup> Testimony of *Batay Ouvriye* on the DeWine/Kolbe HERO Act can be found in, "Investigating the Human Effects of Withheld Humanitarian Aid," the report of the January 2003 Quixote center delegation, [www.haitireborn.org](http://www.haitireborn.org)

Not one other individual or organization confirmed this story. In fact, our observation mission interviewed many who pointed to the U.S. role in the removal of Aristide, and several noted the collusion of the Haitian bourgeois in the plot:

Members of the CTH, Haiti's largest labor union, stated: "We have a coup now, from the U.S. and these people (opposition)."

PAPDA also holds the U.S. responsible: "In terms of the events of February 29, PAPDA is against what happened because it is a direct violation by the U.S. State Department, which implemented this coup... The intervention was done... without regard to the Haitian constitution and law." Chalmers pointed out that not only is the law violated, but Haitian actors are excluded from the process; "There is no relationship between Haitian actors and political developments here. No respect for political actors, especially Aristide and the Democratic Platform."

Members of *Fanmi Lavalas* argued that "the Marines went to Aristide's house, took him in an airplane. They say he resigned, but we will never accept that. If an elected president decided to resign the letter has to go to the chief justice of the assembly. A constitutionally-elected president – it is absurd that he would give his resignation letter in the middle of the night to the American Embassy."

NCHR said they wouldn't be investigating the removal of Aristide, but added: "We're not going to lie to ourselves. The way he was removed was wrong and the consequences are incalculable. We can't investigate how he left office. Aristide knows, and the so-called friends of Haiti know: the U.S., France, and Canada."

A resident of Haiti's large shantytown, Cite Soleil, shared a common sentiment among the women in her community: "We elected Aristide for five years, and the U.S., France and Canada took our president and forced us into hiding."

"Aristide had to leave as a result of a strong fight of the Haitian people against him and the interference of foreign governments," said members of the Civil Society Initiative, an organization dominated by private business. "We never made coups alone by ourselves. They are conceived in DC," they explained, concluding the conversation by saying: "As to what happened that night, I would ask you to talk to the U.S. Embassy."

Many people shared their analyses of *why* the United States had supported the coup d'etat against Aristide. *Batay Ouvriye* alleged that "Aristide's removal was a plot by imperialist forces and reactionary forces in Haiti... The coup was an attempt to stop the popular movement, which was going to uproot Aristide; they did not want a repeat of the mass movement that overthrew Baby Doc, which went too far. So instead they took him out before we could and presented us with a new government that represents international interests."

Sorel Francois of *Fanmi Lavalas* pointed to political reasons that motivated the U.S.: "Bush has a personal problem with Aristide because his father gave Aristide a coup. Now he gives another coup. We know Iraq put France and the U.S. against each other. Now they are a team again in Haiti." Father Jean-Juste agreed, "Haiti's future is linked to the future of the U.S., especially the U.S. presidential elections. If the democrats win there may be greater hope for us to wield pressure to strengthen our democracy. If Bush wins again, it will be tough times for Lavalas."

Some also alleged that the U.S. interest in Haiti is tied to the Mole St. Nicholas territory, strategically located on the Windward Passage. A military base at Mole St. Nicholas will enable the U.S. to carry out surveillance of Cuba. Djaloki T. L. Dessables, a member of DOA/BN said,

"The Americans are after Mole St. Nicholas." A cooperative member from Jacmel agreed: "The U.S. has personal reasons to be in Haiti. They wanted Mole St. Nicholas... they need it to control Cuba. One of the main reasons they came to Haiti is to control Mole St. Nicholas."

The U.S. did not act alone in Haiti. France and Canada were also involved. In terms of French motivations, Father DeValcin pointed out:

"it is because he had the audacity – he was the first – to claim restitution and reparations from France, who colonized Haiti and stole all of its wealth. Haiti, the poorest country, was the Pearl of the Antilles 300-400 years ago. Since April 2003, Aristide has been demanding restitution. I personally observed a plot against him and the people in this country. They never talk about that, but it is the heart of the problem."

A member of the *Fondasyon Trant Septamn* agreed: "They took Aristide because he asked for the money back from France."

Chalmers said, "The real interest of the U.S. occupation is to block the popular mobilization to take control of the political terrain." Perhaps he has summed it up best. No matter what the pretense for the removal of Aristide, the underlying U.S. plan in Haiti is clear. This plan is indicated in the history of U.S. policies towards Aristide and Haiti, as well as the most recent events in Haiti. Now that Aristide has been removed, the U.S. has installed a government that will carry out the economic policies the Aristide government would not, detailed in IV of this report. The ongoing popular mobilization that ended the Duvalier dictatorship, created democracy, survived the 1991 coup, and manifested its vote in the democratically elected Lavalas government, had to be stopped at any cost.

The class war is another pertinent theme in the February 29 coup d'etat. Aristide's removal was also the manifestation of a centuries' long alliance between the U.S., France and the Haitian elite. Sorel Francois said, "The problem with Aristide has come from the rich in this country." A member of the Federation of Feminists in Petionville agreed, "Aristide came from the popular movement and the real problem here is a class struggle. After Aristide we don't see anyone who can take his place, who can really see the suffering of the poor and lead us out of this impasse."

Deputy Bolivar Romelus, who describes himself as a peasant who still lives among peasants, felt the class war was central. "In my personal opinion, and from my position in the parliament, I truly believe that Aristide separated himself from a certain class...I didn't feel Aristide was ever distant from the masses. Many in the government weren't happy he was working with the masses. This was the true dilemma in the party that led to the situation today."

When the wealthy elite control all the resources *and* all the power, the poor are left with nothing. Members of the Confederation of Haiti Workers explained: "The people currently in power have all the money. They give us jobs but they also repress us. If we strike they will fire us all – people who can't feed their families now won't be able to even do a little. We wish we could strike because people need to survive."

### *Characteristics of the Occupation*

Our observation team questioned political advisor Conrad Tribble at the U.S. Embassy about some of the details of the current U.S. occupation. In response to the widespread allegations that U.S. Marines targeted poor neighborhoods known to have a majority of Lavalas supporters, Tribble responded, "the Marines are patrolling those areas but not because we've determined

those areas to be a threat. The city has been divided up within the MIF (multinational intervention force)."

American troops are living in the university that President Aristide built, the University of Peace. Tribble didn't try to explain the reason that particular site was chosen, but instead stated: "When the Marines got to the medical school it had been trashed. They are putting money into it and will leave it better than it was when they arrived." The U.S. should evacuate the site immediately so that classes can resume, as they have at the state university. "Taiwan donated \$17 million to build the medical university, and the Marines are living there on the campus." They keep the students from learning, Father DeValcin of FL lamented. A member of the *Fondasyon Trant Septamn* victims' group agreed, "the University of Peace is being used as a military headquarters. We think this is a grave situation in regards to education in Haiti."

Cases of senseless killing by the U.S Marines abound. "Today the Americans, at any time, they can stop your car, but there is a language problem. They shoot people who don't understand them without reflection," claimed Paul Loulou Chery of the CTH. Tribble also offered an example of this: "In front of the Teleco building last week they shot a car because it was driving high speed towards the checkpoint. It could have been a communication problem." Father Gerard Jean-Juste shared two similar stories: "A taxi driver was at the airport and they asked him to stop in a foreign language he didn't understand, and people drive like crazy in Haiti so they shot him... On the front page of a local paper was a story about two partisans of the opposition who had an ill child and they went to buy medicine. They were ordered to stop, they didn't stop, so he (the father) was shot twelve times." A member of the Civil Society Initiative claimed, "I have a friend whose car took forty-five bullets when he drove through a U.S. checkpoint."

### *State of democracy*

According to the U.S. Embassy, an OAS plan was used to create the interim government. A tripartite commission including one member of *Fanmi Lavalas*, and one representative each from the opposition and the international community, chose a nine-member Council of Elders. The Council was based on the formulation for the Provisionary Electoral Council (CEP) outlined in OAS Resolution 822.

The selection of the FL representative of the tripartite commission was called into question by allegations from the FL that:

"Neptune was being held by the Marines and the French. The foreign soldiers asked him to choose the FL representative for the commission. They said [Guy] Philippe was coming to arrest him and he was forced to choose under duress. They said, 'If you choose we'll give you security.'"

The FL decided to support Neptune's selection, Minister Leslie Voltaire, even though Neptune had chosen under duress and without consulting the rest of the organization.

According to *Fanmi Lavalas*, each of the entities named in the OAS formula was supposed to send a "neutral" representative to the Council. Therefore, the FL "chose someone who was not part of FL to represent FL on the Council, Paul Emile Simon...the other institutions didn't respect the plan and sent people to defend their own interests."

These interests did not include naming a truly representative government. Their choice for prime minister was Gerard Latortue, a technocrat with United Nations experience who has resided in

Boca Raton, Florida – not Haiti – for at least the last thirty years. According to the Haitian Constitution, “to be the prime minister, you must have lived in the country for the five years prior... today’s prime minister is a de facto prime minister,” a member of FTS explained to the team. This indicates the interim government is also unconstitutional.

The government includes members of the Group of 184 political organization, as well as Democratic Convergence. However, it stops short of representing the majority of Haitians – it has no peasant or union representation. The Group of 184 claims to include peasants, but it is well known throughout Haiti that it basically represents big business and corporate interests. The political opposition is discussed in the following section.

The U.S. claimed “there is a modest mandate for the government, they’re still defining it.” According to most, including provisional President Boniface Alexandre, the mandate of this interim government is simply to get the country to elections, so it can be succeeded by a democratic government. This is an urgent priority, however, because those now in power are proposing late 2005 as the soonest those elections can be held. Tribble explained, “It hasn’t been determined how quickly elections will take place. We want good elections, not quick elections – sometime in the next 12-15 months.” Members of the OAS Special Mission agreed with this estimate.

The sole mandate of the interim governments is elections, however it is moving forward with two dangerous policies: (1) The government is incorporating resurgent military, paramilitary and rebels into the police forces and governance positions throughout the country, despite the fact that it claims it will leave the question of re-establishing the Haitian Army to the next democratically elected government. (2) The IFIs and donor communities are negotiating new aid packages and loan agreements with the interim government. Economic issues are explored in VI.

Deputy Bolivar Romelus talked about the militarization of the Haitian National Police. “There are ten chiefs of police,” he explained. “Before Aristide departed only two were former military; now they are all military.” Since our delegation returned there have been numerous reports in the Haitian and international media that the interim Minister of Interior, General Herard Abraham, has every intention of bringing more military into the police force. In addition, he will incorporate rebels into the police, and has created a commission to discuss “restructuring” the Haitian Army.<sup>11</sup>

*Fanmi Lavalas* representatives have denounced their exclusion from the interim government. In addition, they have stated that they will not participate in any of the processes being carried out to prepare for elections in the current climate. On April 20, FL representatives met with Prime Minister Latortue and said they would not name their representative to the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) until the government guaranteed that the partisans and supporters of FL would no longer be targets of the ongoing campaign of terror. A spokesperson for the Democratic Convergence opposition coalition claimed that FL has no credible fear of persecution and was just trying to delay the process.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “Haiti’s new interior minister said on March 23 that he plans to integrate rebels who help oust President Aristide into the police... he also made clear in an interview he wanted to re-establish Haiti’s army... Abraham said he had set up a committee to ‘restructure’ the armed forces.” Reuters, March 23. “Abraham... said he is counting on the likely inclusion of former members of the demobilized Haitian army to help address the personnel shortage now facing the PNH.” Agence Haitienne de Presse, March 31, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Agence Haitienne de Presse, April 20, 2004.

Interestingly enough, elections would already have been held and the coup may have been prevented if the Democratic Convergence and other entities had named their representatives to the CEP as spelled out in OAS Resolution 822. The CD and four others stalled the elections with the excuse that proper security didn't exist then. Certainly the presence of rebel forces, resurgent military, escaped convicts and foreign troops have created a new and even more threatening climate of insecurity.

### *U.S. Treatment of Haitian Refugees*

Even in this climate of terror and insecurity, the U.S. is unwilling to reconsider its Haitian refugee policy. As it currently stands, any Haitian caught fleeing Haiti in a boat is summarily returned. cursory interviews are conducted on board Coast Guard cutters, but reports maintain that there is seldom a Creole translator aboard the ships. Haitians arriving illegally in the U.S. are subject to indefinite detention.

Pamela Callen of USAID responded to the observation team's inquiries concerning Haitian refugees:

"Refugees from Haiti will be returned to Haiti. You can send them back, put them in detention, drop them in the ocean – Haitians will always leave Haiti. Not even 20,000 troops could cover every part of this country...the vast majority are economic refugees. We have not recommended TPS (Temporary Protective Status) to refugees."

On the issue of interviewing refugees, Conrad Tribble of the U.S. Embassy said, "Sometimes we have a Creole translator on Coast Guard boats, but not all the time. In-depth interviews are done in Creole – sometimes they hold people on the ship until a Creole-speaker can be brought there to do the interview...it is true that some ships have no Creole translators." Tribble wasn't concerned by this, and claimed, "Most people here would know to say something in English like 'asylum.'"

## V. Democracy and Governance in Haiti

In order to truly understand the situation of democratic governance in Haiti, it is helpful to review some key events in Haitian history that continue to impact the current situation.

In 1825, despite the fact that Haitian independence had been won through a thirteen year war between rebelling slaves and the army of Napoleon, Haiti paid an indemnity to France to secure recognition and trade status. This indemnity represented reparations to the French colonizers who had lost property during the revolution, namely the Haitians' physical selves. In order to pay the fee for its recognition by France as an independent country, Haitian President Boyer borrowed the 150 million gold francs from Parisian money-lenders.

In 1915, under the guise of quelling a popular rebellion, the United States began a nineteen-year occupation. The true motives for this occupation were clear in the policies implemented during that time: (a) The Haitian Constitution was redrafted in Washington, DC to allow foreign ownership of land for the first time in Haitian history. The Haitian parliament, which refused to ratify the new constitution, was simply dismissed by the American treaty government. (b) Haiti's outstanding debts were consolidated in U.S. hands. Then the U.S. acted as both creditor and debtor, and made debt repayment the priority while acting as Haiti's government. (c) The U.S. created what became the Haitian Army, and trained them. The Army later emerged as Haiti's most effective way of transitioning from one undemocratic regime to the next.

From 1957 to 1986, Haiti was ruled by first Francois "Papa Doc" and then his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. During the Duvalier era, the Haitian Army was used as a tool to oppress the Haitian population, and a patronage system was implemented throughout the country. In each small town and village, the Duvalier regime had individuals who identified themselves as either section chief or *tonton macoute*. Both were connected to the central government. In return for their loyalty, the Duvaliers gave them limitless power to exploit the population in their particular territory. The *macoutes* became well known as the Duvaliers' paramilitary henchmen.

The popular rebellion that brought down the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 sprang from many sources, including the *ti legliz*, a network of small church communities led by liberation theology teachings. Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the pastor of a church in the Port-au-Prince slum La Saline, was most famous for his fiery sermons, based in liberation theology. The movement became known as *lavalas*, the Creole word for a flood that follows a tropical storm and washes away everything that came before.

After massacres at polling stations and several years of violent military rule and several presidents, Haiti held its first democratic elections in 1990. Jean-Bertrand Aristide ran on a broad Lavalas platform and won 67% of the popular vote.

Only eight months into his term, Aristide was overthrown in a violent military coup d'etat. Before his removal from office, Aristide had presented a plan with many pro-poor policies, including a proposed raise in the minimum wage, investments in agriculture, and a national literacy program. At least 5,000 people were killed during the coup period, tens of thousands took to the high seas as refugees and tens of thousands were internally displaced.

It has been well documented that the United States supported the leaders of the 1991 coup d'état, and that the head of the paramilitary killing squads known as FRAPH, Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, was on the CIA payroll. As the number of refugees arriving in Florida swelled and pressure from the international community grew, the U.S. oversaw negotiations that resulted in Aristide's return to Haiti on October 15, 1994, with amnesty and safe passage out for the military leaders of the coup. Constant was given safe passage to resettle in Queens, NY, where he still resides despite an outstanding deportation order from the INS.

Two key events highlighted President Aristide's return to power late in 1994, one economic and one political, both made significant contributions to the crisis in Haiti today. Aristide's return by the U.S.-led intervention forces was conditioned on his agreement to finish his five year term as if he had never left office, and his commitment to carry out a Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This was the major economic event of the 1990's, not only because the SAP's demands contradicted all of the pro-poor economic policies Aristide had promised to carry out, but also because if implemented, the SAP would destroy the Haitian peasant economy. In fact, the SAP nearly destroyed the peasantry, despite the fact that the program was only partially implemented.

The major political event was President Aristide's decision to found a new political party instead of remaining part of the broad coalition that had backed his run for president in 1990. This new party, *Fanmi Lavalas* (FL), excluded the OPL (formerly the Lavalas Political Organization, now the Organization of People in Struggle), an intellectual elite party with a decent grassroots base. When Aristide passed the presidency to Rene Preval, in Haiti's first peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected leader to the next, the OPL won a majority in the Haitian parliament.

Between 1995 and 2000, many elements of the U.S. aid plan for Haiti were implemented. One of the most destructive elements was a food aid program that centered on rice from the U.S. Camille Chalmers, PAPDA, explained that, "detrimental food programs destroy the self-sufficiency of peasants and the promotion of local productions." That is the reason "we fight the invasion of international food filling the markets. We are importing more than \$260 million in U.S. rice. Haitians are relying on American rice!"<sup>13</sup>

During Preval's presidency he halted privatization and made some investments in agriculture. But he was in a constant standoff with the OPL-controlled parliament, which failed to organize the elections required to replace itself, and expired in January 1999. On May 21, 2000, members of the OPL and the FL, among others, ran candidates for 7500 positions – both local and legislative.

These elections were praised as free and fair by all international observers, including the Organization of American States, but on May 22 several opposition parties formed a coalition and declared the elections fraudulent. They were initially called the *Groupe de Convergence*, but later changed it to the *Convergence Democratique*, or the Democratic Convergence (CD). The CD included the OPL, former power player and part of Lavalas, as well as neo-Duvalierists, former military and conservative religious parties. The members had nothing to align them other than a hatred for President Aristide, and the goal of his removal.

Several weeks later when the Electoral Council (CEP) issued its formal results for the May 21 elections, the OAS leaked a letter to the press outlining its concerns about the CEP's decision

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<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed treatment of the impact of food aid, see "Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy: USAID Policies in Haiti", Laurie Richardson for Grassroots International, May 1997.



regarding seven senators. The OAS alleged that these seats should have been decided in a second round of voting, but the CEP maintained that because it was a general election, similar to the ones in 1990, they had followed historical precedent in determining the winners.

The CEP stood its ground and refused to hold second round elections for the seven senate seats, and the senators resigned so that the electoral process could move forward. They did not want a controversy over 0.2% of the positions decided in the May 21 elections to hold up the democratic process. But the controversy was exaggerated, and the international community boycotted the November 26 presidential and senatorial elections. One team of accredited international observers, the International Coalition of Independent Observers (ICIO), observed the election in four departments. Its findings supported the findings of the KOZEPEP peasant organization, led by Charles Suffrard, which deployed 3,000 observers nationally. KOZEPEP estimated a 60% voter turn out rate, as did the CEP. The ICIO findings supported this national estimate.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of the observers' reports, many have questioned voter participation. PAPDA and several other Port-au-Prince based NGO's claim that only 5% of the population voted in the November elections. The international community didn't question President Aristide's legitimacy as president when he was inaugurated on February 7, 2001, but the Democratic Convergence inaugurated their own "parallel president".

After the OAS raised the issue of the seven senators, it also began a long negotiating process to try to win the participation of the CD in future elections. The negotiations led to disillusionment on the part of many Haitians who felt the elected government should not make so many concessions to people who had not won the popular vote. The U.S. supported the negotiations, and strengthened the position of the CD by granting them a virtual veto over the electoral process; without the participation of the CD, the U.S. would not consider elections in Haiti legitimate.

During various meetings overseen by the U.S. and the OAS, the CD presented the conditions for its participation. These conditions were later made into hemispheric policy in the OAS Resolution 822. The conditions focused on security, professionalization of the Haitian National Police (PNH) and reparations for damages incurred by opposition parties during reprisal attacks that followed a coup attempt (led by rebel leader Guy Philippe) on December 17, 2001. The Aristide-Neptune government made the reparations payments, and entered into agreements with the OAS for international police trainers. The OAS Special Mission never had the funding necessary to carry out the police training program.

The CD continued to withhold its participation, and the Civil Society Initiative (ISC) claimed, "We played an important role in 2001. The election of Aristide was not done properly. We tried for a solution where the parties that didn't win could still have some benefit. We worked with the OAS to have negotiations. Some benefits came of this, like the OAS formula for creating the Provisional Electoral Council was used to compose the Council of Elders."

The leader of the ISC, Rosny Desroches, is described by the leaders of one popular organization as "a very dangerous guy... Desroches is very linked to the U.S. and France - he got two awards in 2003 from them! He is a politician completely dependent on foreign actors."

In the meantime the Group of 184, a self-purported civil society organization, emerged. The main feature of the G184's entrance onto the scene was their "Caravan of Hope", which traveled throughout Haiti gathering support for a "new social contract." The Caravan's travels are the

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<sup>14</sup> The full report of the ICIO, which was coordinated by the Quixote Center and Global Exchange, can be found at [www.haitireborn.org](http://www.haitireborn.org).

basis for the Group's claim that they represent 184 peasant cooperatives, women's groups, community organizations and private business interests. Yet their leadership is comprised solely of the last sector listed – private business interests. Their leader, Andre Apaid, Jr, is an American-born factory owner. Members of Haiti's largest labor union, the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) explained: "Who created the Group of 184? The factory owners, the media owners, and certain kinds of human rights organizations."

According to Chalmers, "PAPDA has no connection with the Group of 184 social contract and we do not agree with the proposal because," he continued, "the Group of 184 is controlled by the bourgeoisie – they are anti-national and manipulating the social contract. They went to rural areas and read a text and said people agreed, but it was not a process of consensus." *Batay Ouvriye* offered this testimony: "184 was advocating another kind of slavery. The social contract is not for the masses. We've always been against them because we know what they have done to the workers." Members of the CTH labor union added,

"Ralph Becker is a factory owner trying to reduce the minimum wage. He is a member of the Group of 184... there was a commission under Aristide to raise the minimum wage. He held meetings with owners and met with Becker then, as well as the owner of the banks. They wanted to pay the workers 50 *gourdes* each day, and Aristide asked for 100. We proposed 72 *gourdes*, and we asked the government to help the workers who had been fired. We said we would accept 72 *gourdes* to keep our jobs... Even though the minimum wage was 72 *gourdes*, Andre Apaid didn't pay that in his factories... Anyone who raises questions in the factories has their life at stake. They have the money, the weapons, and now they have the political power, too."

Late in 2003, the Group of 184 and the CD began a different kind of campaign against the Lavalas government. Major demonstrations were called, and small demonstrations grew to the thousands and even tens of thousands in December 2003. The rise in opposition to the government can be explained by two things, according to organizations interviewed by the observation mission.

NGOs including PAPDA and CONAP credit the violent incidents at the State University of December 5, 2003 as the final act in a long string of violence from the Aristide-Neptune government. On that day, as students readied themselves for a protest march calling for the overthrow of President Aristide, they were attacked on university grounds by persons alleged to be *chime*, working on behalf of the government. The Rector of the university, Jean Marie Paquiot, had his legs broken by a metal baton. According to Camille Chalmers, "The person who broke the knees of the rector of the university on December 5 was rewarded with a position in the Palace Security."

Father Gerard Jean-Juste, who acted as chaplain in the Palace for the Aristide-Neptune government, claimed that "Aristide and the party condemned [the events of 12/5]." Patrick Elie advised that, "the university attacks must be looked at critically. There is no proof of who committed these crimes, but those who benefited from it were members of the opposition, which can lead to some conclusions. It is easy to be on the red team, but put on a green shirt to blame it all on the other team."

The Group of 184 maintained that it was the December 5 event that made them decide not to participate in the compromise agreement that was on the table, according to members of the Civil Society Initiative. They also agreed with PAPDA and CONAP that the event is what created a mass mobilization against President Aristide. However, the observation heard testimony that it was bribes and coercion that put large numbers in the streets to protest Aristide. A member of the

CTH declared, "I am a teacher and another professor invited me to march against Aristide. They offered me \$300 U.S. that day – each of those protesters received \$200-300 each day." A female factory worker from Port-au-Prince described the coercion of factory workers: "When there is a demonstration, if you don't go you are fired. If you go, you get paid \$10."

It is important to note that both the CD and the G184 were products of the U.S. aid program. USAID allocated funding to the International Republic Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) as part of its democracy enhancement program, which also included its own Governance and Democracy program. These agencies did political trainings aimed at creating "plurality," or in other words, an opposition to the vastly popular Lavalas party. Although USAID denies that their funding created these coalitions, they do admit funding trainings for them which focused on political party development and campaigning. Grants were made for political campaigns as well, especially in the lead up to the 2000 elections.

### **Large Picture of Democracy in Haiti**

"We are fighting against exclusion in this country. If you are from a popular neighborhood or Lavalas, they take you out of the process," said a member of the *Fondasyon Trant Septamn* (FTS). Indigent Lavalas supporters and FL party leaders maintained that the goal of the current political process is to ensure that Haiti's largest political party and its followers cannot participate in future democratic elections. Seeing how easily the interim government has excluded them so far, there is an immediate danger that some of the most marginalized and disempowered Haitians will be robbed of their democratic voice and right to participate.

This was the major preoccupation of the Fanmi Lavalas, the CTH, the Coordination of Women Workers, the FTS, FONKOZE, Zanmi Lasante and many individuals who spoke with our observation team. By examining recent events one can see that the poor have already been excluded.

In contrast, the PAPDA talked about "re-conception" and "reconstruction" as they reflected on the way democracy is being defined in conversations today. "The U.S. has a thing called 'democracy' which is defined by the U.S. government. They expect all countries to comply with the kind of democracy they have but we think each country needs one on their terms, based on the country, its history, etc," Chalmers explained. He advocated using 2004, Haiti's bicentennial year, as an opportunity to hold a series of critical dialogues on what democracy is and how it should be organized in Haiti. PAPDA is a member of the new political coalition, the RDP, which advocated for the overthrow of President Aristide.

According to *Batay Ouvriye*, "Candidates always make promises, but we need to create mechanisms to hold them accountable to those promises." They shared concerns about the next elections, and asserted, "We can't walk into a scheme of pre-fabricated ruling class elections which are aimed to put their feet on our shoulders and make us think we are participating." Furthermore, Batay pointed at the "democratic rights that workers have and we must fight to keep them and we are seizing democratic rights all the time. Elections every five years is not a guarantee of democracy; we talk of mechanisms of control, mandates, platforms. This creates a relationship between those in power and the masses, in and out, instead of once every five years. We want real, permanent, dynamic democracy where there are constant elections."

One thing is clear. The formulation of Haiti's democracy is not presently in the hands of the Haitian poor who, traditionally, have been excluded from the process, nor is it under the control of organizations envisioning a new kind of democracy. Rather, it is the United States, the technocrats, and the powerful business interests in the interim government who will likely decide what further steps will be taken in Haiti's quest for democracy.

### **Questions Raised, Investigations Needed**

Our team of observers felt the information gathered during our time in Haiti led us to ask larger questions. They require further in-depth investigation. We question:

1. The U.S. role in creating, advising, supporting and strategizing with the political opposition in Haiti. Very little detail can be gathered from public documents on this issue. This specifically includes funding to the Group of 184, the Democratic Convergence, and various civil society groups through the USAID and its democracy enhancement program.
2. The U.S. role in training and supporting members of the military opposition and the "rebels." According to Camille Chalmers, we can "see how the U.S. State Department has complete control over Philippe and others – they strategically coordinated the rebels for perfect timing." What role have U.S. agencies and/or operatives played in the creation of the Cannibal Army of Gonaives and the Northern Opposition Front of Cap-Haitien? What ties does the U.S. have to former FRAPH and former military including financing, weapons, and training? Did the U.S. play a role in coordinating the rebellion?

In addition, the observation mission was appalled at the incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information that has been disseminated through the mainstream media about recent events in Haiti. An investigation should be made into the role of mainstream media in supporting the U.S. agenda in Haiti.

## **VI. Economic Policy: The Heart of the Matter**

### **Haiti's Death Plan: Structural Adjustment, Debt and the IFIs**

For the last several years the Haitian government has been ineligible for international multilateral assistance loans and bilateral funding from the U.S. and the European Union. This was because Haiti did not implement its structural adjustment program (SAP), a series of neoliberal economic programs which Haitians call the "death plan" because of the disastrous effects these reforms have had in the past. When then-President Rene Preval stopped privatizing Haiti's state-owned enterprises in 1997, Haiti failed to meet the requirements to continue its IMF lending program. As a result, the World Bank also suspended funding. In addition, the United States moved to withhold funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

In January 1999, the Haitian parliament expired after failing to organize elections, leaving a legislative void. With the pretense of the legislative vacuum, the U.S. changed its public reason for suspending funding to Haiti to the electoral problems. When the controversy surrounding the May 2000 elections arose, funding became linked to new elections. But the true motives of the U.S. were laid bare in its bullying tactics at the IDB, when, using undue influence during the window for disbursement, the U.S. Executive Director wrote a letter to the Board of Executive Directors of the Bank, in April 2001 stating, "we do not believe that these loans can or should be treated in a routine manner and strongly urge you to not authorize any disbursements at this time."<sup>15</sup>

The situation was clear, Haiti would not have access to funding until it got back on track with structural adjustments like privatization of state-owned enterprises and further liberalization of the market, something that was very unlikely to happen under the Aristide-Neptune government, making them an obstacle as well. The loans that were blocked at the IDB were for potable water, health care, education and rural road rehabilitation – programs geared towards improving the lives of the poorest Haitians. The U.S. effectively maintained an embargo on humanitarian aid in an effort to restart Haiti's SAP.

Even though Haiti was still the recipient of aid from Taiwan, Cuba, Venezuela and others, the Aristide-Neptune government made efforts to get the funding from the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the U.S. flowing again. Stating concerns about democracy, the EU had also placed sanctions on aid to the Haitian government. One of government's largest and most highly criticized concessions was the construction of a free trade zone in Haiti's northwest along the border of the Dominican Republic. Several aspects of the program that continue to draw criticism are:

1. The area chosen for construction was the fertile Maribahoux Plain. According to a member of the Committee to Defend Pito Be, "A study in 1995 said that with irrigation we could feed 500,000 people."<sup>16</sup> It has now been partly paved over and factories have been built there.
2. *The Sunday Times* reported that the farmers who were forced off their land were offered compensation of only 1/3 its value.<sup>17</sup>
3. Charles Arthur of the London-based Haiti Support Group explained that in addition to using fertile land for factories instead of food production, the project would create new shantytowns as desperate peasants flock to the area in search of jobs. Two concrete results of this are likely to be increased deforestation for charcoal production and an

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<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Harrington, Executive Director, USA, IDB, 4/6/01.

<sup>16</sup> Meeting with Quixote Center delegation, "Investigating the Human Effects of Withheld Humanitarian Aid," in January 2003.

<sup>17</sup> "Farmers forced out as global brands built Haiti free trade area," by Jacqui Goddard for *The Sunday Times*, July 6, 2003.

“accumulation of untreated human and commercial waste.” To sum it up, he expects the new free trade zone to “drastically reduce the country’s capacity for food production and worsen the prospects of desertification in the area.”<sup>18</sup>

4. The corporation who built the new free trade zone is the Dominican Republic-based Grupo M. They chose to build in Haiti to take advantage of the lowest wages in the hemisphere. An added benefit is that the quota of exports from the DR to the U.S. has already been maxed out, and the new factory will use Haiti’s quota.
5. Labor rights are not a priority in the Ouanaminthe factories. According to the *Batay Ouvriye* labor movement: “We established a union in the free trade zone. One week later they fired thirty-four people who were members.”

This project signified the first loan, \$20 million, from the World Bank’s finance arm, the International Finance Corporation, to Haiti since 1997.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the free trade zone project, the Haitian government bowed to a long-standing demand of the IMF when it cut the subsidy on petrol products in January 2003. Camille Chalmers of PAPDA, also an economist, described the situation:

“In December 2002, we saw the government of Haiti (GOH) negotiating anew with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). One condition of the IMF was that the GOH lift the subsidy on petrol products. In two days, the price of gasoline went up 130%. It was very strategic for the IMF to target petrol products because it is the type of product that affects the entire country. It destroyed normal life and made the population poorer, also increasing the anti-Aristide sentiment.”

In order to get access to the IDB loans the U.S. blocked in 2001, the Haitian government emptied the national treasury to pay its arrears to the Bank. These debts, accumulated under the illegitimate Duvalier dictatorship, are odious debts that must be cancelled. Haiti pays \$5-6 million a month to service its \$1.6 billion external debt. In 2004, the ten-year grace period on the loans from Haiti’s so-called “reconstruction” of 1994-96 comes to an end, and Haiti’s debt payments will more than double. There are few lasting signs of those funds. The observation team finds it illogical as well as immoral to continue the transfer of money from the poorest in this hemisphere to the wealthiest in the world.

Even after all the efforts made by the Aristide-Neptune government, loans were not re-activated while they were in power. As Chalmers noted above, the compromises made to restart the funding had consequences and disillusioned many. “Aristide made a lot of sacrifices, but he didn’t get what he wanted,” Chalmers added.

Above all, it is necessary to cut through the myths about the role of economic policies in the preface and aftermath of the coup d’etat against President Aristide. In fact, economic policies were the central issue and reason for his removal. President Aristide did not effectively implement the structural adjustment program in Haiti. He may have made some efforts, such as the free trade zones at Ouanaminthe, but if he had made satisfactory progress in implementing the SAP, the IMF would have resumed lending, the U.S. would have ended its embargo and the EU would have lifted its sanctions. Instead Aristide was ousted in a coup d’etat.

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<sup>18</sup> “New free trade zone threatens more hunger and desertification”, Press release of the Haiti Support Group, September 4, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> “IFC Haiti project funding goes ahead despite investigation’s ‘mixed results’”, News the Bretton Woods Project, February 3, 2004.

It is in the interest of so-called progressive Haitian organizations to couch discussions of the coup d'etat in criticism of Aristide's economic policies. They called for his overthrow because they didn't want him to take Haiti further down the path of implementing neoliberal economic policies. They were hoping that without Aristide there would be space for an alternative economic program. Instead, these Haitian organizations received a coup carried out by the U.S. for very different reasons. Those reasons are clear from a historically view point, from the pattern of U.S. policies in Haiti and the economic policies that are beginning to be carried out now. The U.S. government has created a government that will carry out the very programs that President Aristide refused to implement.

Deputy Bolivar Romelus underscored the motivation: "U.S. forces had the objective to insure that Aristide not return, and to reinforce the infrastructural changes that back away from protecting the poor and [move toward] working with the IMF and World Bank. They will now attempt to build a government that the U.S. is comfortable with and that doesn't represent the poor but does support the rich and business possibilities." Patrick Elie noted that, "the NGOs such as *Batay Ouvriye* and PAPDA are hypocritical. Even though their critique of Aristide was 90% correct, they supported the occupation with their actions and now have no right to condemn what is taking place in the country because they had a role in carrying it out."

One reason to worry about these organizations, particularly the SOFA, *Batay Ouvriye* and *Tet Kole Ti Peyizan*, is that they are members of the PAPDA coalition, and a member of PAPDA, Yves Andre Wainwright, has joined the interim government as the Minister of the Environment.<sup>20</sup> Serious questions will be raised if Wainwright doesn't immediately tender his resignation now that it is abundantly clear that the current government is poised to carry out the SAP, and is already meeting with donors to discuss the terms for Haiti's future debts.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Camille Chalmers of PADPA.

## VII. Conclusion

The Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, the first volunteer observation team on the ground after the coup d'etat of February 29, 2004, was alarmed to discover that the violations of human rights taking place in Haiti were far worse than had been reported by the mainstream press. Since the coup d'etat there has been a dramatic increase in terror and a disruption of Haiti's fragile peasant economy, having deadly consequences for the impoverished majority of the population. Recent events remind us that the divisions in Haitian society exist within a two hundred-year old tradition of class warfare, and we observed that the poor are once again paying the highest price.

Only days after the removal of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an illegitimate government was created from Haiti's private sector and the political opposition, backed by United States with the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS). This interim government has not even attempted to create the illusion that it is inclusive and has gone beyond just excluding *Fanmi Lavalas* members to compiling a list of Lavalas leadership that must not, under any circumstances, attempt to leave the country. In addition, this interim government appears to be implicitly supporting violent criminals-at-large, and resurgent military and paramilitary groups. In its actions and in its words, the "interim" government is condoning a large violent faction that is committing human rights violations.

Disturbingly, few organizations in Haiti are willing to investigate the widespread abuses that are reported. These include targeted disappearances, beatings, and murders of Lavalas supporters. The National Coalition for Haitian Rights has been notably biased in its investigations. This is especially unfortunate because the NCHR is widely quoted in mainstream media and historically, has been relied upon by policy circles throughout the hemisphere. Although they have not reported it, we found the level of terror in the country is pervasive. Each day, radio stations read the names of those who are being hunted for their alleged crimes and connections to Lavalas. Our observation team met with people whose names are on the list, and learned that several of the individuals who were identified on the radio have already disappeared or are in *marronage*, hiding.

The presence of the Multinational Interim Force, or MIF, is NOT creating a greater sense of security. Although the U.S. Embassy explained that disarmament is part of the MIF's official mandate, it does not appear to consider the escaped criminals and human rights abusers currently controlling northern Haiti to be a threat to its mission. In fact, disarming so-called rebels, many of them known criminals, is not part of the MIF's mission. Perhaps most unsettling for our team were the consistent reports that U.S. Marines had shot and killed people in poor neighborhoods and then removed their bodies in body bags.

We experienced the terror the U.S. Marines inspire in Port-au-Prince. Helicopters circled parts of the city including Bel Air, Cite Soleil and Carrefour (Kafou), notoriously poor areas and strongholds of support for Lavalas. At night they circled, dipping in close to the ground, with their lights turned off. We were unable to discern any purpose to this kind of patrol other than the inspiration of terror. Several times we encountered members of the population running towards our car as a group of Marines rounded the corner behind them. The U.S. troops and the MIF have failed to provide security to the largest and most vulnerable sector of Haitian society.

In addition, Haitian democracy has received a blow that could signify a return to complete consolidation of power in the hands of the wealthy few at the continued expense of the needs of



the majority. The coup d'état against President Aristide is only the most recent attack on popular democracy that Haiti has suffered over the last several years. Anne Hastings of FONKOZE noted:

"Most of the people have given up on politics. The only politician the people trusted was Aristide. If the people truly believed Aristide was corrupt they would have taken him out long ago but what's the point? No one will come after who is better."

The aid embargo, the U.S. and OAS-backed negotiation process factors, and the escalating humanitarian crisis have led to widespread disillusionment among poor and marginalized Haitians when it comes to the democratic process. The destructive impact of U.S. policy on Haitian democracy is unparalleled and would be difficult to overstate. It is with the consideration of both the present and the past that the observation mission demands a full investigation into the U.S. role in the events of February 29, 2004, along with other actions and policies that may have contributed to the illegitimate removal of Haiti's President.

Our greatest fears, the worst case scenario, do seem imminently possible:

- In a political climate controlled by the U.S. and the traditional Haitian elite, the resurgent military will continue to assume security and governance positions until re-establishing the army has been accomplished *de facto*;
- As Haiti moves toward elections at the end of 2005, the campaign of terror against the poor who support Lavalas will intensify, guaranteeing their exclusion in the electoral process;
- The interim government will re-start the SAP, and the U.S. aid program will once again take priority, along with debt repayment;
- The 2005 elections will be dominated by opposition political parties who are positioned to benefit from U.S. aid for democracy; and
- The Haitian people's voices will be silenced as their lives are destroyed by neoliberal economic policies.

In the interest of preventing this tragedy, we offer our recommendations and demands.

## VIII. Recommendations

### Urgent Unanimous Recommendations:

- I. We condemn the circumstances of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's removal from Haiti on February 29, 2004, which we consider a coup d'etat.
- II. During this Bicentennial Anniversary of the successful slave rebellion that gave birth to the Republic of Haiti, we call on all the nations of the world to respect the sovereignty and self-determination of the Haitian Republic.
- III. We call for a full investigation by the United Nations, as requested by CARICOM, and a bipartisan, independent commission of the United States Congress into:
  - The U.S. role in the removal of President Aristide from Haiti;
  - U.S. funding to the Group of 184, the Democratic Convergence, and various civil society groups, especially through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its democracy enhancement program;
  - U.S. ties to FRAPH and former military dealing with financing, weapons and training for them in the Dominican Republic, and coordination of their rebellion. This should include an investigation into the shipment of arms and military equipment by the United States to the Dominican Republic and the subsequent distribution of those supplies;
  - The role of U.S. agencies and/or operatives in the creation of the Cannibal Army of Gonaives and the Northern Opposition Front of Cap-Haitien;
  - Whether, as is alleged, there have been serious human rights abuses, including murder, by the foreign occupation forces;
  - Any and all violations by the U.S., France, and Canada, of international treaties and covenants pertaining to democracy, national sovereignty, human rights, and refugee rights; and
  - Any and all violations of Haiti's Constitution by the establishment and empowerment of the "interim government."
- IV. We call for the immediate replacement of the Multinational Force led by the United States with a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission that does not include the U.S., France, or Canada. Pending the removal of U.S. Marines from Haiti, we demand Creole translators for every unit, the immediate removal of helicopters, tanks and artillery. Lastly, we call for the U.S. to adopt France's rules of engagement: to not fire unless fired upon.
- V. We demand that any government claiming legitimacy in Haiti immediately arrest the so-called "rebels", including their leader Guy Philippe, for their violent crimes. We call for the prompt re-capture and re-imprisonment of convicted criminals, in particular, convicted human rights abusers Jean Pierre Baptiste (alias Jean Tatoune), Jean-Claude Duperval, Carl Dorelien, Prosper Avril, and Louis Jodel Chamblain, who are notorious human rights abusers.
- VI. With regards to United States foreign policy towards Haiti, we unanimously demand:
  - That the U.S. respect the sovereignty of the Haitian Republic, including the territorial sovereignty of Mole St. Nicolas;

- An immediate end to punitive U.S. policies, including embargos, towards Jamaica, for acting as host to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; and
- The arrest of convicted human rights violator Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, living in Queens, NY.

VII. We condemn human rights abuses committed by all sides and all parties, before and after the events of February 29, 2004, and we call for the establishment of an independent truth commission.

### **Unanimous Statements and Recommendations**

We condemn U.S.<sup>1</sup> treatment of Haitian refugees, and we call for an immediate change in U.S. policy. We demand that Temporary Protective Status (TPS) be granted to all Haitians facing political persecution, including those whose names are read daily on Haitian radio stations.

We condemn the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) in Haiti for not maintaining its impartiality as a human rights organization.

We condemn the statement made by the de facto Haitian Prime Minister in Gonaives on March 20, praising Louis Jodel Chamblain, Guy Philippe, Jean Pierre Baptiste alias Jean Tatoune, and other convicted or accused criminals and human rights violators as "freedom fighters." We also condemn the impression of agreement with this statement by OAS Ambassador David Lee who accompanied the Prime Minister and was present with him at the event.

We call for an end to the practice of funding and aid that includes neoliberal conditionalities such as structural adjustment programs because of the disastrous effects these conditions have on developing countries throughout the world. In addition, we call for complete cancellation of the odious debts of Haiti, especially the debts accrued by the Duvalier family dictatorships. Odious debts, according to international law, do not have to be repaid.

We demand an immediate investigation within the Canadian Parliament into the Canadian role in supporting U.S. policy and the Haitian intervention.

We demand that Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide be free to speak to the press and move freely. In addition, we urge the United Nations to invite President Aristide to address the UN General Assembly as soon as possible.

In order to encourage an environment where human rights are respected, we call for independent, on-the-ground human rights investigators.

We call on the international solidarity community to mobilize for:

- An international day of solidarity and/or prayer for the Haitian people;
- Solidarity and support for countries suffering from imperialistic U.S. policies;
- Accompaniment programs for the many Haitians who are now in hiding within their own country; and
- A renewal of the Haiti solidarity movement in response to U.S., Canadian, and French policies.

In addition to these unanimous demands and recommendations, we offer

## **Majority Demands of the Emergency Haiti Observation Mission:**

- I. We call for a full investigation by the United Nations, and a bipartisan, independent commission of the United States Congress into:
  1. The relationship between armed groups, sometimes known as *chime*, and all political actors in Haiti.
  2. The activities of Guy Philippe in the Dominican Republic prior to his re-entry into Haiti.
  3. The disinformation in the U.S. corporate media about the situation in Haiti.
  
- II. With regards to U.S. policies, we demand:
  1. A new U.S. anti-drug policy, which would cease treating the use of drugs as a criminal matter and approach it instead as a matter of public health. By taking most of the profit out of drug trafficking, such a policy would be of enormous help to Haiti and other countries in Latin America that have been corrupted by the drug trade's enormous sales in the U.S. market.
  2. Non-interference into Haiti-Cuba cooperation.
  3. An end to the USAID democracy enhancement program in Haiti.
  4. An end to U.S. funding of political and military activities in Haiti.
  5. Cancellation of Haiti's debts to the U.S. and future funding in the form of grants rather than loans.
  
- III. We also call for:
  1. A complete disarmament campaign in Haiti.
  2. Reparations from France to Haiti for the "independence debt." A sum of 150 million gold francs was paid to France in 1825 to compensate French colonizers for their loss of property, namely the Haitians themselves.
  3. Greater humanitarian assistance and funding for infrastructure from the international community.
  4. The establishment of a media watch group in Haiti.
  5. A review of the Haitian Constitution by Haitian legal scholars.
  6. An end to the campaign of terror perpetrated by the Democratic Platform and the "rebels".
  7. Complete cancellation of Haiti's external debt.



## Appendix 1: Acronyms

<b>AHP</b>	<i>Agence Haitienne de Presse</i> , Haitian Press Agency
<b>AP</b>	Associated Press
<b>BAI</b>	<i>Bureau des Avocats Internationaux</i> , Bureau of International Lawyers
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Community and Commonwealth
<b>CD</b>	<i>Convergence Democratique</i> , Democratic Convergence
<b>CEP</b>	Provisional Electoral Council
<b>CHREDHU</b>	<i>Commission Haitienne pour le Respect des Droits Humains</i> , the Haitian Commission for the Respect of Human Rights
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CONAP</b>	National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights
<b>CTH</b>	<i>Confederation des Travailleurs Haitiens</i> , Confederation of Haitian Workers
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FL</b>	<i>Fanmi Lavalas</i> , the Lavalas Family political party
<b>FOPEP</b>	Federation of Feminists of Petionville
<b>FRAPH</b>	Revolutionary Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti
<b>FTS</b>	<i>Fondasyon Trant Septamn</i> , the 30 <sup>th</sup> of September Foundation
<b>G184</b>	Group of 184
<b>HERO Act</b>	Haitian Economic Recovery and Opportunity Act
<b>HIPC</b>	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
<b>ICIO</b>	International Coalition of Independent Observers, co-coordinated by the Quixote Center and Global Exchange
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>IFIs</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INS</b>	formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service, now the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement
<b>IRI</b>	International Republican Institute
<b>ISC</b>	Civil Society Initiative
<b>MIF</b>	Multination Interim Force
<b>MPP</b>	<i>Mouvman Peyizan Papaye</i> , Peasant Movement of Papaye
<b>NCHR</b>	National Coalition for Haitian Rights (formerly Haitian Refugees)
<b>NDI</b>	National Democratic Institute
<b>NED</b>	National Endowment for Democracy
<b>NGOs</b>	non-governmental organizations
<b>OAS</b>	Organization of American States
<b>OPL</b>	<i>Organisation du Peuple en Lutte</i> , Organization of People in Struggle; formerly the <i>Organisation Politique Lavalas</i> , Lavalas Political Organization
<b>PAPDA</b>	<i>Platfom Ayisyen pou Pledwaye pou yon Devlopman Alternatif</i> , the Haitian Platform to Advocate for an Alternative Development
<b>PNH</b>	Haitian National Police
<b>RDP</b>	<i>Regroupement Democratique Populaire</i> , Popular Democratic Regroupment
<b>SAP</b>	Structural adjustment program
<b>SOFA</b>	<i>Solidarite Organization Fanm Ayisien</i> , Haitian Women's Solidarity Organization
<b>TPS</b>	Temporary Protective Status
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>ZL</b>	<i>Zanmi Lasante</i> , Partners In Health

## Appendix Two: U.S. Policymakers

- **Roger Noriega:** Former staffer for Jesse Helms on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Helms was a leading critic of Clinton's effort to restore Aristide to power in 1994.<sup>21</sup> During this time Helm's office promoted the false accusation that Aristide was "mentally unstable." He used forged documents that cited the name of a non-existent Canadian psychologist.<sup>22</sup>
- **Otto Reich:** A key player in the Iran-contra scandal by heading the notorious Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD) in the State Department. The group suggested books to school libraries and arranged speeches, but also leaked false information to the press. The most infamous of which accused the Sandinista government of receiving Soviet MiG fighters and implicated the government in drug-trafficking. This unit was staffed with CIA and Pentagon "psychological warfare" specialists and reported to Oliver North. There he manufactured op-eds that were passed off to the U.S. media under the name of Nicaraguan rebel leaders. During the Iran-contra investigation the US comptroller general identified numerous illegalities, which led to the closure of the Office of Public Diplomacy. At this time Reich was already named the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, where he laid the groundwork to destabilize President Chavez. Less than a year ago, Reich welcomed a coup against Chavez on record.<sup>23</sup>
- **John Negroponte:** Pending U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Former aide to Henry Kissinger at the NSC. Former Ambassador to Honduras during the '81-'85 'dirty war'.<sup>24</sup> The New York Times credits John Negroponte with "carrying out the covert strategy of the Reagan administration to crush the Sandinista government in Nicaragua." He oversaw the growth of military government aid to Honduras from \$4 million to \$77.4 million per year. He publicly denied the widespread human rights abuses committed by the Honduran military government of General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez. Involved in the Iran-Contra Scandal.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Farmer, Paul. "Who Removed Aristide?" London Review of Books. vol. 26, no. 8. April 15, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Farmer, Paul. The Uses of Haiti. Common Courage Press, Maine. 2003, 161.

<sup>23</sup> Farmer, Paul. "Who Removed Aristide?" London Review of Books. vol. 26, no. 8. April 15, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Farmer, Paul. "Who Removed Aristide?" London Review of Books. vol. 26, no. 8. April 15, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.maryknoll.org/GLOBAL/ALERTS/no\\_negroponte.htm](http://www.maryknoll.org/GLOBAL/ALERTS/no_negroponte.htm)

### **Appendix Three: Personal Reflections of Observation Mission Members**

Letter from Haiti by **Tom F. Driver**  
Aboard American Airlines flight 896  
Port-au-Prince to New York  
April 2, 2004

Haiti exists, but not happily. Before getting home to all my catching-up with Anne, my mail, email, telephone, and appointments (let's forget about income taxes) I want to send you some news about the Haiti I have been visiting since March 23, when I came down with the first non-governmental delegation that's gone there since the United States forcibly removed Pres. Aristide on Feb. 29. The delegation was put together by "Haiti Reborn," an arm of The Quixote Center in Maryland.

Haiti has suffered a terrible humiliation at the hands of the U.S. Although her poverty is bad enough, it does not wound the psyche as do recent events that amount to a kind of political/military rape of the country. The clock of Haitians' self-government has been set back at least 50 years. On the surface, life can appear rather normal, but awful fears and hatreds lie just underneath, ready to ensnare or explode. For example:

One day when we returned in our van to the house where we lodged, a visitor cautioned that someone was watching the house and street -- something we had not noticed and weren't sure whether to believe. Our visitor had brought with him, for an interview with us, two men who were prominent in Pres. Aristide's Lavalas political party. Since Aristide's ouster over a month ago, one of the men has not dared sleep in the same house two nights running. He quit our meeting early so as to stay on the move. Later that day we found out that his name was read out on the radio, which is like being marked for death. Every afternoon around 4 p.m. names are broadcast. Perhaps they are on a list of those whom the new government wants to arrest, or perhaps listeners call in with the name of so-and-so. All are linked with Aristide in some way. Some of those named soon disappear. Today most of Haiti's radio stations have fallen silent, while the remaining ones are owned by members of "the opposition," which of course is no longer in opposition to the government, because during the night of February 28-29 the United States brought about a regime change in Haiti.

Although there is a "transitional" President in the National Palace (we met with him), the building is mostly occupied by U.S. Marines, who also patrol the streets and the airport, and fly helicopters almost constantly over the poorer parts of Port-au-Prince night and day. U.S. forces have made many night-time raids into some of the poorest quarters, particularly the one called Belair. In these raids they have killed an uncertain number of people, estimates going as high as 70. Occasionally the foreign soldiers venture into middle class neighborhoods, but never threaten the houses on the hills where the wealthy live.

We met with groups very loyal to Aristide and groups who hate him, but only one group, which is dominated by wealthy businessmen, failed to condemn in the strongest terms the occupation of Haiti by the U.S.-led multinational force. It is an insult to Haiti's spirit of freedom and self-worth; and it has come, perhaps not by accident, during the 200th anniversary of Haiti's declaration of independence in 1804.



In the States, it seems that only the Congressional Black Caucus has been willing to speak of Aristide's removal as a coup. John Kerry did come close on CBS on the morning of Feb. 29, when Dan Rather asked all the Democratic candidates what they thought about Aristide's removal, which had happened during the previous night. Kerry rightly said that the Haiti crisis had been created by Pres. Bush, because his administration had put lots of pressure on Aristide and none on his opponents, both armed and unarmed. Bush thus empowered the opposition to refuse all compromise, making a negotiated solution impossible. I hope Kerry will stand by this analysis and continue to hold Bush accountable. Although it is true that the game plan began at least as far back as the year 2000, before Bush came in, it was his team, including Colin Powell, that pursued it to its bitter and very cynical end.

I have followed this matter from its inception, and I will somewhere write in more detail about the Washington-based plot that has been so disastrous for the dreams of democracy that arose in Haiti during the 1980s and 90s. Suffice it to say that the "rebels" who came over the border from the Dominican Republic in February could not have been trained, supplied, and strategically prepared without the foreknowledge, and probably the assistance, of the United States. That said, I want here to relate just a few of the things I discovered in Haiti the past ten days.

- The country is shockingly divided in political opinion. It is weird to leave one interview and go into another in which you are told the exact opposite of what was said in the first. Our interlocutors might begin a session saying reasonable things, but before long their claims would become so extreme as to defy all belief. This includes people with high levels of education who are widely traveled in the world. We heard torrents of hatred and vilification, especially from Aristide's detractors, and from others we heard and saw expressions of fear.
- Most of the Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that rail against Aristide have been getting money from USAID via the International Republican Institute, or the National Democratic Institute, all of which disperse U.S. Government money.
- Aristide made serious mistakes as President. It seems likely that his administration included unknown amounts of corruption, drug traffic involvement, and (as his hold on power grew weaker) reliance upon armed gangs from slum neighborhoods that looked upon him as a deliverer. He was, no doubt, a charismatic leader with poor administrative skills.
- Even so, he was far from being the tyrant, dictator, and despot that his opponents and much of the U.S. press paint him to be. What kind of a tyrant is it whose most popular move was to disband the army?
- One of Aristide's accomplishments was to establish a new school of medicine. The U.S. military has closed it and uses it as a barracks. This in a country in desperate need of doctors.
- When Aristide was taken away, he received assurance that his house would be protected. It was immediately trashed and looted. By contrast, in 1994 the houses of Gen. Cedras and other military officers whom the U.S. ousted from power were guarded by U.S. soldiers.
- There is no effort by the U.S.-led multinational force or the Haitian police to arrest the known criminals among the armed rebels who played the key role in bringing down the government. Not only are all the rebels insurrectionists who took up arms against a legitimate government, some of their leaders had previously been tried and convicted of politically motivated crimes. Upon entering Haiti from the Dominican Republic, they released about 2000 more criminals from jail. Staff at the U.S. Embassy told us that to capture and disarm them is not part of the

mission of the U.S. forces. Meanwhile, the mission does include the use of lethal force against militants in the slums who were loyal to Aristide.

- Aristide's opponents come from the left as well as the right. He tried to bring the disparate factions together, but the elite, whether leftist or rightist, turned against him for not serving their interests. He found his base of support in the urban masses, whom he had once served as priest in the "parish of the poor" at the Church of St. Jean Bosco in Port-au-Prince. He seems to have had less solid support among the rural peasantry.
- The issue that concerns me is not whether Aristide was everything that Haiti needs. He clearly was not. The issue is whether the United States has the right to undermine and then destroy a duly elected government. I am ashamed of my country for having done so, and I'm very angry about it.
- Although the transitional government talks of inclusiveness and power sharing, the cabinet it has appointed includes no members of Aristide's faction.
- The new cabinet's Minister of Security is Herard Abraham, a General in the army that Aristide disbanded in 1995. This is the clearest of several indications that the U.S. intends for Haiti's army to be reinstated. It was, and surely would be again, a proxy army trained and equipped by the U.S. for the purpose of quelling social unrest in the population.
- Finally, a Catholic priest who has remained close to Aristide throughout his political career told us that Haiti "must" create and train a movement of nonviolent resistance. Although Aristide did not think along that line, the time for doing so seems to be at hand.

Whenever I go to Haiti I come home with some reason for hope in the midst of desperation. This time, it's the discovery that some Haitians are dreaming of a nonviolent way to renew their struggle for democracy and true independence. We can help them by working to get the U.S. out of the business of regime change. It is shameful for a superpower to bully other nations, especially one as small, as impoverished, and as eager for self-rule as Haiti.

## Patrick Tortora

As our American Airlines Flight from Miami approached Port-au-Prince in March of 2004, it was obvious that things had changed since the last time I landed here in April of 1991. On that trip President Aristide had been in office for two months, and most of the nation was on a high after holding the first free and fair election in the nation's 186-year history the previous December. In 1991 there were no machine guns present in and around the airport as there were in 1983 when I first visited Haiti under the Duvalier regime, and as there were in 1987 under one of the successor military regimes, and as there is now. Rows and rows of Haitian National Police and U.S. Military vehicles could be seen lined up on the tarmac as well as in a storage depot area close to the airport.

When I visited in 1983 everyone had a picture of Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier hung up in their homes, and when asked about the government, most would indicate it was "O.K.", but would say no more. In 1987, no houses I went into had a picture of Duvalier, and most people would say it was good that he was gone, but little more than that. In April of 1991, you could not shut people up when I solicited their opinions about politics, economics, democracy, and Aristide. It was like the floodgates were open, and opinions that had never been uttered in public came pouring through.

And now, in 2004, people have to come out of hiding and risk their lives to tell you how they feel about recent events, and they ask us to tell the world about what happened to their President and what is happening to their country.

I am not a neophyte regarding Haiti. My wife Vivian and I have been following events there for 22 years, and we were co-editors of *The Haiti News*, a networking newsletter about Haiti, for six years in the 1990's. We have participated in workshops and conferences about Haiti, and were instrumental in getting our parish involved with The Haiti Parish Twinning Program (now The Parish Twinning Program of the Americas). Vivian was an official election observer in 1990 and 2000, and was an observer on the ground when Aristide returned in 1994. The recent events in Haiti have pained me.

It was very hard to separate fact from fiction in Haiti. Rumors abound and there are very strong feelings on all sides of the political spectrum about what kind of a leader and a man President Aristide was and the way in which he was removed from office. However, except from those entities from which you would expect the official line that Aristide resigned constitutionally, most Haitians I spoke to (both officially and unofficially) regretted the way in which the Lavalas regime ended. Even some individuals "in the know", when speaking off the record, acknowledged the long reach of the U.S. State Department in the demise of the true democratic process in Haiti. So, another chapter needs to be added to books such as *The Uses of Haiti* by Dr. Paul Farmer, as indeed Haiti has been used once again.

It was a real honor **again** to visit Haiti, to meet such courageous people, and to reaffirm my convictions regarding the people of Haiti.

## Haiti: The American Learning Zone

*For CounterPunch.org, April 14, 2004*

Tom Reeves

I returned this month from Haiti as part of the first independent U.S. observer delegation since the removal on February 29 of President Jean Bertrand Aristide. More than a decade ago, I helped organize the New England Observer Delegations to Haiti - nine diverse groups of prominent Boston area people who went to Haiti after the first coup d'etat against President Aristide. We witnessed a reign of terror by the Haitian military, in which at least 3,000 democracy activists were slaughtered. We also witnessed the almost universal jubilation of the Haitian urban and rural poor (85% of the population) on Aristide's return.

This time I went to see the results of another coup against Aristide, one clearly planned, funded and orchestrated by the U.S. I felt a terrible déjà vu: massive violence against the poor, especially against Aristide's Lavalas movement; the very same paramilitary and former Haitian army officers committing the atrocities. Convicted mass murderers acting as judges, administrators and police. Despite intimidation and brutal attacks on the poorest neighborhoods, we saw overwhelming support for Aristide among the poor, and violent hatred of Aristide by the tiny elite. A crucial difference was the attitude of the professionals and many intellectuals. They expressed a sense of betrayal by Aristide, and joy at his fall. Yet one of them told me, "The Haitian people elected Aristide, and only they should have been able to take him down."

We heard from people who witnessed night-time raids against Lavalas. In one case in the poor neighborhood of Bel Air, we were told U.S. helicopters came with blinding lights, heavily armed U.S. fired into crowds, killing between five and twenty persons (March 17). Members of our group interviewed relatives of victims and eyewitnesses to this attack. In case after case, we were told that known criminals and former army men were incorporated into the police. They harassed or beat Lavalas supporters and hounded for "arrest" former government officials.

A stream of people came to see us from their hiding places at great risk to tell us this. Jeremy was one. Now 21, he met Aristide at age 11. He worked for Children's Radio (Radio Ti Moun) funded by Aristide's foundation. Jeremy tearfully recalled the past month: He fled the radio station as it was trashed. He was chased and saw his young companions beaten. He ran from his aunt's house as three former military came looking for him. They shot his aunt and she died on the way to the hospital. This happened a week before we arrived. Jeremy had been afraid to go to her funeral.

A woman came to us from the community group, Ai Bobo Brav, victims of the last coup. I'd met her last March when she told me, "Every Haitian baby knows Bush's game." Back then she'd forecast the coup. Now she was living it. "While your President was sleeping in his bed, they kidnapped our president. They dragged him off. It was so disrespectful. It hurt me so. She wept.

Driving back to Port Au Prince from Jacmel on Friday, I saw a cow munching on garbage by a sign in English advertising a school. The sign said, "Welcome to the American Learning Zone." The U.S. State Department point man on Haiti, Roger Noriega (also involved in the Iran-Contra plot in Nicaragua) told an audience in Washington last year that Cuba and Venezuela should pay close attention to events in Haiti. One of the first acts by U.S. marines after landing in Haiti this year may have been to establish a perimeter around Mole St. Nicolas, the peninsula opposite Guantanamo, jutting into the narrow strait between Haiti and Cuba. Local residents reported to

Haitian news media that U.S. military structures were being built on the site long sought by the U.S. as a companion base to Guantanamo.

What interests provoke such an expensive, brutal lesson in Haiti? Haiti has no oil. Of course there are thousands of sweat shop workers who toil for less than a dollar a day. Of course there are big US companies that supply rice, wheat and other staples supplanting Haitian rice and cassava, so that nearly 70% of the food consumed by Haitians must be imported, mostly from the U.S. This for a country that once provided more wealth to France than all its other New World colonies! And then there is Aristide, the little Liberation Theology priest who preached a message of conflict between the tiny elite and the desperately poor majority. Haiti is so close to Cuba - that other obsession of U.S. foreign policy. One of Aristide's first acts was to establish ties with Cuba. More than 500 Cuban doctors remain in Haiti, helping the poorest communities. They must be remembering Grenada, where a U.S. occupation twenty years ago ousted Cuban doctors. Most of all, Haiti sits in what the U.S. sees as it's back yard, it's playground, it's lap. Upstart, uncontrolled forces there are just too close to home. So - Venezuela and Cuba and others beware: Haiti is the American (imperial) learning zone.

#### HAITI SHOULD BE A LEARNING ZONE FOR SOLIDARITY ACTIVISTS, TOO

Haiti should be a learning zone for all Americans who would understand and counter the imperial U.S. policy of intervention world-wide. If the U.S. can get away with covert and overt support for a "rebellion" in Haiti led by former military and para-military, many of whom have been convicted of murders and other human rights violations dating to the last coup, it will be psyched for similar operations in Venezuela and perhaps even in Cuba. The evidence is clear: U.S. weapons (intended for the Dominican army) were smuggled into Haiti by former Haitian military and para-military, many of whom were trained and long funded by the CIA and other U.S. agents. U.S. money, both government and private, flowed into the coffers of NGOs attached to the "opposition" - the right-wing Convergence and the neo-liberal "Group of 184," led by the Haitian business elite (including the sweat-shop owners) and widely publicized by the ultra-conservative "Haiti Democracy Project"(HDP) in Washington, D.C. Among the funders and organizers of the opposition were the IRI and NDI, the international NGOs closely tied to the U.S. Republican and Democrat Parties respectively. IRI and HDP operatives were present at meetings organized by FRAPH (a CIA-funded para-military group) and former Haitian military in the Dominican Republic - at which Dominican authorities claimed plans were laid a year ago for a Haitian coup.

In Jacmel, we met students, women and union organizers who had formed specifically anti-Aristide groups to counter the existing organizations in Jacmel - for the purpose of joining the demonstrations led by the Convergence and 184 to demand the ouster of Aristide earlier this year. Pierre J.G.C. Gestion, a leader of the MHDR (Haitian Movement for Rural Development) proudly asserted his connection to USAID, the State Department Democracy Enhancement program and the NDI. "They trained us and taught us how to organize, and we organized the groups you see here to demand the corrupt government of Aristide be brought down."

We also met representatives in Port au Prince of SOFA, CONAM, ENFOFANM and other progressive women's groups, as well as Batay Ouvriye, the rightly heralded support group for the Free Trade Zone and other mostly women workers in the assembly industries (sweat shops). These women's and labor groups were strongly critical of Aristide's government and the Lavalas movement. During the past few months, they openly called for Aristide's removal, and they chose not to denounce the opposition's "zero option" strategy of non-cooperation and non-compromise. Yet I heard no answer to our question: "What did you think would happen if Aristide was forced to leave by the right-wing rebels or by a U.S. occupation?" I believe these

groups did not ask themselves that question.

I think they were blinded by their feeling that Aristide had betrayed his progressive mandate. A good bit of their analysis of Aristide's record was right - though not all. Aristide did accept a compromise when he returned. He did include, at U.S. insistence, elements of the former army and even Duvalierists in his regime. Yet the government put in place by this recent coup is far worse: it is full of such Macoutes, and worse - convicted mass murderers. It has already militarized the police and is preparing the return of an unreconstructed Haitian army - the instrument of U.S. and elite oppression in Haiti since its creation by the U.S. at its first invasion in 1915.

Aristide also compromised terribly on the issues of structural adjustment - he did put in place the first Free Trade Zone, and lay plans for a second one, a bitter insult to Haitian labor. He did begin privatization. He did not protect Haitian products adequately. Yet he did not compromise on everything. He continued to agitate for a better minimum wage, against the sweat shop owners. He resisted most of the demanded privatization. He held out for collective bargaining rights for the Free Trade Zone workers. He continued to make small steps toward agrarian reform. As Paul Farmer and others have shown, he made greater strides in fighting AIDS and promoting literacy than any previous government. The Latortue government from the start has been wholly dominated by free trade enthusiasts, neoliberal theoreticians and the worst of the sweatshop owners and other business elite.

The women's groups told us bluntly that the situation under Aristide was the worst in Haiti's history - worse than Duvalier and worse than Haiti during the 1991-1994 coup period. Yet I met these groups during that time. They were in hiding then, terrified by the very same elements now roaming Haiti freely, committing atrocities now as then. When U.S. and other international delegations visited them a year ago, under Aristide's rule, they functioned openly. They did not appear terrorized. Their most concrete criticisms were that when they demonstrated against the government - during the same period as the sometimes violent demonstrations orchestrated by the 184 and the Convergence, and coming during a time when it was clear that former military and para-military (the CIA-funded FRAPH) were entering the country and preparing a coup - police stood by as people they called Lavalas threw bottles of urine and stones at them. All of that is terrible - and should not have gone without a severe criticism of Aristide and Lavalas. But it cannot be compared to the brutal onslaught by the Fraph and former army officers in Gonaives, Cap Haitien and elsewhere after Feb. 5. Aristide's alleged abuses pale beside the documented reports of the "rebels" slaughtering police and Lavalas and mutilating their bodies; of summary executions; of groups of Lavalas herded into containers and dumped into the sea.

Perhaps worst of all, I listened again (as I had a year ago) to the litany of abuses the NCHR (National Coalition for Haitian Rights) says it documented against officials of the Aristide government and the Lavalas movement. They rightly protested cases like that of the journalist Jean Dominique and a dozen other high profile attacks on opposition activists and as many as three opposition journalists. Yet during the two years leading up to this latest coup, they adamantly refused to investigate now-verified allegations of murders, arson and bombings against the government and Lavalas by former military and FRAPH. They scoffed at the alleged coup attempt at the National Palace in December of 2001, though Jodel Chamblain now boasts that was an initial coup attempt.

Although they were the only human rights group in the country adequately funded and having trained monitors throughout Haiti, the NCHR became completely partisan: anti-Lavalas, anti-Aristide. This is simply not proper for a group calling itself a "Haitian Rights" organization.

During the final month before the coup, they abandoned any pretext of impartiality, joining calls for the ouster of Aristide, without reference to the means. After Feb. 29, they continue to site abuses by "chimere," whom they call simply "Aristide gangs," without documenting the connections. Though they told our group they had "heard about" violence against unarmed Lavalas, including the possible complicity of U.S. marines in the Bel Air incident, the NCHR said they "lacked access" to the pro-Lavalas shanty-towns. Of course they lacked access: they lacked any shred of credibility as a human rights monitor.

We also heard from PAPDA (Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development) which had called for Aristide's ouster on the grounds of his compromises with "U.S. imperialism," as well as corruption and human rights violations. PAPDA had functioned openly in its offices under Aristide, right up to and through this year's coup, though at least one PAPDA member was killed, allegedly by "chimere." Camille Chalmers, PAPDA's director, said, "This is a sad day for Haiti. But it was the people who overturned Aristide. The U.S. only came in to shape the results, as they always do....Right now, the population has regained some hope. This hope will go against the marines. Confrontations are already happening." Though the current government is extremely pro-neo-liberal, a PAPDA coalition leader on environmental issues, Yves Wainwright, has accepted the post of Minister of the Environment. "The current political situation has not been defined," Chalmers told us. "If the Provisional Government were to develop a logical program it would conflict with U.S. interests. Under Aristide, we had less and less space to organize and demonstrate - we were repressed. As long as we can demonstrate against the military occupation now, we will retain a tiny space." Together, some 40 similar anti-Aristide "left" groups have formed the RDP (Popular Democratic Regroupment) to put forward an alternative opposition program to the government, even while some work within that government.

One man I hoped to see, but did not, was Chavannes Jean-Baptiste. Chavannes was at times very close to Aristide - serving as his spokesperson when he returned after the coup. Chavannes is founder and leader of the MPP (a large peasant group in the Central Plateau). Shortly after Aristide chose Preval for his successor, Chavannes announced his break with Aristide (there was indeed an ugly confrontation between Chavannes and Lavalas activists in Mirebalais). By the 2000 election, Chavannes openly embraced his former worst enemies, and joined the Convergence. Later Chavannes joined the more palatable, but clearly neo-liberal, Group of 184. MPP has now endorsed its "Social Contract," put forward by elite business groups.

A peasant from Mirabalais in the Central Plateau told me he had evidence that most of the weapons and men moved from the Dominican Republic to start the rebellions in Gonaives and Cap Haitien in early February, came through Chavannes' turf. "No way could that have been done without his active support." Chavannes is said to be considering a position in the de facto government - as minister for peasant affairs. I was with Chavannes and his mother when they went on seeing the ruins and vandalism at their offices in Papay on their return after the first coup in 1994. That damage was done by the very same para-military and military who now occupy much of the country. Another dissident peasant whom I met told of Chavannes' embracing and throwing a feast for Chamblain, the convicted murderer and FRAPH member who "liberated" Hinche, the MPP base. Chamblain now sits in Cap Haitien, acting as "judge" condemning and punishing "criminals" and "traitors." Such alliances may be - as the civil society leader told us - just strange bedfellows in wartime, but on a personal level, they are hard to understand.

International human rights organizations, especially Human Rights Watch and Journalists Without Borders, and to a lesser extent Amnesty International, have taken the NCHR reports uncritically and failed to develop other impartial human rights contacts in Haiti. Progressive funders like Grassroots International and NGOs in Canada, the US and Europe also listened

uncritically to their "partners" and funded groups in Haiti like PAPDA, SOFA, Batay Ouvriye and MPP.

The primary lesson to be learned for funders and NGOS, and for all solidarity activists, is that solidarity must first of all be with the people of Haiti - by the assertion of their will by voting, as Haitians did for Aristide in 2000 (the OAS and international NGOs certified that at the time). Beyond that, international funding and solidarity groups (and here the criticism is equally valid for those who were wholly supportive of Lavalas without critique) must not put on blinders when they visit Haiti. They must listen critically to all sides. They must watch for concrete evidence of the mass base of the organizations they fund - and evidence that the rank and file feel as the "leaders" do.

It remains to be seen whether the U.S. empire will gain more from its exercise in the learning zone of Haiti, or the international solidarity movement. Let us hope for the latter - since the next learning zones may come sooner than we expect, especially if the Bush regime lives through its debacle in Iraq and survives the November election.

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Material for this article was compiled partly from observations and interviews in conjunction with the Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, a group of 24 diverse people from throughout the U.S. and Canada, coordinated by the Quixote Center in Maryland. The ideas expressed in this article are solely those of the author.





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