

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: MARCH 2 – 10, 2006

Haiti to hold legislative run-off next month

Fri Mar 10, 2006

By Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- A run-off to choose a new legislative assembly in Haiti will take place next month, paving the way for President-elect Rene Preval to be sworn in, authorities said on Friday.

The president of the troubled Caribbean country's electoral council, Max Mathurin, told Reuters the run-off would be held on April 23 and promised to correct technical problems encountered during the first round in February.

The run-off for Senate and lower chamber seats had initially been planned for March 19 but was delayed for unexplained reasons. That postponed the installation of Haiti's first elected government since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in 2004.

"The April 23 date has been communicated to the government but it will be official only after publication by the executive branch," said Mathurin.

Francois Benoit, a member of the electoral council, said the government could announce the date as early as this weekend.

The party that holds a majority in parliament will pick a prime minister and form a government. No party seems likely to obtain an outright majority but Preval, a one-time protege of Aristide, has been meeting candidates and politicians from other parties in hopes of building a governing coalition.

Preval was declared president following the first round of last month's general election, after fears of violence and widespread suspicions of vote fraud prompted electoral authorities to change the way they counted blank ballots. The change gave him just over 50 percent of the votes.

Preval's inauguration was initially set for March 29 but was postponed because of the need to elect the legislative assembly that administers the oath of office. Sources close to the interim government said on Friday that Preval could be sworn in during the first week of May.

Haiti's Preval to meet with Bush

AFP

Caribbean Net News

03-10-2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haitian president-elect Rene Preval announced Thursday he will travel to the United States this month to meet with US President George W. Bush.

Meanwhile, the head of the Provisional Electoral Council said a second round of legislative elections, originally scheduled for March 19, will likely take place on April 23.

The delay could postpone's Preval's March 29 inauguration, because the constitution calls for the swearing in to take place before parliament.

Preval will visit the United States March 27-28 to meet with Bush and officials from the Organization of American States, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. He will also visit the United Nations in New York.

Preval, who was elected in the first round of February's presidential election, departed Thursday on a South American tour to Brazil, Chile and Argentina.

Brazil heads the UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) that was sent to Haiti after then president Jean Bertrand Aristide fled amid an uprising in February 2004.

Haitian Americans receive an apology

By Darran Simon

Miami Herald

March 10, 2006

Fort Lauderdale City Manager George Gretsas offered his apologies Thursday to the city's growing Haitian population for not reaching out to the community.

Gretsas made his remarks before some 300 people who had packed into the cafeteria of North Side Elementary School for the city's first town hall meeting since 2003 with members of the Haitian-American community in Fort Lauderdale.

The city, its police department and North Side Elementary hosted the meeting in English and Creole for Haitian-American residents to learn about city services and meet city and school leaders.

"We need to be doing more of this," Gretsas said, of the meeting that was organized by Junia Jeantilus-Robinson, Fort Lauderdale's community relations specialist who works with the Haitian-American community. "I think we need to be meeting quarterly to discuss issues that affect your community."

CITY LEADERS

Several other city leaders attended the meeting, including Mayor Jim Naugle, Police Chief Bruce Roberts and Broward School Board Chairman Benjamin Williams.

Gretsas and other city officials addressed questions on issues ranging from what some perceived as discrimination against Haitians to frustration over the paltry number of Haitian Americans on the police force, in the school system and in decision-making positions in city government.

"We have qualified Haitian Americans who can work at any single level in this city," said Francois Leconte, founder and CEO of Minority Development and Empowerment.

Communication between the city and Haitian Americans has stalled under the new administration, Leconte said.

He also complained about the city not translating important materials into Creole so that it can reach the more than 15,000 Haitians living in Fort Lauderdale.

Naugle said the city did translate FEMA information into Creole during the 2005 hurricane season so Haitian residents could get the information.

Many questions were directed at Williams. Audience members asked how could the district ensure that Haitian Americans who graduate can read and how should students deal with a verbally abusive teacher.

FEW OFFICERS

Fred St. Amand Sr., a member of the Miami Police Department's civilian investigative panel, said he was disappointed at the low number of Haitian-American officers in Fort Lauderdale. Three of the city's five Haitian-American officers attended the meeting.

But, St. Amand said, he was encouraged at Thursday's turnout.

"The power belongs to you," he said.

Some left the meeting feeling unsatisfied, saying panelists' answers were vague and short on specifics. "It doesn't make sense," said Timothy St. Fleur, who thought the meeting itself was a good idea.

International Tribunal on Haiti - Miami - March 11
Third Session of International Tribunal to be held on March 11 at Florida International University in Miami, Florida
Haiti Action Committee
March 10, 2006

US, French, Canadian, Haitian and UN officials and officers indicted

Report of Commission of Inquiry, headed by Ramsey Clark, to be presented

Verdicts to be forwarded to the International Criminal Court

The third session of the International Tribunal on Haiti will be held on March 11, 2006 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Florida International University in Miami.

Witnesses at the Tribunal will include recently released political prisoner Father Gérard Jean-Juste, who will testify about his ordeal in Haiti's jails; Duclos Benissoit, former head of the taxi drivers union; Agnes Mentor, a former Presidential security officer who witnessed hooded Haitian policemen massacre over a dozen people on Oct. 26, 2004; and Dr. Evan Lyon, a colleague of Dr. Paul Farmer in Partners in Health.

Members of a blue-ribbon Commission of Inquiry will also testify. Led by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, the Commission traveled to Haiti last October and gathered evidence of and testimony about new massacres and other crimes against humanity. Commission members Tom Griffin, John Parker and Dave Welsh will present videotaped testimony from victims and witnesses of massacres in Haiti.

The Tribunal's third session will take place at the Margaret E. Anliker Auditorium (GC140) at the Graham Center at FIU's University Park Campus. Free bus transportation to the Tribunal will leave from Veye Yo, 28 NE 54th Street in Miami at 4:30 p.m. on March 11.

The Tribunal's two previous sessions were held on September 23, 2005 in Washington D.C., and on November 19, 2005 in Boston. During those sessions, prosecutors presented a detailed background of the February 29, 2004 coup against exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and preliminary indictments. The actions of the U.S. and Canadian governments to destabilize the Aristide government prior to February 29, 2004 were examined. Witnesses provided eye-witness testimony about the on-going massacres of innocent civilians in Haiti being carried out by masked policemen with the acquiescence, and increasingly participation, of the U.N. occupation force. Five of the 23 people indicted were convicted by 15-member juries. Tribunal prosecutors will be announcing new indictments at the third session.

The Tribunal will forward evidence supporting the convictions for those found guilty of ordering, executing or tolerating massacres and crimes against humanity to the new International Criminal Court in The Hague.

This session of the Tribunal is being organized by a coalition of Haiti solidarity organizations, supported by the Miami community groups Veye Yo and Haiti Solidarity, as well as the Latin America

Solidarity Coalition, the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti, the International Action Center and the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition. It is being hosted by the Bolivarian Youth at FIU.

Please support the International Tribunal on Haiti

Dear Friend of Haiti,

The Third Session of the International Tribunal on Haiti is all set for Saturday, March 11, at Florida International University in Miami, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.. Let me tell you why I believe the Tribunal is of such critical importance now.

The people of Haiti have just won a tremendous victory, in preventing the theft of the presidential election from landslide winner, René Prével. But the murderous coup regime is still in power at this moment, and the outside powers that stand behind it &Mac246; the US, France, Canada, and under the UN flag, Brazil, Argentina and Chile &Mac246; have not stopped their criminal intervention in Haiti.

Moreover, the perpetrators of the many massacres, extrajudicial executions, and other atrocities since the February 29, 2004 coup d'etat, are for the most part still at large, their stockpiles of weapons untouched, under the protection of powerful patrons -- a constant threat to the restoration of Haitian democracy and self-determination.

That is why it is so important to support the International Tribunal on Haiti, in its continuing effort to collect evidence and bring to justice, before the International Criminal Court in the Hague, the individuals responsible for these crimes against humanity.

The Tribunal's opening session drew some 400 people at George Washington University in Washington, DC on September 23, 2005. Seven witnesses testified, two videotapes were entered into evidence, and three of the 21 people indicted were found guilty: former Haitian National Police Chief Léon Charles, former MINUSTAH military commander Brazilian Lt. General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, and the current Chilean MINUSTAH chief Juan Valdes.

The Tribunal's Investigating Judge convened a Commission of Inquiry, headed by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, which visited Haiti in October. The seven-member Commission interviewed over 50 victims and witnesses, compiling evidence that will surely generate more indictments and convictions of those carrying out crimes against humanity.

The second session of the Tribunal was held November 19, 2005 at Suffolk University Law School in Boston, to a good-sized crowd drawn largely from the New England Haitian community. Six witnesses testified, and three tapes were entered into evidence, containing videotaped witness testimony obtained by the Commission of Inquiry in Haiti. Two more of those indicted were found guilty by the jury: US Marine General Ronald Coleman, who was in charge of US and allied military operations in Haiti from the time of the coup in February to June 2004; and Haitian National Police Inspector Jean-Michel (Yves) Gaspard, who directed police/paramilitary operations responsible for the "soccer field massacre" in Martissant in August 2005.

The third session of the Tribunal on March 11 will feature witness testimony to other atrocities, as well as videotaped testimony of victims and eyewitnesses from Bel Air recorded by the Commission of Inquiry. The Commission will also present its final report on the October delegation. We are expecting a large turnout from the Miami Haitian community and hope you can attend the Miami session as well.

We Need Your Help Immediately

We need your support to continue this ground-breaking work. With your support, we covered expenses for the first and second sessions, and for the Commission of Inquiry delegation to Haiti in October. But now we must raise \$6,000 to cover the costs of the third session, and the costs of a second investigative trip to Haiti by the Commission of Inquiry to gather new witness testimony.

Please give generously. Make your tax-deductible check out as soon as you read this letter. Your contribution can concretely help to save the lives of mothers, fathers and children who are daily being killed.

Make your tax-deductible check out to:

International Tribunal on Haiti/CISPES Education Fund
and send it to P.O. Box 8560, NY, NY 10116.

Contribute Now Online

The best and fastest way to send funds is when you give a tax-deductible contribution over the Internet with either a Mastercard or Visa. Go to the secure server of the Nicaragua Network at www.nicanet.org/donate_afgj.htm. Just indicate that your gift is for the "International Tribunal on Haiti" and then the amount you'd like to give. Follow the prompts to finalize your tax-deductible donation.

For more information on how you can support or attend the Tribunal, please call us at (718) 434-8100

In solidarity,

Kim Ives

for the International Tribunal on Haiti

Statement on Recent Elections
Haiti Democracy Project
March 11, 2006

The Haiti Democracy Project applauds the Haitian people for their outstanding participation in the recent elections, deplores the premature awarding of the presidential election to a candidate who had not received the required 50 percent, and pledges renewed efforts to support and strengthen the democratic process in Haiti.

The determined participation of the Haitian people, rich and poor and in all regions, in free and open elections is the principal and overriding positive result of the elections. They stood proudly in line for hours to cast their ballots. There was a minimum of violence and political pressures at polling stations. The voter turnout of 1.3 million, or 63 percent of registered voters, was an extraordinary accomplishment given the enormous logistical and administrative problems in organizing elections in this very poor country of mountainous terrain. The highly successful elections, moreover, augur well for future elections, especially with continued technical and financial support from the international community.

Unfortunately, the election outcome was marred by the expedient of prorating blank ballots among presidential candidates, in explicit violation of provisions in the Haitian electoral law. This outcome was doubly troubling because René Prével, with 49 percent of the total vote, compared with only 11 percent for the runner-up, would almost certainly have won a sizable majority and uncontested mandate in the second round. The Haiti Democracy Project believes that Haiti would have been better served if the interim government and the international community had properly investigated allegations of fraud and followed the electoral law which called for a second round between the top two candidates if no presidential candidate achieved a majority. The change in vote-counting procedure was the result of mob pressure and threats against election officials by a relatively small number of people from different political groups, which nevertheless intimidated the U.N. special representative, the interim Haitian government, and ultimately the international community, including the United States, into declaring Prével the first-round winner.

Nevertheless, the Haiti Democracy Project is dedicated to continued support for the democratic process in Haiti, both for political and economic reforms within Haiti and for technical and financial assistance from the international community. A priority objective is to reach out to the Haitian-American community of over one million so as to encourage and facilitate their positive participation in building a more democratic and economically prosperous Haiti. For example, Haitian-Americans provided the majority of the fifteen-member observation mission we deployed in Haiti for the first round.

We are encouraged by our initial exchanges with close advisers to President-elect Prével, and we urge close and constructive collaboration among his government, the newly-elected legislature, and the Haitian private sector and civil society.

Our interest is to look forward rather than backward, and to do our best to assist the Haitian government and people. The motivating concept for all involved should be that of reconciliation, as most eloquently stated by Haiti's most revered poet and political thinker, Jacques Roumain:

La réconciliation, la réconciliation

Pour que la vie recommence,

Pour que le jour se lève sur la rosée.

How to help Haiti
Venice Gondolier
March 10, 2006

At the end of March, I will be traveling to Haiti with a friend of mine who runs a nonprofit organization called Help Haiti Now.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and its people are desperately in need of aid.

Drinkable water is a huge problem on the island. Medical care is hard to come by and education is a constant challenge with a system where the impoverished children are required to pay to attend in order to fund the meager teacher salaries.

Help Haiti Now has founded and is operating a medical clinic in the mountainous area of Goyovier, where a Haitian doctor now sees 50-100 patients a week.

The organization is also funding a school in Goyovier by providing supplies and paying teachers salaries so 500 children there can attend school.

In the coastal community of 87th Place, Help Haiti Now provides food and water by buying and delivering rice, beans, oil, soap and water barrels. 87th Place has no water and the most urgent project is to build an above-ground water cistern to collect rain water for cooking and drinking. This will cost about \$1,500. Malnourishment is a huge problem, especially for the children.

The medical clinics are also in need of many supplies we take for granted here, such as ibuprofen and stomach medicines like Mylanta tablets.

They simply do not have the access.

Help Haiti Now is collecting the following items to take down at the end of the month: Multivitamins (for children and adults), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), children and infant ibuprofen, stomach medicine (Pepcid A/C, Zantac/Ranitidine, Mylanta tablets), antifungal cream, hydrocortisone cream, antibiotic cream, Benadryl tablets/capsules. Jeans and tennis shoes are also welcome, as are funds to help purchase any of the above or to help with the water cistern project. Help Haiti Now is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Donations can be mailed to Help Haiti Now, P.O. Box 1041, Venice, 34284-1041; or Nathan Van Coops, 1026 Bay St. N.E. Apt. 2, St. Petersburg, 33701. For more information, contact Rachel Quirk at rachel@helphaitinow.org or 473-3477, or Van Coops at coops65000@yahoo.com or 544-5718, or visit HelpHaiti

Now.org.

Nathan Van Coops is a Florida aircraft mechanic working with VIDES, an international volunteer organization run by the Salesian order of St. John Bosco. He is a core team member of Epiphany Cathedral's Life Teen youth ministry program.

Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, speaking at OAS, pledges full CARICOM support for Haiti

Source: Organization of American States (OAS)

ReliefWeb

Date: 10 Mar 2006

Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica, speaking at the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington today, stressed that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will do “everything in its power” to ensure that Haiti is no longer isolated.

Patterson spoke to a protocolary meeting of the OAS Permanent Council, addressing OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza, Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin and diplomats from the 34 member countries. The session was chaired by Trinidad and Tobago’s Ambassador Marina Valere.

Patterson said CARICOM has pledged to help Haiti “nurture a democratic tradition and receive from the international community the material and technical support it has so long deserved in order to improve the living standards of the Haitian people.” He also called for every effort to bring Haiti into full participation in the various trade negotiations in the hemisphere and the World Trade Organization (WTO). “In this case, there can be no question about the need for special and differential treatment and technical assistance,” he said.

The Prime Minister made the remarks while praising the “pivotal role” of the OAS in settling disputes and helping to bring solution to political crises in the Americas, including in Haiti. He remarked that he and his Caribbean colleague heads of government “welcome and applaud the return of President René Préval as the duly elected leader of Haiti.” He added that Caribbean heads are “all anxious to extend a warm embrace to the democratically constituted government of Haiti at our next summit in St. Kitts and Nevis.”

In welcoming Patterson, Secretary General Insulza hailed the Prime Minister’s political mission and vision—“to make Jamaica a better place for its people, where they feel a greater sense of self-esteem and ownership in their country’s future and are empowered so as to benefit from its development.” The Secretary General noted that Patterson has become synonymous with the fight to alleviate poverty, improve employment, education and “to give voice and focused attention to the plight of the poor and marginalized, not only in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean, but worldwide.”

For her part, Ambassador Valere praised the longest-serving Jamaican Prime Minister as an outstanding political figure who, as a Caribbean leader, stands as “a beacon of our region’s dedication to deeply rooted democratic traditions, peaceful interaction with our neighbors, and a deepening process of intra-regional integration.” Valere commended the Jamaican Prime Minister as a “sterling example of an international statesman par excellence,” and noted the high caliber of Jamaica’s contribution to the international and inter-American agenda, including through its Permanent Representative to the OAS Ambassador Gordon Shirley.

In his first address to the Permanent Council as Prime Minister, Patterson—who is retiring from office soon—also expressed disappointment that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) process “is faltering on the rock of political will.” He called for a more inclusive global economic governance and

integration that is more beneficial to the interests of developing countries, and said this would lead to “greater prospects for tangible signs of development and strengthening democracy in our countries and societies around the world.”

Addressing the member state ambassadors, permanent observers, officials, and other guests, the Jamaican leader referred to a “sense of unease and restlessness” wherever people lack meaningful opportunities for self-expression and self-actualization. “We regard these as fundamental elements of democracy and the civil society we want to establish,” he declared. “In order to meet the challenges which militate against peace and stability, we must provide a truly enabling environment.”

In his wide-ranging remarks, Patterson also outlined the progress with the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and noted efforts towards a Regional Development Fund. He also stressed the vital role of education, security, health and environment issues, as well as justice, inclusion and inclusiveness, and the rule of law, also touching on the importance of “principle, integrity, honor and justice” in improving the conduct of international and institutional relations.

Haiti's Preval Calls on Brazil-Led Forces to Stay (Update1)
March 10, 2006
Bloomberg News

Haitian President-elect Rene Preval called on Brazil-led peacekeeping forces to remain in the country to help provide security as it restores democracy and order.

Preval, speaking at a news conference in Brasilia, said Brazilian troops have also helped provide education and health to Haiti's poor population. He said the Caribbean country will need time to reinforce its own police and justice system.

“Our justice system and police are extremely frail,” Preval, a former ally of ousted leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide, said. “The presence of the forces should continue and be renewed.”

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, is trying to reorganize a government two years after a rebellion drove Aristide from power and the country into chaos, calling for the United Nations to send forces to help restore security.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim on Feb. 16 said Brazil will maintain support for Haiti, though he declined to say how long Brazil plans to keep its 1,222 soldiers there, where the UN has about 9,000 troops.

Haiti's daily average income is about \$1.

Outlook

Ambassador Jose Martins Felicio, the Brazilian foreign ministry's secretary for the Western Hemisphere, said in an interview on Jan. 26 before the elections that Haiti will probably need the help of Brazilian troops to ensure security for at least another year.

Felicio said that even as security is restored, the troops could remain longer to continue rebuilding schools, roads and hospitals.

Preval also said Haiti has no need for an army of its own.

“An army at this point would be useless,” Preval said. “We are more concerned about education and infrastructure.”

Haiti's president-elect was declared winner of the country's Feb. 7 presidential elections after taking more than half the valid votes.

The announcement of Preval's victory followed five days of protests by his supporters. He had more than 60 percent of the vote in early tallies, slipping below 50 percent as the counting progressed.

To contact the reporter on this story:
Carlos Caminada in Brasilia at ccaminada1@bloomberg.net

UN mission in Haiti suspends training program for police

Source: Xinhua News Agency

Reuters Reliefweb

09 Mar 2006

HAVANA, The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti known as Minustah said on Thursday it had suspended a training program for local police till President-elect Rene Preval takes office.

The training agreement was signed on Feb. 22 in New York by Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and Minustah civilian chief Juan Gabriel Valdes.

Minustah spokesman David Whimurst said the UN mission favored a broad consultation on the issue which would involve Minustah, the Haitian transitional government, officials of the new government and heads of the police.

Whimurst added that Spanish forces would leave the island by April 5, a move Madrid announced last month. They will be replaced by Uruguayan troops.

The Spanish Foreign Ministry said last week they would send police and aid personnel to Haiti to replace its troops in the UN mission.

Haitian president-elect to tour Americas for economic help
China View News
March 10, 2006

HAVANA, -- Haitian president-elect Rene Preval is to begin a multinational tour on Friday, visiting Argentina, Chile and Brazil, and later the United States, to drum up economic support, reports from Port-au-Prince said on Thursday.

Seeking the support needed to rebuild his country's infrastructure, boost economic growth and create jobs in Haiti, the winner of the Feb. 7 elections will first fly to Brazil to meet President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

He will then attend the inauguration ceremony of new Chilean President Michelle Bachelet before visiting President Nestor Kirchner in Argentina. Finally, Preval will head to the United States to meet President George W. Bush.

Preval, a 63-year-old agricultural economist, hopes for assistance and knowledge from Brazil to help Haiti rebuild its sugar and coffee industries, two sectors in which the largest South American country has had major successes. Haiti's agriculture has been ravaged by bad farming practices, exhausted earth and a lack of investment.

He will make a trip to the U.S. on March 27 and March 28, meeting with the President Bush, as well as officials from the Organization of American States, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations.

The tour is the second foreign trip Preval has made since winning the elections. At the end of last week he visited the Dominican Republic, the state which shares the island of Hispanola with Haiti.

Preval is due to take office on March 29, but there are signs that he might postpone his inauguration till the completion of the second round of legislative elections. Haiti's constitution prescribes that the inauguration must take place before a full parliament.

Rene Preval Visits Brazil
Prensa Latina
March 10, 2006

Port-au-Prince, Haitian President-elect Rene Preval's official visit to Brazil starts Friday with his counterpart Luis Inacio Lula da Silva.

Brazil is part of a South American tour including Chile and Argentina, to seek financial aid to rebuild his nations' deteriorated economy, foster job creation and examine bilateral cooperation.

"We will discuss ways for joint actions to develop and improve some sectors in Haiti," asserted Preval, whose agenda also includes talks on know-how to modernize sugar producing facilities.

Preval is slated to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chilean President-elect

Michelle Bachelet and meet with Argentine counterpart Nestor Kirchner.

Following election as president, he visited the Dominican Republic on March 2.

LETTER TO NEW YORK TIMES on HAITI

By: Hazel Ross-Robinson

The St. Kitts & Nevis Democrat

March 10, 2006

Dear Sir/Madame:

It is unethical for The New York Times to continue to write about how Aristide and Preval failed to deliver a better life to the Haitian people while you remain mum on the true cause of their impotence. I refer to the deadly and utterly amoral decision of "the world's leading democracies" to block \$500 million in APPROVED IDB loans for safe drinking water, literacy programs, and health care for the poorest nation in the western hemisphere between 2000 and 2004.

This crushing financial embargo was imposed simply and solely to destabilize the Aristide government. In the process, millions of already poor people were forced to endure unspeakable suffering. The New York Times has a professional obligation to reveal the facts behind this embargo and present, in unflinching detail, the human consequences of same.

Your long-standing lack of balance was, again, evident in your editorial, "Stumbling Forward in Haiti", where you urge Preval to rein in his opponents. However, you do not identify the wealthy Haitians, the February 29 troika (i.e., Canada, France, and the United States), and indeed the United Nations "peacekeepers" who, over the past two years, have been major perpetrators of violence against the Haitian people. You also do not urge them to rein in themselves in.

Most importantly, the New York Times must halt covering Haiti as though its "instability" is the result of "poor black people being unable to govern themselves. Foreign governments have combined with powerful political and economic interests - inside and outside of Haiti to perpetrate and instigate much of Haiti's tumult OVER THE CENTURIES. When The New York Times begins to factor this into its coverage and analysis, we will know that it has, at long last, begun to understand that the "nameless, faceless millions" that, for many, is Haiti, do indeed have a compelling human story that deserves to be told.

Sincerely,

Hazel Ross-Robinson

President elect of Haiti visits Brazil
Agencia Brasil
March 10, 2006

Brasília - Today the president elect of Haiti, René Préval, arrives in Brasilia for a short visit. Tomorrow he will travel to Chile together with president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for the Michelle Bachelet inauguration.

In Brasilia, Préval will visit the Brazilian Farm Research Corporation (Embrapa) and meet with members of the Foreign Relations and Defense Commission in the Senate.

Perval will be the guest of honor at a lunch at the Foreign Ministry. Following the lunch he will hold a press conference.

In the afternoon, Perval will visit an exposition on Latin America at the Banco do Brasil's Cultural Center.

Translation: Allen Bennett

Spain to pull out of Haiti
The Daily Journal, Venezuela
March 10, 2006

Port-au-Prince (AP) – Spain will pull out of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti despite a request that its forces stay until the country finishes the stalled electoral process, a U.N. official said Thursday.

Spain's 200 troops in northeast Haiti will be replaced in late March by Uruguayan soldiers who are already in the Caribbean nation, U.N. spokes-man David Wimhurst told reporters, calling the move "an internal political decision" by the Spanish government.

"Troop contributors do provide soldiers on a voluntary basis and they can withdraw them when they feel it's appropriate," Wimhurst said.

Haiti waits

BY REV. THOMAS WENSKI

Miami Herald

March 9, 2006

Twenty years have passed since the end of the Duvalier dictatorships, 15 years since Haiti saw its first truly democratic election. But today Haiti still awaits a functioning government. The Haitian proverb, *Ki mele pis grangou chen* -- What concern is it to the flea that the dog is hungry? -- accurately describes the failure of Haiti's political class to live up to the aspirations of the Haitian people for democracy. Hopefully, last month's presidential election signals the dawning of a new day.

In a display of courage that parallels the courage of the Iraqis in their recent elections, the Haitian people voted to elect a new president. They deserve our admiration. They have refused to give up -- either on themselves or on the promise of democracy. In spite of insecurity and other obstacles, there was a surprisingly substantial turnout; and, despite a few bumps along the road, a president was decisively elected.

Runoff for Parliament

If Haiti is to overcome two centuries of despotic misrule, a successful runoff election, scheduled later this month for members of Parliament's two houses, will be crucial.

The challenges ahead are enormous and will require the cooperation of all sectors of Haitian society.

The president, members of the legislature and the new prime minister when installed must immediately move to bring about significant and early improvements in Haitians' standard of living. This is best accomplished by seeking the active participation of political parties, the private sector, academia, the many vibrant organizations of civil society, the Haitian diaspora and Haiti's numerous friends throughout the world.

The Catholic Church in Haiti will continue to fulfill its mission of fostering unity, peace and reconciliation. Statements of Haitian bishops in recent years and the Holy Father's 2006 Lenten Message, which addresses development, offer sage counsel to those who wish to work so that Haiti can offer a better future to its citizens. "Those who act according to the logic of the Gospel," Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "live the faith as friendship with God Incarnate and, like Him, bear the burden of the material and spiritual needs of their neighbors."

Move legislation

The international community must increase its assistance and partner in the development of capacity for sustained economic growth and social transformation. As political stability, personal security and democratic practices and accountability are strengthened, the largely unemployed and underemployed Haitian workforce must be able to count on continued foreign and domestic investment to create employment opportunities. Specifically, the United States ought to help enable the apparel industry to thrive again. The U.S. Congress ought to act soon in moving stalled legislation that would grant meaningful trade preferences to Haiti and, thereby, create thousands of new jobs.

The people of Haiti have taken an important step forward in electing a president. Now the United States and the international community must take additional steps to accompany the Haitian people as they walk the long road to a future of democratic and economic revitalization.

Rev. Thomas Wenski is bishop of the archdiocese of Orlando and co-founder of the Church of Notre Dame d'Haiti in Miami.

Wyclef Jean brings hip-hop hope to Haiti

By Letta Tayler

Newsday S

March 9 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- "Yo! Back up!" Wyclef Jean, the Haitian-born hip-hop star, was shouting to a mob of Carnival revelers. "We can't be responsible for somebody being eaten by a lion!"

It was supposed to be the realization of Jean's childhood dream. Decked out as Haiti's revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines, complete with a tri-cornered hat, swashbuckler's boots, glittering sword and ruffled shirt, the former Fugees front man would ride a float in Haiti's biggest festival, a real lion at his side, capping a heroic return to his ravaged birthplace from his adopted homes of Brooklyn and New Jersey.

But the king of beasts wasn't having it.

Seven times a trainer tried and failed to coax Major, the 450-pound feline, from a truck into a display cage on the Carnival float. One foray was aborted after Major leapt into some bushes, dragging the trainer by the leash. Eventually, the float left without him.

Seemingly impossible dreams are nothing new to Jean. With the same vision - some would argue naiveté - that prompted him to try bringing a contrary lion onto a Carnival float, he is vowing to rebuild his broken country largely through the power of music, aided by Yéle Haiti, the nonprofit group he founded last year.

"Just when you think it's over, that's when the lightning and the thunder is going to come," vowed Jean, a Nazarene preacher's son. "You know what I'm saying? Maybe Haiti won't change in a dramatic way, but it will change. It already has."

"The wind is turning!"

Jean jumped on the float, grabbed a microphone and began to belt his pumping Carnival chant: "Van vire! Van vire!" (Haitian Creole for "The wind is turning! The wind is turning!") Then he rolled into the reveling throngs of Port-au-Prince.

For five days last week, Jean moved through Haiti at breakneck speed, rallying support from grassroots leaders, gang members and socialites in a country convulsed by lawlessness and divided by class and race.

But in the hours before Carnival, he was enjoying a rare quiet moment on the sweeping terrace of a luxury hotel perched high above the stifling capital. He wore camouflage pants and a Yéle Haiti T-shirt. His hair was braided in immaculate corn rows. A diamond-studded medallion of Christ's face dangled from his neck.

Far below him stretched the capital's squalid slums, including the notorious, gang-ruled shantytown of Cité Soleil. "Just to think that I went from there to here," he said, his voice incredulous, as a waiter in a white uniform served him pasta with julienne vegetables.

As a young boy, Jean lived in the rural counterpart to Cité Soleil, sharing a mud hut with five relatives in the dirt-poor town of Laserre in central Haiti. The hut had no running water or electricity.

"I rode a donkey to school. I never had more than two pairs of pants and one pair of shoes," Jean said. Sometimes, he added, he had no pants or shoes at all.

The tough Marlboro housing projects in East Bensonhurst, where he arrived from Haiti when he was 9 and spoke only Creole, seemed luxurious in contrast. "We got yellow cheese, government cheese. I thought I was rich - the white man be giving us cheese," Jean remembered. "And he was wearing a uniform!"

Worried that Jean was getting into trouble, his mother got him a guitar to keep him busy. The family moved when Jean was a teenager to East Orange, N.J. It was there that Jean helped form the Fugees - short for refugees - a band that sold more than 20 million records with its innovative, reggae-and-R&B-inflected hip-hop.

Now 36, Jean has millions of dollars, a lavish home in suburban New Jersey - he won't say where, wanting to protect his privacy - and is trying to give something back.

"Yéle Haiti is about making kids feel that no matter what, their dreams can come true," he said. "I stand up for them. The story of me is them."

"Yéle," the title of one of Jean's songs, is a cry for freedom in Creole. With a budget of \$1 million last year, mostly from a Haitian telecommunications company, Yéle Haiti rebuilds schools and provides scholarships and soccer programs to slum children. It also helps run a program to clear the mounds of garbage that pile up everywhere by paying legions of street cleaners.

Some skeptics say Yéle Haiti's programs are a drop in the bucket for this former French-ruled slave colony, where half the population is illiterate, more than two-thirds of the people live on less than \$2 a day, and more than 70 percent of the workforce is unemployed.

"These rich people come, they make big plans, and they go," said Jean Roland, 22, an unemployed construction worker, as he loitered on a filthy street corner in the capital. "We're left here with the same old mess."

Jean, Roland said, may be more interested in returning to Haiti to boost his own fame than to change Haiti.

But supporters say Jean is onto something far more intangible and powerful than cleaning a road or building a school: restoring hope and pride in a country that has lost much of both.

"He sends an important message to Haitians of similar humble origins, that he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth and if he can make it, they can," said Mamadou Mbaye, the Haiti director of the United Nations World Food Program.

And one of the best ways to make it, Jean tells this country, is through music.

For months, the World Food Program couldn't deliver food in Cité Soleil because shootouts between gang members and UN peacekeepers made it too dangerous to enter. But using his contacts in the Haitian hip-hop community, Jean last summer enlisted Cité Soleil rappers to persuade gang members to let local musicians truck in the food.

The shipments still are far too infrequent and some food still is being looted as it leaves the trucks. Still, said Mbaye, "Wyclef has opened doors for us. He can communicate with people in Cité Soleil to gain their trust. He walks the walk. He talks the talk."

Indeed, Jean has so much street cred that he has convinced aspiring young slum rappers to compete for the best jingle about such socially conscious topics as cleaning streets or protecting the environment. He plans to record the winning jingle for broadcast on Haitian radio and transport buses.

"Clean! Clean! If you want to build a better future, keep the country clean!" rapped a tough young performer named Mad Ass during an outdoor show for Jean in the impoverished neighborhood of Bel-Air.

"Pwop! Pwop!" ("Clean! Clean!") hundreds of spectators sang along, pumping their fists.

By returning to help his homeland after making it big - even skipping this year's Grammys and flying here on the red-eye to vote in last month's presidential elections - Jean also sends a powerful message to Haiti's tiny ruling class.

"He's a thorn in the backside of the elite, a pressure on them to help change their country," said Robert Duval, an influential industrialist-turned-philanthropist who runs a soccer program for slum youths with Yéle Haiti.

Jean draws a weary world's attention to Haiti the way that U2's Bono raised consciousness about developing nations' debt. It was Jean who wrapped himself in the Haitian flag when he went onstage in 1997 to accept the Fugees' two Grammys for their breakthrough album, "The Score." It was Jean who brought Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt here in January to urge the world to help this country. And it's Jean who constantly plugs his homeland's vibrant culture and gorgeous Caribbean beaches, exclaiming, "Haiti is the eighth wonder of the world."

Their life's work

Jean says his inspiration comes from his mother and father, who immigrated to the United States in the 1970s to escape the Duvalier dictatorship. (They took Jean up several years later.) The Jeans re-established their Nazarene church in their adopted country and made it their life's work to help Haitian refugees and orphans.

"My parents taught me that one of the reasons in making it was coming back to help," Jean said.

Sedeck Jean, a music producer and one of Wyclef's three siblings, said the Fugee also inherited their preacher-father's ability to connect. "Our dad was incredibly charismatic, and 'Clef is like that," he said. "When he gets into his work it's 159 percent."

So skillful is Jean at building social bridges, some Haitians wonder if he's angling to run for president. Jean roundly denies it. "What I want to do for Haiti is what Sammy Sosa did for the Dominican Republic or what Bob Marley did for Jamaica," he said.

Perhaps Jean realizes his dreams are too flamboyant for public office. One minute, he's talking about buying an island off Haiti's coast to build his version of the Atlantis Resort, a massive, manmade complex of waterfalls, lagoons and a casino in the Bahamas. The next minute, he says he'll donate two of his 36 antique cars to Port-au-Prince slums to remind kids that they can make it out of the ghetto - undeterred by the risk that people who must scrounge food and shelter might strip the vintage sheet metal for roofing material.

And no matter that the lion he flew in from Los Angeles didn't get on the Carnival float. Jean is already looking into bringing an entire circus to the tour the country next year.

"Ninety-seven percent of kids in Haiti have never seen a lion," Jean said. "We've got to change that. We've got to open kids' eyes, make them say, 'Wow.'"

Jean is equally unorthodox about his security.

When he cruised with a bunch of Haitian and Haitian-American musicians into Cité Soleil, a neighborhood where most Haitians fear to tread, his only protector was Beast, his bearded, 6-foot-8-inch bodyguard. But there were no guns in sight on this day, only throngs of fans chanting, "Van vire! Van vire!"

Indeed, the event became one big love fest as the ebony Jean appeared on an outdoor stage with Roberto Martino, the light-skinned, affluent leader of the Haitian pop group T-Vice.

"The color divisions must end!" Wyclef shouted through a bullhorn.

Onstage with them were Cité Soleil gang members who'd helped let in the food aid. "Wyclef's visit will change things in Cité Soleil," said a reputed gang leader named Ti Blanc. "The tension between the bourgeoisie and the poor will soon clear up."

Maybe, but not on this trip. At Jean's next stop in Cité Soleil, a soccer program funded by Yéle Haiti, Martino suddenly found some of the cheering spectators stripping him of his wallet, his sunglasses and his bandanna.

"They were even trying to steal my hair," Martino said after he fled into the bus.

A powerful performance

And when Jean left his float at the end of Carnival, hordes of people stormed it, carting off instruments and a laptop. The crowds also tried to let the lion loose. "I thought they were going to kill me," said the lion tamer. The looting followed one of the most powerful performances of Jean's career.

"Everyone who wants kidnapping to stop, raise your hands!" he hollered in Creole as he dove on and off the carnival float. Hands shot up among an estimated half-million revelers who'd packed streets and climbed trees, tombstones and rooftops to catch a glimpse of the superstar.

Crooning to the melody of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry," Jean sang an imaginary conversation with Haiti's President-elect René Préval, a darling of the poor.

I called Préval before the show and I said,

Dear President, the Haitian people need food.

Dear President, the Haitian people need jobs.

Dear President, the Haitian people need security.

Jean's band cranked up the tempo to a boisterous rah-rah, the rhythm of Carnival.

"And the president said," Jean bellowed, "Van vire! Van vire!"

Brazilian biodiesel project for Haiti

March 8, 2006

Spensy Pimentel

Reporter - Agência Brasil

Porto Alegre – Brazil's biodiesel project, which has been set up to use vegetable oils from crops grown on family farms as an additive, may be an important alternative for resolving some of the economic problems in Haiti. The declaration was made by the Haitian representative, Budry Bayard, at the 2nd Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development which is taking place this week in Porto Alegre. The event is sponsored by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization.

"We find the Brazilian biodiesel project attractive because it can resolve economic and environmental problems without cutting into food production," explained Bayard.

Haiti is a small, densely populated country (8 million people in 27,000 square kilometers) where people have been destroying forests to heat their food. Jose Graziano, an aide to the Brazilian president, says biodiesel could boost rural development in Haiti and reduce deforestation by providing an alternative energy source.

A Brazilian-led UN Stabilization Mission (Minustah) has been in Haiti since May 2004. Most people agree that it is not troops the country needs. Political stability will only come with development and economic stability. The Brazilian biodiesel project is an economic alternative which could work in Haiti and has also attracted interest in Morocco, Paraguay, the United States, Venezuela and Angola.

Translation: Allen Bennett

CentAm Summit Supports Haiti
Prensa Latina
March 9, 2006

Panama, The support to the democratic process in Haiti and its President-elect Rene Preval, together with a series of joint initiatives, were highlights of the Extraordinary Summit of the Central American Integration System (SICA).

The meeting was Thursday morning in Miraflores, Panama Canal, made progress in consolidating mechanisms of cooperation among the members of one of the poorest zones of the world.

SICA exhorted the multilateral and bilateral lending organisms to speed-up delivering resources committed to strengthen Haiti's physical and institutional infrastructure.

It also agreed with the Panamanian initiative to create a fund to eliminate malnutrition in children in the member countries, in a cooperative action with the World Food Program and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Another important topic was intensification of oceanic cargo and passenger transport development in the region and the connections with the Caribbean.

SICA wants to study technology to produce and biological fuel, mainly ethanol, with the supervision of Brazil.

Panamanian President Martin Torrijos, now pro tempore president of SICA and host, directed analyzation of documents adopted by Foreign Ministers and other officials two days ago.

Haiti: COHFEL - Promoting women's participation in the political process

Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

ReliefWeb

08 Mar 2006

Although they comprise 52% of the population, Haitian women continue to be under-represented as political party leaders and elected officials. In 2003, USAID through a grant to the International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted training seminars in the Dominican Republic to help sharpen women's political skills and increase their participation in the political process. As a result, the Coalition Haïtienne des Femmes Leaders (COHFEL) was created that July. COHFEL is a non-partisan platform of women leaders and party activists spanning the entire political spectrum and involved in several civil society organizations. Its main objective is to promote women's participation in the political process.

In preparation for the 2006 elections, COHFEL conducted a series of training workshops to increase women's participation in the political process through voting and running for office from July to December 2005. IRI international consultants held four seminars focusing on voter registration and outreach, public speaking, campaign techniques, and media campaign strategies. A two-day meeting in Cap Haitien trained women candidates and facilitated exchanges between them and former municipal and legislative candidate members of COHFEL.

Supporting women candidates for the 2006 elections, COHFEL joined forces with two other women's organizations (Femmes en Démocratie and Réseau des Femmes Candidates pour Gagner). Together, they facilitated the development and promotion of a common women's platform that focuses on four major issues: the fight against corruption; primary education; maternal health and children protection; and water and sanitation. With the assistance of IRI and the U.S. Embassy, this platform was published in French and Creole and distributed throughout the country to civil society organizations, political parties, private sector associations and government offices.

In December 2005, the program partnered with COHFEL to conduct eleven one-day voter education workshops for women leaders throughout the country. Over 1,000 women leaders of more than 200 women's organizations were involved in the activities. The workshops' themes highlight women's participation in the electoral process, voter responsibility, information about women candidates, and the common electoral platform.

COHFEL initiatives supported by USAID program have mobilized women to participate in politics, be active in the 2006 elections and develop strategies for women to assist female candidates. Three members of the COHFEL board of directors—Eveline Cheron of Lavalas, Marie Denise Claude of Fusion and Edmonde Beauzile of Fusion—will be running for the Senate in the second round. Twelve participants of COHFEL training workshop and programs that support women candidates will be run as Deputies in the second round. They all have campaigned on the women candidates' common electoral platform.

Following the 2006 elections, COHFEL will invite former candidates and elected municipal and legislative officials to join the Coalition. COHFEL will mobilize funds and technical assistance to train

women legislators in the drafting of legislation and the law making process. It will also conduct a public awareness campaign of the legislative process and legislation resulting from the training.

Haiti proves a trying mission
BY HURST LAVIANA
The Wichita Eagle
Wed, March 8, 2006

Six Wichita men arrived safely at Mid-Continent Airport on Tuesday night after a harrowing missionary trip to Haiti that was disrupted by an attack by armed, would-be kidnappers.

More than 100 people -- most from Wichita's Cornerstone Fellowship Missionary Church -- greeted the group with shouts, cheers and welcome-home signs after their flight touched down a few minutes behind schedule.

The men exchanged tearful hugs with friends and relatives. And with one notable exception -- a nasty cut on James Richards' forehead -- appeared to have come through the ordeal without physical scars. Richards, a machinist who went to Haiti primarily to work on a malfunctioning diesel engine, said he had no regrets about the trip.

"I just feel the peace of God was upon us and was trying to protect us," he said.

The missionaries went to Haiti to help fellow church members Summer and David Schoenhals feed and care for children in the impoverished nation.

The gunmen attacked as the Americans worked at a mission that was being used to help the children. Witnesses said David Schoenhals was shot three times during the attack but did not suffer life-threatening injuries. Richards was pistol-whipped before the attackers were warded off with rocks and stones.

Richards and Schoenhals were escorted to a local hospital by Haitian police.

Richards said the biggest lesson he learned from the ordeal involved forgiveness. He said he was praying for the salvation of the men who attacked him.

"I forgive them for what they did," he said.

Richards and Stuart Ortman, pastor of the church, both said they would likely return to Haiti if moved to do so by God.

Ortman said the coming-home airport celebration was entirely unexpected.

"This is more than we could ever imagine as far as a reception is concerned," he said. "We were hoping for a quiet, slip-in and sneak-home entrance."

Minnesotans help Haitians get clean, lifesaving water

By Trisha Volpe

KARE 11 News TV, Minnesota

March 9, 2006

While water is a commodity Minnesotans take for granted, this basic life necessity is in short supply in Haiti, a small country just a couple hundred miles south of the United States.

Haiti is an unstable country facing constant turmoil and political unrest. The people of Haiti are very poor - something that inspired one group of Minnesotans to help.

"There is no infrastructure in the country, roads, electricity, lack of clean sanitary conditions, lack of clean water to drink," says Chris Stone of Plymouth. "It just pulled at my heart strings to be honest with you."

Chris Stone, a member of the Buffalo Rotary, along with Doug Schmitt president of the City of Lakes Rotary Club, have seen the recent images from Haiti. But they didn't understand how dire the situation was until they went there themselves.

Chris and Doug recently spent ten days in Haiti - part of a group from Minnesota and Wisconsin working on a project organized by Rotary International, a service organization with branches around the world.

The project was to build something the people of Haiti need desperately.

"A third of the children die before the age of five in Haiti and a lot of it is related to water illnesses," says Stone.

Money from local rotary clubs has been used to build wells that provide fresh, clean water to entire communities.

"In this central plateau of Haiti, there's about 42,000 people affected by this," says Schmitt.

Chris and Doug were also affected as they toured one of the poorest nations in the world...and yet - saw hope.

"Water is basic to life and with this country being just a couple hours off of our border and being the poorest in the western hemisphere, it's really exciting to be able to go down there and just with a tiny amount of money be able to improve the lives of so many people," says Schmitt.

The well project is a collaboration between Rotary, World Vision and a group called Haiti Outreach.

They provide the money to build the wells - about \$8,000 each - but they don't actually build the wells.

These organizations hire locals so they can run and maintain the wells themselves.

To learn more about the well project and how to help, click here on Haiti Outreach

After February 7th: Haiti's Election 'Provides Space' to Poor Organizations

by Stuart Neatby

March 08, 2006

ZNet Magazine

The second anniversary of the coup of elected Haitian leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide occurred in the midst of la carnival, a popular yearly cultural festival. Tens of thousands of Haitians from neighbourhoods all over the capital came out for the celebration, which included a performance by Haitian hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean. Last year, the planned festival was all but cancelled in Port-au-Prince amid political demonstrations and violence by the Haitian National Police, who shot and killed three participants in a peaceful demonstration protesting Aristide's removal. This year, in the aftermath of the Rene Preval's landslide win in the February 7th Haitian elections, the climate is noticeably calmer, even within some of the poorest neighbourhoods.

On Thursday, March 2nd, hip-hop star Wyclef Jean lead a delegation of individuals from Yele Haiti, the public works NGO founded by the hip-hop icon, into Bel Air and Cite Soleil, two of the poorest urban slums in the capital of Port-au-Prince. The next morning, Le Matin, a paper owned by Haitian industrialist Reginal Boulos, featured a cover photo of Jean standing arm in arm with Evans and Amaral, two "gang leaders" according to the caption, in Cite Soleil. Many of the artists and musicians accompanying Wyclef into Cite Soleil called for a new spirit of "reunification" of Haiti, presumably within the "troubled" poor neighborhoods surrounding Haiti's capital.

Such optimism may seem somewhat premature, given the fact that on the same day as Wyclef's well-publicized visit, the Haitian Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) announced without explanation that the planned March 19th parliamentary elections would be postponed indefinitely. This announcement echoes the announcements of past delays of the Presidential election, which was delayed at least three times before it was held in a state of massive disorganization on February 7th. The tallying of the votes for this election took more than a full week, and culminated in an explosion of street protests by poor Haitians and supporters of Preval after burned and charred ballots bearing an "x" under Preval's name turned up in a dumpsite on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. The Provisional Electoral Council's tally of votes had reduced Preval's lead from its earlier tally of 61% to 48.7%, below the 50% required to avoid a run-off vote. Preval was declared President soon after by the CEP, under pressure from within and without as the international community began to recognize the fact that none of Preval's rivals, most of whom taken from Haiti's wealthy elite, had garnered anywhere near the electoral support that he had.

Still, almost one month after the election, it is clear that Haiti is entering a new phase. The previous phase, which began after Aristide's removal by Canadian, US, and French military forces, was characterized by widespread attacks, massacres, imprisonment and human rights abuses perpetrated against the poorest sectors of Haitian society by the Haitian National Police, whose training programs are commanded by Canadian personnel, and by UN forces. Journalists visiting poor neighborhoods following raids by the United Nations Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) forces have reported that UN forces have on several occasions fired upon schools and hospitals, and have killed civilians in large numbers.

Cite Soleil was markedly different than it had been a month ago, our translator noted as we visited this community yesterday. The formerly deserted Rte National #1 highway was notably busy with traffic, and a nearby market place bustled with activity, even under the watchful eye (and cannon) of a nearby MINUSTAH Armored Personnel Carrier.

The situation has become calmer in Bel Air as well, according to Samba Boukman, a grassroots leader within the community. Boukman was optimistic that the February 7th elections would “provide space” for the efforts of popular organizations.

“Our vote on February 7th was for the release of political prisoners, for real reconciliation, through a national dialogue of the people,” Boukman told us.

“We want [UN Secretary-General] Kofi Annan to hear the cry of all the people in the poor neighbourhoods for a general amnesty for everyone in the country to facilitate a clear and real stability, to create a real dynamism of dialogue.”

A call for a general amnesty from Boukman contains a generosity of spirit, as it implies that those responsible for crimes against the poor communities would not be prosecuted by the new government. Boukman provided testimony and documentation of one such crime investigators with the Harvard School of Law. On November 10th 2004, seven Bel Air residents were shot and killed by the Haitian National Police during a peaceful demonstration. MINUSTAH forces reportedly watched as this shooting took place, but did not intervene. Three more of those who were arrested during the demonstration later turned up dead in a dump outside of the capital, according to the report.

Boukman sees this as a pragmatic recognition of the level of impunity that has existed in Haiti for government members who have committed crimes against the poor. He stressed that the purpose of such an amnesty would be to give the same protection to political prisoners from the poor neighbourhoods and popular movements. Boukman himself, as well as many other grassroots leaders in poor neighbourhoods, are still listed on wanted lists by MINUSTAH forces, and have been painted as ‘chimeres’ or ‘gang leaders’ by Haiti’s elite-owned media. Over 1000 political prisoners remain in Haiti’s jails.

Yet it seems that the issue of a general amnesty is a sensitive topic for some leaders of popular organizations of the poor in Haiti.

“You cannot have dialogue with the ones who killed your relatives, with the ones that killed your friends” said William Batiste, the spokesman for the Movement for the Survival of Cite Soleil a grassroots organization based in the poor neighbourhood. “First there should be a call for justice and compensation in the country, and then a dialogue process should start.”

In the lead-up to the election, Cite Soleil experienced the most brutal attacks and raids of any neighborhood by the Haitian National Police, and later by MINUSTAH itself. Such attacks occurred after pressure from organizations of Haiti’s wealthy elite called for a larger crackdown upon such “gang” neighborhoods.

The results of such pressure were still evident on Friday.

“It was on school hours when the operation started,” said Claudy Guillaume, the owner of a building which housed a small primary school near the entrance of the community. “Some of the children lay down and some of them escaped out the back door.”

Other residents claim that they were given advance warning of the raid before it occurred. The small classroom was riddled with bullet holes in the chalkboard and back walls. Guillaume claimed that the shots had been fired during a raid carried out by Jordanian soldiers from MINUSTAH on Dec 17, 2005. Residents told us that no one had been injured during the raid, but buildings and houses along the highway were littered with holes from automatic gunfire, as well as high caliber artillery. As we filmed some of the damage from a second story building, a UN APC rumbled past.

“The students will not come back,” explained Germain Jean Phillippe, the principal of another primary and secondary school nearby that had been fired upon. He explained that the students were afraid to return. He had approached MINUSTAH, but had received no compensation as a result of the damage.

Even now, residents of both Bel Air and Cite Soleil claim that they still experience intimidation by UN forces, one month after the elections. Batiste claimed that Brazilian MINUSTAH troops were still regularly firing upon the neighborhood of Pele, which adjoins Cite Soleil. One Cite Soleil resident claimed that MINUSTAH forces had inexplicably begun firing upon the community last Sunday, while another resident of Bel Air told us that MINUSTAH forces continued to harass residents and confiscate property.

Even so, it is clear that the political climate has relaxed somewhat in Haiti since the February 7th elections, so much so that we were able to photograph both Boukman and Batiste, who previously had not allowed journalists to take their picture for fear of arrest. Still, the issue of social exclusion for the poor underscores what is likely to be a deep barrier for any form of national reconciliation.

Haiti is emerging from two lost years in terms of social development. Few new social programs have been implemented by the US, Canadian, and France-imposed Interim Government of Haiti. By contrast, during the Presidency of Aristide, several programs and initiatives were implemented particularly in the areas of education. The years of 2000-2004 witnessed the construction of hundreds of new primary schools throughout the country, the establishment of thousands of alpha-resto community literacy and meal programs for adults, and the founding of Haiti’s largest medical school, the Universite Fondation Aristide. Now, after two years of an unelected government buttressed by the UN and the international community, the alpha-resto programs have disappeared, primary and secondary schools are so strapped for funds that they are turning away poor children in greater numbers, and the Universite Fondation Aristide has been occupied and turned into a military base for MINUSTAH forces. More than half of the population remains illiterate.

Back in Bel Air, Samba Boukman recognizes the costs which have come about with the loss of these educational programs for the poor. He estimated that since the 2004 coup, education has been operating at 10% of its capacity in the poor neighbourhoods. In order to fill some of these social gaps, he and other volunteers have begun a feeding program for street youth called Zakat Zanfan. But Boukman was quick to recognize the lack of basic educational services that have been offered in his community.

“The only program that the [interim] government has been involved in has been to come and kill people in poor neighborhoods,” he said.

State Department: Human Rights Abuses Continued in Latin America
By VOA News
08 March 2006

The State Department report says political harassment, arbitrary arrests, killings, and other human rights abuses continued in Latin America last year.

It blamed all sides in Colombia's long-running war - government forces, paramilitaries and leftist rebels - for human rights violations, but said the majority of those abuses were committed by illegal armed groups.

In Cuba, it said problems included harassment of political opponents, arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights advocates, denial of fair trial, and severe limitations on freedom of speech, the press and movement.

In Haiti, it blamed the national police for disappearances and arbitrary killings. It said corruption was widespread in all branches of government, and internal trafficking of children and child domestic labor was a problem.

In Venezuela, it cited unlawful killings of criminal suspects, torture and abuse of detainees, as well as official intimidation on the media, political opposition and human rights groups.

The report said other problems in Venezuela included illegal wiretapping and searches of private homes and businesses, and widespread corruption in all levels of government.

It said Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador faced problems of human trafficking, harsh prison conditions and arbitrary arrest and detention.

Opinion
Letters to the Editor (Long Island Edition)
Newsday
March 7, 2006

The United States holds far greater responsibility for the destruction of Haiti than your editorial acknowledged ["Haiti: no easy answers," Editorial, Feb. 27]. Dictators have come and gone in Haitian history. But about 50 years ago, François "Papa Doc" Duvalier made himself and his 19-year-old son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" presidents-for-life, with the support of three consecutive U.S. administrations.

That was during the Cold War, and the Duvaliers and their police state were seen as bulwarks against communism.

As recently as the 1960s, when I was growing up, Haiti was able to feed itself. Haiti had a relatively backward but self-sustaining economy. But by the mid-1970s, the U.S. Agency for International Development ruled that it was counterproductive for Haiti to grow its own foodstuffs when it could buy them from the United States.

Haiti's advantages, it was decided, were in tourism, the production of cash crops for the U.S. market, and its cheap labor force. Hundreds of thousands of peasants migrated to Port-au-Prince and other cities, looking for work in the textile free-trade zones. But by then Haiti was no longer competitive in that market, due to political instability.

Some Haitians would argue that the United States has already done enough harm. A massive influx of economic investment or aid is unlikely as you say, and another military occupation is, frankly, unadvisable. So why not un-shoulder the "white man's burden," and let Haitians decide their own destiny for a change? Not in isolation, but with the help and goodwill of many nations, including the United States, Haiti can regain the self-sufficiency it lost in the last few decades.

Daniel Simidor

Editor's note: The writer is a Haitian community activist.

Brooklyn

Church Schedules Speaker, Lenten Meal
VoicesNews.com
03/08/2006

OXFORD-SEYMOUR - Maryse Adonis will speak on the needs of Haitians in the Dominican Republic at an ecumenical Lenten meal at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 5, at Great Hill United Methodist Church.

Ms. Adonis became involved in this project after visiting the Dominican Republic on vacation. There she saw Haitian immigrant children living in mud houses and villagers without access to medical attention.

Many families considered "well off" by Haitian standards were working in sugar cane fields and living on \$4 a week.

Because Haitian immigrants are not recognized as citizens in the Dominican Republic, they do not receive government vouchers to visit a doctor or even receive basic medication.

Ms. Adonis took it upon herself to organize and fund a volunteer mission at one of the bateyes (shantytowns) to help raise the standard for living and medical conditions.

The bateyes are located in the sugar cane fields where the cane cutters and their families live.

Ms Adonis has been enlisting the help of drugstores, churches, the medical community and other potential volunteers to donate time, effort and money to those living in poverty.

A native of Haiti, she has worked with the Connecticut Haitian Organization to make her volunteer mission, the Dominican Republic Health Care Fair, a reality.

Top official for elections back in Haiti

By Stevenson Jacobs

AP

Miami Herald

March 7, 2006

The leader of Haiti's embattled electoral council has returned to the country after fleeing because of threats against him.

PORT-AU-PRINCE - A top election official who fled the country under threat has returned to help organize a legislative runoff needed to form a new government, Haiti's electoral council said Monday. Jacques Bernard, director-general of the embattled electoral council, arrived in the capital, Port-au-Prince, on Sunday to resume his duties, two weeks after he left for the United States, the council's secretary-general, Rosemand Pradel, told reporters.

Bernard fled after opponents ransacked his farm and diplomats warned that gang members planned to ambush his car as he left the vote tabulation center.

The threats came amid complaints about the tabulation of results from the Feb. 7 presidential election won by René Prével, a former president.

Bernard was appointed in November to bring order to a council plagued by organizational problems and infighting. Attempts to reach him for comment Monday were unsuccessful.

Bernard will help prepare for a legislative runoff that had been scheduled for March 19 until officials said it would be delayed because of street protests that have slowed planning. Officials will announce a new election date shortly, Pradel said.

The delay means Prével's scheduled March 29 inauguration will also be postponed since he cannot take power without a sitting parliament.

Prével, who won four times as many votes as his nearest rival, was declared the victor after the electoral council divided thousands of blank ballots among the 33 candidates proportionally according to the votes they had received. That gave Prével the 51 percent he needed to avoid a runoff.

Before the decision, Prével supporters flooded the streets and accused Bernard of trying to manipulate the vote count to deny Prével a first-round victory -- a charge Bernard denies.

Two council members have also denounced Bernard, accusing him of "megalomania" and of excluding them from important decisions.

The patience of a people abused
by Stuart Neatby
San Francisco Bay View
March 8, 2006

Haitians, afraid the Provisional Election Commission was about to deny René Préval the victory their votes had given him, on Feb. 12 stormed the upscale Hotel Montana, where the commission was headquartered, to demand justice, shouting, "Préval is president!" Neither the U.N. nor hotel security could hold them back.

We are driving in a sea of people walking on both sides of the road, everyone maneuvering and dodging, women balancing loads on their heads, all managing to barely avoid our SUV, but it happens so constantly, that one could consider it a kind of system. The skill level is breathtaking. Our driver and guide, Marc Orel, is complementing the other drivers' and pedestrians' moves with constant turns of the wheel. We are at the edge of our seats much of the time.

Haitians have to get along, sharing roads and facilities that leave so much to be desired that our North American complaints about potholes seems fussy in the extreme. At least we have pavement in which to have potholes. In Haiti - within the capital Port-au-Prince even - you have many roads that have the quality of a riverbed, and steeply climbing the mountainside at that.

The large majority of people are navigating through physical conditions in their day that we cannot quite fathom. What one can see of it in the streets, like the traffic - just getting from here to there - and the patience it requires, is a metaphor of the political struggle to get from rule by wealthy elites and their foreign masters to democratic standards.

The current situation, after the election of President René Préval, is an opportunity for that - once again. Haitians had a long "education" in the multitude of experiences of political manipulation over the last decades.

The poor majority is struggling with literacy, still, but they are experts in the real world of political power. That is why they so forcefully claimed their victory after electing René Préval - without violence, it is important to note!

Having had control of the capital at the end of a long week of waiting for election results, they showed amazing restraint and unity in their determination to get what they bargained for. They had already determined their choice with Jean-Bertrand Aristide, twice before, but were cheated out of the fruits of their labor.

Given that backdrop, it is truly a great people that can behave so peacefully. A few hours of poolside R+R at the upscale Hotel Montana, the headquarters of the Provisional Election Commission, known as the CEP, was all they took, as far as "loot" goes. No hostages, no burning, no killing. Downright baffling, if one is steeped in the mainstream media's violent and negative terms of reference for the supporters of constitutional democracy during the two years since Aristide's forced removal.

Now the new democracy is in a position where Haiti's elite, as represented by Group 184 and others in the opposition to Lavalas, Aristide's party - and now also to Préval's Lespwa party - is sawing away at Préval's legitimacy by complaining about both violence and a "negotiated" presidency. As the Kingston, Jamaica, based writer John Maxwell so aptly put it: "They are giving him a basket to carry water!"

This is in concert with the Washington cabal, the masters of all the actions, covert and flagrantly obvious alike, which led to the late February 2004 violence, termed a "popular uprising" by Western media, in total ignorance of the facts. And again, the battle is on for the opinions of citizens of the Western countries which have interfered in Haitian affairs for so long, primarily the United States, but now very importantly also Canada.

It is perhaps a treacherous relaxation of the tension in Haiti, but Haitian leaders like Samba Boukman and William Batiste, in the slums of Bel Air and Cité Soleil, are expressing goodwill for dialogue and reconciliation, but with a clear intent to see some form of justice. Most importantly, an equal form of justice, from high up to the bottom of the ladder. The patience and will to have peace and a better country for all Haitians is in the air around the poor areas of Port-au-Prince.

As we careen through the sun-drenched, dusty streets, the density of people and market vendors increases, and the stench of raw sewage is everywhere. Garbage is lying in heaps in random places, often in the street. Little rivers of grey colored waste run down a gutter at the feet of the people sitting along the road, and the kids are playing all around in bare feet.

The rough houses and shacks form infinitely complex mazes of entrance alleys, stairs and doorways, reaching deep into the blocks. The exhaust fumes belched from all manner of laboring trucks and cars fill the area, as in most parts of the city, but seemingly worse.

We are now in Bel Air, one of the poor sections of the city.

Contact Stuart Neatby at (902) 405-9480 or stu.neatby@gmail.com and visit <http://haiti.nspirig.org>.

Election chief returns to Haiti for legislative runoff

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Haiti election woes may delay legislative runoff

CNN.com

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) -- A top election official who fled Haiti under threat has returned to help organize a legislative runoff needed to form a new government.

Jacques Bernard, director general of the embattled electoral council, arrived in the capital of Port-au-Prince on Sunday to resume his duties, two weeks after he left for the United States, the council's secretary-general, Rosemand Pradel, told reporters.

Bernard fled after opponents ransacked his farm and diplomats warned that gang members planned to ambush his car as he left the vote tabulation center.

The threats came amid complaints about the tabulation of results from the February 7 elections won by President-elect Rene Preval, a former president.

Bernard will help prepare for a legislative runoff that had been scheduled for March 19 until officials said it would be delayed because of street protests that have slowed planning.

Officials will announce a new election date shortly, Pradel said.

Cite Soleil: Ballots & Bullets in Haiti (The Independent)

By Andrew Stern

NYC IndyMedia

March 5, 2006

As the Feb. 7 elections approached, the situation in Cité Soleil changed markedly. Gone were the young men toting automatic weapons and the gunfire. Instead, militants started donning tee shirts and organizing rallies to support the presidential campaign of former Aristide ally Rene Preval.

Located on the edge of Haiti's capitol city of Port-au-Prince, Cité Soleil is a vast neighborhood of crumbling tin shacks and endless heaps of rotting garbage mired in the most desperate poverty.

When I first visited in January, the air was always thick with the sound of machinegun fire exchanged between U.N. "peacekeepers" and armed local residents, who support Jean-Bertrand Aristide. A former priest-turned-president, Aristide was deposed and forced into exile by a U.S.-backed coup in February 2004.

As the Feb. 7 elections approached, the situation in Cité Soleil changed markedly. Gone were the young men toting automatic weapons and the gunfire. Instead, militants started donning tee shirts and organizing rallies to support the presidential campaign of former Aristide ally Rene Preval.

Despite many apparent attempts to disenfranchise the population of Cité Soleil from voting, — all voting centers were removed from Cité Soleil, forcing people to walk down the most dangerous road in Port-au-Prince in order to vote — on election day people showed up in droves to cast their ballots.

For Cité Soleil's 200,000 plus residents, participating in the vote was regarded as a matter of life and death. They knew that the election of rightwing business candidate Charles Henri Baker would likely result in a massacre; whereas the election of Preval was expected to bring the development of schools, hospitals and housing.

On Election Day, I arrived at daybreak at the one of the voting centers on the far outskirts of Cité Soleil, to find that thousands of people had already been standing in line for hours. All day long, people rallied and danced through the streets carrying tree branches — the symbol of Preval's Lespwa (or, "Hope") Party — demanding the right to vote.

I watched the incredible passion of people fighting their way through the massive and chaotic line to have their voice heard in the election. In the face of considerable discouragement and obstacles, Cité Soleil residents persevered — and their efforts paid off in the successful election of their candidate. I can only hope that the strength and hope of the people of Cité Soleil is not forgotten by President Preval in the years to come.

Queen Elizabeth praises Brazilian participation in Haiti's mission

Carolina Pimentel

Reporter - Agencia Brasil

March 8, 2006

London – The first day of the State Visit Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is paying to the United Kingdom ended with a State dinner in his honor, offered by Queen Elizabeth II, at Buckingham Palace, official residence of the British royal family.

In her speech, the Queen referred to Brazil as a world "key emerging power". "There is no doubt that during the past few years Brazil's development has caught the world's attention and admiration."

Elizabeth II praised the work of Brazilian soldiers at the United Nations peace mission in Haiti. "It is no surprise therefore that the United Kingdom and Brazil are working increasingly closely on the international stage, including at the United Nations, in areas such as tackling poverty and combating climate change, to the benefit of all of our citizens," said the Queen.

She also mentioned the interest of Brazilian youth to study and work in the UK. "There is no doubt that Brazilian culture is playing an increasingly lively role in Britain. There is growing interest and appreciation, not just in your music and literature, but also your cinema, fashion and food."

Translation: Andréa Alves

U.N., Canada Sign Pact To Fund Reform of Haiti's Justice System
Agreement adds to U.S. effort to provide equal access to justice in Haiti
By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer
US State Department
March 7, 2006

Washington -- The United Nations and Canada have signed a new funding agreement with Haiti that adds to the U.S. government's efforts to reform the Caribbean nation's justice system.

In a March 7 statement, the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) said the main aim of the agreement is to establish a program that provides all people in Haiti with equitable access to the country's justice system.

The program is funded for an initial period of three years, and will include activities in the areas of institution strengthening, reinforcement of case-management procedures, the prison system, legislative reforms and training, said the UNDP.

Olivier Ranaivondrambola, the UNDP's deputy special resident representative in Haiti, who signed the funding agreement, said the new pact seeks "to establish the essential conditions for the people of Haiti to be able to enjoy the benefits of a justice system that is professional, observant of the law, and capable of promoting a greater awareness in people of their rights and obligations."

Canada's ambassador to Haiti, Claude Boucher, added that in the context of the February 7 elections in Haiti, which he said were designed to restore "genuine" democracy to the country, "it is essential to re-establish a justice system capable of encouraging the resolution of conflicts -- and reducing, in the very short term, the grave problems which arise from a non-functioning judicial apparatus."

The United States has been deeply involved in the international effort to build a criminal justice system in Haiti.

The U.S. State Department's Jonathan Farrar said in May 2005 U.S. congressional testimony that the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have developed an overall strategy for justice-sector reform in Haiti and "are working together to move forward in this difficult task." (See related article.)

Farrar, then speaking as the deputy assistant secretary of state for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, said USAID is leading a justice reform program in Haiti aimed at developing a functioning judiciary that includes prosecutors and judges, but that it "would be difficult to overstate the challenges that this reform effort faces."

Farrar, whose current position is principal deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, said "all three pillars" of Haiti's criminal justice system (police, judicial sector, and prisons) "are in desperate need of reconstruction."

The United States and other members of an international donors group for Haiti welcomed the February 7 election of René Préval as Haiti's president and expressed their commitment to work with the Caribbean nation's new leaders.

Some \$780 million of donor support from the international community has been disbursed to Haiti, as of the end of 2005. The United States has disbursed \$277 million of that total amount. (See related article.)

The UNDP's Ranaivondrambola said the new funding agreement is intended to make the justice system in Haiti more independent, effective, transparent and accessible to the Haitian people.

"Improving the justice system will undoubtedly have the effect of enhancing the Haitian people's trust in this important institution, and thereby stimulating their interest in playing an active part in the processes of reform and strategies for sustainable development," said Ranaivondrambola.

Floodwater Gone but Fear Remains in Haiti's Gonaives

By Jim Loney

Reuters

March 7, 2006

GONAIVES - Along the banks of Haiti's now bone-dry La Quinte river, tiny concrete-block homes have replaced mud huts swept away by Tropical Storm Jeanne's floods 17 months ago. But the memories and the fears remain.

"The water was so high it killed some people over by the mango tree," said Rosemene Ulysee Assad, who lives about 50 yards (46 metres) from the La Quinte riverbed. "It was up to the top of the house and we were all in the tree, 10 or 15 people in the tree."

More than 3,000 people died in and around Haiti's third-largest city, Gonaives, when Jeanne's rains swelled rivers and sent torrents of mud from barren hillsides into the streets. Just four months after another flood in southern Haiti also killed nearly 3,000, Jeanne overwhelmed the impoverished Caribbean country.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other humanitarian groups launched appeals for money to feed tens of thousands in one of the world's poorest countries. Aid workers descended on Gonaives to pull the city from the mud.

Since the September 2004 disaster, CARE and other groups have cleared 64,000 cubic yards of debris from the streets and built or rehabilitated more than 6 miles (10 km) of canals in the vulnerable city of 200,000, officials said.

Still, Assad and her neighbours fear a repeat. More work needs to be done on the city's defences, and residents hope that the Feb. 7 election of President Rene Preval will bring political stability and increase the flow of aid money.

"Every time it rains, these people get out of their houses and move away from the river," said Jouthe Joseph, a regional administrator for CARE.

Gonaives, a tough port city only 100 miles (160 km) north of Haiti's capital but four bone-jarring hours along a rocky, cratered national highway, was the birthplace of the bloody revolt that forced ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide out of the National Palace in February 2004.

WATER TO THE ROOFS

Just seven months after the rebellion, Jeanne compounded Haiti's misery. Although it swept north of Hispaniola, the Caribbean island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the storm's heavy rains saturated vulnerable hillsides cleared of trees by impoverished Haitians desperate for cooking fuel.

Mudslides swamped Gonaives and surrounding towns. At the two-storey Chachou Hotel in the centre of the city, water reached the roof.

Corn, bananas, beans and other crops were wiped out, leaving farmers without food or seed.

The poverty that stalks the vast majority of Haitians - average annual income is about \$390 - reached crisis proportions. Aid groups scrambled to feed tens of thousands of homeless Gonaives residents.

The city's dust-choked streets have long been cleared of the mud and the emergency feeding programmes have wound down. But the pain of the flood lingers.

"Life will never be back to normal because I don't have any place to live and we lost everything," said Assad, 34, as she breast-fed her 3-month-old daughter, Ludina. "Before we used to live day by day, but now it's worse. I don't know where to get food for the children."

Assad's mud hut was no match for the floods. She had to move her eight children into her mother's home nearby, which they share with six relatives.

On the banks of the La Quinte, many of the tiny houses have walls constructed of hard-packed mud fortified by sticks. With no electricity or running water, residents use candles or oil lamps at night and carry water in buckets from streams.

Aid organisations built about 50 4.3-6.5-yard (4-by-6 metre) concrete-block buildings, at a cost of about \$1,000 each, to replace some of the destroyed mud homes. Scattered along the riverbank, they are jokingly referred to as "Cite Jeanne."

But the contractors told residents not to stay inside the simple structures during high winds, Joseph said.

A \$22 million programme funded by the US Agency for International Development paid for a revamped canal system designed to help save Gonaives from a repeat of Jeanne. Along a stretch of the La Quinte near Assad's home, workers spent five months meticulously building 260 feet (80 metres) of sturdy riverbank by piling rock, four tiers high, behind wire mesh.

Tons of garbage - along with the bodies of some lost storm victims - were scooped from canals that had not been cleaned in 20 years. The debris was a critical factor in the flood.

"It's better now. I have seen how the canals react in a heavy rain," Joseph said. "If Jeanne came back, it would be better but we would still have problems."

Donor nations pledged \$1.3 billion to Haiti after Aristide's departure but only about 45 percent has been disbursed. Joseph said Gonaives needs another \$22 million to complete the canal work. Residents have pleaded with CARE to return to finish the job.

"We don't feel safe, even with all the work done on the river. We had some rain but not as much rain as Jeanne," said Dorilien Liberis, a wiry farmer who at 54 has already surpassed Haiti's life expectancy of 53, the lowest in the Americas.

"But this is the only land we have, so we have no choice. We have to stay. We have nowhere to go."

Young Photographers Lift their Masks

Amy Bracken

Inter Press Service News Agency

March 8, 2006

JACMEL, Haiti - For a moment, it could have been lower Manhattan. Edgy photos hung on bright white walls inside an old brick warehouse. Men and women from around the globe stood captivated by black-and-white images of monsters and people.

In one of the 16-by-20-inch prints, a boy lies on the beach with opaque waves lapping over his limbs, as sinewy male figures in the ocean twist and turn, apparently washing off body paint with the silted water.

In another, a wiry man with a face lost in shadow leans in to the photographer as a child in the background pauses at a door, staring intently at the camera. The two figures trap the viewer in an eerie apprehension.

The exhibit's images, including those of Carnival costumes and children holding hands, are undeniably dark and disturbing, with dizzying angles, creeping shadows, and daggers of light.

But this is not the work of a New York professional. Behind the cameras were people who know nothing of wealthy cities or galleries or what it would be like to be successful artists. They are 12 Haitian domestic child labourers. Known as restaveks, from the French for "stay with", they are children whose parents, too poor to keep them, sent them to work for other families in exchange for food and shelter.

Most of Haiti's estimated 200,000 restaveks are abused -- many sexually -- and they often wind up on the streets. They are among the most ill-fated citizens of one of the poorest countries in the world, which is why they were chosen to participate in a photography workshop.

In 2004, the founder of Kids With Cameras, a non-profit organisation that teaches photography to some of the most marginalised children around the world, convinced New York-based photographer Gigi Cohen to start her own workshop. She had already been documenting child labour in Haiti and decided to work with children at Foyer Maurice Sixto, a community centre for restaveks on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.

Over two months, the 11 girls and one boy, between 10 and 14 years old, learned the principles of photography, and took cheap, plastic Holga cameras home with them to capture their lives. Toward the end, in February 2005, they took their first trip to the southern town of Jacmel to see and capture Haiti's most traditional Carnival, known for its street bands and elaborate papier mache costumes.

In all, the children took more than 5,000 pictures. With help from the Fledgling Fund, whose Creative Media Initiative supports projects that creatively address social problems, as well as Kids With

Cameras, Cohen printed 60 of those photos for an exhibit at the Jacmel art foundation, Fondation Sant D'A Jackmel (FOSAJ), to open during Carnival 2006.

During the opening, children in body paint and masks shuffled by outside FOSAJ's giant open doors. Others ducked into papier mache costumes in the building's courtyard, and, to the beat of drums, a swirl of zebras, an orange parrot, a pink pineapple, and other animals and fruit, they stomped and flapped through the gallery.

The eight photographers -- four were unable to make it to the opening -- swarmed around, the girls all wearing summer dresses donated by a New York friend of Cohen's.

All had been stunned upon their arrival in Jacmel to see their own giant images on display.

"I feel proud of myself," said Kettelene Metelus, a tall, slender 14-year-old, flashing a broad smile. She said she hopes to continue to study photography somehow. "I want to know how to make my photos more beautiful." She had taken the picture of the boy at the ocean's edge.

Upon arrival, Cohen had gone through the prints with the children, asking them to critique their own pieces. For some, she said, they had no idea how to describe what they saw. But some were quick to say how much they liked their own work. One was Jerome Rigaud, the only boy.

"I'm really happy to see the photos we did," he said during the opening. "They're beautiful." He repeated several times how happy he was and how beautiful the images were.

All of Rigaud's pictures on display were of Carnival monsters galumphing toward him. For his self-portrait, required of all the artists, he had held the camera up toward the midday sun, casting a long shadow behind him as he winced under the oppressive light.

He said he wanted to be a photographer when he grew up. Short of that, he just wanted to work, and he wanted to be able to leave his current home, where he said he is tied up and beaten.

To Patrick Bernard, a social worker and assistant director of Maurice Sixto, the workshop pumped life into children too often made to feel like shells of human beings. "I think the photography project helped de-zombify the children because children in domesticity aren't treated as people," he said.

Cohen entitled the exhibit "Haiti Unmasked", and she described the project as a way to make overlooked children visible to themselves and to others.

"The first part of the workshop was to empower them through self-expression," she said, "to help them go from always feeling under-appreciated to having self-worth."

Cohen said she hoped an effect of the exhibit itself would be to send a message to adults. "The idea is: Given an opportunity, these kids can do incredible things," she said. "It's partly about adults learning... How can we treat our children in a way that doesn't make them invisible?"

Cohen said she could see from people's reactions to the exhibit that there is a lot to be learned. She said viewers often expressed a belief that Cohen was the real artist, the one responsible for the outcome of the works through darkroom manipulation. Others belittled the significance of the photos by saying it was by accident that they had turned out well.

Cohen called these reactions "defence mechanisms" for those not ready to really see the children. She said she appreciates these comments as part of an important dialogue, but she hopes it will ultimately be a learning experience.

To Cohen, positive feedback is essential. "If children aren't encouraged when they do amazing things and are instead disregardedà [we] are creating adults that are incapable of trusting their own ability. Why not instead praise the child, encourage them, support them and respect them?"

"That way that child will grow up to be self-confident, be secure in his or her choices and believe in his or her own intelligence. After all, as adults in any society it's our responsibility to pass on the best of ourselves to the next generation."

After a month in Jacmel, Boucard said he hopes to take the show to Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince and to other cities around the country. He and Cohen have also discussed not selling the photos (Cohen said she does not want to become the kids' agent) but providing prints in exchange for donations to education funds for them.

Bernard said the impact of the project on the children has been enormous, and he hopes it can continue in some way.

If the children could continue with photography, Bernard said, they could become professionals and therefore have a future independent of their host families. "If tomorrow they can have some money to live," he said, "I think that's all that's needed."

It is time for the release of all political prisoners
An open letter from Father Gérard Jean-Juste
San Francisco Bay View
March 8, 2006

Greetings, my dear sisters and brothers:

I am very happy that the people of Haiti overcame all the many obstacles and elected a new government. That was my prayer. The two years of illegal de facto government and their supporters have been rejected.

Now it is time for the international community, especially the U.S., France and Canada, to respect us and never again interfere with our democracy. There should be no more coups d'état. Give Haiti a chance to be stable and be developed so it can meet basic needs to the people.

It is time for the release of all political prisoners. Though I will be in the hospital, I will never stop working and praying for the release of all the other political prisoners in Haiti and around the world.

To my friends, I say, with your help I passed through a little crack in the freedom door, but we have to have it wide open for the other political prisoners! This is a new day for solidarity. This is a new day for justice. I would like that we put pressure on and allow them to be free. The sooner the better.

For me, this week is a decisive one. I now face the chemo treatment. I am hospitalized Monday. I rely on the prayers of every friend.

The doctor saw me Wednesday and thought I am in good shape for the treatment. They say I have chronic lymphocytic leukemia. The doctor asked me to choose between the week of the 6th or the week of 13th of March to start my treatment. I chose the one that will bring me faster to Haiti.

I have been in and out of the hospital. Doctors worked on my pneumonia and did surgery on my neck. The weeks of tests and in and out of the hospital flow by quickly.

I welcome people whenever I can. My friends keep me busy with visits, writing, caring for St. Clare's, calling and meeting the media and different communities.

From the prison world to the hospital one, it's quite a difference. I'll go through all these stages of life if pleasing to God. As it is part of my mission, may God's will be done. I rely on His strength to carry on and on the support and prayers of His family.

Saint Clare's is functioning well. Services as usual. I send them an email every week for the Sunday masses.

The food program is progressing five days a week thanks to the What If Foundation. The children are doing marvelously. Each group carries its duties. A burnt child and her mother are with me in Miami. She will have a surgery in Boston next August. They were in Boston, but it was too cold for them.

The carnival time went out smoothly in Haiti. The stories about how Katrina hit Louisiana touch me so deeply. It was a monstrous disaster. I keep my fingers crossed for the people in New Orleans. Take courage!

Thanks again to all the sisters and brothers everywhere across the world who prayed and worked to free me from jail. Never forget all who are still there, in Haiti and in countries across the world.

Pray, my sisters and brothers! Peace and love to you all!

Gerry

SolarPedalflo Brings Water to Project Hope in Haiti
Press Release from SolarPedalflo - Moving Water Industries
Renewable Energy Access
March 7, 2006

Les Cayes, Haiti Pwoje Espwa (Project Hope) in Haiti is a multi-faceted program serving the needs of over 1,000 children in Haiti.

In February of 2005, Pwoje Espwa worked with Cross International located in Les Cayes (southern Haiti) to acquire an MWI SolarPedalflo in order to supply purified drinking water to its Hope Village. Vilaj Espwa (Hope Village) is a 140 acre community with the goal of providing its residents the life skills needed to become productive adults. A major goal and consideration in all development is that the village be ecologically responsible and as self-sustaining as possible. Hence, the SolarPedalflo was the perfect fit since it uses only solar or human leg power to pump water from a borehole and purify the water through filters and chlorination if needed. The system was installed in July and currently there are over 400 people using the SolarPedalflo on a daily basis for their drinking water. For more information about Pwoje Espwa, go to www.theoswork.org

'Naje Pou Soti': Legal Obstacles Facing Haiti's Preval

By Brian Concannon, Jr.

The Jurist

March 8, 2006

JURIST Special Guest Columnist Brian Concannon Jr., Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, says that Haitian President-elect Rene Preval faces a daunting if familiar series of legal obstacles involving parliament, the judiciary and the police as he attempts to move forward with economic and social reforms following his latest election victory...

"Naje pou soti" in Haitian creole means "swim your way out." Haiti sits on an island, where rivers swell and rage after rain, few people know how to swim, and many die trying to flee the country in rickety boats. So hard experience makes the saying less theoretical and more disconcerting than Americans' "sink or swim."

Haiti's President-Elect, René Preval, famously invoked the saying towards the end of his first term in office, which ran from 1996 to 2001. Preval had been elected to pursue progressive economic and social policies- building schools, roads and hospitals, reforming and supporting Haiti's agricultural base, developing a judiciary responsive to the majority of Haitians who are poor, etc. – but had struggled to implement the mandate.

Parliamentary Paralysis

Preval's biggest obstacle was the Parliament, even though most legislators were elected on the same progressive platform. The OPL party, the largest party in the legislature, changed course after the election and opted for the policies championed by the international financial institutions and the U.S. - cutting government spending, allowing the private sector more control of the economy and reducing tariffs that protected Haitian agriculture.

The policy dispute spilled beyond Parliament into the streets, where protests forced the resignation of the OPL Prime Minister in June, 1997. For the next nineteen months Parliament refused to confirm any of President Preval's nominations for a replacement Prime Minister. The international community took the legislators' side, and withheld urgently-needed development assistance to force the administration to give in to the opposition's demands.

The dispute turned into an impasse, and for the next three years endless negotiations diverted the Administration's energy and paralyzed government operations. Even officials not involved in the talks were reluctant to initiate long-term projects, because they expected the negotiations would at any time replace them with a new team with new plans. The impasse was eventually broken not by talks, but by Parliamentary suicide- the legislators' intransigence led to their terms expiring without new elections being held. But in the meantime Haiti's poor became poorer and more numerous.

Desperate Measures For Desperate Times

Mr. Preval invoked “naje pou soti” in a meeting with peasants who were complaining about the difficulty of their situation- complaints that the President was hearing everywhere he went. An agronomist by training, Preval knew how bad things were in the countryside, but as President he also knew that there was no easy solution. He invoked the saying to dispel any false hopes: the peasants needed to know that the government did not have the resources to elevate them out of their misery, and that the international community would not come through with the promised development assistance. But President Preval also wanted to instill a hope that was more limited and desperate, but more real- that Haitians could at least survive by relying on their own resources.

The President turned out to be right on both counts. No one did help- throughout the remaining time of his Administration, the international community increased its pressure and decreased its development assistance. But Haiti also did manage to swim- not out of danger, but enough to keep alive and fighting. President Preval found ways to build hundreds of miles of roads, dozens of schools and a few health centers. He transferred thousands of acres of land into peasants’ hands and he organized the two best human rights trials in Haiti’s history.

It appears that Preval will once again be President, once again with a mandate to implement progressive policies. But despite the strength of his landslide election victory on February 7- he won 4 times more votes than his nearest competitor- President Preval and the citizens who elected him will need to start swimming from the very beginning. An impressive array of forces and obstacles has already assembled to delay, frustrate and block his implementation of progressive policies.

Parliamentary Paralysis II

Preval may have even more trouble with Parliament this time around. Although the results of the legislative elections will not be decided until the second round (which is still not scheduled, a month after the first round), it is clear that Parliament will be fragmented, with many parties each having a few seats. Perhaps more important, a large percentage of legislators will be from conservative parties opposing Preval’s progressive agenda.

Both the parliamentary fragmentation and the conservative success are the product of two years of repression against progressive political activists. Many top leaders, including the last Constitutional Prime Minister, were kept of politics by being kept in jail, illegally. Grassroots activists were arrested or killed, police routinely fired at peaceful, legal demonstrations and critical news outlets were closed or intimidated. Paramilitary groups, including groups of former soldiers who had led the 2004 coup d’état, harassed, intimidated and even killed progressive activists with impunity.

The repression was particularly focused against Haiti’s largest political party, Fanmi Lavalas, which won large majorities in both the Senate and the Chambre des Deputés in Haiti’s last election, in 2000. Fanmi Lavalas refused to participate because the Interim Government of Haiti (IGH) refused to free its political prisoners- including former Ministers and parliamentarians- or to stop the brutal repression of grassroots activists (some individual candidates claimed the Fanmi Lavalas banner, without the approval of the organization, or for the most part, the voters). As a result, the party with the best organization throughout the country, the most electoral support and the most legislative experience was removed from the contest.

Other parties close to Fanmi Lavalas, including Preval's Espwa (Hope) party ran candidates in some races, but not all. They lacked Lavalas' organization and name recognition, and the repression forced them to run a very limited campaign. Even Preval, with the international spotlight on him, planned very few public campaign activities and was forced to curtail this limited schedule when mobs destroyed the podium for one appearance and attacked his supporters at another.

The low-key campaign was adequate for the former President with universal name recognition and a five-year record. But it was not adequate for less experienced and prominent local candidates, who were unable to conduct the grassroots organizing work necessary to build a political base. Allies of the IGH, on the other hand, were able to organize freely at the local level, and often had the benefit of political patronage to attract campaign workers and supporters.

Many areas that voted overwhelmingly for President Preval's progressive policies will be represented in Parliament by conservatives committed to opposing the policies. As a result, to have any of his program passed, Preval will need to compromise away from the platform he was elected on. Preval will not have much opportunity to increase Parliamentary support during his term either. There are legislative elections scheduled for late 2007, but only for 1/3 of the Senate. Broader elections for the entire House of Deputies and another third of the Senate are scheduled for 2009, but even if Preval's candidates win that one, they will take office with only a year left in the Presidential term.

Fragmentation in the legislature will make it extremely difficult to assemble a majority on even uncontroversial legislation. The fragmentation is compounded by inexperience- only a tiny percentage of those in the second round have served in a legislature before. The Senators and Deputies will need to learn their jobs, choose leaders, find ways of working with people from across the political spectrum, and draft and pass the legislation that the Haitian people urgently need, all under extreme pressure.

The fragmentation will almost certainly be compounded by yet another political crisis following the runoff elections. The first round on February 7 was plagued by poor organization and a vote count that was unruly, and by many accounts fraudulent. Thousands of ballots were missing, many of which turned up partially burned in a dump. Electoral officials and political parties claim the count was manipulated and information concealed.

Many of the irregularities were rendered irrelevant in the Presidential contest by Preval's landslide, but they will loom larger in close legislative contests. The Electoral Council is also in disarray- its General Director, Jacques Bernard, fled to the U.S. ahead of fraud allegations, and spent two weeks on a lecture circuit sponsored by Lavalas opponents in the U.S., claiming that others were responsible for fraud, and that his farm was burned in retaliation for his work. He claimed he would return only after three members of the Electoral Council were fired, but he returned to Haiti in early March to the same Council (and according to an investigation, to an undamaged farm).

Under these circumstances anyone who loses, especially in a close race, will have grounds to contest the results. So many first round candidates complained that the Electoral Council indefinitely postponed the runoffs scheduled for March 19. To effectively deal with these complaints, the Council should organize a transparent and precise retabulation of the results, and reconstitute results that were destroyed using the election code's backup systems. The Council declined to take these measures to

resolve the dispute over the Presidential election, preferring a negotiated settlement that preserved everyone's right to complain. It is likely that the Council will take a similar path with the legislative results, planting the seeds for the next political crisis in fertile ground.

Judicial Reform?

The judicial branch may be equally problematic. Haiti's justice system has evolved for three centuries to serve the needs of dictatorships. As President Preval found out in his first administration, effective judicial reform is a long-term project. Substantial progress requires patiently training a new generation of judges, prosecutors and lawyers and persistently integrating them into the system with enough support for them to do their jobs honestly and well.

But this time around President Preval will find the job harder than before. Many of the promising judges and prosecutors trained in his first term have been pushed out of the system, illegally, by the IGH. Some have been beaten, or their houses burned. Some may be lured back by renewed opportunities to build a democratic justice system, but many will be reluctant to stick their necks out a second time. The IGH has also packed the judiciary with officials whose main qualification was a willingness to comply with the IGH's orders, especially when the orders conflicted with the law's requirements. The most notorious court-packing incident came in December 2005, when Prime Minister Gerard Latortue illegally fired five Supreme Court Justices and replaced them with his henchmen. But the same process has been repeated more quietly throughout the judicial ranks for two years.

Cobbling Together A Government

Preval's most difficult battle of all may be within his own Executive Branch. Haiti's Constitution grants the Prime Minister and the Ministers a large share of executive power. They hire most officials, run most government programs and manage the lion's share of the national budget. Although the President nominates the Prime Minister, he must choose someone from the majority party in Parliament (if there is no majority party, as is likely to be the case, the President chooses someone in consultation with Parliamentary leaders). Both the Prime Minister and his cabinet must be ratified by Parliament, and a legislative vote of no confidence will cause the government to fall.

In order to cobble together enough votes for ratification, Preval will most likely be forced to assemble a cabinet from many disparate parts- political parties that have no common political vision, just a shared agreement to vote for ratification in return for the power of controlling a ministry. Just getting a government ratified by a fractured Parliament will take much effort, and perhaps more importantly, time. Organizing the government to advance a coherent policy will be extremely difficult. In the best case scenario, Ministers of good faith but diverse ideologies will struggle hard to find consensus on a few key issues. In a more likely scenario, broad agreement on anything will be impossible, and many Ministers will spend their time and energies implementing their own, often contradictory, policies and expanding their patronage base.

Controlling the Police

Managing the cabinet may, however, be easy compared to getting a handle on the police force. Haiti's police have become highly politicized, corrupt and violent over the two years under the IGH. Many good officers have been forced out or killed; others have been turned into killers by the violence. Former soldiers, many of them violent, have been integrated into the force, bypassing normal recruitment and promotion regulations. The population, especially in poor neighborhoods, is deeply distrustful of the police, for good reason- police regularly conduct murderous raids in their areas and routinely make illegal warrantless arrests. Even the police force's General Director complains that at least a quarter of his officers are criminals.

Reforming the police will take time, and money, both of which are in short supply. Reform will also need to be balanced with the urgent need to fight increasing common crime. Haiti's police force is already dangerously understaffed, which will be exacerbated in the short term by diverting human resources to reform efforts, and even by the process of removing crooked officers.

Demoting Democracy, Selling Sovereignty

Preval's authority with the police was severely limited by a controversial and far-reaching agreement reached between Prime Minister Latortue and Juan Gabriel Valdes, the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The agreement grants MINUSTAH extensive authority over the police and government, including a) a right of consultation before any police operation; b) veto power over police promotions; c) access to all files of any government official or entity relating to the police; and d) veto power over international agreements relating to the police.

The deal has been controversial because it was reached quietly- it was signed in New York and not even the police chief or Justice Minister even knew about it until a week after the signing- and because it hands an immense amount of national sovereignty to MINUSTAH. But it should be equally controversial because it demonstrates a deep disrespect for Haiti's voters, its Constitution and its democracy. The deal was signed on February 22, a week after the announcement of Preval's victory, and five weeks before his (then) scheduled inauguration. If the agreement was appropriate to negotiate at all, it would have been appropriate to negotiate it with the President who would have to abide by it, and who also had the electoral and constitutional legitimacy to bind his country.

There was no reason why the deal could not have been negotiated with the elected President, other than a fear that the voters' choice would not agree to it. It is not hard to understand why Prime Minister Latortue, who was never elected and is on his way out after two disastrous and unconstitutional years in office, would be willing to pull a fast one on his country and his Constitution. But the UN should be above such underhanded stunts.

MINUSTAH's bad faith is magnified by the fact that the agreement grants it extraordinary control over a police force under an elected President, when the Mission refused to exercise even ordinary oversight over the force under the unelected dictatorship. Time and again MINUSTAH forces stood by while the police massacred prisoners, invaded neighborhoods and made illegal political arrests, insisting that their mandate prevented them from interfering in the police force's internal affairs. The Mission that did not issue a single investigative report in almost two years of Mr. Latortue's reign will now have access to President Preval's personal diary if he writes in it about the police.

The agreement is unconstitutional and illegal, as Mr. Latortue was forced to concede once it became public, so President Preval is not legally required to recognize it. But he may be politically required to do so- MINUSTAH currently intends to stay for at least half of Preval's term, and there is not much he can effectively do about it. With little money, a police force loyal to his unelected predecessor and the example of his predecessor flown to exile by the international community, Mr. Preval's bargaining position is weak.

More Desperate Times

In the meantime, life will get harder for Haiti's poor. The life expectancy for men has dropped to 48 years, infant mortality and AIDS are by far the worst in the hemisphere. Most Haitians struggle to get by on little more than \$1 a day, over half are malnourished.

As before, President Preval will not be able to count on the international community to help fight Haiti's poverty with the necessary consistency. There will be some development assistance sent to Haiti, and much of it will have a positive impact on the ground. But this aid will, sooner rather than later, become contingent on the Preval administration implementing the international community's economic policies. The U.S. government, among others, has already declared that Preval must compromise with his political opponents, who the voters resoundingly rejected. Those pressures will increase with the disputes likely to arise from the legislative elections and the choice of ministers, with the international community consistently taking the side of Lavalas opponents.

Right now President Preval does not even know when his new job starts. Although the Constitution called for the inauguration of a new President on February 7, and the latest electoral decree scheduled it for March 29, the inauguration is now held hostage to the second round of legislative elections. The Constitution requires the President to take his oath of office in front of Parliament. The IGH, which was itself installed without Parliament and which ignored constitutional election deadlines in June 2004 and November 2005 as well as the February 7 inauguration deadline, is insisting that it needs a parliament to hand over power. The best likely scenario has the inauguration in early May, three months late and 5% through the Constitutional term.

Elusive Victories

February 7 was the fourth consecutive landslide victory for a Presidential candidate from the Lavalas movement. In any other country, such electoral success would translate into a long period of stability, and an opportunity for the victors to implement the policies they were elected on. Instead, for three of those terms, there have been two coup d'etats leading to five years of exile for the elected President, a nearly perpetual controversy over legislative elections and very little progress on the root causes of Haiti's misery. Time will tell whether President Preval can escape this cycle of instability in the fourth of these terms, but one thing is certain: he and the people who voted for him had better start swimming now.

Brian Concannon Jr., Esquire, directs the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, and observed several elections in Haiti for the Organization of American States.

Haiti's poor suffer as world looks elsewhere

Fri Mar 3, 2006

By Jim Loney

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- The scars on the shoulder, neck and chin of little Laurencia Dieudonne are a constant reminder of the frightening night when bullets pierced the thin walls of her shanty-home in Haiti's Cite Soleil slum.

The sounds of gunfire on that day 14 months ago -- probably another fight between slum gangs and U.N. peacekeepers -- chased now 5-year-old Laurencia and her mother, Guilene Jean, under the bed.

But the walls of the rickety home, fashioned from rusted sheets of iron, offered little protection. Laurencia, a tiny child with an engaging smile and braided hair, was shot three times and became another forgotten victim of Haiti's immutable violence and poverty.

"She doesn't talk about it. But when people ask about the scars, she just says, 'I got shot,'" said Guilene, who at 26 is

pregnant with her third child.

The poorest country in the Americas, Haiti is one of the world's forgotten crises -- overshadowed by the Asian tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands of people, Hurricane Katrina which swamped one of America's best known cities and a host of other global disasters.

The average Haitian lives on less than \$2 (1.14 pounds) a day. The poor have stripped the land of trees for cooking charcoal. This has added catastrophic soil erosion to a long list of woes as the unstable Caribbean nation takes another stab at democracy after last month's presidential election, which followed decades of dictatorship, coups and turmoil.

Just under 50 percent of Haitians cannot read, more than two-thirds are unemployed, over half are malnourished.

Yet aside from the moments when its political upheavals make news, Haiti is a simmering crisis, not splashy enough to force the world to care, according to foreign aid groups working here.

"It's not spectacular. Sometimes, countries are not interesting," said Loris De Filippi, head of the Medecins Sans Frontieres mission in Haiti. "But when you have 48 years of life expectancy, and infant mortality rates are catastrophic, this is an ongoing disaster."

HEALTH CARE FOR THE POOR

Last year MSF revived the St. Catherine Laboure Hospital in Cite Soleil, a squalid, violent shantytown on the northern edge of Port-au-Prince.

In an inconspicuous walled compound abandoned by Haiti's authorities a year earlier, the group restored health care to a slum that had none. Doctors say they are seeing people in their 50s who have never had medical care before.

With 70 beds and an operating room, the volunteer doctors and nurses treat bruises, cuts, pregnancies, cancer, diabetes and in recent months, more than 200 gunshot victims, many caught in the cross-fire between slum gangs and U.N. troops.

Doctors say the use of high-powered weapons in Cite Soleil's cramped maze of concrete and iron shacks produce astonishing wounds among the slum's innocent bystanders.

"The speed of the bullets is very high and the damage is awful, terrible," said Dr. Carlo Belloni of Padua, Italy, who calls conditions in the slum "unbelievable."

"I have never seen anything like this. Nothing is working here. Everything is destroyed."

One night in January, gunshots ripped into the metal blinds of the hospital's pediatric ward, which is now protected by a wall of stacked steel drums filled with rocks and concrete. Bullet holes pock the doors of two small rooms where doctors used to take naps. Sleeping is no longer allowed there.

HELP ON THE WAY?

When a rebellion by a ragtag band of armed gangs and former Haitian army troops sent President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile two years ago, foreign nations pledged \$1.3 billion to rebuild Haiti. The United Nations says about 45 to 50 percent of the money has been disbursed.

"Disbursed means the contracts have been signed. That doesn't mean the money has actually arrived," said Carine Roenen, country director for Dublin-based Concern Worldwide, which has a yearly budget of about 4 million euros for Haiti.

Shortly after the post-rebellion burst of goodwill toward Haiti, the tsunami struck Asia, Katrina hit New Orleans and Pakistan was crushed by an earthquake. Haiti was shoved to a back-burner again.

"We saw donations drop by about 30 percent after the tsunami," said Susie Krabacher, an American whose Mercy and Sharing Foundation runs three orphanages and six feeding programs in Haiti.

Aid organizations in Haiti face uphill battles against corruption and feeble government institutions, which slow and sometimes halt the flow of foreign money to badly needed projects supplying food, clean water and infrastructure.

"They virtually have no public administration. There has been a huge, huge brain drain," said Roenen. "Nobody wants to work for the government anymore because it is so weak."

Aid groups are hoping the February 7 election of Rene Preval, an agronomist who served as president from 1996 to 2001, will stabilize Haiti in the eyes of the world and provide a platform to help the poor masses.

"People are interested in Haiti in a negative sense, like when we have to stop drugs from flowing through the country or we have to stop people from getting on boats," Roenen said.

NO WAY OUT

Guilene Jean says Laurencia's father was shot to death on his way home from work on the same day the girl was wounded.

Laurencia has had no follow-up care since her gunshot wounds healed, and psychological counseling is unheard of in Haiti. She often complains that her neck aches and rarely goes a few weeks without getting sick.

Their shanty sits on the edge of a fetid pond whose surface is tinged with an oily residue and a greenish scum. Pigs root through the tons of rotting trash that form its banks.

Jean said she would like to flee this place. Bullets often whiz over her leaky roof. But escape doesn't seem possible.

"I don't have any money to go anywhere else," she said.

Haiti President-Elect to Visit S. America

Saturday March 4, 2006

By JONATHAN M. KATZ

Associated Press Writer

The Guardian Unlimited

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) - Haitian President-elect Rene Preval said Friday he will visit three South American countries this month to raise aid money for his impoverished country.

The planned trips to Brazil, Chile and Argentina come as Preval seeks funds to rebuild Haiti's battered infrastructure and create jobs after a revolt two years ago toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and pushed the nation deeper into despair. Preval did not give dates for the trips.

"The international community is very disposed to help Haiti," Preval said at the close of a two-day trip to the neighboring Dominican Republic to discuss immigration and trade issues.

International donors have disbursed some \$780 million in aid to Haiti since December 2005, but officials say much more is needed to speed development in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

The Dominican government did not offer an aid package but hosted a meeting Friday between Preval and Dominican business leaders in an effort to spur private investment in Haiti, Dominican Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Veri Candelario said.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share a 243-mile border on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Tension have surged between the countries over what to do about as many as 1 million Haitian workers who cross the border to work in the Dominican Republic, often illegally.

Preval was due to take power on March 29, but delays in holding a legislative runoff needed to form a government could push back the inauguration by a month, officials say.

Haiti descended into chaos after Aristide fled into exile in South Africa after the February 2004 uprising.

Aristide has said he wants to return to Haiti. Preval reiterated Friday that the constitution allows any Haitian to enter the country without a visa, but declined to say if he would welcome back his former mentor.

Haiti's new leader fears mentor's return

WRONG MOVE COULD PLUNGE NATION INTO ANARCHY

Sun, Mar. 05, 2006

By Joe Mozingo

Knight Ridder

San Jose Mercury News

MIAMI - The critical issue of whether Haitian President-elect René Préval will allow the return from exile of his political mentor -- ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- will be taken up this week at meetings with Aristide's South African hosts, Haitian and foreign officials say.

Préval has made it increasingly clear to foreign diplomats that he does not want the fiery former priest to return home any time soon. But he must walk a delicate line to appease Aristide's supporters in Port-au-Prince's slums, who during the election put up street barricades and threatened violence until Préval was declared the victor.

Foreign diplomats from six key countries long involved in Haitian affairs -- the so-called Core Group consisting of the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile and Argentina -- agree that Aristide's arrival would destabilize a country that has been on the brink of anarchy for two years.

They plan to take the opportunity of Chilean President-elect Michelle Bachelet's inauguration in Santiago this week to discuss the subject with South African President Thabo Mbeki, according to Haitian and foreign officials.

“Brazil has been approached to be the point person, to tell President Mbeki that Aristide's return is not welcome,” said a Haitian political analyst privy to the discussions within the Core Group. Brazil, a close ally of South Africa, heads the U.N. peacekeeping mission that was deployed in Haiti to restore order after Aristide left the country during an armed insurgency in 2004. Préval is expected to visit Brazil before the ceremony in Chile, and fly to Santiago with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Da Silva, unlike the Bush administration, is not seen as hostile toward Aristide, but agrees that his return would result in political paralysis and instability that could endanger the nation's troops, according to the political analyst and two senior Western diplomats, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

“At this point it would be a very polarizing and divisive event that could fatally damage the effort to move Haiti forward,” said Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the International Crisis Group.

Préval has been coy on the subject in public, only suggesting that Aristide might face corruption or other charges if he returns. Initially an ally of Aristide, he and Aristide grew distant during Préval's 1996-2001 term as president.

When Préval was recently asked about the question of a possible Aristide return by CNN en Español he responded: “The Haitian Constitution says that whatever Haitian can return to his country, he does not need a visa, so he must decide whether he wants to return, if there are legal and other actions.”

The Bush administration has been sending this signal to Aristide as well. An investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has landed Aristide's former chief of palace security, three senior Haitian police officials and an ally in the Haitian Senate in federal prison in Miami. Knight Ridder has reported that a grand jury in Miami is looking into Aristide's own affairs.

Washington views Préval as more cooperative than Aristide in its fight against drug trafficking. Indeed, the Bush administration has been supportive of Préval since his victory was declared Feb. 16.

The announcement came after allegations of fraud and increasingly agitated street demonstrations had driven the vote tabulation to a halt and raised fears the electoral process might collapse. Under pressure from Brazil and Chile, the electoral council decided to distribute blank ballots in such a manner as to give Préval just over the 50 percent of votes he needed to avoid a runoff.

U.S. diplomats, initially wary of such a move, soon acquiesced, followed by France and then Canada, according to sources familiar with the discussions.

Bush called Préval on Feb. 22, and Thomas Shannon, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, visited him five days later in Port-au-Prince.

In those discussions, Préval indicated he would cooperate fully with the DEA to fight drug trafficking through Haiti, and retain as his chief of national police Mario Andresol, whom the DEA views as strong and uncorrupt, according to the Haitian political analyst and U.S. officials.

Préval also discussed his hope that the U.S. Congress would enact legislation to give trade preferences to Haiti to revive its flat-lining economy, the analyst said.

The administration recently pledged support to such trade preferences. On Feb. 15, Bush's trade representative, Rob Portman, told the House Ways and Means Committee that he "would try to see what we can do to move forward with some kind of a preferences program" for Haiti.

But the hope that Préval's administration will get off to a fast start is already being tempered by the reality that his inauguration, scheduled for March 29, will probably be postponed.

Diplomats are now hoping to have the new Préval government in place by April 29.

Citizen class all full in Little Haiti
BY ALFONSO CHARDY
Miami Herald
Mon, Mar. 06, 2006

Evelt Jeudy, immigration and citizenship coordinator at Haitian Women of Miami, shouts instructions as if he were a drill sergeant.

``OK everybody, repeat: branch!"

The dozen women in Jeudy's class complied immediately. "Branch!" they shouted back. Jeudy: ``Again, branch! branch! branch!"

The women: ``Branch! branch! branch!"

]Jeudy's Haitian-born students were not learning another language. They were memorizing words likely to come up on their citizenship tests, such as: What are the three branches of our government?

Coaching Haitian immigrants to become U.S. citizens is one of the most popular services at Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami or Haitian Women of Miami, a 15-year-old grass roots nonprofit community organization in Little Haiti.

Executive director Marleine Bastien depends mostly on donations and government and private grants to finance her organization, which has a staff of 14. The group operates on \$700,000 a year, but Bastien says it needs at least \$1 million or more to stop turning people away. Every day the group serves about 50 people, but turns away at least 10, she said.

The group held its 14th annual fundraiser dinner Saturday and hopes to continue to raise money at the Caribbean food festival March 25, all in an effort to eventually buy a building to house its offices in Little Haiti.

Aside from citizenship classes, Haitian Women offers an after-school program, mammograms for women who can't afford healthcare and anger management classes involving domestic violence. Many of the people who come through the organization's doors hope to legalize their status.

SENSITIVE TIME

This is a particularly sensitive time for immigrants as Congress gears up for a debate on immigration reform, a battle between legalizing up to 11 million undocumented immigrants or compelling them to leave the country.

Many Haitian immigrants believe immigration reform should encompass legislation to help Haitians gain status with the same ease as Cubans under the wet foot, dry foot policy.

Cubans who reach U.S. soil generally stay, while those intercepted at sea are usually repatriated. Not so for Haitian migrants who arrive by boat, and are caught. They are put on expedited deportation -- unless they can convince an asylum officer they have a "credible fear" of persecution if returned home.

The difficulty in obtaining legal status helps to explain why Haitian immigrants who qualify for citizenship generally apply for naturalization as soon as possible. The number of Haitians who naturalize annually is high compared to their native country's population.

In fiscal year 2004, for example, 8,215 Haitians became citizens -- ahead of naturalizations for nationals from larger countries, including Britain (7,785) and Canada (7,682), according to the latest nationwide immigration statistics.

Fanm, responding to the community's need, is among the local organizations that offers citizenship classes twice a week: Tuesdays and Fridays, 3-5 p.m.

The classes have been going on since January 2002 and have graduated about 500 Haitians, all of whom passed the citizenship test, according to Jeudy. Also, he said, Fanm has helped another 500 immigrants from all ethnic backgrounds become citizens.

Jeudy's method: memorize, memorize, memorize.

Jeudy tells students there are slightly more than a dozen words and phrases they have to memorize because they appear in questions likely to come up on the test.

Among key phrases to memorize: Capitol Building, Speaker of the House, declare war and vice president.

"Let's take branch," Jeudy asked the women at a class recently. "Can you tell me any question that can have the word branch on it? Any question?"

One of the women raised her hand. "How many branch?"

Jeudy corrected.

"How many branches are there in the government," is one of the questions you have to study to pass the test," he said. "So, what is the answer?"

Four replied in unison: "Three branches."

Jeudy's class is a reflection of recent trends.

MOSTLY WOMEN

Most people naturalizing now are women, according to immigration statistics. The 2004 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics shows that females accounted for 54 percent of persons naturalizing. Anne Marie Josette Nazaire, 53, is set to take her test March 15, she said.

Nazaire, who arrived in 1999, wants to become a citizen because she likes "freedom" and wants to bring her family.

Louissetee Jeune, 59, was attending class for the first time. She hasn't applied for citizenship yet.

Renette Charlot, 55, is still waiting for a date for her swearing-in ceremony.

Charlot said she applied for citizenship because she wants to cast ballots in U.S. elections.

"I like to vote," she said.

Haiti's Incoming President Visits Dominican Republic
By VOA News
03 March 2006

Haitian President-elect Rene Preval is in the neighboring Dominican Republic on his first foreign visit since being elected last month.

Mr. Preval said after his arrival Thursday in Santo Domingo that the purpose of his visit was to maintain friendship with the Dominican people.

Mr. Preval was scheduled to meet with Dominican President Leonel Fernandez to discuss topics that include illegal immigration.

Up to a million Haitian workers are estimated to live in the more prosperous Dominican Republic, many of them illegally.

Mr. Preval's trip came before his official inauguration, an event expected on March 29, but likely to be delayed because no Parliament has yet been elected, a requirement for inauguration of the president in Haiti.

SFBC Employees in Montreal Found to Have Latent Tuberculosis

March 8

Bloomberg News

At least 11 employees of drug-trial company SFBC International Inc. tested positive for latent tuberculosis after being exposed to a TB-infected participant in a Montreal experiment, according to local health officials.

Of 14 SFBC employees in closest contact with the sick man, half tested positive for the latent form of the lung disease, according to the Montreal Public Health Department. Four out of 35 employees who didn't come in close contact with the infected trial participant also tested positive, the authorities said.

SFBC, operator of the biggest privately owned U.S. facility for clinical trials, in Miami, is at the center of a U.S. Senate probe of its treatment of patients in experimental research for drug companies.

Bloomberg News reported in November that ethicists said the company's consent process inadequately warned trial participants of the risks of injury and death.

The latest finding brings to 20 the number of people found infected after Princeton, New Jersey-based SFBC included an immigrant from Haiti with active tuberculosis among test subjects confined for a week in September at SFBC's Montreal unit. The Haitian was seen coughing up blood by a roommate during the trial. Canadian health authorities in December found that nine healthy people hired to test an Isotechnika Inc. drug had latent TB afterward.

“There was evidence the person was sick enough that he infected some of those people,” said Terry Tannenbaum, the physician in charge of tuberculosis prevention for the Montreal Public Health Department, in an interview yesterday. “It means there was transmission, most likely.”

Rules Violated

Admitting someone with active tuberculosis violated the rules for the trial, according to Edmonton, Alberta-based Isotechnika. The company hired SFBC to recruit healthy people to participate in the test of its experimental drug ISA 247. The product lowers the body's ability to fight off disease and is being tested to prevent rejection of transplanted organs and to treat psoriasis.

Joanne Champagne, chief operating officer of SFBC's Anapharm unit in Canada yesterday referred all questions about the tuberculosis issue to the company's outside spokesman, attorney Michael York. York declined yesterday to comment. SFBC Chief Executive Officer Jeff McMullen was traveling yesterday and unavailable for comment.

Randall Yatscoff, chief executive officer of Isotechnika, also was traveling and unavailable to comment. Isotechnika allowed SFBC to redo the study of the drug.

SFBC's shares fell 9 cents to \$18.30 yesterday in Nasdaq Stock Market composite trading. The stock dropped 16 percent March 3, the day after the company withdrew its earnings forecasts for this year, delayed its fourth-quarter financial report and said it may have a charge for a “significant decline in business” at the Miami testing center.

Health Canada Probe

The company's shares lost 56 percent of their value through yesterday since Nov. 1, the day before Bloomberg News reported on operators of clinical drug trials.

In the Bloomberg report, more than 15 scientists, doctors and government officials said the drug testing industry inadequately protected participants from the risks of injury and death. The story also disclosed conflicts of interest in the drug-testing industry, including a company paid to monitor the safety of participants in more than 20 percent of SFBC's clinical trials that was owned by the wife of an SFBC executive.

Health Canada, which oversees clinical trials, is continuing its investigation of the tuberculosis incident at SFBC's Anapharm unit, according to spokeswoman Jirina Vlk. The agency hasn't announced any sanctions.

“It isn't over,” Vlk said yesterday in an interview. “We're still looking carefully at all the issues.”

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that kills 2 million people worldwide each year. Active tuberculosis is contagious and spreads through the air as people cough or speak. It develops from latent tuberculosis, which isn't contagious and can be treated by a nine-month regimen of antibiotics.

Haitian Immigrant

Haiti has the highest TB infection rate in North America, about 100 times higher than Canada, according to the Geneva-based World Health Organization.

The Haitian who was later found to have active TB coughed up blood during the trial, according to fellow participant Mohsen, a 37-year-old man from Toronto who was assigned by SFBC to share his room. Mohsen, who contracted latent TB from that exposure, according to health officials, says he reported what he saw to SFBC's staff. SFBC said it kept the sick Haitian in the trial, in the same room with Mohsen, for four more days.

Mohsen, who emigrated from Kuwait in 1990, asked that his last name not be published because he hasn't told his family or friends that he has latent tuberculosis.

In 2003, there were 386 cases of active tuberculosis in Haiti per 100,000 people, according to the United Nations health organization. Canada recorded 4 people with active tuberculosis per 100,000 in 2003. The U.S. had 3 active cases per 100,000, WHO statistics show.

Haitian consulate to renew passports, offer visas in Norwalk City Hall

By Brian Lockhart

Staff Writer

The Stamford Advocate

March 6 2006

NORWALK -- The city will be the first in the state to offer Haitians a satellite consulate where they can obtain visas and renew passports.

The Common Council last week unanimously supported a petition by the United Haitian-American Society for a one-year license that allows Haiti's consul general in New York City to conduct business in Norwalk City Hall two days a week.

"This came about because of complaints from the Haitian-American community of Connecticut that there's no access to a Haitian consulate here," said Gerry Azor Jr. of Fairfield, society vice chairman. "They have to take a train or drive and pay \$30 to \$40 for parking and miss a whole day of work to apply for the passport or visa, then go back and pick it up."

The 5-year-old society covers the state and an estimated 60,000 Haitians, Azor said, but most of its activities are concentrated between Bridgeport and Stamford.

For the past few years, Norwalk has hosted the society's Haitian-American celebration, which draws hundreds to South Norwalk with bands, dance demonstrations and food.

One of those visitors has been Consul General Felix Augustin, who hopes the satellite office will allow him and his staff greater opportunities to be involved in cultural, educational and commercial activities in Connecticut.

"I've done this for other states -- Pennsylvania, New Jersey," Augustin said. "Anything done in New York can be done in Connecticut."

Under the agreement approved by the council, the society and Augustin's staff may use a small first-floor room now occupied by the Human Relations and Fair Rent Department. Norwalk Corporation Counsel Peter Nolin anticipates his department will issue the license in two to four weeks.

Human Relations Director Elisabeth Youngerman said Human Relations Commissioner Rahoul Dupervil had the idea and she supports it as a way for her department to build a stronger relationship with Norwalk's Haitian community.

Residents of Haitian descent make up 1.8 percent of Norwalk's population, or 1,499 people, according to the 2000 Census.

More than 3,500 Haitians live in Stamford, accounting for 3 percent of the city's population, according to the 2000 Census.

About 4 percent of Fairfield County's foreign-born population is from Haiti.

"It's really, really important. This group of people don't come in very easily," Youngerman said. "It's really by word-of-mouth and this establishes a way to go bigger than that."

Augustin and Azor said the state remains a popular destination for Haitian immigrants.

"When you go to Connecticut or upstate New York or Asbury Park, N.J., Haitians feel better. . . . It doesn't have the rush you have in New York," Augustin said.

Haitian immigrants prefer Connecticut schools and generally "make more progress" in less densely populated areas than in a highly concentrated metropolis such as New York, Augustin said.

Some Common Council members questioned whether the City Hall consulate might prove too attractive, drawing more Haitians than Norwalk City Hall can handle.

"If you know the room, it's tiny. It's not like you could put 50 people in there," Nolin said. "That's why there's a provision (in the license) that . . . if they put any extra burden on the city, the city has the right to opt out."

Azor said Norwalk's consulate could be busy.

Haiti was plunged into violence in 2004 after a rebellion forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power, and the instability and kidnappings increased in the run-up to the November elections.

Rene Preval was named president in last month after the United Nations-backed interim government and an electoral council officials reached a stand-off because of the high number of blank ballots. Preval's victory was hailed by tens of thousands of Haiti's poor.

"I think with this guy we will have a stable government," Azor said. "But remember, Haiti doesn't have an army anymore but a police force. They need to re-establish a very strict and respectable police force that will not get involved in drugs or any contraband. . . . Once we have security, people will go back and start to visit."

Azor said the United Haitian-American Society will find a larger venue if necessary and is considering setting up consulate hours in Stamford.

But, for now, he said, the small room in Norwalk City Hall will do.

-- The South Florida Sun-Sentinel contributed to this story.

**A political alliance in Haiti was the easy part
Now the new president has to pull the country out of the abyss**
ISABEL VINCENT
Macleans, Canada
March 3, 2006

On the surface, the match between Italy and Brazil in the 1970 World Cup final might seem far removed from recent events in Haiti. But for the Brazilian diplomat and the Canadian bureaucrats of the Organization of American States who hammered out the extraordinary deal that saw presidential front-runner René Préval emerge victorious in a first round of voting on Feb. 7 -- and avoided widespread violence in the country -- the game became somewhat of a guiding principle. "It was a metaphor that kept coming back to me," said Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, the Brazilian ambassador to Haiti. "With three minutes left in that game, the score was four to one for Brazil, and the referee had to decide whether to call the game, or keep playing, knowing that it would be impossible for the Italian team to tie."

So the referee called the game, which is in a sense what happened in Haiti. With 90 per cent of the votes counted, Préval had 48.8 per cent of the vote. Among the 33 candidates on the ballot, his closest rival, Leslie Manigat, had 11.8 per cent. "It was similar to the World Cup where Préval was leading four to one," said Cordeiro, who before his appointment to Haiti last year was the minister counsellor at the Brazilian embassy in Ottawa. With 10 per cent of the votes left to be counted, and with deepening suspicions of fraud inflaming violent protests throughout the country, Cordeiro offered up the plan of allocating the blank votes (some 85,000 out of 2.2 million cast) to candidates according to the percentage of the votes they had received until then -- a plan that gave Préval the 51 per cent he needed to avoid a runoff vote, which analysts predicted would have driven Haiti further "into the abyss."

So, in the wee hours of Feb. 16, Haiti's nine-member electoral council, a body similar to Elections Canada, voted eight to one to declare Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist and former Haitian president, the country's new leader. But while diplomats and UN and OAS bureaucrats congratulated themselves on a rapid and successful conclusion to democratic elections in the western hemisphere's most impoverished and troubled country, others worried about the future.

Would the Brazilian deal allow Préval the legitimacy he needs to govern this country of 8.1 million, where the vast majority of the population lives on less than one dollar a day? Could he rebuild the institutional infrastructure destroyed during decades of violence and corrupt rule? How would this quiet, soft-spoken politician broker the necessary alliances, after what promise to be fractious runoff votes for parliamentary seats scheduled for next month, to turn Haiti back into a nation? "The international community is creating further crisis in Haiti," said Jean Voltaire, a Haitian political scientist, after the Brazilian-backed deal. "For its part, Brazil made a huge error in asking the CEP [the electoral council] to declare Préval president. That is sad."

Last week, Jacques Bernard, the director general of Haiti's electoral council, fled the country when he received death threats after the council declared Préval the winner. His farmhouse, north of the capital, Port-au-Prince, was burned to the ground a few days after the Préval victory was announced. But despite some opposition among Préval's rivals, most analysts agree the elections and the Brazilian-

brokered deal give Préval the right to rule the country. "The new government will have complete and absolute legitimacy," says Ricardo Seitenfus, a Brazilian academic and one of the world's foremost experts on Haiti, who observed the entire election process as Brazil's special envoy. "These were the most inclusive elections and the most transparent in Haiti's history. You have to remember that there were a lot of political forces stacked against this."

But what sort of government will the new leader run? During his campaign, Préval, who was president between 1996 and 2001, made only vague promises -- to decentralize the government, build up the judiciary and institute universal education. Moreover, Préval, who studied agronomy in Belgium and held a series of blue collar jobs while living in exile in New York during the regime of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, is a former ally of the controversial Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an ex-priest and fiery radical who was overthrown in a military coup in 1991. In 1994, the Clinton administration sent 20,000 U.S. troops to restore Aristide to power, but the populist leader soon became an embarrassment to the international community by promoting violence among his supporters in the shantytowns of Port-au-Prince. At the forceful urging of France and the U.S., Aristide left the country in 2004, and currently lives in exile in South Africa.

Préval has tried to distance himself from the Aristide legacy. He ran as leader of a new party, Lepswa (Creole for "hope") in the election, and refused to say whether he would entertain Aristide's return to Haiti in the near future. (Last week Préval finally conceded that there was nothing barring Aristide from coming home.) In fact, Préval has been mum on many things, a characteristic that has earned him the nickname "the mute" in Haiti. He is an experienced politician, to be sure, but one who seems to prefer listening to speaking. "Let's not forget that he was the only president in 200 years of Haitian history to transfer the presidency peacefully to his successor," says Seitenfus. "He may lack excitement, but there will be no surprises in his government."

Préval's previous tenure was lacklustre, although not without controversy. After winning the 1996 election with a sweeping 88 per cent of the vote, he presided over a handful of political and land reforms but little else. He also disbanded parliament -- a move that earned him the condemnation of the international community. Now, his biggest task is to "disarm the spirits," as one Haiti analyst put it. If his party doesn't get a majority in parliament -- which seems extremely likely -- he needs to engage in political patchworking in order to address the rebuilding of Haiti's shattered political and social institutions.

But Préval also needs continued international support. "He can't do it on his own," says Annette Hester, an economist based in Calgary who is also senior associate of the Center for Strategic & International Studies, a Washington-based think tank. "Brazil and Canada, especially at the OAS, have already taken the lead in these elections, and they and the international community can't abandon the country now." (Elizabeth Spehar, a Canadian who heads up the OAS's voter-registration unit in Haiti, is widely credited with preparing much of the groundwork for Haiti's Feb. 7 presidential and parliamentary elections.)

In fact, many Haiti watchers are calling for a full-fledged Marshall Plan-like effort for the country, to address the dire poverty and health situation (it's estimated that nearly six per cent of the population is infected with HIV). There are encouraging signs. On Feb. 14, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti for another six months. Brazil, which heads up the

9,300-strong UN peacekeeping force, has already held meetings in Washington with key members of a core group of countries, including Canada (which has 100 police officers in the country), to discuss aid strategies.

The Caribbean Community, meanwhile, which ousted Haiti from its ranks in 2004, has promised to reinstate the country's membership. But much more is necessary. "Haiti needs a Marshall Plan and it needs it now," says Seitenfus. "Democracy without addressing social issues, and without addressing the immense inequality, will turn this into an empty exercise, and leave Haiti without any future."

To comment, email letters@macleans.ca

Aristide return may mean chaos
Sunday, 05 March 2006
MercoPress, Uruguay

The critical issue of whether Haitian President-elect Rene Preval will allow the return from exile of his political mentor - ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - will be taken up this week at meetings with Aristide's South African hosts, Haitian and foreign officials say.

Preval has made it increasingly clear to foreign diplomats that he does not want the fiery former priest to return home any time soon. But he must walk a delicate line to appease Aristide's supporters in Port-au-Prince's slums, who during the election put up street barricades and threatened violence until Preval was declared the victor.

Foreign diplomats from six key countries long involved in Haitian affairs - the so-called Core Group consisting of the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile and Argentina - agree that Aristide's arrival would destabilize a country that has been on the brink of anarchy for two years.

They plan to take the opportunity of Chilean President-elect Michelle Bachelet's inauguration in Santiago this week to discuss the subject with South African President Thabo Mbeki, according to Haitian and foreign officials.

“Brazil has been approached to be the point-person, to tell President Mbeki that Aristide's return is not welcome,” said a Haitian political analyst privy to the discussions within the Core Group.

Brazil, a close ally of South Africa, heads the U.N. peacekeeping mission that was deployed in Haiti to restore order after Aristide fled the country as an armed insurgency swept toward the capital in 2004. Preval is expected to visit Brazil before the ceremony in Chile, and fly to Santiago with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Lula, unlike the Bush administration, is not seen as hostile toward Aristide, but agrees that his return would result in political paralysis and instability that could endanger the nation's troops, according to the political analyst and two senior western diplomats, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

“At this point it would be a very polarizing and divisive event that could fatally damage the effort to move Haiti forward,” said Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the International Crisis Group.

Preval has been coy on the subject in public, only suggesting that Aristide might face corruption or other charges if he returns. Initially an ally of Aristide, they grew distant during Preval's 1996-2001 term as president.

When Preval was recently asked about the question of a possible Aristide return by CNN en Español he responded: “The Haitian Constitution says that whatever Haitian can return to his country, he does not need a visa, so he must decide whether he wants to return, if there are legal and other actions.”

The Bush administration has been sending this signal to Aristide as well. An investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has landed Aristide's former chief of palace security, three senior Haitian police officials and an ally in the Haitian Senate in federal prison in Miami. The Miami Herald has reported that a grand jury in Miami is looking into Aristide's own affairs.

Washington views Preval as more cooperative than Aristide in its fight against drug trafficking. Indeed, the Bush administration has been supportive of Preval since his victory was declared on Feb. 16.

The announcement came after allegations of fraud and increasingly agitated street demonstrations had driven the vote tabulation to a halt and raised fears the electoral process might collapse. Under pressure from Brazil and Chile, the electoral council decided to distribute blank ballots in such a manner as to give Preval just over the 50 percent of votes he needed to avoid a runoff.

U.S. diplomats, initially wary of such a move, soon acquiesced, followed by France and then Canada, according to sources familiar with the discussions.

Bush called Preval on Feb. 22, and Thomas Shannon, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, visited him five days later in Port-au-Prince.

In those discussions, Preval indicated he would cooperate fully with the DEA to fight drug trafficking through Haiti, and retain as his chief of national police Mario Andresol, whom the DEA views as strong and uncorrupted, according to the Haitian political analyst and U.S. officials.

Preval also discussed his hope that the U.S. Congress would enact legislation to give trade preferences to Haiti to revive its flat-lining economy, the analyst added.

The administration recently pledged support to such trade preferences. On Feb. 15, Bush's trade representative, Rob Portman, told the House Ways and Means Committee that he "would try to see what we can do to move forward with some kind of a preferences program" for Haiti.

But the hope that Preval's administration will get off to a fast start is already being tempered by the reality that his inauguration, scheduled for March 29, will likely be postponed.

Electoral officials are yet to announce the names of the candidates for the 129 parliamentary seats who fell short of a majority and will have to go into a runoff against the second-place finishers.

The run-offs were scheduled for March 19, but officials say it will take weeks to hold them. Diplomats are now hoping to have the new Preval government in place by April 29.

DR will try benefiting Haiti with DR-CAFTA
The Dominican Today
March 3, 2006

Santo Domingo.- Haiti also could benefit from the advantages that the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Central America promises for the region.

This was one of the issues discussed yesterday with the Foreign Relations Minister, Carlos Morales Troncoso and Haiti's elected president Rene Preval.

Both countries would engage in joint ventures in the framework of the DR-CAFTA.

Preval is expected to return this afternoon to his country, after a fruitful visit to the Dominican Republic, during which he met with president Leonel Fernandez, who hosted a dinner in his honor at the Presidential Palace.

One of the major priorities for the Dominican Government is to assist Haiti in creating new job opportunities. For this, emphasis is being placed on duty-free zones, given the rapidity with which these create employment posts.

Another option could be tourism, one of the sectors with most growth in the Caribbean.

DR, Haiti Work Together again
Prensa Latina
March 3, 2006

Santo Domingo, The immediate reactivation of the Joint Commission between the Dominican Republic and Haiti was one of the main outcome of the meeting between Presidents Leonel Fernandez and Rene Preval, reported media here Friday.

Fernandez met with the Haitian president-elect at the National Palace on Thursday night. Both examined the state of bilateral relations and agreed to reactivate the Joint Commission, according to government sources.

The commission will discuss the thorny issues of bilateral ties and possible agreements on immigration, trade, border security, health and environment, the sources stated.

The Dominican Republic refugees nearly one million Haitians, most of them illegal, who mainly work cutting sugar cane and other agricultural labors, as well as in construction.

Both countries, in spite of sharing the territory of the same island, have no regular trade and experts consider their common border vulnerable for people smuggling, weapon and drug trafficking.

For Him, for her, for them
Mission trip to Haiti is a journey of the heart
Leominster Champion, Massachusetts
March 10, 2006
BY BILL GILMAN

The weather is sweltering, the living conditions are deplorable. Hygiene is luxury few can afford and to call the accommodations spartan would be generous.

Yet there is no place on earth Norman Charpentier would rather be this week.

Charpentier is the leader of Haitian Outreach, based out of St. Cecilia's Parish. On March 7, he and his mission team arrived in a village on the outskirts of Port Au Prince, where they will spend two weeks doing what they can to try and improve the lives of some of the people in the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

"The first time we went down there it was just for three days. We thought, 'Oh, this is too much, we can't handle it,'" said Charpentier. "But after we got home, within the first two weeks, we were saying we have to do something for these people. They need so much and they are suffering."

Charpentier has made seven such trips to Haiti but this one is different and bittersweet. It is his first mission trip without his beloved wife Lorrie, who passed away in September at the age of 62. He says her love for the Haitian people and her passion for making a difference in their lives serves as an inspiration to him and other members of the eight-person team.

"The smile on her face when she was in Haiti - it was like she was in Heaven," he said.

It was Lorrie Charpentier who founded Haitian Outreach back in 1998. She became interested in the plight of the Haitian people after hearing Mother Monique from the Daughters of Queen Mary Immaculate convent in Haiti speak at Leominster's Franco Vets Club. Speaking through an interpreter, the elderly nun detailed the plight of the Haitian children, particularly the girls, who had little to eat and were not afforded the opportunity for basic education.

"They have a shelter down there where girls come to stay for two years," said Norman. "They clothe them and feed them and teach them to read and teach them to take care of children."

According to Charpentier, after the two-year period, the girls are able to find employment (a precious commodity) as nannies and domestic help. In all, the sisters have 13 missions and serve more than 5,000 children.

While Mother Monique was in Boston for medical treatment in 1997, she elicited a promise from the Charpentiers that they would visit Haiti. Unfortunately, she died three months before their first visit.

It was in the wake of that visit that Lorrie, saying she was moved by the Holy Spirit, formed Haitian Outreach, a year-round project to provide assistance to the nuns of the all-Haitian Daughters of Queen Mary Immaculate convent and pay for the children of the villages they serve to be educated.

Sponsors pledge \$100 to pay for one child to attend school for a year.

"Right now we have 260 children being sponsored," said Charpentier, adding that additional money is sometimes pledged to pay for food for the children and their families. "An extra \$100 will pay for almost a year's supply of rice."

The outreach also provides humanitarian aid for the people of the villages. According to Charpentier, the outreach has sent an estimated 100 tons of food, clothing, dry goods and medical supplies to Haiti since 1998. The goods are shipped in 52-gallon plastic containers provided free of charge by Al Stone and the Sterilite Corp.

The shipments are sent several times throughout the year. However, each winter a mission team from Haitian Outreach boards a plane and heads to the island nation for two weeks of hands-on service.

Lorrie Charpentier led five of these mission trips before becoming seriously ill in 2003 with a rare lung disease related to tuberculosis. Neither she nor her husband was able to participate in the 2004 or 2005 Haitian Outreach mission trips.

"She tried to get me to go in 2004 but there was no way I was going to go without her," said Charpentier. "I needed to be there to take care of her."

Lorrie's death in September hit everyone on the team hard, but there was never any doubt that the mission work in Haiti would continue as fervently as ever.

"A lot of people miss her, but her work goes on," said Charpentier. "Her spirit is always with us and she will definitely be with us on this trip."

This trip to Haiti has a second purpose for Charpentier. He has made arrangements to inter some of Lorrie's ashes on the grounds of the convent's "Mother House." They will be buried next to those of Mother Monique.

"It seemed appropriate that that's where she should be," he said.

While the interment ceremony will command some of the missionaries' attention, their primary goal will be to fulfill Lorrie's mission of helping the Haitian people. According to Charpentier, they will be doing repair and painting work to buildings on the convent grounds. The mission team will be assisted by Haitians hired for the two-week period.

Work is hard to come by for men trying to support a family and most men work for no more than \$2 per day. The mission team will be paying them \$5 per day. The extra money is truly a Godsend in a nation hampered by the second-highest poverty rate in the world.

"The average wage is about \$350 per year and sugar is selling for about \$8 a bag," Charpentier said. "Understandably, they look forward to us coming down there and they are disappointed when we don't."

In addition, the team will be dispersing backpacks filled with toiletries, shoes, socks, underwear and other sundries to the children. The backpacks are filled by the children's sponsors.

In addition to Charpentier, the mission team includes Lou and Claire Giuliani, nurse Linda Belliveau and her daughter Christine, Gloria LeBlanc and Greg Moquin.

It has been three years between visits to Haiti for Charpentier. But still the faces of hungry children and adults trapped in a spiral of poverty remain etched in his mind. Through his nostrils he can still smell the stench of the river flowing through the middle of Port Au Prince, a river in which people bathe, wash their clothes and drink, a body of water he refers to as the "River of Garbage."

But mostly, he remembers the faith in God that has helped the Haitian people endure their suffering. He remembers the smiles on the faces of the children as they walk to school.

It's been three years since his last visit to Haiti, and Norman Charpentier cannot wait to return.

"I do feel at home when I go down there. I miss the people something awful," he said. "These people have nothing, but the children actually seem happier than the ones up here. These people have great faith."

Q-C group bridges distance to troubled, impoverished Haiti
By Jody Ferres
Quad City Times, Iowa
March 5, 2006

Eighteen years ago, Cleon Vander Vennet got a glimpse of the poorest of the poor. She hasn't been able to get them out of her mind ever since.

"I put names and faces on the poor," said Vander Vennet, as she started listing off names. "'Poor' isn't just out there anymore. It's all the people I can name."

For Vander Vennet, it's the men she met who try to farm for their families. It's the women who try to cook meals with what little supplies they have. And it's the children who walk barefoot to school and some who have no clothes on their back.

It's the people of the village of Trouin, Haiti, and nearby St. Anne's parish.

And since 1988, the Moline woman and a small group of Quad-City residents have been working diligently to maintain the Friends of the People of Haiti Parish Twinning Program.

The Friends of the People of Haiti group met Sunday at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport for the group's annual meeting and to share their troubles in the economically and politically suffering country.

The program began in the Quad-Cities after Vander Vennet visited Haiti in 1988 with her husband and another couple.

"After we went and saw what was going on, we knew we had to help," she said.

It was then that Vander Vennet learned about the Parish Twinning Program. Based in Nashville, the program matches a church or group in the United States with a poor village in Haiti or poor Central American country. The group sends money, clothing, medical supplies and their personal assistance to their village once a year.

With a little more than 200 on their mailing list, and about 20 very active members, the Friends of the People of Haiti has helped the parish and village educate hundreds of students. Members install water purification systems, offer medical care and help replace homes. The group spends more than \$30,000 every year.

Although the Quad-City group is ecumenical, the area they serve is primarily the St. Anne's parish, a remote region in southern Haiti.

Diana Lovett has been traveling to Haiti since 1982 as a nurse. After hearing about the group in 1994, she knew she had to join. Since then, Lovett travels to different schools, groups and organizations around the Quad-Cities presenting an informational slide show about the side of Haiti people don't hear about in the news.

In 2005, the medical team saw more than 2,800 patients and performed 34 surgeries.

“They can’t get out of (poverty) alone,” Lovett said.

For the last couple of years, the group has sponsored a young Haitian woman while she attends nursing school.

“We are showing these poor people that someone really does care, and that someone is willing to show them friendship,” she said.

In conjunction with the meeting, the Figge Arts Museum will feature the Edouard Duval-Carrie exhibit “Migration of the Spirit” through April 16. The Miami artist portrays Haitian history, African Diaspora and Vodou in his work.

The city desk can be contacted at

(563) 383-2245 or newsroom@qctimes.com.

A 'pure heart' in Haiti cares for country's forgotten children
NEIL MACDONALD
CBCNews
March 3, 2006

A 15-year veteran of CBC Television News, Neil Macdonald is currently

THE NATIONAL's Washington correspondent. Macdonald joined CBC News in 1988. He was initially assigned to Parliament Hill, where, between Southam newspapers and THE NATIONAL, he would spend a combined total of a decade covering Parliament, reporting on five federal elections, and covering six prime ministers. Macdonald then reported from the Middle East for five years. Macdonald took up his post in Washington in March 2003. He speaks English and French fluently, and Arabic conversationally.

Theresa came into her world ill-equipped.

As she took form in her mother's belly, something twisted her feet into useless lumps of gristle and bone, flecked with a few toenails. It also fused the fingers on one hand together.

Then her mother, having given birth, took a look at her newborn girl and walked away.

In Haiti, a society so poor, so viciously hardscrabble that the term "Darwinian" barely begins to do it justice, Theresa would only act as a drag on her family's efforts to feed itself.

So, Theresa was sent to the room behind the locked door at the back of the pediatric unit in Port-au-Prince's general hospital. There, she was diapered and laid on her back, and left to gurgle and cry and generally add to the din created by her wardmates, many of whom arrived with even worse disabilities.

There was the little girl with the baseball-sized tumour on her face, the blind, clearly retarded girl who wraps her arms fiercely around the legs of any stranger, the toddler whose maladies provoke him to shriek constantly, and, because there is only one woman tending these children, has to spend his time in a caged-in crib.

Children who go to the abandoned ward sometimes don't last very long. Theresa, just weeks old, could not have known how much more hopeless her future had just become.

Michele BlaiseAt about the same time, Michele Blaise was in church, listening to her God.

Blaise, having spent the last 29 years of her life driving a bus for a school board in New York state, had just retired. She took her savings and moved back to her native Haiti, which, despite its blights, had remained in her dreams.

In Port-au-Prince, she found a house, and joined a congregation, and that day, she says, God told her to go to the hospital after church.

So she did. And when she got there, she found Theresa.

"When He sent me there," says Blaise, "He told me, 'Look at that little girl, how she live, we can leave her like that?' And I said no, I take her to my house. And I take her to my house."

Blaise did not have the slightest idea how to care for a disabled child. But, she said she soon found out that aside from the obvious, the little girl was normal.

"I take her to the doctor, and I do everything medical for her, and I see she has no diseases, and I say 'Uh-uh, I'm not gonna let the rest die.' So I go back, and I tell them 'Why those kids die for no reason? They have no diseases.' And they tell me, 'Because we don't have nobody who need those kids because they are handicapped.'

"I say 'Oh, because they are handicapped they have to die? No. What can I do?' They tell me they don't have no room for them.

"So whatever little money I have, I come here and I rent this place, and I fix this place with what I have, and I take those kids and I put them here. And that is all I can do right now."

In other words, Madame Blaise is one of those astonishing pure hearts who can truly be described as selfless. She gives all she has, and then some — her money, even her life, which now consists solely of caring for a dozen very needy children.

So Blaise suddenly had an orphanage on her hands. But she's an amateur, and she knows it, so she reached out, looking for help.

Gina Duncan with TheresaShe finally found Gina Duncan, which was another very fortunate event for baby Theresa. (Someday Theresa will find out how close she came to winding up disabled in a some of the world's grimmest slums, with no help and no protection. Aid workers here say disabled girls are often used as sexual play toys, then left for dead—an incomprehensible savagery that people here say is done because the rapists can do it).

Duncan, a former Montrealer, runs Healing Hands, an agency that makes prosthetics and provides rehabilitation for destitute amputees. It's the only agency providing such a service in Haiti, a place where amputations are fairly common.

Infections are the main cause, often blossoming from physical contact with the abundance of filth and raw sewage in these neighbourhoods.

Healing Hands, says Duncan, was "too happy" to help out. She gave Blaise some organizational help, showed her how to find a little charity money, and went to work on the children.

They persuaded a doctor to amputate one of Theresa's deformed feet. They plan to do the same to the other one soon. Then Theresa will get some prosthetic feet and some rehabilitation, and maybe some education. Eventually, they hope, she'll take her place in Haitian society.

Theresa "My hope, as I said to Madame Blaise, is I hope somebody adopts her," says Duncan, as Blaise feeds the other children rice and beans. "She doesn't need to be here, she needs to be in a home, with parents— there's nothing wrong with her."

Duncan hopes to have a rehab worker visit Blaise's new orphanage regularly. She sees other children here she believes can be salvaged, and redeemed, and given a productive life.

She's done it before.

"We have made a lot of difference in a lot of people's lives that were before not able to have any kind of respect or dignity in a society that completely excludes them," says Duncan.

And Duncan is more of a pro at this game than Blaise. She knows there's strong competition for charity dollars, and that small agencies like hers compete for attention with the likes of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, who visited this year, and the former Playboy Playmate, Susie Krabacher, who makes high-profile trips here and compares herself to Mother Teresa. Not that their activism isn't appreciated, but they eclipse the little workers.

Duncan, choosing her words carefully, explains that Healing Hands doesn't divert one Haitian gourde to corrupt officials in order to ensure uninterrupted delivery of its supplies and operations.

And she isn't afraid to say it: she and Blaise do need money.

Gina Duncan currently has a request in for a grant from CIDA, Canada's foreign aid agency. The Canadian Embassy here is impressed with her work, and chances are good her application will succeed.

It would be hard to imagine a better use for the money.

In the abandoned ward at the central hospital, Dr. Jessie Colimon Adrien at first tries to tell a television crew they can't go in. After all this is a hospital, and there are rules, and then, clearly disgusted, the chief of medical services waves the foreigners through.

Perhaps a little publicity might do some good. God knows no one else gives a damn.

Not that she blames the parents who abandon the children.

"They are too much of a burden. [The parents] leave them, they are no longer visited, and after a few weeks, they are placed here," she says.

After ten minutes, she says she must close the locked door again.

Leaving the ward inspires shame in everyone, simply for not having done something. And the fact that the infants inside are not yet aware of their misery does nothing to lessen the guilt.