



Special Edition on Haiti

IN MEMORIAM Marx Vilaire Aristide

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IN MEMORIAM Marx Vilaire Aristide 1967 – 2004

Since publication of this special edition of FOCAL Point Haiti, its diaspora and the community of those dedicated to working for the betterment of the country have all suffered a deep and in many cases personal loss with the untimely passing of Marx Vilaire Aristide in an automobile accident in Washington DC on June 21st.

Marx Aristide was born in Gonaives Haiti, emigrated to the US and took a degree in economics from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He moved to Washington DC to do graduate work at Howard University and later to run the Washington Office on Haiti, a non-profit human rights group. He returned to Haiti to work with organised peasant movement as director of SEMENCE a loan fund that financed peasant cooperatives. Marx was a leader in working to involve the diaspora in the development of Haiti and one of his last endeavours was to create the Haitian-American Skills Share Foundation. Throughout this career Marx worked with all but one of the contributors to this special edition of FOCAL Point. We all have our memories of Marx and his work, but what stands out are his intelligence, dedication and for me his sense of humour. Marx appeared as someone who could make his fortune, or at least a comfortable living, doing anything. Yet, he chose Haiti and a less than comfortable life. Marx was always able to find the humour, so absurd as it is, in the mess that is Haiti and he used this gift to keep himself and the rest of us sane. With his passing work on Haiti has gotten a bit more difficult, a bit heavier and lonelier.

This Special Edition of FOCAL Point is dedicated to Marx.

Concertation - Voices from Haiti

The recent humanitarian and political crisis in Haiti has, or more correctly, *had* until recently, prompted much news coverage. For a few weeks the media in Canada and elsewhere presented almost daily stories on the unfolding events. Yet, just as quickly as the crisis appeared, the coverage has faded. Even though this is the nature of news, and the rise and fall in coverage on Haiti was to be expected, there is, however, much to criticize in the range and depth of the coverage on Haiti.

What has been missing is what we have seen elsewhere in coverage on Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan and that is in-depth and critical analysis of the crisis and what this means for Canada. An increasing number of critics and

observers are noting this is not an idle question. More so than any of the other flashpoints in the world Canada is connected to Haiti by immigration, geo-politically through its relationship with the wider Caribbean as well as through language and culture. Long after Iraq and Afghanistan have exited the spotlight of international attention, Haiti will continue to affect Canada.

Decisions are now being made about long-term development in Haiti and Canada will play a prominent role including hosting the International Donors' meeting on Haiti this summer. More than ever we need to understand what has happened in Haiti, what it means for Canada and what are the options for the future. This *FOCAL POINT Special Edition* on Haiti has assembled voices ranging across the political and geographic spectrum and given them space beyond the usual sound bites to which they have been confined. Yves Savain provides a view from the private sector and the right-of-centre *Fondation Nouvelle Haiti*; Chavennes Jean-Baptiste writing from Papaye for the organised peasant movement, and there are voices from the Haitian diaspora. The edition also includes a critical analysis of the US role in Haiti, by Bob Maguire, former member of the US State Department Taskforce on Haiti, explaining, clearly and concisely how the current crisis unfolded.

The voices presented have different preoccupations and concerns and this being Haiti, there is continuation of past grievances, but most interestingly what comes across is a common set of concerns and a consensus on what is needed to move ahead.■

Carlo Dade
FOCAL Senior Advisor
Guest Editor for the *FOCAL POINT Special Edition* on Haiti.

Origins of the Current Crisis: The *Chimeres* of Washington, D.C.

Robert Maguire

In the streets of Port-au-Prince and throughout the Haitian countryside, we have seen the kind of murder and mayhem that characterized the country between 1991 and 1994, following a violent coup d'état that led to three years of brutal de facto military rule. Rampaging mobs of civilians and paramilitary death squads loot, burn and destroy in a practice that Haitians call *dechoukaj*, or uprooting. U.S. and other international troops, hustled into Haiti to protect the lives of their nationals and to try to stabilize this situation find themselves drawn increasingly into the middle of Haiti's muddled environment of anger, frustration, and fear, as their mission "creeps" to include disarming the multitudes of Haitians with weapons.

Haiti's suddenly exiled President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, insists that his removal was a coercive one while, concurrently, in Port-au-Prince a new, provisional President is sworn in under the watchful eyes of ambassadors and envoys, and a new Prime Minister is named by a group of citizens who now form a national political advisory board. All of this has this veteran Haiti-watcher thinking that we are seeing a case of "deja vu all over again."

Multiple Disappointments

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell stated that he had been "disappointed" with Haiti's now-deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He is correct, as there is no doubt that Mr. Aristide provided much to be disappointed about. I will not elaborate here, as Mr. Aristide's detractors have already undertaken that task with much gusto.

I wonder, however, if Mr. Powell has also been disappointed in Haiti's self-proclaimed democratic opposition, a group of political and economic leaders who have also given us much to criticize and regret. The single-minded intransigence of this largely ad hoc group toward achieving its one, unifying objective - the removal of Mr. Aristide from office - has motivated it to behave rather undemocratically. Its leaders failed to engage in true democratic process as measured by elections and by negotiated solutions to political problems. Instead, they have appeared to practice that deeply rooted Haitian political practice of giving a "wink and a nod" to violence in the street if you believe it furthers your political objectives, emulating, unfortunately, a strategy amply employed by Mr. Aristide in recent years.

Over the past three years, they have acted with a veto from an empty chair at the negotiating table; repeatedly undermining or thwarting internationally-led attempts to find a solution to Haiti's political crisis. This included their rejection in late February of the urgings of Secretary Powell to accept the plan presented by CARICOM to achieve a peaceful, mediated solution to Haiti's longstanding crisis that would have permitted Haiti's elected President to serve out his term, while providing them with a shared role in the country's governance.

This failure of US influence when push came to shove in late February 2004 is doubly distressing since the personalities who comprise this opposition have been widely perceived as allies — even sycophants — of Washington. Among these personalities are individuals who have participated for years in an array of political strategy meetings organized by the International Republican Institute using US government funds, and who have repeatedly visited Washington over the past three years.

As I scan this political landscape, I get a strong sense of *deja vu all over again*, as self-styled and unelected political chiefs broker their way into power. In their mind's eye, again taking a page from deeply-rooted Haitian political practice, the means justify the ends. And what are those ends? What we have been seeing in Haiti over the past years is not a political struggle of competing issues, ideas, and principals. It is nothing more than a struggle among the political class and its allies, and the now-unseated government and its allies to seize, and/or to hold on to, power.

U.S. Policy Toward Haiti

In terms of disappointment, I also wonder whether this sense of Mr. Powell has extended to those who have been largely responsible for the conduct of U.S. policy toward Haiti since January 2001 when US policy began to evolve from constructive engagement to a policy that worked to isolate the Haitian government, withhold resources, punish it, and push it into a corner. As US efforts focused more and more exclusively on working with Haiti's opposition groups the US sacrificed carefully constructed leverage and influence with Haitian elected political actors, many of whom were already distrustful of the United States.

This concern that presumptive policy signals were being sent to Port-au-Prince from Washington, and that those signals were highly damaging to efforts to resolve what was, back then, a relatively reparable political crisis, was shared by none other than the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti. In his farewell address in Port-au-Prince in the summer of 2003 to HAMCHAM, the Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce, the career diplomat who headed the US mission in Haiti, the Honourable Brian Dean Curran, reflected on Haiti's long-standing political crisis remarking:

"There is an incoherence (in Haiti) that has troubled me: the incoherence of the way Washington's views are interpreted here. Those of you who know me will realize that since I arrived here as President Clinton's Ambassador and then President Bush's, I have always talked straight about US policy and what might and might not be new policy directions. But there were many in Haiti who preferred not to listen to me, the president's representative, but to their own friends in Washington, sirens of extremism or revanchism on the one hand or apologists on the other. They don't hold official positions. I call them the *chimeres* of Washington."

US policy - and practices - toward Haiti in recent years have been driven, unfortunately, by a deeply rooted animosity to one man – Jean-Bertrand Aristide – that has been held among a relatively small but powerful group of actors in Washington. Policies rigorously enacted under the auspices of

this group in order either to emasculate Mr. Aristide politically or to force him out of office, as we have witnessed, have put Haiti and its citizens at grave risk, while concurrently creating potential spill over effects both in the Caribbean.

To achieve the narrow political goal of getting Mr. Aristide, the *chimeres* of Washington have, in essence, enacted policies that have devastated Haiti. What better example can one identify of being willing to throw out the bathwater in order to get the baby...

A Pyrrhic Victory

The departure of Mr. Aristide, at least for now, has been achieved. Those who have sought it are now rejoicing in their political victory. But their victory is proving to be a Pyrrhic one as Haiti has descended deeper and deeper on the slippery slope of lawlessness. And, with the descent into lawlessness comes the prospect of Haiti's emergence as a kind of narco-trafficking free state, as the countryside's runways and ports fall within the domain of the local warlords, many of whom already have a history of involvement in drug trafficking.

The victory is Pyrrhic also because it was achieved through the slow strangulation of Haiti's capacity to respond to the humanitarian, social and environmental challenges and crises before it. And we have seen a rash of significant damage to the country's already weak humanitarian and development infrastructure, as roads and ports have been severely damaged and destroyed, and public and private buildings looted and burned. This destruction has included attacks by marauding armed rebels on such medical installations as the highly-respected hospital in central Haiti operated by Dr. Paul Farmer's Partners in Health organization, where two members of the staff have been murdered, the hospital's only ambulance has been commandeered, and medical staff and patients have been constantly threatened by the bandits.

Perhaps the most Pyrrhic element of this victory, however, has been its achievement at the expense of the Haitian population's faith in democracy. This is illustrated most vividly by the enthusiastic welcome given by some to the return of the gunmen. While there should be no doubt

that this welcome has been fuelled by a realistic sense of self-preservation by those who do not have the guns, by the gratitude of those released from Haiti's jails and their families, and by former military and paramilitary figures who have been waiting patiently for such an opening to occur, this welcome is also fuelled by another factor. Haiti's citizens are deeply disappointed, indeed, disgusted, with the comportment of all of the country's political leaders who, over the past decade, have been so intent on their own, personal struggles to maintain or attain power that they have sacrificed their country. To reinterpret a phrase, Haiti's politicians have been fiddling while Port-au-Prince has been burning.

This disenchantment with democracy is an enormously tragic and dangerous development. Haitians have harboured "dreams of democracy" since the 1986 ouster of the Duvalier dictatorship. Their dreams have repeatedly been turned into nightmares. It is in everyone's interest that we work together to deflect that disenchantment and restore faith in the resolution of disputes through participation, engagement, the peaceful mediation of differences, rule of law, and the rejection of all forms of political intimidation, violence and recidivism.■

Robert Maguire, PhD, is the Director of the Trinity College Haiti Program in Washington, DC. Prior to this he served on the Haiti Task Force at the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. This article is excerpted from testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on March 10, 2004.

The Organised Peasant Movement Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Chavannes Jean-Baptiste

Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from a longer letter written in February 2004 by Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, the director of the Papaye Peasant Movement, MPP (*Mouvement des paysans de papaye/ Mouvement paysan papay*) and translated by Louise Bowditch. Though recent events have overtaken the story, the analysis illuminates the relationship between the armed insurgents and the organised peasant movement in Haiti. The excerpt has been edited for brevity.

What is the MPP's Position Facing this New Situation?

We are in a de facto situation not a legal situation. The Front [National Liberation Front of Haiti] is fighting to force the departure of Aristide; we ourselves have been fighting to get Aristide out since he returned to the National Palace. There we have a coincidence of interests; both of us want Aristide out. It is the only thing we have in common, but they have just now come to the position we have held for a very long time. Both of us want Aristide to go, but we have different methods. MPP has always used peaceful methods based on the mobilization of the population. They [the Front] have chosen arms.

We want a normal country based in participatory democracy where we can continue to work to change the situation of the popular masses especially the peasantry, which represents over 70 percent of the population. We don't know what plan the Front has. We have problems with the origin of all the sectors that form the Front. We see in it the former military that tortured MPP militants during the coup d'état, FRAPH [Revolutionary Front for Haitian Advancement and Progress], which caused all the militants of MPP to go into hiding, and the Cannibal Army, which has mistreated and killed and Aristide supporters.

We cannot make an alliance with this group just because we are both against Aristide. An alliance requires more than that. But at the same time they agreed on the need for a provisional President who comes from civil society, they agree to give up their arms as soon as there is a government to replace Aristide. There is no assurance that they don't have a plan to take power. There is just one thing they are clear about, and that is the existence of the army in the Haitian constitution. They want the army to return. It is true that the army is constitutional, but that would be a long discussion.

Today according to our analysis the great majority of the Haitian people want Aristide to quit. The international community until now has stood firmly behind him. Because the OAS has lost so much face in this affair, they are standing behind CARICOM in their proposition to end the crisis. The Haitian people don't like this proposition for two reasons: They [the international community] don't understand- if the OAS failed with the dossier how can CARICOM succeed? It is as if a General fails (then expecting that) a policeman will succeed. Secondly, because CARICOM always showed their support for Aristide, no one in Haiti takes them seriously.

Today no sector in national life has confidence in the international community and how they view the resolution of the crisis.■

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Private Investment: The Cure for Chronic Ailments

Yves Savain

Emerging from another difficult political season, Haitians in Haiti and its Diaspora are challenged once again to implement policies that deliver sustained social tranquility and broadly distributed economic prosperity. The first in a number of tasks is the establishment of the limited government intended by the Constitution of 1987. The proper role for such a government is to motivate, facilitate, coordinate and foremost refrain from impeding the market forces that alone will spur productivity and engender growth. A major step of course is to ensure accountability through a fair and transparent electoral process. However, along with a competent and fair judiciary, the most significant and favorable impact on the economy will come from the decentralization of public administration, its control and oversight. The Constitution mandates this reform and also favors the creation of regional and mixed public-private but mainly private bodies with the authority to raise capital and manage major public works projects. This approach, common in the United States and once judged unfeasible in Haiti, is gaining wide support especially from the country's business community.

Therein lies the core of Haiti's economic, and by default its political, dilemma. The nation's general desire for prosperity hinges on the ability to attract large investments. Modest and irregular gestures of bilateral and multilateral generosity will not suffice to build and maintain the economy needed to sustain 8 million human beings in the early 21st Century. The operative term here is large. Because without an adequate infusion of capital carefully aimed at building the infrastructure with which to create future growth, Haiti's ecological and social decline will not be slowed. Instead social instability, chronic and abject poverty and unrelenting out-migration will persist.

For now the economy plods along nourished mainly by remittances. The Inter-American Development Bank IDB estimates that nearly \$US 1 billion a year flows into a country with a GDP of \$US 3.6 billion, by World Bank measurements. Individual transfers rarely exceed \$3000 per year but are significant when compared to export of goods and services that the World Bank sets at 12.6% of GDP. Directed at consumption, these small individual grants, mainly from Haitian Americans, tend to have little effect on savings, reinvestments and overall economic growth that in the same decade has been flat or negative.

But even as macro economic conditions remain unfavorable, the population stubbornly strives to improve its situation. After emigration, education is widely regarded as the most promising means to financial betterment. Schooling is big business across the country. Private academic institutions, heavily subsidized by remittances, serve poorly for the most part, over 70% of all children enrolled. Commerce, that is the importation, distribution and retailing of imported goods—often

secondhand—is another essential pillar of a fragile and unbalanced economy. Here again money sent by relatives sustains a new class of merchants that constitutes a vast network of grassroots entrepreneurs otherwise known as the informal economy.

It is then the formal side of the economy that is in need of urgent repair. And only on that side can concrete steps be taken to attract the major influx of resources that will generate an improved standard of living for all. Indeed, the obstacle to such investments is not a dearth of viable business models but the absence of legal and regulatory certitude. Assurances are needed that protect competition and reward performance. Funds, for example, can quickly materialize to provide Haitians the modern and affordable telecommunications services already available to most Caribbean communities. Without a penny from the national treasury, the country's political class has it in its power to bring widely distributed voice and broadband capabilities to major towns.

To go forward, truly autonomous authorities must be created to build and manage Haiti's infrastructure. Since 2001, Jacmel, population 30,000, has had reliable electrical service, around the clock. It is so because the Canadian International Development Agency that financed its power plant worked closely with the local community and obtained assurances of total independence and non-interference from EDH, the national electric utility based in Port-au-Prince. The significant investments that will bring current to other towns and cities must be shielded from political whims or worse. Managers and trustees must be selected on the basis of competence and reputation. This goes as well for modern ports and airports, drinking water and major highways. Only then might the country's comparative advantage in commerce, small-scale manufacturing, and countless other sectors yet to be developed live up to their full potential.

In summary, economic rebirth must be the highest priority of any administration and that is contingent on large external investments. Once the proper legal conditions are in place, the Diaspora will lead with accelerated transfers. Private, bilateral and multilateral financial institutions will no doubt follow. And for short and

long-term gain; the most effective use of any inflow of capital must be the construction of a modern infrastructure.■

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Bases of a Successful Approach to Haiti

James R. Morrell

Haiti is a troubled country in which people in public life find it difficult to compromise. Haitians are slow to trust and quick to denounce. This is true even of those intellectually committed to democracy. The wonderful loyalty shown to one another in family life—witness more than \$1 billion in voluntary family remittances from Haitians in Canada and the United States each year—is extended to politics with difficulty. There, it is everyone for himself, from the president on down, as most recently and convincingly demonstrated by President Aristide, although he was only the latest in a long line of Haitian presidents who behaved this way. Haiti, therefore, has yet to truly build a nation.

However, there are times when Haitians surmount these barriers of mistrust, take personal risks, and accomplish great things together. At the end of 2003 and the first months of 2004, a sketchy, tenuous unity of purpose took hold among probably a majority of Haitians, just in time for the bicentennial of that original rare moment of unity that culminated in 1804, the victory of the world's only successful slave insurrection. The unity of 2004 was a negative unity, a rejection of Aristide's corruption, abuse, and violence, a unity long to congeal and quick to dissipate. Yet, there it was, spreading from the intellectuals and the government opposition coalition Group of 184 to the students and concerned citizens of Port-au-Prince, to the people of Cap-Haitian mobilized by *Initiative Citoyenne*, and to the former Aristide henchmen with their mass following in Gonaives. Only yesterday these henchmen had been terrorizing the democratic elements. But now, the various strands of the impromptu movement encouraged each other. Demonstrators in Port-au-Prince on January 1, 2004 listened on their radios for news from Gonaives. Each reinforced each other and when the former Aristide thugs in Gonaives took police headquarters on February 5, 2004, having scattered the police and gangs sent by Aristide, the death knell of the regime sounded. The man who had once had virtually the whole country behind him now had no one to defend him.

Another group of former Aristide henchmen, drug dealers, soldiers of the disbanded army, and terrorists observed these goings-on from the Dominican Republic. They grabbed some old rifles, piled into a few trucks, and knocked down the house of cards they found in the Central Plateau and Cap-Haitian. The frequent, insistent demonstrations of the Group of 184 had lapped almost to the grounds of the palace, but being peaceful, never physically threatened the occupant. The uprisings of the former

Aristide henchmen in Gonaives and now the drug dealers and army men from the Dominican Republic were different. Aristide duly fled, having allegedly safely placed abroad in family accounts at least \$250 million against this day. It was an alliance of convenience, not any intellectual unity that bound these three main disparate strands of the anti-Aristide uprising together. Yet none could have succeeded without the other. They even seemed to have developed a dim awareness of this fact.

Give the Haitians credit, then, for having re-liberated themselves in 2004. For it is certain that as in 1804, they did it by themselves. In fact, they did it in the teeth of resistance by major power centres in the West. The Bush administration quickly overcame its early ideological distaste for Aristide to accept and support him as the power holder in place. For three long years it lent diplomatic support and from 2002 gradually restored the aid that President Clinton had cut in an effort to correct the 2000 elections. The OAS tilted toward Aristide. Ex-members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other lobbyists were alleged to have received \$7 million from Aristide to press his case in the U.S. political arena. Even elements of the Left, which should have been strongest for the people and against Aristide, were in his camp, and remain so to this day.

It is the people of Haiti, then, who are to be saluted in 2004. No one in the West has grounds to complain that they did it in their own way. That thugs gave the final push is to be blamed not on Haitians but on Westerners who abandoned the democratic movement, leaving it incapable, alone, of finishing the job. Far from aiding the democratic movement, in the final weeks, after fifty Marines were sent, the push was on in the West to send many more to prop up the rejected Aristide regime. Totally misunderstanding the situation, U.S. senators John Kerry and Tom Harkin, the Black Caucus, much of the U.S. Left, and the editorialists of the New York Times and Washington Post all clamored for the Marines to go and save Aristide. In the crunch, the Bush administration, as would any incumbent American administration under the circumstances, declined to commit the U.S. military to such a completely hopeless and useless cause.

Canada can base a successful approach to Haiti on this coincidence of understanding with the Bush administration, but more importantly, on grasping the crucial importance of building on such sense of unity as the Haitians managed to achieve in the anti-Aristide uprising. Foreigners will not conveniently disarm either the rebel or the Lavalas gangs for the new government. There are too many guns and they are too easy to hide. It would transform the foreign troops from stabilizers into occupiers. That leaves only political suasion, building on the tenuous anti-Aristide unity as a way to subsume and channel the former henchmen and soldiers into the political process. Only some will be willing to be so channeled, while others will opportunistically return to their criminal ways, posing a dire challenge both to the interim regime and its foreign protectors. Minimizing, rather than provoking this problem ought to be the goal.

Similarly, the inclusion of the pro-Aristide Lavalas party in the original tripartite commission that named the interim government, and the attempt to include it in the electoral commission, may yet persuade modern-minded members of this organization that its future lies in the political process, rather than as a continued personalistic vehicle for Aristide and an organizer of deadly gangs.

There is no need for the countries of the Americas and donor community to drive wedges between the Haitians. The international community should—and the Canadians are best at doing this—objectively survey the scene, discern the elements of unity that exist, and demand that Haitians work together in a common process and facilitate this happening. Once it is made very clear to the Haitians that mutual accommodation is key to progress, and foreign support is for the democratic process, not any particular faction, the route toward success is opened. ■

James R. Morrell is Director, Haiti Democracy Project, a research organization based in Washington, D.C.

And If Haitians Could Express Themselves?

Madeleine Desnoyers

At the beginning of June 2004, as the umpteenth international mission arrives in Haiti, many ask: what are the chances for success this time? Others try to identify the reasons behind the failure of previous missions and the incapacity of international donors to stop the drift which has led this country to the brink of civil war. Why have these missions not contributed significantly to the advancement of democracy and peace in Haiti?

John Reginald Dumas, Special Advisor on Haiti to the United Nations Secretary General, attributed the failure of previous missions in part to the “inability of international organizations to involve the local population”

in their actions (as quoted by Jocelyn Coulon in *La Presse* on June 2, 2004). One could equally apply this statement to Haitian governments, and particularly to the current provisional government.

International donors engaged in setting up the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) have attempted a synthesis of the “lessons learned” in which they emphasize, among other points, the lack of a long-term vision, of coordination between international donors, and of transparency and confidence of both parties in the relationship between donors and the government. They also underline, and this is what interests us here, that social, cultural and historical factors were not considered in their plans. This is a real deficiency, and it is emphasized (though not well documented) in evaluations of donor programmes on democracy and governance. With a glimmer of hope, the synthesis also pointed to successes, for example in the electricity infrastructure in Jacmel. There, the population having participated in the project, showed its commitment, to the point of defending the installation against the generalized destruction that characterized the troubles of early 2004.

During a mission to Haiti by Rights and Democracy from May 11-22, we heard Haitians speak for themselves, of their desire to construct and define themselves as a nation, and of their exasperation with always being directed from above, or from outside the country.

Even a citizen's most basic requirement, to have official identity documents, is not fulfilled in Haiti. Several million Haitians do not “officially” exist. The government is not even concerned with this problem. However, human rights organizations are campaigning to register these individuals. This is a pressing issue given the fact that civil registries will be crucial in determining who can vote in the upcoming elections (in 2005).

The conditions in which the majority of Haitians live are terribly distressing. Prime Minister Latortue had promised to re-establish electrical and water services, resume garbage collection and improve security in the first three months of

his mandate. But it is his subsequent silence and inaction on these very matters which causes the majority of Haitians to think that they simply do not matter, or even exist, for the interim government. Putting the country back on its feet may be a complicated challenge, but Haitians would understand it if government officials take the time to explain the delays, the obstacles, and fix realistic time frames. Moreover, if Haitians are asked to participate in cleaning brigades, rather than wait for new garbage trucks to be donated by the international community, without a doubt they would join in and mobilize. But such initiatives are not being taken due to the absence of leadership; the result is the feeling of helplessness, and piled up garbage!

Many projects have been proposed by diverse civil society organizations—national conference, national congress, social contract—showing the desire of Haitians to define by themselves and between themselves a national project. It is the need to start afresh in order to erase the strong feeling of failure which has been modestly expressed by several interlocutors. As one person put it: "Faut faire société" (we need to make society)

A first phase could be to bring together people in the regions according to their sectors of activity. This act of coming together, and overcoming insecurity and fear, will allow Haitians to speak publicly and to make plans for regional development. This would then lead to a second stage, the articulation of a national development project. All want to arrive at a consensus around such a project to redefine their country. There certainly are major challenges to be met on the way. However, by recognizing that there will be divergent opinions despite this common goal and that such divergences are inevitable, Haitians can learn to dialogue and negotiate. The international community can provide the material resources to realize these objectives, while leaving the total control of the process to Haitians themselves.

Haitian civil society was the determining factor in the departure of President Aristide, while the international community just guaranteed his exit. This was the result of a long period of mobilization and demonstrations, which were costly in terms of human lives and violations of all sorts. The departure of Aristide is in itself quite an accomplishment, but civil society sectors did not stop there. They also made proposals on how to solve the crisis: for example the *la Plate-forme démocratique* (Democratic Platform) proposed establishing a "Council of the Wise" with representatives from civil society; and the *Coordination des femmes* (CONAP – Women's Coordination) demanded, among others, a fair representation of women in the provisional government. Earlier, social organizations showed their capacity to make policy proposals, suggest modifications to legislation, and create a political space where dialogue and negotiations could occur with government representatives.

International donor say they want to support civil society participation—but this is not just a matter of reinforcing institutional capacities of this organization or that coalition, it is a matter of reinforcing the capacity of

these organizations to contribute to the construction and functioning of democracy. This translates into giving the means to civil society organizations to talk directly to the government about questions that concern them. In concrete terms, that would mean furnishing them with the tools to analyze the situation in their sector (labour codes, labour conditions in factories, small and peasant farming, registration of land claims, condition of women), to identify needs and formulate policy proposals, to promote their proposals before the public and government authorities. It is equally important, and even a necessity, to encourage future Haitian governments to engage in these political spaces of dialogue and negotiation with diverse sectors of civil society, and to make a place in institutions for the participation of social organizations.

Democracy cannot be constructed without a strong and independent civil society, where the most marginalized sectors have their place. The international community could furnish civil society organizations with the means to act, while taking care to leave to Haitians themselves, the latitude to re-construct their society as they see fit.■

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The article is also available in French « Et si on laissait de la place aux Haïtiens? » on the FOCAL website at <http://www.focal.ca>.



Canada in Post-Aristide Haiti

Carlo Dade

More than crises in Europe and the Middle East, the collapse of Haiti is, and will continue to be, of particular and immediate concern to Canada both internationally and domestically. As instability and lawlessness grow in Haiti and the country becomes more entrenched as a narcotics and transnational crime base the repercussions will resonate in Canada and the US.

Most immediately, the effect will be felt along the migration and transnational pathways that link Haiti and Canada. In the longer term, problems in Haiti will impact neighbouring countries and adversely affect wider Canadian interests, as well as immigrant communities from throughout the Caribbean in Canada. Responding to the crisis in Haiti is not only a matter of narrow national interest; it also poses larger questions of relevance in terms of defining Canada's place in the world. There are few places where Canada has such a clear comparative advantage as a donor for being a francophone country with the attendant institutions. And no other donor has as positive a history in Haiti or is as unencumbered by colonial legacies. The question then is not *if* Canada should be engaged in Haiti; the question is *how*.

First, it is crucial to clarify that Haiti is neither hopeless nor a basket case. Nowhere is it preordained that Haiti must suffer poor government and poverty. Addressing issues of poverty and bad governance in Haiti does not require defying the laws of physics nor does it require a deep understanding of theoretical quantum physics. Past attempts to improve governance and quality of life in Haiti largely have failed through a combination of Haitian truculence, corruption, donor fatigue and impatience. The most recent failure though is directly linked to a unique, and unhelpful, antipathy toward Aristide by the Bush administration that is admirably documented by Robert Maguire in this Special Edition of *FOCAL POINT*. The removal of Aristide means the removal of US obstructionism and thus presents a new chance for Haiti, for Haitians and for the international donor community. It also presents an opportunity for Canada.

Second, the situation in Haiti is not yet at the level of concern as in Afghanistan or Somalia, though it is clearly headed in that direction. Institutions that support law and order and exercise the functions of government have broken down under internal violence and economic collapse. The remnants of a Haitian State persist but only as a shadow presence; it retains a flimsy legal standing but, for all practical purposes, has lost the ability to exercise authority in its own territory. The vacuum of governance and the scale of appalling human misery is a reproach to the hemisphere and to the principal donor nations. Haiti is a major drug transshipment point. Estimates are that close to 21 percent of cocaine leaving Colombia for the US and Canada passes

through Haiti. The leaders of the armed insurgency that ousted Aristide have been under investigation by US Drug Enforcement Agencies. Money from the drug trade, estimated by the US State Department at over US\$ 80 million a year during Aristide's last years in power, fuels lawlessness, weakens governance and increases instability. Haiti has become a "failed state." Without a competent functioning government in Haiti these problems, and their impact on Canada and the region, will become more severe.

Third, involvement in Haiti is important for Canada's relation with the United States. Canadian diplomatic and development experience, capabilities and expertise in Haiti allow for a more equal and balanced partnership than is possible in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere where Canadian contributions tend to get lost in the background. Because Canada has strong national interests, strong expertise and a strong history of involvement in Haiti it should be able to influence international engagement to more strongly reflect Canadian values. Added to this, the US has had a rougher time of it in Haiti recently and this creates space for a stronger Canadian role. Such a combination of factors does not, and will not, appear often for Canada.

But it is important to bear in mind that it is not only the Haitian state that has failed. International assistance efforts aimed at ending poverty and promoting democracy have also largely failed. The challenge now is to avoid the temptation of quick fixes and throwing money into repetitions of past mistakes. It is necessary to find a development model that will work by learning from past mistakes at state-building in Haiti and elsewhere while taking into account the changed environment in the country. Based on experience elsewhere, it is clear that a new strategy for Haiti must involve five key components. In each of these there is a role for Canada.

1. Long-term commitment. The UN Secretary General originally called for a ten-year commitment but has settled for a two-year

commitment with an option to renew. It is well known from experience in Haiti and elsewhere that commitment erodes and funding declines as the crisis that created headlines fades from media attention. This situation has been avoided only when a major donor has taken on the responsibility to lead and sustain the initiative, as did Australia in East Timor and Norway in Sri Lanka. This is not something that the United Nations has proven able to do by itself. The US will be the main donor in Haiti, but with more pressing responsibilities in the Middle-East and Asia as well as a troubled history in Haiti, having another nation assume leadership on Haiti would be welcomed by the Americans. In addition, now that Aristide has been removed, the current US administration has less interest in the country. The danger is that “less interest” translates into “no interest” and Haiti once again slips into the shadows. This can only be avoided if another country steps to the fore. Brazil has agreed to provide the bulk of the peacekeeping force. But, the Brazilians lack experience in state building and commanding peacekeeping operations. Also, the Brazilians have given no indication that they are committed to Haiti for the long-term. Canada has the experience to guide long-term efforts in Haiti and could look to forge a partnership to share knowledge and experience with Brazil.

2. Security. No progress on any front is possible without the restoration and maintenance of security and the rule of law. The first step is to arrest the leaders of the armed insurgency for whom criminal charges are already outstanding. Under the UN mandate, foreign soldiers in an active peacekeeping role should provide overwhelming force to disarm gangs and stem the rise of the narco-economy. Disarmament is difficult; but it is impossible only if no attempt is made to accomplish it. Peacekeeping requirements are lighter in Haiti than in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Iraq because the country lacks cadres of seasoned, trained, and well-armed fighters. The clear danger is that given time and improved narco-connections, armed gangs in Haiti will develop into formidable gangs with warlords along the Jamaican or Somali models. Organized Haitian gangs have not yet reached this stage and one goal of any intervention should be to prevent that scenario from emerging. Recalling frustrated Canadian experience in the nineties, equal attention and resources must be given to the establishment of a reasonably reliable judicial and penal system.

3. The Haitian diaspora. Due to out-migration and flight, there are shortages of professionals throughout government ministries and civil society organizations. CIDA and USAID have efforts underway to incorporate the Haitian Diaspora in the rebuilding process. The primary goal would be to identify agencies in donor countries that have significant resources, and especially those involving the Haitian Diaspora, that could be seconded to work in Haiti to jump-start the rebuilding process. There is much experience, good and bad, from which to learn from recent experience in Afghanistan. The secondary goal in doing this is to build donor confidence, given the past history of mismanagement and corruption, and thereby attract the resources needed for reconstruction.

4. Trust fund and donor coordination. This will be the most difficult task in rebuilding Haiti. But convincing donors to sublimate the national ego and work for the greater good in Haiti is absolutely essential. Development is a notoriously supply rather than demand-driven process; donors seek to push national and cultural priorities, including insisting on pet causes carried out by favoured NGOs. The nascent state in Haiti is too weak and understaffed to manage a series of complex and difficult relations with myriad donors. A dozen donors each with its own demands for accountability, reports, official visits and consultations could effectively strangle the rebuilding process in red tape. Donors will have to rationalize their engagement with the government and this will include pooling the resources needed to support an interim Haitian government into a trust fund managed either by an international organization or a private firm. Also, evidence from Afghanistan and elsewhere shows that donors actually disburse only about 60 per cent of promised aid. A trust fund would help with planning in Haiti since budgeting would be based on funds deposited in the trust fund as opposed to funds that have been promised.

5. Elections. The “model” should include approximate parameters for an electoral calendar. Given the chaotic political landscape, the error of a rush to elections, as occurred in Bosnia, must be avoided. First elections should be held at the municipal level. Any national level elections that would be held now would simply fuel a continuation of the fratricidal infighting and bickering that has plagued the country over the past five years. At some point the government must stand for election and achieve popular legitimacy or be replaced. But, the more pressing needs facing the country make the cost of elections, likely close to US\$ 20 million, difficult to justify. In addition, there is fatigue and even widespread disgust with the political process and those who represent it throughout Haiti. There is no reason that a government of technocrats could not stand for at least two years, the length of the first UN mandate, *as long as* visible and real progress was being

made on reconstruction, ending violence and establishing order.

A key factor in designing a successful intervention in Haiti is to have a clear and well-articulated exit strategy with non-ambiguous milestones and goals as opposed to fixed dates. Developing the exit strategy will require pulling in experience from Afghanistan, Kosovo, East Timor and other recent cases. ■

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