

# The Crucifixion of Haiti

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## Part I: Historical Background & Political Struggles

December 1990 to February 2004

### INTRODUCTION: MAKING SENSE OF HAITI

Today, like so many other times since its birth as a nation in 1804, Haiti bleeds. It bleeds because the powerful nations of the world are once again making an example of Haiti, forcing Haiti spend its time on the cross. Understanding this unfolding tragedy requires a critical examination of Haiti's past, a task scrupulously avoided by the mainstream press. Rather, the corporate media offer up nothing more than decontextualized snapshots of the undifferentiated "chaos" and "turmoil" that wrack Haiti today. As a consequence of this ahistoric perspective, commentary and analysis frequently consist of shallow (and not so subtly racist) references to Haiti's deficient political culture (Voodoo, corruption, sectarianism, etc.), which may well thwart our benevolent intentions once again.(1)

Contrary to the depictions of the corporate media, however, Haiti's so-called chaos is far from undifferentiated, and "our" intentions far from benevolent. Rather, the killings and violence, which have intensified since September 30, are part of a systematic effort by the interim government and the former military to silence and subdue the supporters of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his party, Fanmi Lavalas. Furthermore, the U.S., France, and Canada played a pivotal role in creating the conditions for Aristide's removal (ultimately accomplished by U.S. Marines) and have resolutely supported the new government in its brutal endeavours since. These events are not a break from the norm: Even the most cursory look at Haiti's history reveals the preponderant influence of external powers on the development of this impoverished Caribbean nation. In particular, the Haitian military and the United States government have figured prominently in the political struggles of Haiti throughout the 20th century.

Haiti's history is a history of foreign exploitation and domestic class struggle, of gut wrenching violence and debilitating corruption; above all, however, Haiti's history is a history of resistance. As such, the pattern of American intervention in Haiti must be viewed in the larger context of post-WWII U.S. imperialism directed against progressive movements and in support of oligarchies throughout Latin America.(2) While space constraints preclude a full review of the history of U.S.-Haiti relations in such a perspective, it is informative to note here the origin of the Haitian Army and review some of the outrageous claims made against Father Aristide during his first presidency by the U.S. media before looking at the most recent coup d'état and the state of affairs in Haiti today.

"AN ARMY TO FIGHT THE PEOPLE"

Born of the only successful slave rebellion in history, American (and French) antipathy to Haiti goes back to the country's very beginning. The invasion and occupation by the U.S. Marines from 1915 to 1934 is significant, however, for two reasons: 1) it reveals the motives that guided U.S. involvement in Haiti prior to the Cold War, broadly the same concerns that guide U.S. policy today, and 2) it left deep scars on Haiti and created the military, an institution that would dominate Haiti's political life long after the end of the occupation. According to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, the goals of the occupation were to "pacify" the peasants, control the customs houses, and diminish European influence in Haiti. Noam Chomsky describes the many "successes" of the mission: "[T]he acceleration of Haiti's economic, military, and political centralization, its economic dependence and sharp class divisions, the vicious exploitation of the peasantry, the internal conflicts much intensified by the extreme racism of the occupying forces, and perhaps worst of all, the establishment of 'an army to fight the people.'"(3) Other achievements of the occupation included reinstating virtual slavery and dissolving the National Assembly in order to impose a U.S.-designed constitution allowing foreign ownership of Haitian land. Such was the political and institutional legacy of "Wilsonian idealism" and American efforts to "bring democracy" to Haiti (scarcely different from today's noble venture), a legacy whose firm grip on the country would loosen only by 1986, with the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship.(4)

#### "VITAL COUNTERWEIGHTS": THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND MAINSTREAM PRESS VS. DEMOCRACY

Following the flight of "Baby Doc" Duvalier from the country in 1986, Haitians endured a period of "Duvalierism without Duvalier", punctuated by coup d'états, voting day massacres, and military governments, until the elections of December 1990, when a diverse array of grassroots organizations called Lavalas ("flash flood") swept Jean-Bertrand Aristide into the presidency. The rich in Haiti and the U.S. government had expected their candidate, former World Bank economist Marc Bazin, to win easily and were stunned by the victory of Aristide, a priest and advocate of the poor. Seven months of Aristide as president yielded a virtual halt in human rights violations, an accompanying reduction in "boat people" fleeing Haiti, a successful anti-corruption campaign, a higher minimum wage, and on September 30, 1991, a military coup. The brutality with which the military and their allies dealt with the Lavalas movement is well documented: Massacres, political assassinations, rapes, beatings and arbitrary arrests were all commonplace. The army, aided by the paramilitary group FRAPH (Front Révolutionnaire pour l'Avancement et le Progrès Haitiens), killed some 5,000 people from 1991 to 1994. The coup followed the familiar script whereby the wealthy Haitian elite organized and financed the operation while the military did the dirty work. The U.S. government was also deeply implicated in the coup: The leader of the coup, General Raoul Cedras, and other high-ranking Haitian military figures, had been on CIA payroll prior to and during the coup, and the FRAPH had been organized and funded by the CIA, according to leader Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, in order to act as a "vital counterweight" to the Lavalas movement.(5)

As long as the U.S. government has opposed revolutionary, nationalist or even reformist regimes in Latin America (1954: Arbenz in Guatemala, 1964: Goulart in Brazil, 1973: Allende in Chile, 2002 to the present: Chavez in Venezuela), the U.S. press has sought to justify this opposition. Most commonly, the media have resorted to the venerable practice of demonizing the leaders of "enemy" governments: The leader is labelled "authoritarian" or "heavy-handed", and a fomenter of "violence" and "class warfare"; Subsequently, when the U.S.-trained military overthrows the elected government and replaces it with a bloody

military junta, commentators in the press blandly lament that the government was the cause of its own demise, while the more reactionary elements laud the initiative of the military for having come just in time to “save democracy” from “Communist totalitarianism”. In this connection, the outlandish accusations levelled against President Aristide stuck to the script quite closely, blaming the President for his overthrow while obscuring the role of U.S. in the coup. For instance, Newsweek described Aristide as “an anti-American demagogue, an unsteady left-wing populist who threatened private enterprise and condoned violence against his political opponents.” Other media repeated opposition claims that he was building a new “fascism”, that he was “worse than Duvalier” or that he was a drug trafficker.(6) All these claims were totally baseless: Human rights abuses reached their lowest level in Haiti’s history and Aristide initiated a successful crackdown on drug transshipment. While Aristide would occasionally condemn the massive inequality in Haiti, he would just as frequently exhort business to cooperate and help the poor. More generally, Aristide could hardly be blamed for the tensions and conflicts created by a society where the top 1% of the population receive 46% of national income whilst the vast majority live in squalor.

### TAMING THE PRIEST

While the U.S. nominally joined the international community in applying sanctions against the military junta, the real pressure was being applied on Aristide. The U.S. embargo was extremely porous and neither Bush I nor Clinton was inclined to close any of the gaps.(7) Meanwhile, at U.S.-initiated negotiations between Aristide and the military, the former priest was frequently pushed to make concessions to his adversaries, even as they slaughtered his supporters in Haiti. The rationale was that Aristide was a “divisive” leader who had “polarized” the country (again, familiar rhetoric when it comes to Latin American leaders who don’t sit well with the bourgeoisie), thus making it necessary to form a more “inclusive” government before Aristide could return. Yet gathering 67% of the votes can hardly be said to indicate polarization, unless we dismiss the opinions of the “illiterates who voted for Aristide” as the Haitian elite would have it. Indeed, the U.S., by forcing Aristide to negotiate with the military and their elite allies, was implicitly recognizing each party’s demands as equally valid. When the flood of Florida-bound refugees escaping from Haiti finally forced Clinton to act, Aristide was restored to power by U.S. Marines in October 1994; His return, however, exacted a heavy price in terms of justice and democracy: amnesty for the military; “broadening” of the government to include opposition members who had supported the coup; implementation of “structural adjustment”, the economic plan favoured by opponent Marc Bazin; and an end to Aristide’s five year term in 1995, effectively treating his three years in exile as time spent in office.

Yet Aristide proved himself to be no political pushover: “[I]n September 1995 Aristide dismissed his prime minister for preparing to sell the state-owned flour and cement mills without insisting on any of the progressive terms the imf had promised to honour”(8) and before the end of his truncated term, Aristide disbanded the murderous army. This was probably the greatest contribution Aristide ever made to the cause of democracy in Haiti. After Rene Préval took over the presidency in 1996, Aristide split with those in Organization Politique Lavalas (OPL) comfortable with implementing the neoliberal policy package (i.e. the “sweatshop model of development”: liberalization of trade, deregulation of the private sector and privatization of state-owned enterprises) and formed Fanmi Lavalas (FL). From this vantage point, Aristide was free to criticize the reforms forced upon him, while his opponents carried them out, putting him on solid political footing for the upcoming

elections.(9)

#### ARISTIDE'S TRIUMPHANT BUT "FLAWED" RETURN

The current crisis in Haiti began in May 2000, with the notoriously "flawed" legislative elections. A plethora of national and local positions were voted upon, and Aristide's FL emerged with a crushing victory, taking 89 of 115 mayoral positions, 72 of 83 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 18 of the 19 Senate seats contested (There are 27 seats in the senate). The OAS (Organization of American States) and other observers estimated the turnout at over 60% with "very few" incidents of either violence or fraud. The impact, as Peter Hallward remarked in *New Left Review*, was tremendous:

The 1995 elections had already 'completely discredited the so-called traditional political parties-especially those that collaborated with the military regime between 1991 and 1994', effectively eliminating them from any further role in electoral politics. In May 2000, members of the original Lavalas coalition who had turned against Aristide suffered the same fate. For the anti-Aristide opposition, the elections proved that there was no chance of defeating the FL at the polls for the foreseeable future.(10)

Faced with a massive defeat in the May elections and the imminent prospect of another loss in the upcoming presidential election, the opposition and their imperialist allies did the only thing they could: they cried foul. The propaganda effort to discredit the elections and, by extension, FL began with the OAS (commonly regarded as a tool of U.S. foreign policy in the Americas) reversing its earlier assessment of the elections on the basis of a technicality, claiming that the counting method used for 8 Senate seats by the CEP (Coalition d'Election Provisional) was "flawed". The Constitution of Haiti stipulates that the winner must get 50% plus one vote at the polls; the CEP determined this by calculating the percentages from the votes for the top four candidates, while the OAS contended that the count should include all candidates.(11) These concerns about the validity of the elections were disingenuous on many fronts: Firstly, the OAS had been working with the CEP to prepare the elections since 1999, and thus was fully aware of what counting method was going to be used beforehand, yet failed to voice any concerns at the time. Secondly, using the OAS's method would hardly have changed the outcome of the elections. Taking an example given by James Morrell, an anti-Aristide policy hack, in the North-East department where two Senate seats were being contested, gives an idea of just how "flawed" the elections were. In this riding, to get the 50% plus one vote demanded by the OAS, 33,154 votes were needed, while the two FL candidates had won with 32,969 and 30,736 votes respectively, with their closest rival getting about 16,000 votes. Thus, were this election to have gone to a second round as called for by the OAS, the two FL candidates would have needed 185 and 2,418 votes respectively, while their opponent would have needed some 17,000 votes.(12) Finally, the results of the disputed legislative elections were consistent with the returns obtained for the mayoral elections and Chamber of Deputies, about which the OAS raised no objections.

The aspersions cast on the elections by the OAS would be the rallying point for all efforts by the opposition and their imperialist allies to overturn the Fanmi Lavalas government. The opposition denounced the elections as fraudulent and their representatives on the CEP resigned in protest. The disparate strands of the opposition-OPL and other "left" dissidents formerly associated with Lavalas, along with business leaders, ex-Duvalierists and other elements of the right-united in the summer of 2000 under the banner of the Convergence Democratique (CD) and announced they would boycott the upcoming November presidential elections. This proved to be an empty gesture; over 50% of the electorate turned out

despite the boycott to deliver Aristide the presidency with over 92% of the votes. While the CD and allied embassies in Haiti would claim the turnout was much lower, between 10% and 20%, an October 2000 USAID-commissioned poll taken by Gallup just before the election supported the official returns, showing that more than 3 out of 4 people were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to vote; in the same poll, over 50% named Aristide as the political figure they “most trusted” in Haiti, with the next closest, CD member Evans Paul, receiving only 3.8%.(13)

## BUSINESS AS USUAL IN AMERICA’S BACKYARD

For their part, the U.S., Canada, and the EU (at the behest of France), along with multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, cut off all aid and loans to Haiti, plunging its fragile economy into crisis. The end of the aid embargo was contingent on a political solution, the U.S. declared, yet the opposition had no intentions of resolving the matter (democratically, at least). “From the start, the cd’s main objective was Option Zéro: the total annulment of the 2000 elections and a refusal to allow Aristide to participate in any subsequent vote.”(14) After Aristide was inaugurated, he persuaded 7 of the 8 Senators to resign and offered to hold new elections for the disputed seats, but the CD refused, knowing full well that they would lose new elections just as they had the previous ones. In each subsequent negotiation, Aristide and FL would offer more and more concessions to the CD, and each time, the CD would reject them. The opposition’s intransigent stance was steadfastly supported by the U.S., which funded the CD, as well as various other anti-Aristide organizations, through USAID and the NED (National Endowment for Democracy). One such outfit was the staunchly neoliberal Group of 184, an association of various “civil society” groups, led by sweatshop owner Andy Apaid. This manufactured “political deadlock” was the pretext used by the U.S. and the other imperialist countries for their economic strangulation of Haiti, right up until Aristide’s overthrow.

During the post-WWII era, economic strangulation and political destabilization, combined with increased aid and training programs to the military, have been the standard U.S. strategy for overthrowing errant Latin American governments. Since the 1960s, according to declassified internal documents, U.S. military aid and training has served to reorient Latin American militaries to “internal security” and other “U.S. objectives”, namely “to protect and promote American investment and trade”, thus producing an indigenous force ready to intervene on the behalf of “U.S. interests” once the target government begins to weaken.(15) When implementing this third and crucial element of the strategy has proven impossible, the U.S. has funded and organized proxy forces in a bordering client state to “liberate” the country. This alternative was used against Nicaragua in the 1980s, with the Contras launching attacks from their staging post in neighbouring Honduras, and has been resorted to again in Haiti.

On July 28, 2001, former members of the army and/or FRAPH death squad led by former police officer Guy Philippe, mounted attacks against police stations located along the Haiti-Dominican Republic border, killing at least five officers. Guy Philippe had received US military training in Ecuador during the 1991-1994 coup, and was incorporated into the Haitian National Police (HNP) in 1995. His tenure at the HNP was marked by reports of summary executions by police under his command and accusations of drug trafficking.(16) In October 2000, Philippe fled to the Dominican Republic after being discovered plotting a coup against the Préval government with fellow police chiefs. From exile, Philippe, along with FRAPH second-in-command Louis Jodel Chamblain, would lead attacks on the



Presidential Palace, on December 17, 2001, and against a hydroelectric dam in Peligre on May 6, 2003. These and numerous other cross-border attacks left dozens of police and Fanmi Lavalas members dead.(17) The Dominican government, meanwhile, did nothing to halt these attacks and ignored repeated extradition requests by the Haitian authorities for various human rights abusers hiding out there. Stan Goff was part of a delegation organized by the International Action Centre in March 2004 that visited the Dominican Republic and discovered, through interviews with a former general in the Dominican army, customs agents, and other sources, that former Haitian military and paramilitary men had been discreetly integrated into the Dominican army and had trained at a base close to the Haitian border. Moreover, according to Goff, "The Dominican government is a colonial government, and nothing else . . . [n]one of this could have happened without the complicity of the United States, without the facilitation by the United States, without the funding and support of the United States." Indeed, Goff indicates that the U.S. embassy in the Dominican Republic was aware of the paramilitaries' presence and even trained and armed them. He quotes retired Dominican general Nobel Espejo as saying that 20,000 M-16 sent by the U.S. in February 2003 were never received by the army, weapons of the type used by Philippe's men;(18) the M-16s were part of a military assistance program called "Operation Jaded Task", ostensibly intended to train the Dominican military in counterinsurgency.(19)

#### HUMAN RIGHTS AS A COVER FOR IMPERIALISM

The Western media played an integral part in the campaign against the Lavalas government, raising spurious questions about Aristide's democratic credentials as the imperialists' and their various "international" bodies' strove to overturn him. To this end, the media resorted to the same libellous rhetoric used prior to and during the 1991-1994 coup: Aristide was portrayed as a corrupt, power hungry leader who had taken power in "flawed" or "fraudulent" elections and used violence to suppress political opposition to his rule. While Aristide's opponents revived and embellished many timeworn accusations about his authoritarian tendencies, his extreme corruption, his involvement in "narco-trafficking" and so on that were uncritically reported as fact by the mainstream press, perhaps the most serious claim made was that Lavalas had provided arms to gangs and used these "Chimères" to attacks its opponents and quell dissent. Now, like most good lies, there was a kernel of truth to these accusations: Supporters of Aristide had used violence against opposition demonstrations and some were members of criminal gangs. Robert Fatton, a bitter critic of Aristide and his supposed authoritarian tendencies, gives an interesting interpretation the gangs' motivations: "Lavalas's Chimères and followers are threatening the opposition because they believe that it is purposefully exacerbating the crisis to generate a chaos that would nurture the return of the military. They fear that CD's ultimate objective is to overthrow Aristide, and they are committed to using violence to prevent such an outcome."(20) In light of recent events in Haiti, their fears seem to have been well founded. As for Aristide's alleged support for the Chimères, not a shred of evidence has ever been produced. Indeed, Haiti's current interim Ministry of Justice has settled for working with the U.S. Justice Department to find proof that Aristide siphoned money from the state coffers into offshore personal bank accounts, apparently abandoning efforts to link the deposed President to the violence that occurred under his rule.

The media gave a grossly one-sided account of what was happening in Haiti, consistently emphasizing violence against the opposition while ignoring attacks against Lavalas from the Dominican Republic and from within Haiti. Thus, the story of Haiti was cast as a "crisis of human rights" rather than a political struggle between the former military and the Haitian

elite on one side and the Lavalas government and their supporters on the other. ShriII cries from the CD and “civil society” frequently equated Aristide and the “Chimères” with the Duvalier dictatorship and their Tonton Macoutes. As Peter Hallward observes:

In a comparative perspective, however, political violence during the Lavalas administrations was far less than under previous Haitian regimes. Amnesty International’s reports covering the years 2000-03 attribute a total of around 20 to 30 killings to the police and supporters of the FL—a far cry from the 5,000 committed by the junta and its supporters in 1991-94, let alone the 50,000 usually attributed to the Duvalier dictatorships. Examination of Lavalas violence would also suggest that it was, indeed, largely a matter of gang violence. There are armed gangs in Port-au-Prince, as there are in São Paulo, Lagos or Los Angeles; their numbers have swelled in recent years with the deportation to the island of over a thousand Haitian and Haitian-American convicts from the American prison system.(21)

#### A MADE-IN-CANADA COUP

As the screws tightened on Haiti, the Canadian government, in the person of then-Minister of La Francophonie Denis Paradis, organized a “high-level roundtable meeting on Haiti” to discuss “the current political situation in Haiti.” Tellingly, the “Ottawa Initiative”, held January 31-February 1, included no Haitian officials, who only learned of the meeting after Paradis leaked the details of it to L’Actualité reporter Michel Vastel in March 2003. According to Vastel, Paradis told him that the themes discussed included Aristide’s possible removal, the potential return of Haiti’s disbanded military, and the option of imposing a Kosovo-like trusteeship on Haiti. The furor this reportage caused in Haiti led to Paradis being stripped of his position as Secretary of State for Latin America, and replaced as Minister of La Francophonie. Paradis would later claim the actual topic of the meeting was the “responsibility to protect” doctrine espoused by Paul Martin, whereby the international community has an obligation to militarily intervene in “failed states”, for the good of the people, of course. In hindsight, as independent journalist Anthony Fenton notes, the distinction is rather slight: “Whether or not military intervention was discussed explicitly, as Vastel contends, or implicitly, as Paradis insists, the important fact is that military intervention did take place, Aristide was removed, the Haitian army has effectively returned, and a de facto trusteeship is being imposed on the Haitian people.”(22)

The intense pressure on Haiti from the aid embargo, the imperialist-funded opposition, and the former military and paramilitaries came to a head in February 2004. The CD and the Group of 184 held a series of anti-government rallies, and a coalition of gangs led by Butter Metayer and former FRAPH leader Jean Tatoune mounted a “rebellion” in Gonaives, later reinforced by Guy Philippe’s invasion. The media depicted the situation as a popular revolt against an authoritarian and corrupt regime, showing little compunction about the fact that notorious human rights abusers were leading the attacks, if even bothering to note the leadership’s sordid past at all. The media also frequently exaggerated the size of opposition rallies while ignoring often larger counter-demonstrations by Lavalas supporters; civil society opposition was said to be “broad-based” including people from across the political spectrum, while it was virtually never mentioned that Aristide still retained support from likely the majority of the population. In a USAID poll from March 2002, 60% of those responding named Aristide as the politician they most trusted and 61.6% said they sympathized or were members of FL, while only 13% indicated the Convergence or any of its constituent parties.(23) Since the coup, members of the U.S. and Canadian embassies in

Haiti have confirmed this result, telling journalist Anthony Fenton in July 2004 that if elections had been held then, Lavalas would have won them.(24)

The “rebels” rampaged across Haiti, going town by town, slaughtering police and burning down public buildings, rapidly closing in on the capital city, Port-au-Prince. Aristide’s request for “a couple dozen peacekeepers” from the international community to help restore order and prevent the former military from once again taking over the country fell on deaf ears. Jeffrey Sachs recounts the events of the night of February 29, 2004, with Guy Philippe’s men waiting on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince:

According to Mr. Aristide, US officials in Port-au- Prince told him that rebels were on the way to the presidential residence and that he and his family were unlikely to survive unless they immediately boarded an American-chartered plane standing by to take them to exile. The US made it clear, he said, that it would provide no protection for him at the official residence, despite the ease with which this could have been arranged.

Indeed, says Aristide’s lawyer, the US blocked reinforcement of Aristide’s own security detail and refused him entry to the airplane until he signed a letter of resignation.

Then Aristide was denied access to a phone for nearly 24 hours and knew nothing of his destination until he was summarily deposited in the Central African Republic.(25)

The U.S. government tersely dismissed Aristide’s claims as “ridiculous”, without evidence or a plausible counter-explanation of what happened.(26) As usual, the media, displaying their uncompromising professional rigour, quickly let the matter drop.

Canada played a lead role in the kidnapping/coup d’état: Joint Task Force 2, an elite commando squad in the Canadian Armed Forces, was on the ground in Haiti on February 29, 2004, securing the airstrip from which U.S. Marines would abduct President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Canada, along with France and Chile, also provided troops for the subsequent U.S.-led and U.N.-approved occupation, which dubbed the invaders the Multinational Interim Force (MIF).

## **Part II: Post-Coup Haiti - March 2004 to January 2005**

### **THE DISASTER SINCE THE COUP**

The human rights situation in Haiti is dire. The February 2004 insurgency that culminated in the kidnapping of President Aristide has ushered in a wave of abuses against Aristide’s Fanmi Lavalas party and its supporters. This campaign of persecution has been waged by the rebels with the active support of the de facto authorities installed by the U.S. and with the complicity of the occupiers.

Numerous human rights groups have documented the widespread abuses that have occurred, and continue to occur, since the overthrow of Aristide. Scores of former government officials, members of popular organizations, slum dwellers, peasants and other supporters of Lavalas have been killed, and many others beaten, threatened and forced into hiding for fear of their lives. A report by the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) gives a chilling insight into the scale of the violence: “The Director of the State Hospital Morgue in Port-au-Prince reported that the morgue had disposed of over 1000 bodies in the month of March alone. Although some of these may have died of natural causes, in a normal month the morgue disposes of 100 cadavers. The Director said that



many of the 1000 disposed bodies arrived with hands tied behind the back and bullet holes in the back of the head.”(27)

In March 2004, the National Lawyers Guild’s (NLG) delegation to Haiti reported that 40 to 60 bodies had been dumped at the Piste d’Aviation in Delmas 2, a neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince; they found a “massive ash pile and pigs eating flesh of human bones that had not burned. The group photographed fresh skulls and other human bones, some still tangled in clothes or with shoes and sneakers nearby. The delegation observed that the fuel for the fire was misprinted Haitian currency.” The Piste d’Aviation was a dumping ground for bodies during the military junta of 1991-1994.(28)

Amnesty International (AI) has reported: “In February and March, the Catholic Church’s Justice and Peace Commission documented some 300 cases of killings in Port-au-Prince alone, although they estimate that the true number of killings could be as high as 500.”

In accordance with findings of virtually every other human rights delegation, AI remarked that “the identity of the victims and the nature of the threats and other abuses committed were mostly consistent with a pattern of persecution, especially of those close, or perceived to have been close, to the former Fanmi Lavalas regime.”(29)

Unfortunately, the situation in the countryside, where 2/3 of Haitians live, could very well be worse. The local police forces have been decimated by the rebels, who are now acting as the de facto authorities: “[The rebels] have occupied police stations and former military barracks. On several occasions, judicial authorities issuing arrest warrants have given them to these groups to enforce, as they are the sole ‘police’ force in the area.”(30) Access to the rural areas has been restricted, especially in the rebel-dominated North, but there have been many reports (in some cases documented) of assassinations and arsons against people supportive of Lavalas.

As a result of the wave of violence against Lavalas and their supporters, massive numbers of people have become refugees in their own country, fleeing to Port-au-Prince, where they change locations each night so as to not get caught, or to the mountains, subsisting any way they can.(31)

The behaviour of the rebels is no surprise to anyone familiar with the past history of their leadership, a group of notorious human rights abusers drawn from the top ranks of FRAPH and the former military. Guy Philippe has been quoted as saying that the man he most admires is Pinochet, and Louis-Jodel Chamblain was convicted of leading the Raboteau massacre of 1994. Men such as Jean “Tatoune” Baptiste and self-declared General Remissainthes Ravix have similar personal histories. The rank and file of the rebels are members of the former military, convicted human rights abusers freed from the jails emptied during the coup, and criminal gangs that sensed which way the political winds were blowing.

#### U.S.-STYLE “NEUTRALITY” AND THE POLITICS OF THE LATORTUE REGIME

With the overthrow of Aristide, the U.S. set up a “neutral” and “technocratic” caretaker government to organize inclusive elections and “restore” democracy (after the US and its proxy forces had finished dismantling it). Yet far from being a neutral political player, the de facto government of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue “is the dream team of the Haitian opposition parties . . . sweep[ing] away all vestiges of the Aristide-ism and turn[ing] the

country in a more conservative, and decidedly more pro-U.S., direction”, according to the Council on Hemispheric Affairs.(32) Tom Reeves describes the political history of new government’s personnel: “Latortue was a member of a previous coup-installed government in 1988. The U.S.-installed government includes far-right officials from the previous coup regime of Raoul Cedras and from the regimes of the infamous Duvaliers. The Minister of Interior is Herard Abraham, a former Haitian general who intends to re-establish the Haitian military. The bulk of the Cabinet are exiled technocrats who worked for the World Bank, IMF, USAID and the UN. They are champions of structural adjustment and other neoliberal policies.”(33)

The Latortue government has dismantled social programs directed to the poor established during the Préval and Aristide administrations. Subsidies on fertilizer for poor farmers have been cut, with a consequent doubling of fertilizer prices, increasing the hardships already faced by Haitian farmers. Latortue’s government has stopped funding to literacy programs and eliminated subsidies for schoolchildren and schoolbooks. The Haiti Accompaniment Project has reported that: “large land owners accompanied by armed paramilitaries have seized land that was given to peasant families as a part of the Land Reform projects carried out by the Préval and Aristide administrations (300 hectares had been distributed to 6000 families). These actions came immediately after de facto Prime Minister Gerard Latortue criticized the Lavalas land reform program in Jacmel.” AI has reported similar occurrences. The public sector has also come under attack: an estimated 10,000 state employees, including 2,000 at the state telecom company, have been fired with no compensation for their perceived support of Lavalas.(34) Doctors and nurses at the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince went on strike in January because the government had not paid their salaries for three months, resulting in a severe deterioration of the already inadequate health care system.(35) The Latortue regime has, however, offered economic support to the large businesses of Haiti in the form of a three-year tax holiday.

Unfortunately, the de facto government’s hostility to Lavalas and the poor goes beyond these economic attacks. “In his first public statement, [Latortue] announced that Aristide’s order to replace the military with a civilian police force violated Haiti’s constitution; he promised to name a commission to examine the issues surrounding its restoration,” reports Paul Farmer, an American doctor working in Haiti.(36) In a revealing speech made in Gonaives on March 19, the de facto PM praised the rebels as “freedom fighters” and called for a moment of silence for all those who “fell fighting against the dictatorship”. Latortue’s Justice Minister Bernard Gousse, a right wing anti-Aristide campaigner, has blithely stated that he does not intend to disarm rebels or recapture the escaped convicts and has been single-mindedly pursuing Lavalas and its supporters. Indeed, the US-installed government has already staffed the top posts in the HNP with former military men(37) and incorporated 500 members of the former military into the HNP, with 500-1000 expected to be hired within the next year.(38)

Under the passive gaze of the interim government, the former army has illegally reconstituted itself, establishing bases across the country, including one in the upscale district of Petionville in Port-au-Prince. The soldiers in Petionville are supported by its wealthy residents and routinely assist HNP operations in the poor neighbourhoods, as well as carry out their own. In addition, the soldiers have demanded payment in back wages for the 1995-2004 period and occupied public buildings and threatened the government to this end. The Latortue government, ever obliging, has since offered \$30 million from the public purse in compensation.(39)

## POLITICAL REPRESSION AND ONE-SIDED JUSTICE

With the resurgence of the brutal Haitian army and the hostility of the interim authorities to Lavalas, the largest mass-based political movement in the country, political freedom in Haiti has been severely curtailed.

At least four pro-Lavalas radio stations have been burned and ransacked in Cap-Haitien and St. Marc, and journalists perceived as supportive of Lavalas or critical of the de facto government have been threatened, kidnapped or beaten by the former rebels. Fearing for their safety, a number of journalists in Haiti's northern and central regions have gone into hiding, according to the Haitian Journalists Association. The de facto government has also constrained press freedom by illegally shutting down Radio TiMoun and Tele-TiMoun, two media outlets established by the Aristide Foundation for Democracy, and arresting one of Tele-TiMoun's cameramen.(40) The Haitian media, meanwhile, no longer defend freedom of the press with the same vigour. According to Joseph Guy Delva, the head of the Haitian Journalists Association and Reuters correspondent, and an Aristide critic, if a journalist was arrested during Aristide's government, there would be a public uproar from print and radio journalists. Now, says Delva, when a journalist is arrested, "the newspapers and radio stations applaud." The reason for this sudden change of heart is pathetically transparent: Approximately 20 of the 25 radio and print outlets in Haiti are owned by members of the Group of 184 and uncritically disseminate the anti-Lavalas propaganda of the government.(41)

Political opponents of the Latortue government and supporters of Lavalas are routinely arrested in violation of their civil liberties: On September 16, "police officers raided the offices of the Confederation of Haitian Workers labour union and arrested nine union members, all without a warrant. The official justification for the arrest was that the defendants were 'close to the Lavalas authorities.' Hours later, masked men in military attire attacked the office of the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Haitian People."(42) Numerous Famni Lavalas leaders and activists have been arrested without a warrant and left to languish in jail, denied their right to see a judge within 48 hours to contest their detention. Police "weapons sweeps" into pro-Lavalas neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince have yielded few weapons but many arbitrary arrests. As IJDH reports: "The prisons are dangerously overcrowded and unsanitary. Many prisons were destroyed by the insurgents, especially in Cap Haitien, Gonaives, Les Cayes and Jeremie. The large influx of prisoners, including many political prisoners, are crowded into the remaining areas. There is not adequate food, potable water or healthcare, and many prisoners have become seriously ill."(43) Beatings and other forms of abuse by prison guards are commonplace. While backlogs in the justice system were a problem that existed under Aristide as well, and thus cannot be blamed entirely on the de facto regime, the Latortue government is knowingly exacerbating conditions in the prisons by illegally arresting their political opponents en masse in order to silence them.

The "justice" system, on the other hand, has been exceedingly kind to friends of the new government. Louis-Jodel Chamblain, previously convicted in absentia for the 1993 assassination of businessman Antoine Izmary, as well as involvement in the Raboteau massacre, tearfully surrendered to the authorities on April 22 (Under Haitian law, those convicted in absentia are entitled to a new trial upon their return to the country). Chamblain stated that he would sacrifice his freedom so that "Haiti can have a chance at the real democracy I have been fighting for." Even before the start of the trial, the hope for an impartial judgement was slim: Minister of Justice Bernard Gousse admitted that the

surrender had been negotiated, and declared that Chamblain “had nothing to hide.” Gousse went on to praise Chamblain’s decision to surrender as “a good and noble one” and suggested that he might be pardoned “for his great service to the nation.” Intimidation was also an important factor: In March 2004, the judge who had convicted Chamblain of the massacre in 2000 was beaten by the former FRAPH commander’s thugs in retaliation. Of the five witnesses called by the prosecution, only one appeared at Chamblain’s hasty overnight trial, and he admitted to not being an eyewitness to the crime. Chamblain was thus acquitted in a trial Amnesty International denounced as “an insult to justice” and a “mockery.”(44)

#### “OPERATION BAGHDAD”: POPULAR RESISTANCE AND ELITE PROPAGANDA

The poor masses of Haiti have not been passive victims of violence and repression. On the contrary, “[o]ne of the most striking findings from [the Haiti Accompaniment Project’s] trip was that despite stepped up repression, many groups in Port-au-Prince and in other parts of the country were preparing for ongoing long-term mobilizations to call for the return of democracy to Haiti.” On May 18 a pro-democracy demonstration in Port-au-Prince was fired upon by police and broken up with the help of US Marines, killing at least one person. Police initially claimed that they had not been given proper notice for the demonstration, but subsequently admitted that the demonstration had been announced well in advance and they had in fact been given proper notice by the organizers.

A large demonstration on September 30 marking the anniversary of first coup that ousted President Aristide in 1991 was similarly met with police violence, this time complemented by a vast propaganda effort on the part of the government and the elite-owned media. More than 10,000 residents of Port-au-Prince’s sprawling slums were marching towards the National Palace to demand an end to the persecution and the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide when police opened fire on the unarmed demonstrators. Gerard Latortue, in a radio interview on October 1, was unrepentant: “We fired on them. Some died, others were wounded, and others fled.” Latortue also indicated that the authorities would take action against further protests.(45)

Later, grasping at straws for a cover, government officials would claim that three police officers had been killed and beheaded by Lavalas supporters during the September 30 demonstration. When journalists and human rights groups asked the names of the officers killed and demanded to see the bodies, the government refused. The beheadings were described as the beginning of “Operation Baghdad”, a Lavalas-organized insurgency against the interim government, by Democratic Platform member Jean-Claude Bajeux in a sensational yet totally unfounded account soon after picked up and repeated ad nauseam by Latortue and the Haitian and international press.(46) Lavalas spokespersons’ denials of the existence of any “Operation Baghdad” and their condemnation of the violence, meanwhile, have been studiously ignored in mainstream media accounts. Meanwhile, an investigation into the reported “Operation Baghdad” by the Haitian human rights group CARLI (Comité des Avocats pour le Respect des Libertés Individuelles) led it to conclude that no such operation exists. CARLI’s investigation did confirm that two officers had been decapitated, but by former soldiers on September 29, and noted that it was only until after the September 30 demonstrations that the government and the media began to blame Lavalas supporters. The media further stirred anti-Lavalas sentiment when it reported on a funeral service held for five HNP officers. Although only two had died in actual violence, the government/media portrayed it as a funeral of five heroic officers who died at the hands of pro-Aristide militants.(47)

The September 30 shooting of unarmed demonstrators by the police sparked a wave of unrest in the capital, with more protest marches, clashes with police and armed resistance by slum residents to the deadly police incursions into their neighbourhoods. Rather than the result of a mythical Lavalas effort to destabilize the new government, the violence since September 30 in Haiti has overwhelmingly been the product of the de facto government's brutal efforts to stifle popular protest in the capital.

#### SILENCING THE SLUMS OF PORT-AU-PRINCE

The reaction of the installed government to the continuing (largely non-violent) opposition of the population has been to intensify the terror and repression, a policy continuing to this day. Raids by masked "anti-gang" police into the slum quarters of Port-au-Prince, already frequent, have become a daily occurrence, with a concomitant increase in arbitrary arrests and summary executions. Reed Lindsay in the Observer (UK) reported on November 1 that: "policemen wearing black masks had shot and killed 12 people, then dragged their bodies away. At least three families have identified the bodies of relatives at the mortuary; others who have loved ones missing fear the worst."<sup>(48)</sup> Amnesty International's November 11 alert was equally gruesome: On October 26 in Fort National, "[i]ndividuals reported to be members of the police burst into a house and kill[ed] at least seven people," while the next day in Carrefour Pean, "[f]our young men are killed in the street in broad daylight by individuals wearing black uniforms and balaclavas. Witnesses identif[ied] their vehicles as police patrol cars."<sup>(49)</sup> The HNP raids are frequently accompanied by ambulances that are used to carry away the bodies; those wounded by police violence often don't seek medical attention, since the HNP arrest anyone, especially young males, found in the hospital with bullet wounds.<sup>(50)</sup>

The deadly consequences of the post-September 30 campaign are most evident in the reports from the morgue: Independent journalist Kevin Pina reported that on October 15 "[t]he General Hospital had to call the Ministry of Health today in order to demand emergency vehicles to remove the more than 600 corpses that have been stockpiled there, that have been coming in from the killing over the last two weeks alone."<sup>(51)</sup> Since October 21, entry to the state morgue has been prohibited, except for visitors pre-approved by the General Hospital administrator, apparently due to the unwanted attention brought by journalists and human rights investigators to the large numbers of bodies coming in. Interviewing morgue employees in mid November, however, lawyer Tom Griffin discovered "that since September 30, 2004 . . . the HNP rarely even bring people killed by violence to the morgue. They stated that the police simply take the bodies of those they kill directly to undisclosed dumping grounds, sometimes stopping by the morgue only to borrow the dump truck."<sup>(52)</sup>

Along with the wave of killings, mass arrests of young men in the slums of Port-au-Prince and arrests of political leaders of Lavalas have increased dramatically, swelling the prison population of Haiti. On October 2, senators Yvon Feuillé and Gerard Gilles and former Deputy Rudy Hérisvaux were arrested, without warrants, after criticizing the interim government on Radio Caraïbe. On October 13, Reverend Gérard Jean-Juste was beaten and arrested, again without a warrant, by the HNP while giving out food to children at his church in the poor Delmas neighborhood. They joined many other officials of Haiti's Constitutional government in jail, including former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and former Minister of the Interior Jocelerme Privert and former Delegate Jacques Mathelier.

While pressure by human rights groups such as Amnesty International on the de facto



government has led to the release of a number of high-profile political prisoners, the situation is much bleaker for those unknown victims detained simply for living in a pro-Lavalas neighborhood. The Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission estimates that there are some 700 political prisoners in Haiti today. Bill Quigley of the human rights group Pax Christi notes that the prison population has grown 20% since the new government offensive began: "[I]n late September of this year, there were 868 people in the prison, 21 of whom had been convicted of a crime. Prison officials advised me that 'most had never seen a judge and do not know when they will see a judge.' In early December, nine weeks later, the penitentiary held 1041 people, 22 of whom had seen a judge."(53)

The injustice of the detentions and the deplorable prison conditions came to a boiling point on December 1: A prisoners' protest in the National Penitentiary against the transfer of inmates to other prisons was put down violently by prison guards and police. Police and prison officials claim that only 10 inmates were killed and that the police used force in self-defense. Former and current prisoners, however, report that the death toll was at least 60 to 110, and that police methodically executed prisoners and carried away the bodies in ambulances to a secret dumping ground. Residents near the prison at the time of the incident state that heavy gunfire began after police entered the prison and continued for hours afterwards. A journalist for Radio Megastar, whose office has a view into the prison, witnessed police firing into prisoners' cells from the catwalk. Government and prison officials have denied entry to the prison by independent human rights groups, journalists, prisoners' lawyers and even families with few exceptions, and have not released a list of the dead and wounded.(54)

#### BLUEWASHING STATE TERRORISM: THE ROLE OF THE U.N. IN HAITI

The presence of MINUSTAH, the military component of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti that replaced the occupying Multinational Interim Force (MIF) on June 1, has failed to protect the people of Haiti in the least. MINUSTAH has at best turned a blind eye to the atrocities happening under its watch, and at worst actively supported the government and their paramilitary allies, thus providing a veneer of legitimacy to the de facto state's violence.

Although their mandate calls for them "to assist . . . with comprehensive and sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes for all armed groups", MINUSTAH forces have pursued this laudable goal in the same one-sided manner as the de facto government, joining the HNP in their zeal for "weapons searches" in the poorest areas of the capital, while making no effort to disarm the reconstituted military, and even actively collaborating with it, according to some reports. In July, the Haiti Accompaniment Project delegation stated: "From all reports we have received, the UN Military Command works in close coordination with the Haitian National Police, which has already integrated many former military into their ranks. While sending thousands of troops to Haiti, the United Nations has so far sent only one human rights officer to Haiti; he must receive permission from the post-coup Justice Minister, Bernard Gousse, before he is able to visit a prison." The Haiti Accompaniment Project cited "numerous reports that the UN military command in the North coordinates its activities with Guy Philippe, the rebel leader who is responsible for major human rights violations—including assassinations—in the period preceding the coup."(55) In early October, UN forces using Armoured Personnel Vehicles (APVs) and attack dogs took up positions around Bel Air, alongside heavily armed units of the Haitian police. Independent journalist Kevin Pina reported that soon after, members of the former military were openly patrolling with Chilean forces assigned to the United Nations. UN troops were on hand backing up Haitian police as they illegally arrested the Lavalas

parliamentarians at a radio station on October 2 and UN riot police were also present on September 30 as the HNP was gunning down unarmed protesters. The commander of the Jordanian riot police present refused to comment when asked why the UN did not intervene to stop Haitian police from firing on the unarmed protestors.(56)

While the material support provided by MINUSTAH during HNP “operations” is harmful enough, the worst aspect of the UN presence in Haiti is the legitimacy its presence confers on the actions and propaganda of the interim government. Crucially, since September 30, high-ranking UN personnel have supported Latortue’s claim that the violence in Haiti is the result of a Lavalas-orchestrated destabilization campaign, and have adopted the government’s characterization of Aristide’s supporters as “Chimères” and “bandits”. For instance, in a radio interview on October 8, The Brazilian Commander of MINUSTAH General Heleno echoed the Latortue regime’s often bloodthirsty rhetoric, declaring: “We must kill the bandits, but it will have to be the bandits only, not everybody.”(57) Likewise, the top UN diplomat’s take on recent events was barely distinguishable from the government’s propaganda: “What we have seen in this country during the last month or two has been a resurgence of brutal violence organized probably to provoke a process of political destabilization,” said Juan Gabriel Valdes, who heads the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). “Any state has the right to defend itself. We were sent by the United Nations to help and assist a government, and this task was given to us by the security council of the United Nations.”(58) Clearly, this task takes precedence over defending the political freedom or human rights of the Haitian people.

#### CONCLUSION: HAITI, CANADA AND THE NEW IMPERIALISM

Ellen Meiksins Wood describes the new imperialism that emerged in the post-WWII era as a complex interaction between more or less sovereign states, rather than the age-old relationship between imperial master and colonial subject. The system is governed by economic imperatives (in the Third World, debt is the principal mechanism) and administered by multiple states, while order and stability in the multi-state system are maintained by the military and political hegemony of the U.S.(59) “Order” and “stability” in Latin America and the Caribbean, as Noam Chomsky observes, have a very specific meaning: The maintenance of “governments that favour private investment of domestic and foreign capital, production for export and the right to bring profits out of the country.”(60)

Many would object to the preceding analysis on the grounds that, in economic terms, Haiti is simply not worth it: U.S. trade and investment with Haiti is miniscule, both absolutely and relative to the U.S. economy, and, unlike Iraq, Haiti is not sitting on top of an immense quantity of valuable natural resources. In this connection, Noam Chomsky’s discussion of the modus operandi of American foreign policy in Latin America is especially illuminating: “As far as American business is concerned, Nicaragua could disappear and nobody would notice. The same is true of El Salvador. But both have been subjected to murderous assaults by the US, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and many billions of dollars.” So what was the American motive for savagely attacking these poor nations? “If you want a global system that’s subordinated to the needs of US investors, you can’t let pieces of it wander off.” In particular, “[t]he weaker and poorer a country is, the more dangerous it is as an example. If a tiny, poor country like Grenada can succeed in bringing about a better life for its people, some other place that has more resources will ask, ‘why not us?’” “In other words, what the US wants is ‘stability,’ meaning security for the ‘upper classes and large foreign enterprises.’ If that can be achieved with formal democratic devices, OK. If not, the ‘threat to stability’ posed by a good example has to be destroyed before the virus infects

others.”(61) Replace “Nicaragua” or “Grenada” with “Haiti”, and we have near perfect explanation of the logic behind America’s toppling of Haitian democracy.

While the U.S. intervention in Haiti is only the latest affair in a long history of imperialist undertakings in Latin America, Canada’s degree of involvement in such an operation is unprecedented. Since hosting a gathering to prepare for the overthrow of a democratically elected government and helping to secure the airstrip from which President Aristide was abducted, the Canadian government continues to be deeply involved in the day-to-day activities (and thus crimes) of the interim regime. “Canada has pledged close to \$200 million in aid to Haiti, including paying the salaries of Philippe Vixamar, a high-level official in Haiti’s justice department and Fernand Yvon, a Canadian adviser to the prime minister. Both are on the payroll of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).”(62) Over 100 RCMP officers head the UN police mission that is overseeing the training and integration of the former military into the police force. Indeed, when confronted about failing to support American aggression in Iraq, Paul Martin frequently responds that Canada is already quite active in other areas such as Afghanistan and Haiti. Hence, “Canada’s Role in The World”, to use the title of a recent Montreal conference attended by many Canadian foreign policy bigwigs, is clear: As a mid-level manager in the U.S. empire, providing the “long-term attention at the highest levels” needed “to really succeed in Haiti,”(63) and other “failed” states. This role is all the more important at a time when U.S. planners are focused on other matters, such as the ongoing resistance to the occupation in Iraq.

In order to justify this new degree of Canadian participation in U.S. imperialism, the Liberal government has repeatedly appealed to the new “responsibility to protect” doctrine when talking about Haiti, which bares a striking resemblance to the colonialist “civilizing” ideologies of yore. What extraordinary hypocrisy it takes to declare that Canada must intervene in order to protect the citizens of “failed states”, while actively organizing and participating in efforts to make certain states “fail”! The specific claims of Canadian officials in regards to Haiti are no less duplicitous: Special Advisor to the PM on Haiti Denis Coderre has “said there would be ‘zero tolerance’ for impunity but that Canada would not get involved in Haiti’s justice system.” The testimony of CIDA’s puppet Vixamar in the Justice Ministry obtained by Tom Griffin could not refute this any more clearly: “Vixamar revealed that the United States and Canadian governments play key roles in the justice system in Haiti,” and “stated that he is a political appointee of the Latortue administration, but the Canadian International Development Agency assigned him to this position and is his direct employer.” (emphasis added) Coderre has also stated that the only groups demanding a count of the bodies piling up in Haiti are Aristide partisans “who refuse to admit that the two camps have blood on their hands,” while nonetheless asserting that “the situation is better today than it was before the departure of Aristide.”(64) Again, Coderre is contradicted by the unanimous conclusions of numerous observer missions sent by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Center for the Study of Human Rights, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti and others, hardly a uniformly pro-Lavalas bloc, who have reported a severe increase in human rights abuses, with the vast majority of the victims being Lavalas members and their supporters. Implicit in the Orwellian urgings of Paul Martin and other officials that “we can’t be nostalgic” about Haiti’s past is an attempt to make us relinquish any understanding of its present. In the world of Canadian foreign policy, Ignorance (for the population) is Strength (for the government).

We here in the richest dependency of the American empire have a responsibility to reject our government’s growing participation in and support for U.S. imperialism, and the

deceitful, contradictory, and hypocritical ideology used to justify it. We have an opportunity to make a tremendous contribution to the struggle for democracy and human rights in Haiti. Haitians continue to brave police bullets in order to demand the return of their elected government; Canadians, who confront no such obstacles, can make an equally large impact in the fight for democracy in Haiti without any need for such extraordinary heroism. A handful of activists in Canada, in conjunction with the Haitian community, have already succeeded in forcing the issue back into the headlines on numerous occasions, and the more the politicians are obligated to defend their neo-colonial policies, the more apparent their moral bankruptcy will become. Getting Canada to withdraw its support and recognition of the Latortue government would be a decisive blow against imperialism, and even getting the government to criticize Latortue's human rights record would open up some space for the Haitian people to continue their struggle. We would not be alone on the international stage in our opposition to the coup d'état in Haiti: The Caribbean community (CARICOM), the African Union and Venezuela still refuse to recognize the installed government, and in January 2005, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre passed a resolution denouncing the repression in Haiti. The chance to begin forging a fairer, more humane world system right here in Canada is ours for the taking, if we are willing to fight for it.

*Additional Research by Diego Hausfather*

#### ENDNOTES

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