

**HAITI UPDATE**

Donald E. Schulz

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## FOREWORD

Recent developments in Haiti including political assassinations attributed to both former Haitian military personnel and members of President Preval's presidential security unit have once again thrust that troubled country into the international spotlight. In the process, questions have been raised about the viability of the nascent Haitian democracy and the political stability on which it rests. In turn, that has led to questions about the length and nature of the international commitment, including that of the United States. Thus it was that in September 1996 Dr. Donald E. Schulz, the author of two previous Strategic Studies Institute reports on Haiti (*Reconciling the Irreconcilable: The Troubled Outlook for U.S. Policy Toward Haiti*, coauthored with Gabriel Marcella, 1994; and *Whither Haiti?*, 1996), spent a week in country gathering information about the current situation and the prospects for the future. During that visit, he spoke with numerous people, including U.S., Haitian and other nationals, on a not-for-attribution basis. This report is the product of those conversations, his personal observations of what he saw, and his continuing research on Haiti.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish this study as a contribution to understanding events in this important Caribbean country.

RICHARD H. WITHERSPOON  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DONALD E. SCHULZ is a Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. He is the coauthor of *Reconciling the Irreconcilable: The Troubled Outlook for U.S. Policy Toward Haiti and The United States, Honduras and the Crisis in Central America*, and coeditor of *Mexico Faces the 21st Century, Revolution and Counterrevolution in Central America and the Caribbean, Cuba and the Future*, and *Political Participation in Communist Systems*. His articles have appeared in *Foreign Policy*, *Orbis*, the *Journal of Interamerican Studies* and *World Affairs*, and *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, as well as such media outlets as *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

## SUMMARY

This study reviews recent political and economic developments in Haiti and assesses the prospects for democratization, political stability and economic development. The report is pessimistic, but far from hopeless. While political violence and human rights violations persist and the economy is stagnant, the Preval administration and the Haitian Congress have finally made the hard decisions to press on with economic modernization, including partial privatization and civil service reforms. International lenders are once more extending aid, which means that the economy should improve. In general, both President Preval and Congress receive high marks for their performances. Even the Haitian National Police, though still probably incapable of maintaining law and order without the help of U.N. peacekeepers, has done reasonably well considering its limited resources and the trying circumstances under which it is operating.

Nevertheless, the challenges facing Haiti and the international community remain enormous. The moment of truth will come when the U.N. peacekeepers leave. Since the United Nations is unlikely to stay past July 1997 and the Haitian police will probably not be up to the task of maintaining law and order by that time, other bilateral and/or multilateral security arrangements will have to be made. The United States and Canada should take the lead in forging those arrangements in the months ahead. Beyond this, the report also calls for an accelerated effort to create a functioning judicial system and recommends that the United States convert its military support mission into a semipermanent operation with ongoing infrastructural and humanitarian responsibilities. Finally, the author notes that there is a need to hold the Haitian government's feet to the fire with regard to human rights violations. If allowed to continue, the recent slide down the slippery slope of political violence could destroy everything that has been accomplished thus far.

## HAITI UPDATE

From time immemorial in Guinea, every man betrays his neighbor.

Creole proverb

The Americans, in short, had modernized everything but Haiti and the Haitians.

Robert and Nancy Heinl,  
on the U.S. occupation of Haiti,  
1915-34

A year ago, this writer painted a fairly bleak, though by no means hopeless, portrait of Haiti's political and socioeconomic prospects.<sup>1</sup> In a nutshell, it was argued that in spite of the substantive progress that had been made since the September 1994 U.S./multinational intervention in that country, there was still a long way to go. The political situation remained extremely fragile and volatile, and the prospects for socioeconomic development were at best problematic. The latter was all the more doubtful because of the suspension of over \$130 million in foreign aid due to the failure of the Aristide administration to privatize state industries and rationalize the economy in accordance with the prescriptions of the U.S. Government and international financial institutions. The administration was warned that unless this deadlock were broken, Haiti would sink back into hopelessness and ungovernability, and that the tactical success that had been achieved to that point would likely, sooner or later, turn into a strategic failure.

Recent developments have once again thrust Haiti into the international spotlight and raised questions about the ability of the Preval government to maintain political stability and democracy after the U.N. Mission departs, which will presumably occur sometime in 1997. The past year has witnessed an intensification of political violence, primarily associated with former members of the now disbanded Haitian Armed Forces (FAdH), but also involving the presidential security unit responsible for protecting both Preval and former President Aristide. Since March 1996, moreover, at least nine members of the Haitian National Police have been killed in a pattern that suggests that its officers are increasingly being targeted by elements on both ends of the political spectrum, as well as by gangs in slums like Cite Soleil.

### **The Recent Crisis.**

These developments came to a head last summer in a flurry of

political arrests, conspiracies and assassinations. The most troubling incidents occurred in August. Early that month, U.S. officials got wind of a plot by former military officers to kill Preval and Aristide. Accordingly, security around the two men was reinforced. On August 16, Haitian police arrested some 20 members of Hubert de Ronceray's ultra-right wing Mobilization for National Development (MND), most of whom were ex-FAdH and were said to have been planning political assassinations. Two nights later, gunmen wearing military-style uniforms attacked the national police headquarters and the parliament building. Then, on August 20, MND leaders Antoine Leroy and Jacques Florival were killed by unidentified gunmen. The political opposition immediately denounced the government as being responsible. The former mayor of Port-au-Prince, Evans Paul, who used to be an ally of Aristide and Preval, even charged that there were no differences between *Lavalas* and the "*Macoutes*"--that both used the same methods.<sup>2</sup> In turn, Preval accused the ex-military of being instruments of destabilization: "But behind them," he claimed, "you will find the politicians who are pulling the strings, and the people who are really committing these actions, the economic sector."<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, gunmen opened fire on Haiti's television station, and a number of journalists received death threats.

By now the White House was getting nervous. A detachment of 165 paratroops from the 82nd Airborne had already been dispatched to Haiti in late July for a week of training and to provide security for the 300 to 500-member American military support team that had been building bridges and roads and providing medical care to Haitians since U.S. peacekeepers left the previous spring. Subsequently, the day after the Leroy/Florival assassinations, a second contingent of troops, composed of 49 Marines, was landed. Quite apart from their other missions, this was a not-so-subtle way of telling those who might be tempted to destabilize or overthrow the government that the United States was still watching the situation and, in the words of one source, "we can still kick your ass." Clearly, however, something more was needed. By late August, eyewitness accounts, recovered shell casings and other evidence had linked elements in Preval's security guard to the Leroy/Florival killings. While there was no evidence that the Haitian president himself was involved, it was important that the issue be addressed before it was too late.

There were, in fact, two problems here. The most immediate was political: If the involvement of Preval's presidential security unit were to become public--and there was a good chance it would--it would become an issue in the U.S. election campaign, with the Republicans using it as a weapon to attack the Clinton administration's claim of having achieved a foreign policy success in Haiti. Moreover, if the cancer were not cut out now, while it was still small and readily manageable, it might grow,

eventually endangering both the democratization process and Preval himself.

Thus it was that at month's end President Clinton's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Anthony Lake, and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott were quietly sent to Port-au-Prince. There they were joined by their Canadian counterparts for a meeting with President Preval at the residence of U.S. Ambassador William Swing. Under heavy pressure from Lake and Talbott, who urged him to move decisively against those suspected of involvement in the murders, Preval agreed to clean house. The head of the presidential security unit, Joseph Moise, and his chief deputy, Milien Romage, were transferred. It was announced that an additional 10 or 12 other members of the force would be suspended, and that some of the 200-member Palace Guard would probably also be removed. At the same time, the Americans and Canadians quickly placed a protective cocoon around Preval. Several dozen armed Canadians surrounded the Presidential Palace. Over a score of State Department agents were rushed to Port-au-Prince to join a smaller contingent of security personnel that had been in place ever since Aristide was restored 2 years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

The retaking of the Presidential Palace--as one scribe referred to it--dramatically underscored the fragility of Haitian democracy/political stability. In effect, the United States now found itself in the embarrassing position of having to protect Preval from his own U.S.-trained body-guards while these units were investigated, given additional training and turned into a security force that the president could trust. How long this would take was difficult to say.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Aristide Wild Card.**

No sooner had this crisis begun to die down than a new problem arose. On September 17, former President Aristide took to the airwaves with a torrent of criticism aimed at the Preval administration. The machinery of government, he warned, had become loaded down with corruption and disorder. Certain politicians had become blinded by power and had given up on the people. An economic coup d'etat was underway; privatization was a trap that had sown division, confusion, conflict, and sorrow among the *Lavalas* family. If order were to be restored, there must be good relations between the *Lavalas* in power and the *Lavalas* out of power.<sup>6</sup>

Relations between Preval and Aristide had long been the subject of speculation. Though the two men have been close for years--Preval served as Aristide's prime minister in the latter's short-lived government in 1991, and they have often been referred



to as twins--their temperaments and styles are in fact quite different. Whereas Aristide is intense, Preval is low-key. One is a rabble-rouser, with an enormous public following based largely on his messianic presence; the other is an administrator, whose popular support flows from his constitutional authority and the backing he has received from Aristide. Lacking a strong independent political base of his own, Preval's continuing public support largely depends on his ability to improve living conditions, provide public order/security and, above all, maintain good relations with his political benefactor. This last requirement, indeed, partially accounts for his reticence to purge his presidential security detail, since that unit was largely composed of Aristide loyalists, many of whom had been with the former president when he was in exile.

The crucial questions, of course, concern Aristide's motives and intentions. Why did he launch his criticisms? And where will he go from here? It is no secret that Aristide has ambitions to regain the presidency in 4 years, when the constitution will allow him to run for office again. Thus, at minimum, his statement may be seen as an attempt to keep himself in the public spotlight while distancing himself from a government whose policies are not likely, in the short run, to improve living conditions. Aristide's own popularity has fallen significantly since he left office, and there may have been a perceived need to halt that decline.<sup>7</sup> Most important, the government's modernization program was on the verge of receiving final approval in the Haitian Senate. The plan, which combined the partial privatization of nine state enterprises with a series of belt-tightening measures and was intended to reopen the sluiceways of international aid, had been rejected by Aristide when he was president. Nothing that had happened since had changed his mind.

How hard would Aristide push on this matter? Was he merely engaged in a bit of political posturing, or was he demanding, in effect, veto power over certain areas of policy? If the latter, what would he do if he didn't get his way? Would he remain a member of the loyal opposition, or would he increasingly try to undermine Preval in order to better be able to present himself as a political alternative? The hardening of differences between pro-Aristide and pro-Preval factions could seriously weaken both the government and *Lavalas* (which was already deeply divided) at precisely the time when the ex-military, the *macoutes*, and other violence-prone elements were beginning to come out of the woodwork. The upshot, potentially, could be the destabilization of Haiti.

As of this writing, it is still too early to tell what will happen. In November, Aristide announced the creation of a new umbrella movement, the *Lavalas* Family, which, he claimed, was not

intended to challenge the president or create more division, but merely reinvigorate and unify the *Lavalas* coalition. At the same time, however, he took the opportunity to criticize international financial institutions for having imposed regressive economic reforms on Latin American and Caribbean governments. He also spoke of "traitors, invisible enemies and disinformation . . . aimed at destabilizing the population." While he made a point of denying that there were divisions within *Lavalas*, even as he spoke activists from opposing factions distributed leaflets to the audience accusing Aristide of sowing division, the misuse of funds, and treason.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Security Situation: The Good News . . . and the Bad.**

This being said, things are not completely bleak. There have been some very real gains, and these need to be recognized lest one draw the conclusion that nothing has been accomplished or that Haiti is a U.S. policy failure.

Perhaps the most important thing (notwithstanding the developments cited above) has been the marked improvement that has occurred in the Haitian security situation since the 1994 U.S. intervention. In large part, this has been due to the dissolution of the Haitian Armed Forces and allied paramilitary organizations. Here, a certain irony exists. Originally, U.S. officials had wanted to keep the FAdH--purge it, professionalize it, and maintain it at a reduced level of manpower--which was a terrible idea considering the predatory nature of the institution and the overwhelming lack of legitimacy it enjoyed among the populace.<sup>9</sup> But Aristide outmaneuvered them, effectively dissolving the army in stages. (The remnants may still be seen in the form of the presidential brass band.) Had the military been retained intact, the danger of a coup or assassination would always have been in the background. Haitian presidents would have been forever looking over their shoulders. The very existence of the institution would have undercut the public's confidence in the government. Just to be associated with it--in any way--would have had a delegitimizing effect.

Now, instead, there is a Haitian National Police (HNP) which, for all of its weaknesses and faults, is still infinitely preferable to what existed before. While human rights abuses continue, they are not massive or systematic, as was the case under the de facto regime (1991-94) when at least 3,000 people died. In recent reports, the O.A.S./U.N. International Civil Mission (MICIVIH) found that the police had killed some four dozen civilians and wounded scores of others during their first year and a half on the beat. Those abuses that did occur--and not all of these cases were confirmed as such--were isolated instances. In general, most officers were doing a credible job in

spite of their inexperience and an often debilitating lack of equipment.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, progress is being made in establishing internal investigatory procedures capable of addressing abuses of authority. Both the Director and the Inspector General of the HNP appear committed to ending the practice of impunity under which police have traditionally operated. Scores of officers have been dismissed, and at least 13 are being prosecuted. One must keep in mind, however, that the concept of police accountability is foreign to Haiti, and that resources to investigate, try and punish abuses are very limited. (Among other things, the courts are almost entirely nonfunctional.) Nevertheless, in spite of all the problems the HNP faces, most urban Haitians, at least, still seem to believe that a fair amount of progress has been made in creating an effective police force.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, the security situation--while it has clearly deteriorated--is not quite as bad as it might seem from reading the U.S. press. The events of last August do not necessarily mean that things are falling apart. As Rachel Neild of the Washington Office on Latin America has observed, violence tends to come in waves in Haiti, with each new flareup generating enormous tension before gradually dying down.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, this has been the pattern over the past half year. Furthermore, those anti-government forces that have been resorting to violence are still very weak and disorganized. The largest group consists of former enlistees from the FAdH, who suffered an abrupt drop in their economic well-being when their careers were terminated. They feel they have legitimate grievances. They want their savings, pensions and severance pay, and have become increasingly militant in demanding them. In June 1996, several hundred ex-soldiers held a protest in the capital, threatening to take up arms if their demands were not met. There are small political groups on both the extreme right and the extreme left who are trying to manipulate the former enlistees for their own purposes and draw them into conspiratorial activities.<sup>13</sup> These elements view democracy and the rule of law as threats to their own privileges and ambitions. They prefer a police force that they might be able to subvert or control to one that is professional and apolitical. Thus, their efforts to undermine the HNP.

Two other security issues must also be mentioned. One involves the criminal gangs that have proliferated over the past 2 years. This is a serious problem. The police are afraid to go into some of the slums for fear they will be attacked. Even U.S. Embassy personnel have been forbidden to go into Cite Soleil without special permission. Still, there is a distinction between criminal violence and political violence. There are five or six identifiable gangs in Cite Soleil, but they don't cooperate with one another and often shoot at each other. Even the most notorious of these groups--the so-called Red Army--does not exist in the sense of being a well-organized, cohesive entity. While

some of its members may share a fantasy of being part of a broad popular army, they have no idea how to organize or discipline themselves. On the other hand, with opportunities for enrichment scarce and guns plentiful it should not be surprising that some might hire themselves out as thugs or assassins.

Finally, about a dozen government-licensed security companies as well as scores of unlicensed security forces organized by local authorities and wealthy families have appeared over the past 2 years. Currently, there are more private security agents than police officers in Port-au-Prince, and they are often more experienced. Many are former members of the FAdH, who are putting to use the skills they learned in the military. They tend to be better armed than the police, who are still limited by law to side arms. While there is a bill before parliament that would allow the equipping of special police units (SWAT and crowd-control teams) with heavier weapons, its fate remains uncertain. In the meantime, the side-arm restriction is increasingly being reinterpreted in practice to permit officers to carry rifles and shotguns.

The bottom line is that none of these groups currently has the capability of overthrowing the government. The best they can do--for the time being, at least--is to continue to engage in sporadic violence. Under these circumstances, the threat is not so much a coup, which is unlikely to be successful and in any case could not be consolidated in the face of the foreign military presence. Rather, the primary dangers are (1) the assassination of Preval, Aristide or both, leading to massive violence between their followers and those perceived to be responsible for the killings, (2) the triggering of a dialectic of revolution in which ongoing violence from each side accelerates the violence from the other, and (3) the creation of such chaos and anxiety as to undermine and eventually destroy the government's ability to maintain order and public confidence, thus preparing the way for its *eventual* collapse or overthrow.

This is the real meaning of the recent deterioration in the security situation. Pre-revolutionary conditions are being created which, if not contained, could lead to something much worse. The problem is complicated by the fact that the government's security forces show signs of falling into the classic trap of overreacting to the threats and provocations that are occurring. The Leroy/Florival killings were only the most notorious case. While the MICIVIH reports on the HNP have been generally favorable, they have documented a sharp increase in police violence in 1996.<sup>14</sup> Though not all of these incidents constituted abuse, there is little question that such behavior is on the rise. Efforts to investigate and punish the guilty still leave much to be desired. Since April 1996, moreover, over 100 individuals have been arrested on vague charges of subversion,

sometimes without warrants, leading to accusations that the government has been targeting political opponents engaged in perfectly legal activities.

### **The Transition: Leadership and Resources.**

One of the most notable achievements during the past 2 years has been the political transition that has taken place. A veritable revolution has occurred in the Haitian Congress, and it has been clearly for the better. Granted, this was not immediately apparent. The June 1995 elections that ushered in the new legislature were seriously flawed, and were at the time roundly denounced by critics in both Haiti and the United States. By the same token, the landslide victory by *Lavalas* gave rise to fears that Haiti was developing a one-party state dominated by the most radical elements in the Aristide camp.

In retrospect, those concerns appear to have been exaggerated. The problem with the elections was primarily one of chaos and incompetence, rather than systematic fraud or violence, and was largely confined to the initial round of balloting. No serious observer doubts that *Lavalas* would have won an overwhelming victory even under the most pristine conditions. The Congress that emerged is a broadly representative body--the first really representative legislature that Haiti has ever had--and the deputies are taking their jobs very seriously. (In contrast, the previous parliament was overflowing with political hacks and opportunists.)

As for *Lavalas*, it was never a monolithic organization. *Lavalas* is a coalition of groups, several of which have representatives in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. There is no party discipline. Even Gerard Pierre-Charles, the leader of the largest of these blocs--the *Lavalas* Political Organization, or OPL--claims he doesn't know how many deputies he has. And certainly they don't always do what the Executive wants. The legislators have rejected a number of presidential appointments and programs, and even an Inter-American Development Bank loan that was considered inappropriate. Whatever else this parliament might be, it is no rubber stamp.

The name of the game is responsible co-government. Not the least of this Congress' virtues is that it is serving as a check on the president. This is a healthy contrast to the traditional Haitian propensity to place all power in the hands of the Executive. And in spite of an incredible lack of resources, the legislature's performance has been impressive. Keep in mind that there is no party machinery to advance the process of legislation, and almost no trained staff. There is no legislative research service, and few people to help with the drafting of

bills. There are not enough secretaries, xerox machines, telephones, desks or chairs. Nor is there air conditioning. (The temperature in the Chamber of Deputies is often around 95°F.) The Senate does not even have a chamber of its own in which to meet; it has had to adapt a conference room for that purpose.

Yet, even under these conditions, tangible progress has been made. Notwithstanding Aristide's opposition, a major modernization law providing for the partial privatization of state enterprises has recently been passed after prolonged debate and negotiation. So has a civil service law designed to help streamline the bureaucracy. And other measures also should be forthcoming in the months ahead. These reforms are part of the price for restarting the flow of aid from international lending institutions. (In November, Haiti received the first installment of a 3-year \$131 million loan from the International Monetary Fund.) They are also necessary if Haiti is to attract investment and construct an economy that is capable of operating with some semblance of efficiency. The government monopolies, in particular, have been notorious sources of graft, overstaffing and incompetence. Ghost workers abound. Most companies lose money or do not operate at all, and the only way the telephone company can turn a profit is by charging inflated prices for overseas calls. Without such reforms, Haiti's prospects for developing self-sustaining economic growth are nil.

But it is not just Congress that has distinguished itself. President Preval also deserves credit. A case can be made that, God and Aristide willing, the Haitian revolution is entering a new stage. The initial heroic period is over, and another kind of leadership is needed to deal with the everyday problems of getting things done. Within that context, political flexibility and management/administrative skills are more important than charisma, ideology and the ability to deliver fiery speeches. It is perhaps no accident that Preval's approval ratings are now higher than Aristide's among urban Haitians, for substantial majorities believe he is as well or better equipped than the former president to manage the economy, improve living standards, maintain law and order, improve the quality of judges and courts, and encourage national reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there is evidence of this in both the quality of some of his appointments and in the administration's performance. People like Pierre Denize, chief of the HNP; Robert Manuel, the Minister for Public Safety; and Leslie Delatour, the Central Bank Governor;<sup>16</sup> are competent technocrats who are committed to economic reforms, the prevention of human rights violations, and all the other things that must be done if Haiti's future is not to be a repeat of her past.

Yet, in the same breath, one must also note that Haiti is a country with an extremely limited human resource base. The

quality of personnel at the top is mixed, and there is an appalling lack of competence below the ministerial level. In effect, what you have in Haiti are ministers without ministries. The comparative handful of talented and dedicated people are constantly being bombarded--indeed, overwhelmed--by demands. They can only do so much. Lacking proper administrative support, they end up having to deal with problems that should be dealt with at lower levels of the bureaucracy. As a result, things move very slowly. Nor is there any assurance that the decisions and policies that are made will be carried out by those who are responsible for implementing them.

### **The Immensity of the Challenge.**

U.S. Ambassador William Swing recently remarked that one must start from the assumption that everything in Haiti is broken except for the human spirit. Everything needs fixing, and there are precious few resources. Haiti, in fact, is still not very far from the Year One; its political, economic, police and judicial arrangements are being built virtually from scratch. In the process, an attempt is being made to transform deeply engrained perceptions, attitudes, values, and behavior--the political culture of the people. All this will require at least a generation of effort, and probably much longer.

Looking back over the 2 years since Aristide was restored, there has been considerable progress in building the institutional bases of democracy, but somewhat less in changing the political culture. The old values, attitudes and behavior live on, and they are an enormous weight that is dragging the country down even as it continues the struggle to get to its feet. This can be seen everywhere. Haiti is a society that has largely been built on mistrust. The old fears and suspicions continue to exist just below the surface, and all it takes to bring them into the open are events such as those of last summer. At the same time, there is a propensity for violence which, while not manifested in the daily lives of ordinary people, can easily break out at moments of stress, as occurred in the aftermath of the fall of the Duvalier regime when hundreds of *Tonton Macoutes* and Vodou clergy were hunted down and killed.<sup>17</sup> Even in 1995, there were over 100 cases of vigilante justice, and there were reportedly 110 people killed in such incidents between January and October 1996.<sup>18</sup> This says much about the low public confidence in Haiti's law enforcement capabilities, especially the judicial system.<sup>19</sup> It also reflects a lack of understanding of the role that the police and courts play in a democracy. The idea that one can look to those sources for justice--as opposed to taking matters into your own hands--is a new idea for Haitians and will require time to take root.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond this, there is a deeply engrained, 200-year tradition of predation to overcome. This has been a political culture in which, traditionally, everyone has been out for himself. Every politician wanted to be president, or at least get his share of the spoils. Given that mentality, it should not be surprising that the state would become a mechanism to extract wealth for the benefit of those who controlled it. (Similarly, political parties have usually been nothing more than vehicles for the personal ambitions of particular leaders or aspiring leaders.) When combined with grinding poverty, endemic corruption, and deep-seated distrust and insecurity, the result was chronic violence. For those with the means, force or the threat of force was often the option of first resort, and those without means became not merely the objects but sometimes the instruments of terror.<sup>21</sup> While the Duvalierists have been ousted, the political culture which spawned them has been only partially uprooted. As long as there are weapons available and elements in the government and opposition willing to resort to violence, democracy will remain vulnerable.

Political culture is important in numerous other ways as well. One can see it in the behavior of the oligarchy and many (though by no means all) elements in the business class, whose pursuit of self-enrichment at any cost to national development has helped make Haiti the poorest country in the hemisphere. Again, this has been a predatory elite, with no sense of identity with or responsibility to the Haitian people. And that raises the question of the role these elements will play in the "new Haiti." Clearly, their talent and capital must be tapped if the country is to have any hope of escaping from the quagmire of underdevelopment. But how does one provide the kinds of incentives that will get these elites to invest in their own country? Certainly, it is much safer to send one's money abroad. Moreover, even if their capital can be attracted, will it be invested in such a way as to promote the national interest, as well as their own private interests?

Part of the problem with the economic strategy that international lenders have imposed on Haiti is that, within the context of the norms and habits of the Haitian political culture, it may perpetuate and even intensify certain abuses. How does one assure, for instance, that privatized state monopolies will not simply become private monopolies continuing many of the same exploitative practices (e.g., high prices, low wages) that have marked past behavior? And how can one prevent the kinds of corruption that have accompanied privatization in so many other countries? (Mexico is a classic example.) In an environment like Haiti's, where graft is endemic and socioeconomic inequalities immense, the danger is that neoliberal reforms may lead to even greater inequalities and hardships. (This is generally conceded for the short run. Haitian officials estimate that as many as



3,000 workers will be laid off at the overstaffed port, telephone and electric companies and another 7,500 cut from the civil service.<sup>22</sup> The hope is that in the longer term more jobs will be created than have been eliminated, but there are no guarantees.)

Another area of concern is the extent of foreign ownership. Most Haitian businessmen do not have the capital to buy the larger privatized entities. This means that the major industries are likely to be transferred to U.S., Canadian or French control. While it can be argued that this is not necessarily a bad thing--the capital has to come from somewhere and foreign owners may actually be less susceptible to corruption and more sensitive to their social responsibilities than Haitians--it is already a source of discontent among some Haitian nationalists and businessmen and could lead to a backlash.

This not an argument against reform. The old predatory and parasitic socioeconomic structures and relationships must be changed if Haiti is to move forward. But such transitions are always difficult and painful. There must be social safety nets in place to catch those who are endangered, and mechanisms of oversight and accountability to prevent abuses. Otherwise the damage done may offset any improvements that are made. For its part, the Haitian government has attempted to ameliorate some of these problems by retaining a state role in the companies that are to be privatized. None of these entities will be totally privately owned. Rather, the plan is to enlist private sector capital and talent through management contracts, concessions, and capitalization or joint ventures similar to those undertaken in Bolivia. But how all this will work out in practice--if, indeed, it works at all--remains to be seen.

Complicating all of these challenges enormously is a staggering lack of resources, both human and material. This can be seen everywhere. Take, for instance, the HNP which, as has been suggested, is one of Haiti's success stories: The police often lack the means to conduct basic operations. They need more officers and vehicles, heavier weapons, more money, better leadership--in short, more of everything. Due to the government's financial crisis, they have gone for months at a time without pay.<sup>23</sup> They suffer from an incredible shortfall of leadership and management at all levels. Added to this, morale and public support are seriously eroding, as officers increasingly become the targets of political or gang violence and resort to unnecessary violence in return.

But then the police at least function, which is more than can be said for the judicial system. There the problems are simply mind-boggling. In the words of one observer:

Haitian justice lacks everything: financial resources,

materials, competent personnel, independence, stature and trust. Court facilities are a disgrace, courthouses often indistinguishable from small shops or run-down residences in Haitian cities and towns. Judges and prosecutors, ill-trained and often chosen because of their connections or willingness to comply with their benefactors' demands, dispense justice to the highest bidder or to the most powerful. No judge or prosecutor in Haiti, until mid-1995, had received any specialized professional training. Law schools are woefully inadequate and lack the most rudimentary necessities like decent classrooms and a law library; cronyism reigns, professors are ill-trained, students ill-prepared, passing grades bought and sold.<sup>24</sup>

One of the advantages police reform has had over judicial reform is that it could construct a new police force more-or-less from scratch after the old police (which had been part of the FAdH) had been dissolved. In contrast, the new Haiti has inherited the old Haiti's judicial system (including personnel) lock, stock and barrel. While some progress has been made in getting rid of corrupt or incompetent judges and prosecutors, training new ones, distributing law books and so on, judicial reform has taken a back seat to the more immediate demands of security. As a result, there has been a serious disconnect between the development of these institutions. It matters little if the police can apprehend criminals if the courts cannot process them and the jails cannot hold them. The resulting breakdown in the process of justice has simply added to the demoralization of the police, fostering apathy, cynicism, corruption and extrajudicial punishment in the field. (Not to mention declining public support and continuing vigilante justice.)

Another enormous complex of challenges concerns the rejuvenation of the countryside. Uli Locher once commented that "rural Haiti as we know it is doomed."<sup>25</sup> It is easy to see what he meant. The first thing one notices when viewing Haiti from the air is the barren mountains. Flying over rural Haiti is a lot like flying over moonscape. Deforestation and soil erosion are turning parts of the country into a desert. Today, a mere 3 percent of the original forest cover remains; tropical storms have carried some 20 percent of the topsoil to the sea; and only about 11 percent of the land is still arable. In the last half of the 20th century, arable land per capita will have decreased from .38 hectares to about .16 hectares, a casualty of an exploding rural population, overworked lands, deforestation and erosion.<sup>26</sup> The upshot is that Haiti can no longer feed itself.

Reversing this decline will require not only a major long-term reforestation program, but fundamental changes in Haitian

behavior. As matters now stand, there are simply too many peasants working too little land. Accordingly, population growth and the demand for charcoal (which accounts for much of the tree-cutting) must be sharply reduced, and economic incentives and means provided to enable farmers to cultivate their crops in more efficient and less destructive ways. Unfortunately, there is reason to doubt whether either the Haitian government or its international sponsors will be up to the challenge. The former has been ambivalent about family planning programs, with the result that little has been accomplished. At the same time, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has cut back funds for such purposes. And as for reforestation, the USAID track record provides ample reason for skepticism: During the 1980s, reforestation was a top priority, and by 1990 about 10 million trees a year were being grown. Even that, however, was far from sufficient, for simultaneously an estimated 15 to 20 million trees were being cut down. Subsequently, in 1991, shortly before the coup that deposed President Aristide, USAID abruptly terminated the program. Annual tree planting immediately dropped to less than 1 million. While that decision has since been reversed, current efforts appear likely to provide for only 2 to 4 million hardwood seedlings a year, a small fraction of what is needed.<sup>27</sup>

Then, there is the problem of urban migration. In 1994, Haiti had a population of roughly 7 million people. By 2025, it will have an estimated 13.1 million. This is bad enough, but whereas in 1994 the populace was only 30.9 percent urban, by 2025 the percentage is expected to be around 53.9 percent. While the rural population will grow only modestly, from 4.86 million to 6.1 million, the urban population will explode more than threefold, from 2.2 million to 7.1 million.<sup>28</sup> Port-au-Prince, now roughly 1.5 million people, will be an estimated 4 million people. This is almost unimaginable. The slums are already so crowded and the housing so wretched that people often have to sleep in shifts, with one group sleeping for a few hours, then being replaced by another. In the most crowded areas, people frequently sleep upright: One person leans against the wall with his head in his arms, another leans against him, and so on, sometimes as many as three or four in a row.<sup>29</sup>

Keep in mind, too, that the unemployment rate in Haiti is, by some estimates, around 80 percent. Can enough jobs be created to absorb all of the newcomers? If not, what are the implications for political stability and crime? This is not to mention pollution, housing, education, and health services. Only 53 percent of the capital's population currently has potable water. Raw sewage pollutes the roadsides. In the face of growing demand, the water table below the city will continue to recede. Some observers estimate that the water will turn brackish within the next few years.<sup>30</sup>

One cannot in this short essay deal with the full range of socioeconomic problems Haiti will face. To take just a few of the more telling indicators: Even before the current crisis, Haiti had the lowest per capita income (\$360) and life expectancy (48 years), and the highest infant mortality (124 per 1,000) and illiteracy (63-90 percent, depending on the criteria employed) rates in the Western Hemisphere. At least 70 percent of the children suffered from malnutrition, and about 33 percent were seriously malnourished. (Extreme malnutrition made Haiti the only country in the region with high incidence of kwashiorkor and marasmus.) With only 810 doctors and even fewer nurses to serve a population of between 6 and 7 million people, Haitians could not even begin to cope with their severe health problems. To the traditional afflictions of tuberculosis (affecting 10 percent of the population), malaria, salmonellosis, venereal disease, and the endemic illnesses associated with malnutrition has recently been added the modern-day version of the plague: the AIDS virus. Between 7 and 10 percent of pregnant women in urban areas tested HIV positive.<sup>31</sup>

These conditions worsened considerably during the period of military rule (1991-94), in part because of the international embargo of the regime. (Per capita income, for instance, fell to around \$250-260, and AIDS spread to the countryside as several hundred thousand urban residents fled the cities.)<sup>32</sup> More recently, of course, the situation has improved due to some \$800 million in international aid and loans. Nevertheless, much of this assistance has been in the form of short-term, quick-impact projects imposed from above, without consulting the local populace about its needs and desires. As a consequence, "few durable new investments materialized and fewer still benefited the poor majority."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the aid freeze resulting from the deadlock between the Haitian government and international financial institutions over privatization postponed the tackling of costly infrastructural projects and prevented any kind of sustained economic recovery. Thus, relatively few permanent jobs have been created. The problem of chronic poverty has been largely ignored. Popular expectations that democracy would bring a marked improvement in living conditions have been frustrated, resulting in growing disillusionment and a heightened potential for violence.

This brings us to the difficult question of absorptive capacity. Because of widespread corruption and incompetence, Haiti has only a very limited ability to effectively use the aid that is being doled out. To take a dramatic example: In September, the author was told that only about 200 of the 500 vehicles given to the Haitian National Police were still functioning. In large part, this was because many of the HNP's recruits did not know how to drive (almost none had licenses at

the time they entered the force),<sup>34</sup> and many others were unfamiliar with even the basics of maintenance, such as the need to occasionally put oil in their vehicles. In the carnage that followed the fielding of the HNP's automobile fleet, scores of cars and trucks were wrecked or broke down because of negligence. Partially as a result, the police today are frequently unable to respond to calls for help.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, one cannot simply dole out money or equipment with no questions asked and inadequate supervision. Still, there must be some balance between the entirely justifiable concern of donors that their assistance not be wasted and the need for such aid to better serve locally established priorities and be managed by Haitian institutions. One should remember that aid can also be squandered on highly paid foreign consultants. As Larry Minear has noted, the cost of a single day of a World Bank consultant's time, including travel, translation and local expenses, could pay two or three days operating costs of a privately run health clinic in a Port-au-Prince slum. This is one reason, among many others, why there has been such a disparity between the massive international resources expended on Haiti and the lack of sustainable results.<sup>36</sup>

### **No Easy Answers.**

So, is Haiti a "success" or a "failure"? There are no easy answers. Americans have a tendency to view the world in simplistic terms: There are blacks and whites, heroes and villains, successes and failures. But in the real world, the categories are often blurred. In making judgments, the proper frame of reference is the country's past, rather than some idealistic--and invariably culture-bound--standard of what ought to be.

On this basis, U.S. policy to date must be judged a qualified success: Aristide was restored and political power transferred from one duly elected government to another; a new police force has been created which, for all its limitations, is functioning reasonably well under extremely difficult conditions; though political violence and human rights violations persist, they are not the massive problem they have been in the past. Today, indeed, Haiti has a government that not only has the broad support of the populace, but is clearly the most responsible and competent government the country has had in decades--and arguably ever.

The problem is that when one looks to the future, judgments become much more tenuous. Clearly, democratization is not irreversible. The situation remains both fragile and volatile. Crises are abundant. In many respects, the challenge resembles

that of a man attempting to climb an enormous mountain: He moves slowly, one step at a time, planting his feet carefully so as not to slip and fall. Now and then, he makes a misstep, losing his grip, and has to scramble to regain his footing. But he keeps climbing. The danger, of course, is that at some point he may make a more serious mistake, or his toehold may crumble, and he may plunge into the abyss below.

This is Haiti today. It is simply too early to tell whether the experiment will be successful or not. What one can say, however, is that the odds are formidable. The country's problems are so huge, its resources so limited and the weight of the political culture so great that one should harbor no illusions. Even if Haitians can forge a stable democracy--and this will be no easy task--the socioeconomic challenges will be even more difficult. Privatization is not a "silver bullet." It will not solve all of the country's socioeconomic ills, and it may even create some new ones. (Ironically, it will also require a more sophisticated governmental regulatory role.) Haiti is in the process of transformation from a rural/ agrarian society into an urban/light industrial society. Traditional society is crumbling because its economic base is disintegrating. This is not a pretty thing to watch. It will involve considerable suffering and insecurity. And there is no guarantee that Haitians will be much better off in the new society that is emerging than in the old one they are leaving.

The bottom line is that if Haiti is to have a reasonable chance at a brighter future, it will need a lot of help over a long period. Nationbuilding is never a quick and easy process. One of the dangers is that the international community--especially the United States--will not stay the course. Now that the U.S. elections are over, American interest in Haiti may disappear. This would be unfortunate and shortsighted, for Haitians are not likely to let us forget them. If political and socioeconomic conditions deteriorate again, the flow of boat people will resume. There are already roughly a million Haitians in the United States. How many more come will in part be determined by the long-term success or failure of the current experiment in democratization and socioeconomic development.

What, specifically, should the international community and the United States do? Elsewhere, the author has presented a detailed list of policy recommendations, and these need not be repeated here.<sup>37</sup> A few brief observations, however, would seem in order:

First, the moment of truth will come when foreign peacekeepers leave Haiti. As matters now stand, the HNP is simply not capable of maintaining law and order by itself. Fortunately, this has been recognized. In early December, the U.N. Security

Council extended the current force (UNSMIH) for 6 more months, with the possibility of a final 2-month renewal through July 1997. One must assume that by next summer support for a continued U.N. peacekeeping presence will have finally evaporated, and that other arrangements, either bilateral or multilateral, will have to be made. (Again, it is likely that the Haitian police will still not be sufficiently trained and equipped to cope with the situation alone.) Accordingly, the international community--and especially the United States and Canada--needs to begin working out security arrangements for a post-UNSMIH Haiti.

Second, an accelerated effort should be made to create a functioning judicial system. In comparison to the energy and resources that have gone into the Haitian National Police, this sector of law enforcement has been sorely neglected. Yet, without just and effective courts, attempts to institute the rule of law will be doomed. Put another way, the sooner Haiti has an effective judicial system to complement the professional police force that is being constructed, the sooner foreign peacekeepers can go home.

Third, much more attention needs to be given to the task of creating an ecologically viable Haiti. Deforestation, erosion, soil exhaustion, water depletion, desertification and rapid population growth cannot be allowed to continue or the country will become utterly uninhabitable. Of all the problems Haiti faces, this complex of maladies, with their built-in momentum, poses the greatest danger to the country's survival.

Fourth, the United States should convert its military support mission into a semipermanent operation with ongoing infrastructural and humanitarian responsibilities. One of the mistakes the United States made when it went into Haiti was imposing severe limitations on nation-building operations. This was a golden opportunity lost. Haitians would have loved for the United States to have done more of this kind of thing, and they still would. Certainly, the need is there.

Finally, there is a need to continue pressing the Haitian government with regard to human rights violations. If allowed to continue, the recent slide down the slippery slope of political violence could destroy everything that has been accomplished. One should caution, however, that it makes little sense to cut off aid for the HNP, as has sometimes been proposed. Rather, the police need *more* officers, equipment and training, including continuing human rights instruction. (Among other things, the MICIVIH and CivPol missions should be continued.) One does not create a better police force by denying it the means to become a truly professional and competent organization. Quite the opposite.

## ENDNOTES

1. Donald E. Schulz, *Whither Haiti?*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1996.

2. *Lavalas* is Aristide and Preval's political movement. *Macoute* refers to the *Tonton Macoutes*, the paramilitary arm of the Duvalier dictatorship. Evans Paul's accusation may be found in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report: Latin America*, August 26, 1996.

3. Larry Rohter, "Haiti's 'Little Kings' Again Terrorize the Populace," *New York Times*, August 25, 1996.

4. Christopher Marquis, "U.S. Rushes Security Agents to Haiti," *Miami Herald*, September 14, 1996; Larry Rohter, "Pressed by U.S., Haitian President Begins Purge of Guards," *New York Times*, September 16, 1996.

5. The U.S. Embassy does not like to use the word "purge" with regard to these cases. At this writing, 9 people have been placed on "administrative suspension" pending investigation. They have not been "fired." As yet, none have been found guilty of anything. Theoretically, at least, they might still be restored to their old positions.

6. Christopher Marquis and Sandra Marquez Garcia, "Aristide Says Corruption, Chaos Tainting Preval's Government," *Miami Herald*, September 20, 1996; FBIS, *Daily Report: Latin America*, September 24, 1996.

7. A May 1996 U.S. Information Agency poll of 1208 adults in Port-au-Prince, Cap Haitien, and Les Cayes, for instance, found that his approval rating had dropped from 91 percent to 73 percent since the previous October; moreover, those holding very good opinions of him had fallen from 84 percent to 42 percent. In contrast, 78 percent of these urban Haitians said that Preval was handling the presidency very well or fairly well, and many (especially the university educated) thought he would do a better job at managing the economy than Aristide. Office of Research and Media Reaction, *USIA Briefing Paper*, Washington, DC, B-31-96, August 2, 1996, p. 1.

8. FBIS, *Daily Report: Latin America*, November 6, 1996.

9. In March 1995, Borge and Associates polled 1200 Haitians on the national situation. Sixty percent felt that the army should be legally prohibited (24 percent did not), and 72 percent said that Aristide had been right to retire its officers (only 4 percent disagreed). Arias Foundation/Borge and Associates, *Republic of Haiti National Survey of Public Opinion*, March 1995,



xerox, pp. 7, 11.

10. See Mission Civile Internationale en Haiti, OEA/ONU (MICIVIH), *La Police Nationale d'Haiti et les Droits de l'Homme*, July 1996; and *The Situation of Democracy and Human Rights in Haiti*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/51/703, December 2, 1996.

11. Seventy-one percent, according to the May USIA poll. About half the respondents in that same poll also said that the police were doing at least a fairly good job at maintaining law and order, and 42 percent had a favorable opinion of HNP Director-General Pierre Denize. Office of Research and Media Reaction, *USIA Briefing Paper*, pp. 6, 8. One must caution that this is not a representative cross section of the Haitian population. Roughly 70 percent of Haitians live in the countryside, and there is no way of knowing for sure what their attitudes are.

12. Letter to the author.

13. Most recently, the government has moved to defuse this issue by publicly committing itself to address the demands of the demobilized soldiers. It remains to be seen, however, whether it can successfully do this. Resources are extremely scarce, and there is opposition from those who believe that the ex-FAdH do not deserve such consideration.

14. From July to December 1995, there were only 11 reported instances of police mistreatment; between January and May 1996, in contrast, the number rose to 86. The comparable figures for killed and wounded were from 6 to 20 and from 21 to 30, respectively. While the data for the rest of 1996 are incomplete, it appears that over 40 people were killed in 1996. On the bright side, the number of allegations of beatings of people in police custody has recently decreased. MICIVIH, *La Police Nationale d'Haiti*, p. 55; and *The Situation of Democracy and Human Rights in Haiti*.

15. On the economy, for instance, 45 percent felt that he will do a better job and 31 percent felt he will do the same. On improving the lives of Haitians, the figures were 34 percent and 41 percent, respectively. Office of Research and Media Reaction, *USIA Briefing Paper*, pp. 6, 8.

16. Actually, Delatour was originally appointed by Aristide, but Preval kept him on.

17. John Merrill, "Vodou and Political Reform in Haiti: Some Lessons for the International Community," *Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter/Spring 1996, pp. 45-46.

18. The first figure is from a U.S. Embassy source, the second from MICIVIH's *The Situation of Democracy and Human Rights in Haiti*.

19. It is significant that in the USIA poll of urban Haitians only 30 percent of the respondents felt there had been progress in terms of improving the judicial system. Office of Research and Media Reaction, *USIA Briefing Paper*, p. 8.

20. Rachel Neild tells the story of how the residents of Gonaives lost respect for the police because the latter were "too nice." After the populace began challenging and throwing stones at them, officers began beating up detainees and committing other abuses, which in turn led to greater popular respect for the HNP. "Police Reform in Haiti: The Challenge of Demilitarizing Public Order and Establishing the Rule of Law," presentation at a conference organized by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, November 7 and 8, 1996, p. 6.

21. Michel-Rolf Trouillot, for instance, has remarked on the number of extreme abuses committed by the Duvalier regime's henchmen. He notes that the perpetrators were mostly "miserable wretches whose average incomes hardly exceeded what some elite families spend for four servants." See *Haiti: State Against Nation*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990, p. 155.

22. Carla Anne Robbins, "No Quick Fix: Haiti Tastes Freedom, But Efforts to Rebuild Run Into Roadblocks," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 1996.

23. In early November, Haiti received the initial installment of a \$131 million loan from the International Monetary Fund, which should allow the government to pay public employees their long-overdue salaries.

24. William G. O'Neill, "No Longer a Pipe-Dream? Justice in Haiti," paper presented before the conference on "Dialogue for Development: The Political and Economic Reconstruction of Haiti," Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, September 23, 1995, p. 2. For a recent detailed report on the state of the judicial system, see Jean Joseph Exume, *Problemes Actuels Identifies dans le Systeme Judiciaire*, Port-au-Prince, September 23, 1996 (draft).

25. Uli Locher, "Land Distribution, Land Tenure and Land Erosion in Haiti," paper presented at the 12th Annual Conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies, July 12-14, 1988, p. 16.

26. Mats Lundahl, "The Haitian Dilemma Reexamined: Lessons From the Past in the Light of Some New Economic Theory," paper presented at the conference on "Dialogue for Development: The

Political and Economic Reconstruction of Haiti," p. 28; Donald E. Schulz and Gabriel Marcella, *Reconciling the Irreconcilable: The Troubled Outlook for U.S. Policy Toward Haiti*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1994, p. 5.

27. Ernest H. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma: A Case Study in Demographics, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996, pp. 33-34, 37-39.

28. Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, United Nations, 1994 Revision. Electronic document: [gopher://gopher.undp.org:70/00/ungophers/popln/wdtrends/urban](mailto:gopher://gopher.undp.org:70/00/ungophers/popln/wdtrends/urban), December 13, 1995.

29. Amy Wilentz, *The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989, p. 18.

30. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma*, pp. 46-47.

31. Schulz and Marcella, *Reconciling the Irreconcilable*, pp. 3-4.

32. Schulz, *Whither Haiti?*, p. 11.

33. Robert Maguire, Edwige Balutansky, Jacques Fomerand, Larry Minear, William G. O'Neill, Thomas G. Weiss, and Sarah Zaidi, *Haiti Held Hostage: International Responses to the Quest for Nationhood, 1986 to 1996*, Occasional Paper No. 23, Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 1996, p. 95. See also pp. 78-82, 94-96.

34. According to CivPol estimates, as few as 2 percent may have had licenses. Rachel Neild, *The Haitian National Police*, Washington, DC: Washington Office on Latin America, March 18, 1996, p. 13.

35. Similarly, many radios were lost or stolen. Much progress has since been made in establishing logistical controls and maintenance systems. Most of the police have received driving lessons, and several facilities have been set up where Haitians are being trained as mechanics.

36. Maguire, *et al.*, *Haiti Held Hostage*, pp. 110-112.

37. See Schulz, *Whither Haiti?*, pp. 35-42. See also Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma*; Maguire, *et al.*, *Haiti Held Hostage*, pp. 85-108; and Jennifer L. McCoy, *Haiti: Prospects for Political and Economic Reconstruction*, Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, pp. 29-30.

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