

The HAITI Support Group

DECEMBER 1993



LEAH GORDON

Mourning Democracy – Day of the Dead, Port-au-Prince 1st November 1993

by Leslie Griffiths

Before the September 1991 coup d'état, 1,500 sacks of charcoal per month were shipped from Jérémie on the western tip of Haiti's southern peninsula. Now, over two years later, that figure has risen to over 4,500. This simple statistic points to the despair of rural populations who are increasingly driven to cut their trees to earn money. The heavy rains of May carried unprecedented amounts of topsoil into the sea. Inette Durandis, member of the National Association of Haitian Agriculturalists, was even more pointed. Studies conducted by her organisation show how over half a million peasants have mortgaged their crops and, worse, their land, in order to capitalize their needs. She anticipates the continuation of the political impasse and, as a direct consequence, the expropriation of peasant land by unscrupulous speculators and money-lenders.

I was in Haiti for a couple of weeks waiting for Aristide's return in fulfilment of the Governor's Island Accord. I met political leaders, army and police chiefs, the leadership of the ghastly 'attachés', and representatives of the business class as well as people living in the slum districts of Port-au-Prince. None of them could give me a convincing answer to the question I put

repeatedly: 'How will Haiti get out of the mess it's in?' The one group that's taking advantage of the vacuum which currently exists is known as FRAPH (Force Revolutionnaire pour l'Avancement du Pays d'Haiti). It wants President Aristide, Army Chief Cédras, and UN Envoy Caputo to resign. The FRAPH leadership (linked closely to the 'attachés', the police-backed thugs who roam the streets with guns imposing terror on city neighbourhoods) wants to play a key role in a new approach to the solving of Haiti's seemingly intractable political problem. Its spokesman is smooth-talking Emmanuel Constant, son of an Army General and nephew of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Gonaïves (two grounds for treating him with extreme caution!). But, on examination, it's a jumped-up bunch of opportunists, tired old men, and nobodies. To hope for enlightenment from this source is like waiting for cockerels to lay eggs.

So the political efforts run into the sand. Port-au-Prince and the Haitian economy grinds to a halt. But the increase in Jérémie's charcoal trade and the mortgaging of peasant land should inject a new note of urgency into the search for a solution. A whole people, their economy and their environment, are on the verge of total collapse. **A WAY OUT HAS TO BE FOUND.**

1 The military regime effectively reneged on the Governor's Island Accord (July 3rd) under which President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was due to return on **October 30th** when General Raoul Cédras failed to step down on **October 15th**. This had been preceded by a big escalation in political murders intended to derail the accord. The most prominent victims were Guy Malary, the new Justice Minister in the intended incoming government, and Antoine Izmay, a rich businessman and long-time supporter of President Aristide.

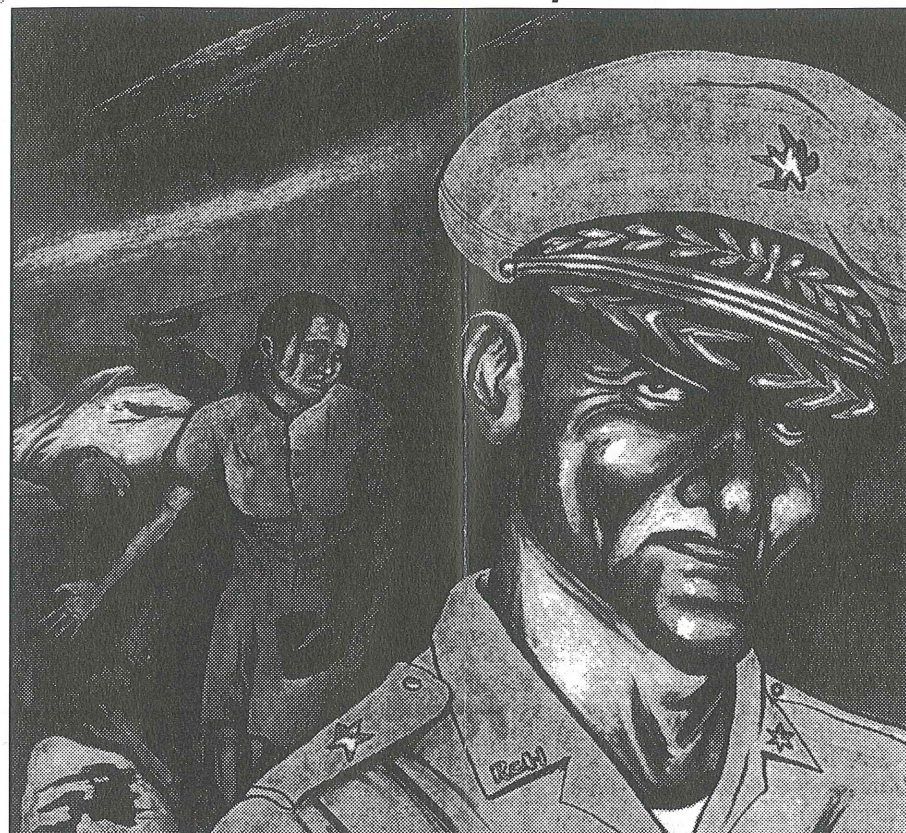
2 These developments were accompanied by near farcical scenes at the Port-au-Prince dockside on **October 11th**. About 150 'attachés' – the licensed thugs who in one diplomat's words 'are the new Tonton Macoutes but worse' – prevented the US troop carrier, 'Harlan County' landing 218 North American army engineers, doctors and training personnel. 230 UN human rights monitors and the 104 foreign military personnel already in Haiti flew out to the Dominican Republic five days later. 'You should have seen Haitians' faces as we pulled out,' one remarked. 'It felt like total betrayal.'

'The Haitian military now knows that the mere threat of effective intervention to put Aristide back in power can be averted by just stepping up the killing, raising the stakes. How long are seven million of us going to be held hostage at gunpoint?'
Journalist in Port-au-Prince

3 UN sanctions were reimposed from **October 18th** with ten warships from the United States, Britain, France, Canada and the Netherlands enforcing an effective arms and oil blockade of Port-au-Prince and northern harbours. Aristide called for an extension of the sanctions in a speech to the UN General Assembly on **October 30th** explaining that the majority of Haitians supported 'a complete embargo' as the best means of restoring democracy. President Clinton responded by simply appealing to key allies, including Britain, to follow the US lead in freezing the assets and revoking the visas of key opponents to Aristide's return.

Haiti- What is Going On

A lot has happened in Haiti since our last briefing. Here's a potted version of some of what you may have read in the press.



General Raoul Cédras: A grant from the CIA to start up in the cocaine business

'If the UN hadn't promised to help, encouraging people to wait, there'd have been riots here long ago. Haitians have been demobilised by the international community.'
Patrick Norzeus, MP

6 The revelations kept coming. A confidential US Senate report leaked to the press finally admitted what many had known for years – the Haitian military and Cédras and François in particular were earning up to US\$250 million per annum from the illicit cocaine trade through Haiti. And more. On **November 14th**, the *New York Times* front page revealed that the Haitian intelligence agency set up the CIA in 1986 as a 'covert anti-narcotics agency' had in itself become a major instrument for drug smuggling. 'This,' concluded one US congressman 'is just unreal.'

5 By early November, the boot was on the other foot. The CIA admitted that the key players resisting Aristide's return, in particular the hardline colonel Michel François and Cédras himself, had been on their pay-roll up until 1991. Were the CIA trying to protect their own in attacking Aristide? The press corps in Haiti focused on Lynn Garrison, a Canadian adviser to Cédras in Port-au-Prince, claimed by some to be the CIA's pointman. Many Democrat supporters of Aristide were outraged: Senator Daniel Moynihan even proposed legislation to dismantle the CIA, claiming that Haiti was simply the latest example of the way the CIA had become fatally addicted to being an 'active player, not an advisory agency in foreign affairs'.

4 The embarrassing reverse of US efforts in Haiti fuelled a war of words, leaks and briefings on Capitol Hill in Washington. President Aristide was reportedly described as 'flaky' and 'mentally unstable' by the CIA's senior intelligence officer for Latin America; Aristide responded by saying he 'knew all about character assassination'. Clinton met his most senior military and national security advisers twice to discuss the options; the debacle in Somalia and consequent pressure at home played a key role in persuading him to desist from military action.

'We're in a war without arms against these gangsters and we're winning. We're not afraid.'
Antoine Izmay, before being dragged from a church and shot.
September 11th 1993.

The truth, the whole truth and nothing but . . .

by Phillip Wearne

Slowly, bit by bit, the terrible truth is emerging. The Governor's Island accord collapsed because Dante Caputo, the UN special envoy and the Clinton administration were gullible enough to believe that in Cédras and François they were dealing with honorable men. They suspended whatever judgement they had because they desperately needed a face-saving formula that could pass for a solution.

It never could have. The lunacy of lifting sanctions – the only thing that had forced the negotiations in the first place – more than nine weeks before Aristide was due to return has now been cruelly exposed. As we go to press, the Haitian military are busy helping themselves to the estimated three months supply of oil they stockpiled up to October 18th.

That stockpile may allow them to hang on indefinitely. The cost? About 50 lives a month at the current rate of political murder in Haiti.

The one man who knew exactly what type of person he was dealing with on Governor's Island – Jean-Bertrand Aristide – was ignored last July. Caputo and his aides presented him with a 'fait accompli'. When Aristide expressed reservations about the deal Caputo was livid. 'History will not forgive President

Aristide . . . he thundered to the press. No Caputo, it is you, the United Nations and your foot-dragging US paymasters that history will not forgive.

But the United Nations failed in Bosnia, in Somalia, in Burundi critics argue. Why is Haiti different? It's very simple. The UN's involvement in Haiti predates that in any of the other current world trouble spots. In Haiti the UN organised and funded the election process that brought Aristide to power – an election result it has a moral, if not legal, obligation to defend.

But if the UN's performance has been mostly incompetence and negligence, the CIA's has been one of downright subversion. A web of deceit not unlike the Contragate saga is now beginning to unravel in Washington.

The CIA, it turns out, had Cédras, François and up to 12 others on its payroll until 1991. Without a hint of irony this has been explained as normal practice: 'The United States often develops relationships with ambitious and bright young men abroad . . . following them through their public service careers . . .'

How do we know they are not still on the CIA payroll? Were they encouraged to develop their 'careers' by overthrowing a democratically elected head of



state many in Washington never reconciled themselves to?

The contacts through CIA men in Port-au-Prince continue. Indeed, with the help of right-wing senators a strategy has developed: discredit Aristide, prevent his return, propose a new government, put it in place. This strategy is now at stage three.

Clinton says this is not his policy. If it isn't, he needs to prove it, by getting Aristide back fast and by crushing the alternative foreign policy that has developed in the vacuum of his own.

The trouble is Clinton has a particularly big credibility problem on Haiti. One of his first acts as President was to renew the Executive Order excluding Haitian boat people in direct contradiction to his campaign promises.

But perhaps the most incredible feature of the last month's revelations was the admission that the Haitian national intelligence agency, SIN, set up by CIA in 1986, has become a major drugs smuggling vehicle.

The same CIA that is at the forefront of the drugs fight was funding a 'liaison' organisation whose anti-narcotics smuggling intelligence allowed it to eliminate rivals to become the biggest drugs smuggling operation in Haiti. Gamekeeper becoming poacher with a vengeance, it seems.

It's not the first time the CIA has been involved in drug running. Indeed, I seem to recall that someone called Ollie North ran cocaine in to secure US airforce bases to fund his arms-for-hostages, 'off-the-books' alternative foreign policy.

There's more to come on this. The political embarrassment of the failures of US policy in Haiti has set the North American press digging deeper than ever

before. In mid-November the CIA-SIN link made the front page of the *New York Times*, which now has three top journalists working on the story.

Time magazine also excelled itself with a three-page article entitled 'With Friends Like These'. The weekly drew attention to a series of names which will ring bells amongst those who reported the CIA's covert actions in Central America in the 1980s – 'veterans of previous US capers in the region', as *Time* put it.

I suspect that the drug smuggling some of us drew attention to as long as two years ago – now worth up to US\$500 million a year in Haiti according to some intelligence chiefs – will eventually emerge as the key plank in the CIA's strategy to help Cédras, François and co. stay in power. These profits have been crucial to both their ability and motivation to survive sanctions.

The question now is have the CIA been as amateur in covering their tracks in Haiti as they were in Central America? How strong are the political connections to US Senators like Bob Dole and Jesse Helms – the chiefs of staff of the 'Discredit Aristide' army on Capitol Hill? Watch this space. Meanwhile get a grip, Clinton. Do they run you or you run them?

UN beats a Haiti retreat

by Leah Gordon

On Saturday October 16th the UN hurriedly evacuated its 270 observers from the Civil Mission in Haiti. These were the foot soldiers in a complex political process with the supposed aim of restoring democracy to Haiti and Aristide to his rightful place as President.

To this day the Mission, culled from human rights organisations all over the world, languish in expensive hotels in the Dominican Republic awaiting their unlikely return to Haiti. As the repression rises in Haiti they still enjoy their salary of \$6,000 a month plus a daily subsistence rate of \$87. Since the UN Mission's beginning, in early 1993, many onlookers have expressed their dissatisfaction with its operation. To the Haitians the Mission represented a life-saver, in reality it was a group of people preparing reports.

An observer said of his work, 'I just sit in the office and people come in and tell me the worst horror stories. They need material help, a safe house, money to leave town, due to harassment by the attachés. When they realise that all I'm going to do is write a report they are incredulous and they feel deeply let down.'

Scandals have rocked the Mission. A female co-ordinator from St Lucia, working in the Northern Department, was revealed to be having an affair with the local military commander. This was not the only incident where the Mission got too close to the ruling powers. In Gonaives another co-ordinator was perceived to have struck up a rather cosy relationship with the 'chef de section'. During his daily visits he would spend most of the time sharing jokes and gossip. This caused a rift in the office. The UN had to act quickly moving half the employees to other bases and replacing the co-ordinator.

By September many papers had begun to report the lavish lifestyles of the observers. *Newsweek* ran a story entitled 'Great

work if you can get it'. Most of the observers lived above Port-au-Prince in Petionville, home to the Haitian elite. They could be found most nights in the opulent French restaurants light years away from the poverty of downtown Port-au-Prince.

Then on September 11th, there came the tragedy of Antoine Izmer's assassination at a memorial service held at the Sacré Coeur. The Malval government had requested extra security but the UN had only one car in the area which did nothing to deter the killers. Out of extreme embarrassment, a week later at Izmer's funeral, they deployed all five of their vehicles at the prerequisite safe distance. This did not prevent the attachés

from surrounding the church after the service whilst Pere Adrien and Pere Masac, two pro-Aristide liberation priests, were still inside. They were finally led to safety by Deputy UN Chief of Mission Colin Grandison about two hours later.

Colin Grandison's concern for the safety of the Mission employees sometimes appeared to neutralise the relative effectiveness of the Mission itself. One observer said 'Some days I felt that I would have to find out what was happening from a journalist as they were the only people who could get close enough to events to witness them.'

Finally the confidentiality of the reports that were being filed has to be questioned. These reports represented a fascinating dossier of Lavalas members and supporters.

When the Canadian UN police arrived they demanded full access to the files, even though they were mandated to work with the Haitian police. There were rumours in the Port-au-Prince office that at least two of the observers were working directly with the US Embassy. People started to be very wary about their files. The day after a report was filed civil mission observers were expected to verify the given address by a personal visit in a UN marked vehicle. Many soon refused because of the danger this could place their informants in. This led, it is rumoured, to the falsification of addresses on the reports. Increasingly, the verification of reports seemed to come before the safety of Haitian people.

So the UN Mission has been effectual, up to now, in merely quashing another popular uprising by asking the people to trust and wait. And the observers, maybe foot-soldiers, maybe pawns, bide their time in holiday paradise. Some taking advantage and having the time of their lives, some frustrated and confused as to their role in all this mess.

Diary of Terror

Heiner Rosendahl kept a diary while working as a UN observer in Haiti. Below we print extracts originally published by the German newspaper 'Public Forum' on October 22, 1993. Translation by Christian McConnell-Wisskirchen.

Friday, 17 September: Two young men from Cité Soleil, a Port-au-Prince slum, come into the office of the observer group, telling us that the democracy-activist Ronald Jean has been shot dead in the street. Two policemen from Cité Soleil police station were involved.

We receive a radio message to drive immediately to the building of the Haitian Foreign Office. Robert Malval, the prime minister appointed by President Aristide, was inaugurating the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, when a group of armed attachés stormed into the hall and interrupted the ceremony. It is possible to push the armed men out of the hall, but they remain in front of the building.

Noticing us, the UN-observers, they run aggressively towards us, uttering insults and threats. The police are standing nearby, doing nothing. Malval leaves the building. He can only reach his car under the protection of his presidential guard. The convoy escapes at high speed.

In the afternoon we are visited by the two chiefs of the civilian UN-observer mission, who explain to us the strategy for the funeral of Antoine Izmer. Izmer, an important economic adviser and longstanding companion of President Aristide, was abducted while attending a mass and murdered by attachés. Since the death of this symbol of hope, the situation in Haiti is visibly deteriorating.

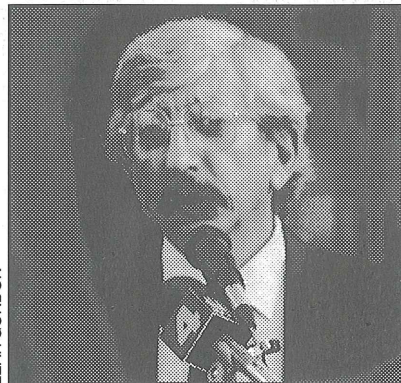
Saturday, 18 September: From 7am we observe the square in front of the church in which the requiem for Antoine Izmer take place. The attachés take up positions from 7.15am onwards. They are coming in groups of six or eight from the police barracks opposite the church and occupy the whole square, spreading out, so that after a while one cannot identify these armed 'civilians'. Some are equipped with walkie-talkies, others receive their instructions from couriers. Two of them have been placed very close to our cars, among them one attaché I have seen before in a police station close to my

flat. His nickname is 'bone-breaker'.

As the service ends, all the attachés stream into the square opposite the church portals.

I remain in my position in front of the church. It is now 11.30am. We hear on the radio-telephone how other observers on the opposite side of the church have witnessed the arrest of a young man, by two attachés.

On our drive to the manse I notice how, about 50 metres away from us, a group of attachés is leading away a young man who,



Dante Caputo – going, going, gone

in simple fear, has defecated. His trousers are smeared from top to bottom.

At the manse, Father Jean Yves asks us to wait and then to accompany the padres. We agree, but then the most senior police officer on the scene demands that we leave the street. I reply that as the observers, we have the right to continue our monitoring. His reactions make it clear that it is only the power of weapons that counts in this country.

It is a rerun of what happened a week ago, when they forced a UN car to leave and a few minutes later dragged Antoine Izmer from the church and shot him. I call over the radio that the director of the UN-mission should come with bodyguards and that they should call the highest police authorities that they can get hold of. This happens. The director of the UN-mission arrives at the main portal of the church and we drive into the yard of the manse. For once we have achieved something in a critical situation.

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PUBLISHED BY THE HAITI SUPPORT GROUP

Trinity Church, Hodford Road, London NW11 8NG. Tel: 081 201 9878

Typeset by Boldface (071 253 2014)

Printed on recycled paper by Wernham Printers, 4 Forster Road, London N17.