



Haiti's new riot police unit in action.

Photo by Evens Sanon

Death and confusion – who controls the Police?

The question of criminal and political violence in Haiti has raised a great deal of controversy since the resignation on 7 October of the Secretary of State for Public Security, Robert Manuel, and the assassination, two days later, of former colonel Jean Lamy, who until his death was an advisor to the leadership of the national police.

Confusion and suspicion about these events are widespread in Haiti due in large measure to the complete silence of the authorities on these matters. Instead of the principle of “transparency” proclaimed at the 1991 inauguration of the Lavalas movement into power, it is complete secrecy that one sees in public affairs. Don’t the people, the governed, those most concerned, have a right to information?

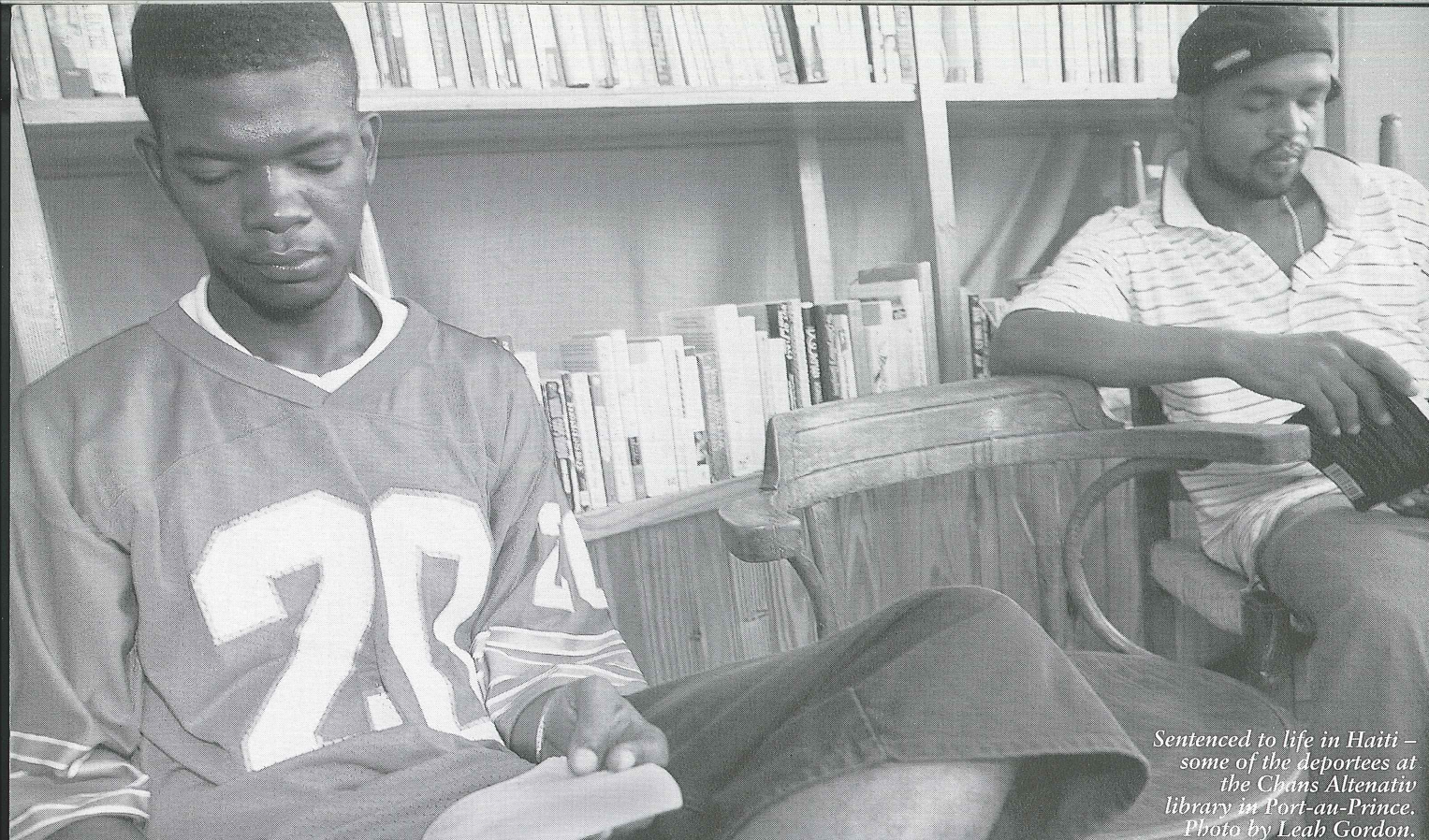
Indeed, until now, the government has not given any explanation about the departure of Robert Manuel. Did he voluntarily resign, or was he fired against his will? In either case, what were the reasons?...Did the Secretary of State, considered a close associate of the head of State, make some kind of grave political error? Or, did Préval finally judge the moment right to concede to the repeated demands of popular organisations, which have long called for Manuel’s dismissal?

The Haitian National Police itself does not say much, even when its own members are struck down. It feels like a return to the old days of the military-civilian dictatorship, where the sole response was always “the investigation continues”. No news has filtered out about the investigations into the 12 January attack on the President’s sister, the

1 March murder of Senator Yvon Toussaint, the 28 May massacre of 11 people in Carrefour Feuilles, or the murders of over a dozen police officers in recent weeks. Should one attribute this to the incompetence of those in charge of the Police, or to their cowardice at denouncing the masters of the “laboratory”, as the CIA/Pentagon nexus is called in Haiti, or to their complicity in the crimes?

The assassination of Jean Lamy (a former Army colonel who remained loyal to the ousted Aristide government during the 1991-94 dictatorship, and who was rumoured to be in line to replace Manuel as Secretary of State for Public Security) had the effect desired by those who carried it out: creating division, confusion, and chaos. All the claims and counter-claims, however, ignore the sector most likely to have perpetrated this assassination – the ‘laboratory’, the connection between the Pentagon and the CIA that does all that it can through its usual proxies, the Macoutes and coup-mongers, to create confusion, anger, and antagonism in order to prepare the way for the elimination of Aristide or other leaders who do not suit them. And, especially, to create such discouragement in the hearts of the people that they will at last become resigned and accept a ‘stable’ government of the extreme right, such as in other Central American countries where this low-intensity warfare has been practised over the course of the last two decades.

■ **Extracted from Haiti Progrès newspaper, 13 and 20 October, 1999.**



Sentenced to life in Haiti – some of the deportees at the Chans Alternativ library in Port-au-Prince. Photo by Leah Gordon.

DEPORTEES FROM THE US – struggling to cope with life in Haiti

Since 1996, the US has been deporting non-citizens who are found guilty of committing crimes. Jamaica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Haiti are having to cope with hundreds of returned criminals, many of them the children of immigrants who entered the US decades ago. Over the last few years, some 900 ex-convict Haitians and Haitian-Americans have been deported to Haiti by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service, most of them for drug offences.

The Haitian government blames these deportees for the increase in common crime that today plagues the country, and in Port-au-Prince it is commonly assumed that they are linked with the trafficking of cocaine, and involved with criminal gangs that carry out shootings and car-jacks. Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, director of the 30 September Foundation human rights organisation, told the *Miami Herald*, "The criminals that they are deporting were not raised in Haiti. They didn't learn to become criminals in Haiti. They learned those delinquent behaviours in the US or in Canada."

Others though say that it is too easy to make the deportees the scapegoats for the social problems caused by a deteriorating economy, the failure of the UN to disarm the right wing groups that supported the military regime, and the use of Haiti as one of the main transshipment points for cocaine from Colombia to the US. For example one Haitian police officer told the *NACLA Report* that a notorious criminal gang operating in the Cite Soleil slum had been in existence since he was a child. "None of these guys have been the States... Their connections are to the Haitian criminal elites not US jails."

Michelle Karshan who runs Chans Alternativ, an organisation that helps these young men adapt to and survive in Haiti, says they have not formed criminal gangs but "hang together because they have no one else from their backgrounds to take care of them." Most have no experience of Haitian life, and it is extremely hard for them to assimilate. Their fashion style of baggy trousers, baseball caps and gold teeth make them stick out a mile in Port-au-Prince, and they face widespread rejection from their neighbours.

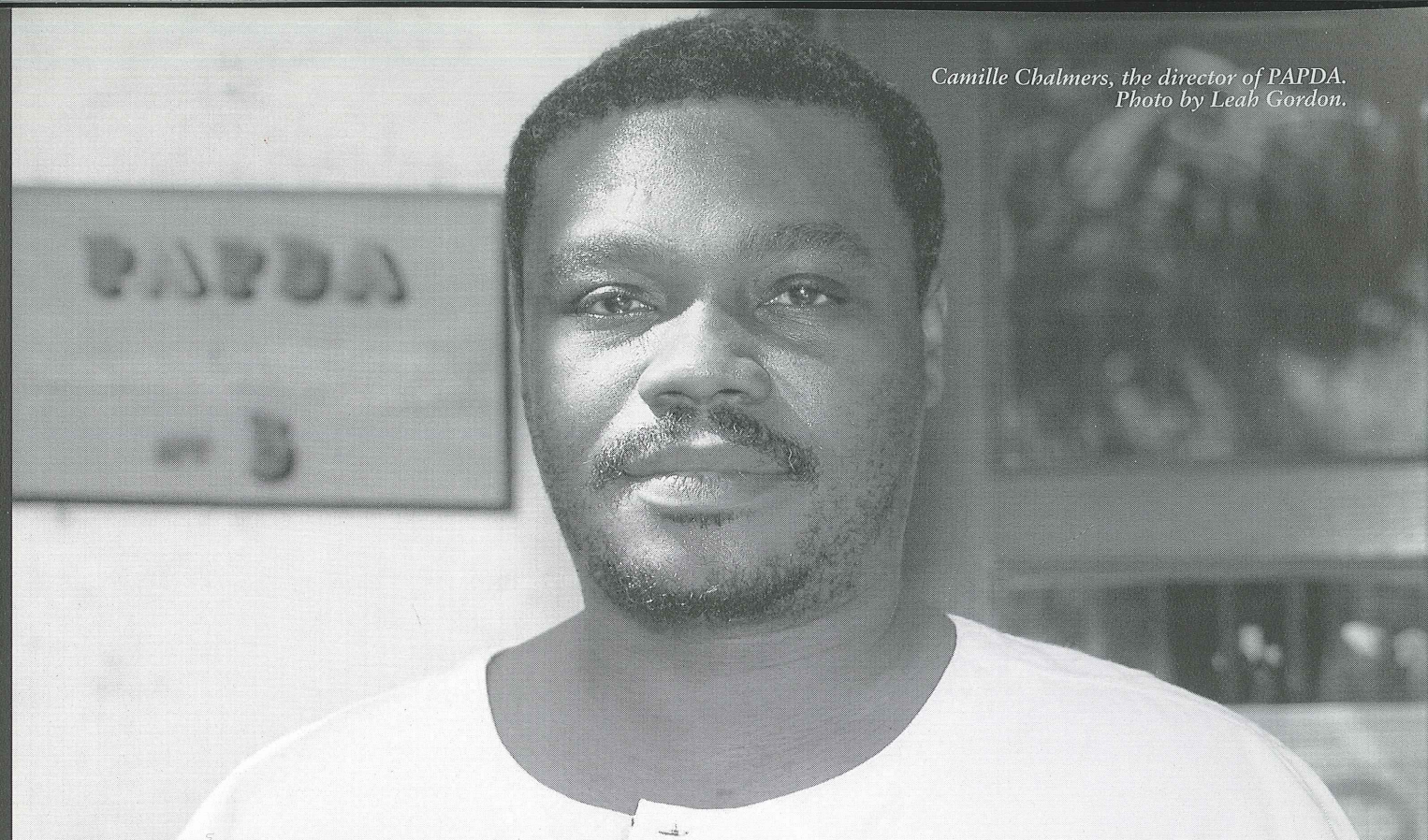
Chans Alternativ offers language classes – many of the deportees know no Creole or French, having never lived in Haiti. One of them told the *Miami Herald* he was born in the Bahamas to Haitian parents, and went to live in Florida when he was two years old. He was deported to Haiti because his parents had not bothered to register as US citizens, and the Bahamas does not recognise children born of Haitian parents as Bahamian citizens.

The organisation also offers classes on conflict resolution, mediation, how to teach English, and how to apply for job. Unemployment is one of the deportees' biggest problems. Not only is it hard to find work in a country with an 80% unemployment rate, but anti-deportee prejudice means potential employers treat them with contempt. Most of the deportees live on the small amount of money that their families in the US send them. Twenty-five year old Harry Desir said he can't rent a room because he has to survive on the few dollars his mother sends him from the \$300 a week she earns in New York.

The deportees are victims of the collapsing US social system where someone is arrested for a drugs offence every 20 seconds, and a new prison is built every week. Chans Alternativ offers them some hope. A group of deportees who take part in the Chans Alternativ programmes have formed a rap band, and sing of their experiences in English and Creole. One of them, Ricardo, told *Haiti Briefing* that being sent to Haiti was "like starting a whole new life all over again."

Sources: "Deportees reflect on life in Haiti", *Miami Herald*, October 11, 1999 by Yves Colon, and "Deported Home to Haiti", *NACLA Report*, November 1998 by Donna Decesare.

● Chans Alternativ last year opened a lending library of English-language books for the use of the alienated and isolated deportees who find that Haiti has little in the way of entertainment of the type they are accustomed to. The library is also used by others who read English and membership revenue helps support other Chans Alternativ programmes. The Haiti Support Group is collecting novels and other general interest books from its supporters to donate to the Chans Alternativ library. Please post your unwanted books to the Haiti Support Group, P.O. Box 29623, London E9 7XU.



Camille Chalmers, the director of PAPDA. Photo by Leah Gordon.

CORRECTING THE IFIs – Camille Chalmers interview

Earlier this year, Charles Arthur spoke to Camille Chalmers, the director of the Haitian Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA), an association of non-governmental organisations, trade unions, and peasant groups.

Question: The international financial institutions (IFIs) routinely produce statistics and cite indicators that support their contention that their neo-liberal plan is working and that the Haitian economy is moving in the right direction. What is PAPDA's reaction to this?

Answer: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank always try to show that the policies they recommend are very good. They even change their own criteria in order to try and prove it. For example, the World Bank has just set the level of absolute poverty at US\$1 a day – that is the amount that they say people need to have in order not to be classified as living in absolute poverty. What country in the world can people live on US\$1 a day?

The IMF cites the following data to make their case: 3.1% annual growth rate, a drop in inflation to 8%, an increase in government revenue, a reduction in the trade deficit, and an increase in international currency reserves sufficient to cover four months of imports at the Central Bank. However, these criteria are insufficient to evaluate how a country is developing, and, in fact, many of them reflect a decrease in economic activity. For example, look at the improved trade balance – this is in fact a consequence of the absence of any real investment, and because there is no real investment, there is a decrease in imports, because there is a high level of unemployment that leaves the people with no capacity to consume!

Let's look at the economic growth rate. It has gone from 4.5% in 1994/95, to 2.8% in 95/96, 1.1% in 96/97, and is now 3.1% for 97/98. The average is less than 3%, well below the average of 4.5% that the World Bank has as its objective over the five years from 1994/95. Even this objective is dubious because it is based on regaining the economic level registered in 1990/91 before the military coup. This would not necessarily improve the situation because it is much more serious now – the rural situation is still

deteriorating day by day, and the capacity of the population to feed itself is decreasing, with food sourced from abroad increasing from 5% to around 30% of the total amount. And, what is more, the 3.1% growth last year was based on the unusually good performance of the agricultural sector thanks to abundant rainfall which cannot be factored into economic predictions.

What about the international development aid money coming into Haiti? News reports often claim that aid money is not being released because of the collapse of the democratic system – is this having a negative effect?

It is important to bear in mind that the flows of international aid coming into Haiti are quite large – US\$300-400 million a year is a lot of money compared to what Haiti has traditionally received. However, it is not clear at all how decisions about disbursement of this money are in any way related to the creation of a democracy. Last year, a "shadow programme" was created, a mechanism that the IMF set up to disburse funds even during the institutional and political crisis that was, and still is, going on. (For over a year and a half, the government was without a Prime Minister, and, since January 1999, there has been no Parliament.) Therefore, we can see that this model of development does not support the construction of democracy, nor is it interested in having structural change in the economy for the benefit of the majority of the population.

In January 1995, the IFIs declared they would provide Haiti with US\$2.5 billion in loans and grants over five years. In general they never really disburse 100% of aid they promise, but by 1998, with one and a half years left, the amount has already reached US\$1.6 billion. So, the total disbursement is not far off the projected figure. Although at times it has slowed down, it has never really been cut off.

And what about aid for the forthcoming elections?

Now the funders have pledged important sums of money to the electoral process even though we are in a situation where the process is far from clear. The European Union had set aside money for democracy and human rights, but they will reallocate all that, and money that was supposedly for civil society will be used for the elections.

PAUL FARMER IN LONDON AS HAITI SUPPORT GROUP GUEST

Paul Farmer is an anthropologist and a practising doctor specialising in infectious diseases.

He could be making a handsome living for himself in private practice in his native Boston, but for the past 15 years he has worked instead with the poor of communities in the developing world and inner-city America. He is founder of the NGO, Partners in Health, which works with sister organisations in Haiti, Peru, Mexico, Cambodia, and the US to make a "preferential option for the poor in health care" by working on projects designed to increase the health and well-being of people struggling against poverty. Partners in Health's roots go back to 1983 when it began working with a group of community activists based in the central plateau of Haiti.

Today, Dr Farmer divides his clinical time between Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, and the Clinique Bon Sauveur in central Haiti. He is also director of the Programme in Infectious Disease and Social

Change at the Harvard Medical School, and the author of "AIDS and Accusation" (1992), "The Uses of Haiti" (1994), and "Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues" (1999).

Dr. Paul Farmer will be addressing meetings in London on 15 and 16 November.

● **Monday 15 November, 1pm-2pm,**
at the Basement Lecture Theatre,
University College London, 1-19
Torrington Place, London WC1,
A lecture on social inequality,
infectious diseases, and health.

● **Tuesday 16 November, 7.30pm**
at the Library, The October Gallery, 24
Old Gloucester Street, London WC1,
A talk on the politics of health in
Haiti, and afterwards, an informal
reception and drinks.

**Please contact Leah Gordon on 0181 533 1250 or email:
leahgordon@aol.com for more details.**

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Baby Doc – turning up the heat

In October, following the British court decision to authorise the extradition of General Pinochet to Spain, the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, expressed his satisfaction, calling it a "moment with great symbolic meaning". Similar positive reactions emanated from other leading members of the ruling French Socialist Party. These were noted by the Paris-based Committee to Judge Duvalier which has recently initiated a legal process against the former Haitian dictator, Jean-Claude Duvalier, in the French courts for crimes against humanity. The Committee wondered if the remarks about the Pinochet case were not a little hypocritical in the light of the French authorities' inaction in relation to the Duvalier case.

On 11 October, the Committee wrote to the French Interior Minister asking for confirmation of a Le Monde newspaper report

that the former dictator had, "at the beginning of the year", applied for the normalisation of his immigration status in the framework of the law relating to those persons resident in France without papers for more than ten years. The Committee pointed out that if the information in the article was correct, the French authorities' claims not to know Duvalier's whereabouts in France could not be true – they must have known Baby Doc's current address for some considerable time.

Documents campaign

The international campaign, launched by Haitian grassroots organisations, with supporters in over 30 countries, demands the return of death squad and army documents removed from Haiti by US troops in 1994. The US government admits that the documents are important to justice in Haiti and does not seriously contest its legal obligation to return them. However, it refuses to release the entire quantity of the documents.

In mid-September, the City Council of Liverpool passed a motion proposed by Haiti Support Group member, Liberal Democrat Councillor Kiron Reid, in support of the Documents campaign. The motion read, "This City Council notes that Liver-

pool is a port with a long history of trade with the Caribbean. Liverpool is also a city with a long history of support by many of its citizens for individual liberty and of helping people in distress...Under the law of Haiti, international law, and United States law, the US has no legal right to have taken the documents or to keep them now. Liverpool City Council calls upon the Government of the United States of America to return all the FRAPH/FADH documents taken from Haiti."

On the recent anniversary of the September 1991 military coup, renewed publicity and demands for the documents' return prompted a response from the US ambassador to Haiti who offered 98% of the documents. However, as supporters of the campaign point out, 2% of 160,000 pages is 3,200 – a significant amount of probably key information that is being withheld from the Haitian judicial process.

Following the US veto of the inclusion of the Documents issue in the resolution on Haiti at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva earlier this year, attention now switches to the UN General Assembly in New York at the beginning of November. The UN Independent Expert on Haiti will again make his call for the return of the documents a central part of his report on the struggle against impunity in Haiti. The Haiti Support Group will join other organisations in lobbying for the inclusion of the Documents issue in the forthcoming General Assembly resolution.