

Haiti 2010: Exploiting Disaster¹

By Peter Hallward

The following essay is adapted from the Afterword of the 2010 printing of Hallward's 2008 book, 'Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment'. (Verso).

Just before 5pm on Tuesday 12 January 2010, Haiti's capital city and the surrounding area were devastated by the most catastrophic earthquake in the history of the hemisphere. The scale of the destruction was overwhelming. According to the most widely cited estimates, around 220,000 people perished and more than 300,000 suffered horrific injuries, leading to many thousands of amputations.² Stories told by the bereaved defy summary. Perhaps as many as 200,000 buildings were destroyed, including 70% of the city's schools. Today, more than half a year after the disaster in which they lost their homes and virtually all their belongings, around 1.5 million people continue to live in makeshift camps with few or no essential services, with few or no jobs, and with few or no prospects of any significant improvement in the near future.

Although the earthquake has no precedent in Haitian history, the factors that magnified its impact, and the responses it has solicited, are all too familiar. They are part and parcel of the fundamental conflict that has structured the last thirty years of Haitian history: the conflict between *pèp la* (the people, the poor) and members of the privileged elite, along with the armed forces and international collaborators who defend them. If the 1980s were marked by the rising flood that became Lavalas, by an unprecedented popular mobilisation that overcame dictatorship and raised the prospect of modest yet revolutionary social change, then the period that began with the military coup of September 1991 is best described as one of the most prolonged and intense periods of counter-revolution anywhere in the world. For the last twenty years, the most powerful political and economic interests in and around Haiti have waged a systematic campaign designed to stifle the popular movement and deprive

¹ A slightly earlier and shorter version of this text will appear next month as an Afterword to the 2010 reprinting of *Damming the Flood: Haiti and the Politics of Containment* (Verso, 2010). I'm grateful to Roger Annis, Isabeau Doucet, Kim Ives and Tim Schwartz for their comments on an earlier draft. Two of the most usefully consolidated sources of information about post-earthquake Haiti are the CEPR's invaluable 'Haiti Relief and Reconstruction Watch', <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/relief-and-reconstruction-watch/>, and the Canada Haiti Action Network website (<http://canadahaitiaction.ca/>).

² See for instance Peter Beaumont, 'Haiti Earthquake: Six Months On', *The Guardian*, 10 July 2010. 'The number of the dead most often cited is 250,000', wrote Beverly Bell six weeks after the earthquake, 'but that is utterly meaningless. No tally was taken of the corpses buried in people's yards or dumped in mass graves. Countless people are still missing. And multi-storied buildings everywhere contain flattened bodies – tens, hundreds each, who knows? You drive down the street and someone points. "You see that building? There are still 200 people inside there; they never got them out." City blocks are cemeteries' (Beverly Bell, 'Grasses of Ginen', *Huffington Post*, 25 February 2010 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beverly-bell/haiti-grasses-of-ginen_b_476436.html). Six months after the quake, most press, government and NGO reports continue to cite casualty figures ranging from 200,000 to 250,000. Writer Tim Schwartz, however, is sceptical of the official numbers, and his own research suggests that the actual number of people killed may have been closer to 60,000 (email from Tim Schwartz, 14 October 2010).

it of its principal weapons, resources and leaders. The January earthquake triggered reactions that carried and that are still carrying such measures to entirely new levels.

So far, this ongoing counter-revolution has been grimly successful. Rarely have the tactics of divide and rule been deployed with such ruthless economy and efficacy as in Haiti 2000-2010. A small handful of privileged families are now wealthier and more powerful than ever before; once the post-quake reconstruction begins in earnest, in early 2011, they are set to become wealthier still. More than a million homeless and penniless people, by contrast, are likely to spend the reconstruction years in a sort of squatters' limbo, as foreign technocrats, multinational executives and NGO consultants decide how best to rebuild their city. The majority of their compatriots will remain destitute and forced to endure the most harrowing rates of exploitation in the hemisphere. The majority also know that if current tendencies prevail, their children, and their children's children, can expect nothing different. Today, with the battered remnants of the Lavalas movement more divided and disorganised than ever before, with the country firmly held in the long-term grip of a foreign 'stabilisation' force, the majority of Haiti's people have little or no political power. At the time of writing, in late summer 2010, many foreign observers of the Haitian popular movement were struck above all by a widespread sense of resignation and impotence. For the time being, suppression of Lavalas has left the people of Haiti at the mercy of some of the most rapacious political and economic forces on the planet. For the time being, at least, it looks as if the threatening prospect of meaningful democracy in Haiti has been well and truly contained.

In these intolerable circumstances, nothing short of popular remobilisation on a massive scale, more powerful, more disciplined, more united and more resolute than before – nothing, in other words, short of the renewal of genuinely revolutionary pressure – holds out any real prospect of significant change for the majority of Haiti's people. Of course, this is precisely the prospect that those who have managed the country's recent political development, and who are managing its post-earthquake reconstruction to this day, are most determined to avoid. Just a few days after the immediate trauma of 12 January, it was already clear that the U.S.- and UN-led relief operation would conform to the three main counter-revolutionary strategies that have shaped the more general course of the island's recent history. (a) It would foreground questions of 'security' and 'stability', and try to answer them by military or quasi-military means. (b) It would sideline Haiti's own leaders and government, and ignore both the needs and the abilities of the majority of its people. (c) It would proceed in ways that directly reinforce and widen the immense gap between the privileged few and the impoverished millions they exploit. Even a cursory review of the first six months of reconstruction in 2010 should be enough to show that the ongoing application of these strategies is best described as an intensification of the measures that have undercut the power and autonomy of Haiti's people over the two preceding decades.

I

The basic political question in Haiti (as in a few other places), from colonial through post-colonial to neo-colonial times, has always been much the same: how can a tiny and precarious ruling class secure its property and privileges in the face

of mass destitution and resentment? In Haiti (as in a few other places), the elite owes its privileges to exclusion, exploitation and violence, and only quasi-monopoly control of violent power allows it to retain them. This monopoly was amply guaranteed by the Duvalier dictatorships through to the mid 1980s, and then rather less amply by the military dictatorships that succeeded them (1986-90). But the Lavalas mobilisation threatened that monopoly, and with it those privileges.

What has happened in Haiti since Aristide was first elected in 1990 should be understood first and foremost as the progressive clarification of this basic alternative – democracy or the army. It's not hard to see that unadulterated democracy might one day allow the interests of the numerical majority to prevail, and thereby challenge the position of the elite; in such a situation, only an army, or the equivalent of an army, can be relied upon to guarantee the 'security' of the status quo. Crucially, the democratic mobilisation that took shape in the 1980s in opposition to dictatorship and neo-liberal 'adjustment' was strong enough to overcome and indeed *eliminate* the domestic armed forces arrayed against it. It was able first to 'uproot' Duvalier and his Macoutes (in 1986) and then, after a long army crackdown that killed another thousand people or so, to overcome direct military rule (in 1990). Much of the momentum of this mobilisation survived the murderous coup of 1991, and Aristide was finally able, at great cost, to disband the army in 1995. When Aristide then won a second overwhelming mandate in the elections of 2000, the resounding victory of his Fanmi Lavalas party at all levels of government raised the prospect, for the first time in Haitian history, of genuine significant political change in a context in which there was no obvious extra-political mechanism – no army – to prevent it.

In order to avoid this outcome, the main strategy of Haiti's little ruling class all through the past decade has been to redefine political questions in terms of 'stability' and 'security', i.e. the security of the wealthy, their property and their investments. Mere numbers may well win an election or sustain a popular movement but, as everyone knows, only an army is equipped to deal with insecurity. The abundantly armed 'friend of Haiti' that is the United States knows this better than anyone else.

In this context, the defining event of contemporary Haitian politics remains the intervention that was designed to restore long-term 'security' by killing off the Lavalas mobilisation once and for all: the coup of 2004. If the most popular thing that Aristide ever did was to disband the army that deposed his first government, perhaps the most significant achievement of the 2004 coup was to return effective political control to a military force.

In the absence of an available domestic option, the 2004 coup gave power to a foreign army: first a US-French-Canadian invasion force, and then a UN pacification force. (The next time the people of Haiti had a chance to express their opinion, in the elections of February 2006, the main military and political leaders associated with this coup scraped no more than 1 or 2% of the vote). As anyone could have predicted, Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas, the party elected with a landslide in the last elections to be held in un-occupied Haiti, has been blocked from participating in all subsequent elections, in 2006, in 2009 and now again in 2010. Its leaders have been scattered or imprisoned, and its main spokesman remains in involuntary exile on the other side of the world. If Haiti's international minders succeed in preserving this pattern of exclusion, it looks as if Haitian democracy is now finally set to proceed in line with the imperial expectations that were so rudely

thwarted twenty years ago, when the local voters chose the wrong man and the wrong agenda.³

In and after 2004, the only way to persuade these voters to accept the coup and its consequences – the systematic and explicit reassertion of foreign and elite domination of their country – has been to ram it down their throats. Ever since the coup, Haiti has been under international military occupation. Year after year, from 2004 through to 2010, at an annual cost (around \$600m) larger than the entire national budget during the pre-coup years, thousands of foreign troops have patrolled the country and obliged its people to accept the end of the Lavalas sequence. During these years, the UN authorities behind this extraordinary 'stabilisation mission' have resorted to levels of violent coercion without parallel in UN operations anywhere else in the world. They have been reinforced by thousands of re-armed and re-trained Haitian police, along with thousands more private security guards hired to protect wealthy families, their businesses, and the foreign contractors and NGOs they do business with. Dozens of anti-occupation demonstrations held on the streets of Port-au-Prince during these years have had little or no political effect.

You might have been forgiven for thinking, a year ago, that only an earthquake could loosen this armed grip on the country.

II

Sure enough, one of the first things to wobble on the afternoon of 12 January 2010 was the coercive power of the state⁴. The headquarters of the UN mission collapsed, along with 27 of 28 federal government buildings. Perhaps a fifth of government employees were killed. If a revolution requires paralysis of the state's capacity to suppress popular protest, then as Kim Ives points out, in a sense 'the earthquake accomplished half a revolution by literally destroying the Haitian state', leaving popular forces on the one hand and elites forces on the other 'scrambling to array their "alternatives" to fill the void.'⁵ The US embassy immediately rushed to evacuate its staff, along with a few of the people its government is most determined to protect. For a moment or two, no doubt, the Haitian elite and their international minders must have contemplated the apocalypse: the prospect of mass unrest, in the absence of adequate levels of coercive force. The result was a near-instantaneous military response on a scale rarely if ever matched by a 'peacetime' operation.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, few tried to counter arguments in favour of allowing the US military, with its 'unrivalled logistical capability', to take de facto control of the relief operation. Weary of bad press in Iraq and Afghanistan, US commanders also seemed glad of this unexpected opportunity to rebrand their armed forces as angels of mercy. As usual, the Haitian government was instructed to be grateful for whatever help it could get.

That was before US commanders actively began, the day after the earthquake struck, to divert aid away from the disaster zone. As soon as the US Air Force took control of Haitian airspace, on Wednesday 13 January, they explicitly

³ Cf. Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 29-33.

⁴ This section is an abbreviated version of the article 'Securing Disaster', which appeared in MRZine. 24 January 2010. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/hallward240110.html>

⁵ Kim Ives, 'How the Earthquake has Affected Haiti's National Democratic Revolution and International Geopolitics', talk delivered at the University of Aberdeen, 12 March 2010.

prioritised military over humanitarian flights. Although most reports from Port-au-Prince emphasised remarkable levels of patience and solidarity on the streets, US commanders made fears of popular unrest and insecurity their number one concern. Their first priority was to avoid what the US Air Force Special Command Public Affairs spokesman (Ty Foster) called another 'Somalia effort'⁶ – which is to say, presumably, a situation in which a humiliated US army might once again risk losing military control of a 'humanitarian' mission.

As many observers predicted, however, the determination of US commanders to forestall this risk by privileging guns and soldiers over doctors and food mainly succeeded in helping to provoke a few occasional bursts of the very unrest they set out to contain. In order to amass a sufficiently large amount of soldiers and military equipment 'on the ground', the US Air Force diverted plane after plane packed with emergency supplies away from Port-au-Prince. The earthquake took place on Tuesday; among many others, World Food Program flights were turned away by US commanders on Thursday and Friday, the *New York Times* reported, 'so that the United States could land troops and equipment, and lift Americans and other foreigners to safety.'⁷ Many similar flights met a similar fate, right through to the end of the week. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) alone had to watch at least five planeloads of its medical supplies be turned away.⁸ Late on Monday 18 January, MSF 'complained that one of its cargo planes carrying 12 tonnes of medical equipment had been turned away three times from Port-au-Prince airport since Sunday,' despite receiving 'repeated assurances they could land.' By that stage one group of MSF doctors in Port-au-Prince had been 'forced to buy a saw in the market to continue the amputations' upon which the lives of their patients depended.⁹

While US commanders set about restoring security by assembling a force of some 14,000 Marines, residents in some less secure parts of Port-au-Prince soon started to run out of food and water. On 20 January people sleeping in one of the largest and most easily accessed of the many hundreds of impromptu IDP (internally displaced people) camps in Port-au-Prince, in the Champs Mars area of Port-au-Prince, told writer Tim Schwartz that 'no relief has arrived; it is all being delivered on other side of town, by the US embassy.'¹⁰ The same day, a full eight days after the quake, Telesur reporter Reed Lindsay confirmed that the impoverished south-western Port-au-Prince suburb closest to the earthquake's epicentre, Carrefour, still hadn't received any food, aid or medical help.¹¹ The

⁶ Quoted on BBC Radio 4, Ten O'clock News, 16 January 2010.

⁷ Ginger Thompson and Damien Cave, 'Officials Strain to Distribute Aid to Haiti as Violence Rises,' *New York Times*, 17 January 2010
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/world/americas/17haiti.html>

⁸ 'Médecins Sans Frontières says its Plane Turned Away from U.S.-run Airport', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 2010.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7031203/Haiti-earthquake-Medecins-Sans-Frontieres-says-its-plane-turned-away-from-US-run-airport.html>

⁹ Giles Whittell and Jacqui Goddard, 'America Sends Paratroopers to Haiti to Help Secure Aid Lines,' *The Times*, 20 January 2010.
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article6994523.ece

¹⁰ Email from Tim Schwartz, 20 January 2010.

¹¹ Reed Lindsay, *Honor and Respect Foundation Newsletter*, 20 January 2010; cf. Luis Felipe Lopez, 'Town at Epicenter of Quake Stays in Isolation,' *The Miami Herald*, 17 January 2010.
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/americas/story/1431239.html>

BBC's Mark Doyle found the same thing in an eastern and less badly affected suburb. 'Their houses are destroyed, they have no running water, food prices have doubled, and they haven't seen a single government official or foreign aid worker since the earthquake struck.'¹² As a Reuters report confirmed six weeks after the quake, 'the 9,000 uniformed U.N. peacekeepers stationed in Haiti when the quake struck on Jan. 12 were the logical "first responders" to the disaster', but 'none of the peacekeepers appeared to be involved in hands-on humanitarian relief in what emergency medical experts describe as the critical first 72 hours after a devastating earthquake strikes. Their response to the appalling suffering was limited to handling security and looking for looters after the magnitude 7.0 quake levelled much of the capital.'¹³ This too was business as usual: the countries controlling the UN stabilisation mission had always voted against any extension of its mandate to include economic development, and from 2004 through to January 2010 it spent its annual \$600m budget almost exclusively on military and security priorities.

On Sunday 17 January, Al-Jazeera's correspondent Sebastian Walker summarised what many other journalists had been saying all week. 'Most Haitians have seen little humanitarian aid so far. What they have seen is guns, and lots of them. Armoured personnel carriers cruise the streets' and 'inside the well-guarded perimeter [of the airport], the US has taken control. It looks more like the Green Zone in Baghdad than a centre for aid distribution.'¹⁴ Late on the same day, the World Food Programme's air logistics officer Jarry Emmanuel confirmed that most of the 200 flights going in and out of the airport each day were still being reserved for the US military: 'their priorities are to secure the country. Ours are to feed.'¹⁵ By Monday 18 January, no matter how many US embassy or military spokesman insisted that 'we are here to help' rather than invade, governments as different as those of France and Venezuela had begun to accuse the US of effectively 'occupying' the country.¹⁶ 'Together with geopolitical control', observed Camille Chalmers a few weeks later, 'we believe that the militarization of Haiti responds to what Bush called a "preventive war" logic. The U.S. fears a popular uprising, because the living standards in Haiti have for so long been intolerable, and this is

¹² BBC Radio 4, Ten O'clock News, 18 January 2010.

¹³ Tom Brown, 'Haiti Aid Effort Marred by Slow U.N. Response', *Reuters*, 26 February 2010.

¹⁴ 'Disputes Emerge over Haiti Aid Control,' Al Jazeera, 17 January 2010. Roger Annis notes the resemblance of the Canadian relief effort to its more prominent US counterpart. 'The principal Canadian government response to the earthquake was to dispatch two Canadian warships loaded with nearly 2,000 soldiers and sailors. They arrived offshore from Léogâne and Jacmel on Jan. 19 and 20. At the time, this was touted by the government as a major earthquake relief operation. But as the Mar. 12 *Halifax Chronicle Herald* later reported, the ships carried relatively few earthquake relief supplies and equipment. They were instead loaded with military personnel and supplies. The military operations performed only peripheral aid and supply tasks. The medical teams the ships brought did not perform a single surgery, according to a study by John Kirk and Emily Kirk in April (www.counterpunch.org/kirk04012010.html). When the ships departed six weeks after arriving, they took with them their vital air traffic control and heavy lift equipment' (Annis, 'Canada's Failed Aid', *Haiti Liberté*, 4 August 2010).

¹⁵ Ginger Thompson and Damien Cave, 'Officials Strain to Distribute Aid to Haiti as Violence Rises,' *New York Times*, 17 January 2010.

¹⁶ Chris McGreal and Esther Addley, 'Haiti Aid Agencies Warn: Chaotic and Confusing Relief Effort is Costing Lives,' *The Guardian*, 18 January 2010.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/18/haiti-aid-distribution-confusion-warning>

even more so the case now; they are inhumane. So the troops are getting ready for when the time comes to suppress the people.¹⁷

The US decision to privilege military over humanitarian traffic at the airport sealed the fate of thousands of people abandoned in the rubble of lower Port-au-Prince and Léogane. In countries all over the world, search and rescue teams were ready to leave for Haiti within 12 hours of the disaster. Only a few were able to arrive without fatal delays – mainly teams, like those from Venezuela, Iceland and China, who managed to land while Haitian staff still retained control of their airport. Some subsequent arrivals, including a team from the UK, were prevented from landing with their heavy moving equipment. Others, such as Canada's several Heavy Urban Search Rescue Teams, were immediately readied but never sent; the teams were told to stand down, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon eventually explained, because 'the government had opted to send Canadian Armed Forces instead', forces that subsequently played no significant role in the relief operation.¹⁸

USAID announced on 19 January that international search and rescue teams, over the course of the first week after the disaster, had managed to save a grand total of 70 people.¹⁹ The majority of these people were rescued in quite specific locations and circumstances. 'Search-and-rescue operations', observed the *Washington Post* on 18 January, 'have been intensely focused on buildings with international aid workers, such as the crushed U.N. headquarters, and on large hotels with international clientele.'²⁰ Tim Schwartz spent much of the first post-quake week as a translator with rescue workers, and was struck by the fact that most of their work was confined to places – the UN's Hotel Christophe, the Montana Hotel, the Caribe supermarket – that were not only frequented by foreigners and the elite but that could be snugly enclosed within 'secure perimeters.' Elsewhere, he observed, UN troops did their best to make sure that rescue workers treated onlooking crowds as a source of potential danger rather than assistance.²¹ No foreign rescue workers, for instance, were dispatched to the site with perhaps the single highest number of casualties, the Carrefour Palm Apparel factory contracted to the Canadian company Gildan Activewear, which collapsed with hundreds of workers still inside.²² (Gildan responded to the disaster, within hours, with a reassuring announcement that it would be shifting production to alternative sewing facilities in neighbouring countries.²³).

¹⁷ Camille Chalmers, cited in Beverly Bell, 'Haiti: "Post Disaster Needs Assessment" - Whose Needs? Whose Assessment?', *Other Worlds*, 26 February 2010.

¹⁸ Don Peat, 'HUSAR Not up to Task, Feds Say: Search and Rescue Team Told to Stand Down,' *Toronto Sun*, 17 January 2010. <http://www.torontosun.com/news/haiti/2010/01/17/12504981.html>

¹⁹ USAID, <http://www.usaid.gov/helphaiti/index.html>, accessed on 20 January 2010.

²⁰ William Booth, 'Haiti's Elite Spared from Much of the Devastation,' *Washington Post*, 18 January 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/17/AR2010011702941.html>

²¹ Tim Schwarz, phone call with the author, 18 January 2010; cf. Tim Schwartz, 'Is this Anarchy? Outsiders Believe this Island Nation is a Land of Bandits. Blame the NGOs for the "Looting"', *NOW Toronto*, 21 January 2010. <http://www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=173333>

²² Meg Laughlin, 'At Stricken Haitian Factory: Prayers for the Dead and New Jobs', *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 February 2010. <http://www.tampabay.com/news/world/at-stricken-haitian-factory-prayers-for-the-dead-and-new-jobs/1072895>

²³ Ross Marowits, 'Gildan Shifting T-shirt Production Outside Haiti to Ensure Adequate Supply,' *The Canadian Press*, 13 January 2010. http://www.canadianbusiness.com/markets/headline_news/article.jsp?content=b131693719

Exactly the same logic condemned yet more people to death in and around Port-au-Prince's hospitals. In one of the most illuminating reports filed from the city, on 20 January *Democracy Now's* Amy Goodman spoke with Dr. Evan Lyon of Partners in Health/Zanmi Lasante from the General Hospital, the most important medical centre in the whole country. Lyon insisted that 'there's no insecurity [...]. I don't know if you guys were out late last night, but you can hear a pin drop in this city. It's a peaceful place. There is no war. There is no crisis except the suffering that's ongoing [...]. The first thing that [your] listeners need to understand is that there is no insecurity here. There has not been, and I expect there will not be.' On the contrary, Lyon explained,

this question of security and the rumours of security and the racism behind the idea of security has been our major block to getting aid in [...]. In terms of aid relief the response has been incredibly slow. There are teams of surgeons that have been sent to places that were, quote, 'more secure', that have ten or twenty doctors and ten patients. We have a thousand people on this campus who are triaged and ready for surgery, but we only have four working operating rooms, without anaesthesia and without pain medications.²⁴

Almost by definition, in post-quake Haiti it seemed that anyone or anything that could not be enclosed in a 'secure perimeter' wasn't worth saving. In their occasional forays outside such perimeters, meanwhile, many Western journalists seemed able to find plenty of reasons for retreating behind them. Lurid stories of looting and gangs soon began to lend 'security experts' like the London-based Stuart Page²⁵ an aura of apparent authority, when he explained to the BBC's gullible 'security correspondent' Frank Gardner that 'all the security gains made in Haiti in the last few years could now be reversed [...]. The criminal gangs, totalling some 3,000, are going to exploit the current humanitarian crisis, to the maximum degree.'²⁶ Another seasoned BBC correspondent, Matt Frei, had a similar story to tell on 18 January, when he found a few scavengers sifting through the remains of a central shopping district. 'Looting is now the only industry here', he said. 'Anything will do as a weapon. Everything is now run by rival armed groups of thugs.' If Haiti is to avoid anarchy, Frei concluded, 'what may be needed is a full scale military occupation.'²⁷

²⁴ 'With Foreign Aid Still at a Trickle, Devastated Port-au-Prince General Hospital Struggles to Meet Overwhelming Need,' *Democracy Now!*, 20 January 2010.

http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/devastated_port_au_prince_hospital_struggles

²⁵ Stuart Page is chairman of Page Group, <http://www.pagegroupltd.com/aboutus.html>.

²⁶ Gardner then explained that, with the police weakened by the quake, 'Thousands of escaped criminals have returned to areas they once terrorized, like the slum district of Cité Soleil [...]. Unless the armed criminals are re-arrested, Haiti's security problems risk being every bit as bad as they were in 2004' (BBC Radio 4, Six O'clock News, 18 January 2010.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8466698.stm>). In fact, when some of these ex-prisoners tried to re-establish themselves in Cité Soleil in the week after the quake, local residents promptly chased them out of the district on their own (see Ed Pilkington and Tom Phillips, 'Haiti Escaped Prisoners Chased Out of Notorious Slum,' *The Guardian*, 20 January 2010.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/20/haiti-escaped-prisoners-cite-soleil>; Tom Leonard, 'Scenes of Devastation Outside Port-au-Prince "Even Worse"', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 January 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7039737/Haiti-earthquake-scenes-of-devastation-outside-Port-au-Prince-even-worse.html>).

²⁷ BBC television, Ten O'clock News, 18 January 2010. An extreme instance of the quasi-military emphasis on security led to an armed police response to a failed prison breakout in Les Cayes on 19 January, killing between 12 and 19 inmates and wounding another 40 (Deborah Sontag and Walt

Scores of Haitian and Haiti-based correspondents boiled over with indignation in the face of such grotesque misrepresentation. On 17 January, for instance, Ciné Institute director David Belle tried to counter international distortion. 'I have been told that much US media coverage paints Haiti as a tinderbox ready to explode. I'm told that lead stories in major media are of looting, violence and chaos. There could be nothing further from the truth. I have travelled the entire city daily since my arrival. The extent of the damage is absolutely staggering [but...] NOT ONCE have we witnessed a single act of aggression or violence [...]. A crippled city of two million awaits help, medicine, food and water. Most haven't received any. Haiti can be proud of its survivors. Their dignity and decency in the face of this tragedy is itself staggering.'²⁸ As anyone can see, however, dignity and decency are no substitute for security. No amount of weapons will ever suffice to reassure those 'fortunate few' whose fortunes isolate them from the people they exploit.

As far as the people themselves were concerned, however, 'security is not the issue', Kim Ives explained soon after the earthquake. 'We see throughout Haiti the population themselves organizing themselves into popular committees to clean up, to pull out the bodies from the rubble, to build refugee camps, to set up their security for the refugee camps. This is a population which is self-sufficient, and it has been self-sufficient for many years.' While the people who have lost what little they had have done their best to cope and regroup, it's the soldiers sent to 'restore order' who provoke confrontation, by treating them as potential combatants. 'It's just the same way they reacted after Katrina. The victims are what's scary.'²⁹ 'According to everyone I spoke with in the centre of the city', confirmed Schwarz around the same time, 'the violence and gang stuff is pure BS.' The relentless obsession with

Bogdanich, 'Escape Attempt Led to Killings of Unarmed Inmates', *New York Times*, 22 May 2010. <http://www.cineinstitute.com/news/2010/01/17/cine-institute-director-david-belle-reports-from-port-au-prince/>).

²⁸ David Belle, Ciné Institute, 17 January 2010, .

²⁹ 'Journalist Kim Ives on How Western Domination Has Undermined Haiti's Ability to Recover from Natural Devastation,' *Democracy Now!* January 21, 2010. http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/journalist_kim_ives_on_how_decades Ives illustrated the way such community organizations work with an example from the Delmas 33 neighbourhood. 'A truckload of food came in the middle of the night unannounced. It could have been a melee. The local popular organization was contacted. They immediately mobilized their members [...]. They lined up about 600 people who were staying on the soccer field behind the [Matthew 25] house, which is also a hospital, and they distributed the food in an orderly, equitable fashion. They were totally sufficient. They didn't need Marines. They didn't need the UN. [...] These are things that people can do for themselves and are doing for themselves.' Andy Kershaw makes the same point: 'This self-imposed blockade by bureaucracy is a scandal but could be easily overcome. The NGOs and the military should recognize the hysteria over "security" for what it is and make use of Haiti's best resource and its most efficient distribution network: the Haitians themselves. Stop treating them as children. Or worse. [...] Any further restriction on, and control of, the supply of aid is not only patronizing but it is in that control and restriction where any "security issues" will really lurk. And it is the Haitians who best know where the aid is needed' (Andy Kershaw, 'Stop Treating these People Like Savages,' *The Independent*, January 21, 2010 <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/andy-kershaw-stop-treating-these-people-like-savages-1874218.html>); cf. Ansel Herz, 'As Aid Efforts Flounder, Haitians Rely on Each Other', IPS 15 January 2010).

security, agreed Andy Kershaw, is clear proof of the fact that most foreign soldiers and NGO workers 'haven't a clue about the country and its people.'³⁰

In order to help keep these people where they belong, meanwhile, the US Department of Homeland Security took 'unprecedented' emergency measures to secure the homeland during the first post-quake weeks. Operation 'Vigilant Sentry' made full use of the large naval flotilla the US quickly assembled around Port-au-Prince. 'As well as providing emergency supplies and medical aid', noted the *Daily Telegraph*, 'the USS Carl Vinson, along with a ring of other navy and coast guard vessels, is acting as a deterrent to Haitians who might be driven to make the 681 mile sea crossing to Miami.' While Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade offered 'voluntary repatriation to any Haitian that wants to return to [the land of] their origin', American officials confirmed that they would continue to apply their long-standing (and thoroughly illegal) policy with respect to all Haitian refugees and asylum seekers – to intercept and repatriate them automatically, regardless of the circumstances.³¹ Over these same weeks, to be on the safe side, the US Air Force took the additional precaution of flying a radio-transmitting cargo plane for five hours a day over large parts of the country, so as to broadcast a recorded message from Haiti's ambassador in Washington. 'Don't rush on boats to leave the country', the message said. 'If you think you will reach the U. S. and all the doors will be wide open to you, that's not at all the case. They will intercept you right on the water and send you back home where you came from.' Not even life-threatening injuries were enough to entitle Haitians to a different sort of American reception. When the dean of medicine at the University of Miami arrived to help set up a field hospital by the airport in Port-au-Prince, he was outraged to find that most seriously injured people in the city were being denied the visas they would need to be transferred to Florida for surgery and treatment.³² As of 19 January the State Department had authorised a total of 23 exceptions to its golden rule of immigration. Six months later, moreover, no less than 55,000 Haitians (with family members living in the US) who had *already* been approved to come to the US before the earthquake struck would still be languishing in a legal limbo, because of rigid US adherence to immigration quotas.³³

With breath-taking cynicism, US President Obama appointed his predecessor George Bush (whose administration was responsible for the 2004 coup in Haiti and whose 'relief effort following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 amounted to

³⁰ Andy Kershaw, 'Stop Treating these People Like Savages,' *The Independent*, 21 January 2010. <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/andy-kershaw-stop-treating-these-people-like-savages-1874218.html>

³¹ Bruno Waterfield, 'U.S. Ships Blockade Coast to Thwart Exodus to America,' *Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7030237/Haiti-earthquake-US-ships-blockade-coast-to-thwart-exodus-to-America.html>; 'Senegal Offers Land to Haitians,' BBC News, 17 January 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8463921.stm>

³² James C. McKinley Jr., 'Homeless Haitians Told Not to Flee to United States,' *New York Times*, 19 January 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/19/us/19refugee.html>

³³ Cf. 'The U.S. Should Welcome Haitians In', *Washington Post*, 29 January 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/28/AR2010012803513.html>; 'President Obama Could Rapidly Aid Haitian Immigration Seekers', *Washington Post*, 26 June 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/25/AR2010062504520.html>

an ethnic cleansing of many of New Orleans's black population³⁴) to help Bill Clinton front US fund-raising for the relief effort. When US ambassador to Haiti Kenneth Merten paid a visit to Washington in mid February he declared himself satisfied with the work in progress. 'I believe that this will be something that people will be able to look back on in the future as a model for how we've been able to sort ourselves out as donors on the ground and responding to an earthquake.'³⁵

III

As untold thousands of bodies were left to rot in the rubble of Port-au-Prince, in February and March international attention turned to plans for the massive reconstruction process. Almost every credible observer agreed about many of the most urgent things that needed to happen.³⁶ The recovery had to be Haitian-led. The priority had to be measures that would empower ordinary Haitian people to regain some control over their lives, to gain or regain access to an education, an income, a place to live, a future for themselves and their families. The internationally-imposed neoliberal policies that for decades have devastated the agrarian economy and reduced the state sector to an impotent façade had to be dropped and then forcefully reversed. There had to be massive and systematic investment in essential public services, in all parts of the country. Genuine Haitian sovereignty, popular, economic and political, had to be restored.

Instead, the actual reconstruction process has mainly conformed to precisely the same old tendencies that have made Haiti so vulnerable to natural, economic and political disaster in recent decades. The great majority of Haitian people have been entirely excluded from all meaningful participation in the planning or execution of reconstruction work. Apart from a series of forums that began at the Aristide Foundation in Tabarre in March, there has been little or no attempt to bring 'large groups of Haitians together to ask for their opinions, their input, or their stories.'³⁷ Even so-called 'civil society' organisations and groups (including PAPDA, ENFOFANM, GARR, SOFA, the MPP and so on) nurtured as part of the anti-Lavalas campaign before and immediately after the 2004 coup have been shut out of this new phase of Haiti's 'transition to democracy.'³⁸ No significant measures

³⁴ John Pilger, 'The Kidnapping of Haiti', *New Statesman*, 28 February 2010.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/2010/02/haiti-pilger-obama-venezuela>

³⁵ Cited in Reed Lindsay, 'Haiti's Excluded', *The Nation*, 11 March 2010,

<http://www.thenation.com/article/haitis-excluded>.

³⁶ See for instance, Mark Schuller, 'Haiti's Resurrection: Promoting Human Rights', *Huffington Post*.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/haitis-resurrection-promo_b_525104.html, 5 April

2010; Robert Fatton Jr., 'Toward a New Haitian State', *The Root*, 9 February 2010.

<http://www.theroot.com/views/toward-new-haitian-state?page=0.0>; Tim Schwartz, 'Program of

Development in Interest of Impoverished Haitians', 7 March 2010.

http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2010/03/07/program_of_development_in_interest_of_impoverished_haitians;

Yves Engler, 'The Political Roadblocks to Haiti's Reconstruction', *Counterpunch*, 16

July 2010; Paul Farmer, 'Testimony to the Congressional Black Caucus: Focus on Haiti', 27 July

2010. <http://www.pih.org/news/entry/focus-on-haiti-the-road-to-recovery-a-six-month-review/#farmer>;

Melinda Miles, 'Haiti's Answer for Six Months and Sixty Years', *Let Haiti Live*, 12

August 2010. <http://lethaitilive.org/2010/08/12/hello-world/>

³⁷ Laura Flynn, "'We Want our Voices to be Heard": Democracy in Haiti's Earthquake Zone', *Haiti*

Action, 3 May 2010. http://www.haitiaction.net/News/AFD/5_3_10/5_3_10.html.

³⁸ 'Haitian NGOs Decry Total Exclusion from Donors' Conferences on Haitian Reconstruction',

IJDH, 18 March 2010, <http://ijdh.org/archives/10541>.

have been taken to stimulate the local agrarian economy or to encourage the decentralisation of people, resources and investment. The strategic plan drafted in early 2009 by neo-liberal 'development' economist Paul Collier and subsequently adopted by the UN's reconstruction team remains geared above all to the exploitation of Haitian poverty, as the most reliable means of generating new profits for the benefit of elite and multinational corporations. The political framework that will force implementation of this plan remains one in which the autonomy of Haiti's people and government is reduced more or less to zero.

One of the most striking features of the relief effort was the almost automatic decision of the 'international community' to work through their own agencies and NGOs, rather than the Haitian state or grassroots popular organisations. For every dollar of US aid to Haiti in the first weeks after the disaster, only a single penny was received by the Haitian government.³⁹ Six months on, of the \$1.8 billion for earthquake relief sent to Haiti, Paul Farmer notes, 'less than 2.9% has so far gone to the government.'⁴⁰ In February, Haiti's president René Préval and his ministers began to complain more loudly about the way foreign governments and NGOs had taken control of the relief and reconstruction effort. In early March, Préval called on the United States to 'stop sending food aid' to Haiti 'so that our economy can recover and create jobs.'⁴¹ Other Haitian leaders 'including Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive are not happy with the way the aid money is being delivered', reported the AP on 5 March: 'the NGOs don't tell us [...] where the money's coming from or how they're spending it.'⁴² On 27 March, speaking from the main hospital in Port-au-Prince, Partners in Health medical director Dr. Joia Mukherjee confirmed that in practice, international management of relief involved 'the real disempowerment of the government. The entire response has bypassed the government in its entirety and this is very worrisome for people in Haiti.' At a time when hundreds of millions of dollars were starting to funnel through foreign and NGO agencies, the government still had no access to 'funds for general operating costs, like paying people's salaries. For us, the most clear example is the general hospital, [...] the *only* public referral hospital in the city – [where] salaries haven't been paid for *4.5 months*. You have doctors and nurses and other staff living in their cars, living on the street, living in tents and they haven't been paid.'⁴³

The subordinate status of the Haitian people and government was made crystal clear in the run-up to the decisive international donors conference held at the UN's New York headquarters on 31 March 2010. The total amount pledged by conference participants came to the substantial sum of \$5.3 billion over eighteen months (with an additional \$4.6 billion anticipated, in theory, for subsequent years). Of this 5.3 billion, the only direct support pledged to the Haitian government amounted to just \$350 million (i.e. 6.6% of the total), set aside to cover unpaid

³⁹ Martha Mendoza, 'Haiti Gets a Penny of Each U.S. Aid Dollar', *AP*, 27 January 2010.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/01/27/world/main6146903.shtml>

⁴⁰ Paul Farmer, 'Testimony to the Congressional Black Caucus: Focus on Haiti', 27 July 2010.

<http://www.pih.org/news/entry/focus-on-haiti-the-road-to-recovery-a-six-month-review/#farmer>

⁴¹ Kim Ives, 'Haiti Reconstruction: Factories, not Fields', *NACLA* 43:3 (May 2010).

<https://nacla.org/node/6547>

⁴² Jonathan Katz, 'Criticism Grows on How Money Is Spent in Haiti', *AP*, 5 March 2010.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2011270352_haiti06.html?syndication=rss

⁴³ 'Partners In Health's Medical Director and Director of Advocacy and Policy Urge Donor Countries to Support the Haitian Government', Partners In Health, 27 March 2010, www.pih.org, accessed 31 March 2010.

salaries of state employees. The key decision, however, involved the creation of a mainly foreign body to decide on the allocation of these promised billions, the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC). The commission is jointly chaired by Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, and former US President (and former Haiti occupier) Bill Clinton. (Original plans for a 24-member board – 11 Haitians along with 13 foreigners representing international financial institutions and the larger donor nations – had to be revised, in the face of subsequent protests, to allow for numerically equal Haitian/foreign representation). Once plans are approved by this IHRC, another group of foreign technocrats and World Bank officials will then supervise the subsequent spending.⁴⁴

No doubt some degree of centralised investment coordination is better than the debilitating fragmentation that has hitherto prevailed in the Haitian 'republic of NGOs', NGOs that even before the earthquake provided around three quarters of local public services. As Bellerive points out, before the IHRC was established, '100% of the money pledged to Haiti was decided by the one giving it', so a move toward 50% is a step forward of sorts.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there is no disguising the fact that Haitians will serve as the junior partners on this commission, in ways that none of the donor countries themselves would ever contemplate. In the weeks after the UN conference, the largest donors held up initial disbursement of the promised billions until a sufficiently cowed Haitian government was prepared to offer formal acknowledgement of its subordination. As Yves Engler explains, 'the international community – led by the US, France and Canada – demanded the Haitian parliament pass an 18-month long state of emergency law that effectively gave up government control over the reconstruction.'⁴⁶ When parliamentary terms expired in Haiti in May 2010, the IHRC took over as the de-facto government of the country, and in terms of actual power and influence it will remain in charge well after new legislators are elected in November.

One of the main reasons why the Haitian government is in no position to argue with the terms dictated to it on 31 March is that long-term international insistence on the privatisation of publicly-owned assets have stripped it of direct control over most of the resources and skills required to maintain some control over its economy (let alone cope with a full-scale disaster). Transport, construction, education, energy, health-care, agriculture, banking – virtually every component of every sector has already been sold off to members of Haiti's tightly integrated business community. State owned factories of two essential products, flour and cement, were privatised in 1997, during Préval's first administration. A year into his second administration, Préval announced the privatisation of Haiti's most valuable state-owned asset, the national telephone company (Téléco), and by mid 2007 almost half of the workforce, some 2,800 employees, had already been laid off. Téléco has been one of the few reliable sources of public revenue and employment in neo-liberal Haiti, and Téléco workers protested the privatisation process from start to finish.⁴⁷ To no avail; four months after the earthquake, in early May 2010,

⁴⁴ Kim Ives, 'For \$10 Billion in Promises, Haiti Surrenders Its Sovereignty', *Haiti Liberté*, 31 March 2010.

⁴⁵ Interviewed by Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines*, *Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/faultlines/2010/07/20107614463473317.html>

⁴⁶ Yves Engler, 'The Political Roadblocks to Haiti's Reconstruction', *Counterpunch*, 16 July 2010.

⁴⁷ Jeb Sprague and Wadner Pierre, 'Haiti: Workers Protest Privatization Layoffs', *IPS*, 24 July 2007. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38646>

the government finally sold a majority stake to a subsidiary of the Vietnamese army, for a mere \$59 million. (Over these same years, the Irish company Digicel rapidly expanded to take a commanding position in Haiti's substantial and lucrative mobile phone market, and by 2008 it was already generating revenues of more than \$250 million⁴⁸).

Today, Patrick Elie notes, 'Haiti is the most privatized country in the world. Almost everything that could be privatized here has been, and the only reason prisons have not been privatized is because it is not yet profitable for them to do so.'⁴⁹ As a result, the Haitian government has lost some essential abilities – the ability to create jobs for large numbers of people, to appropriate needed land and resources, to produce vital construction materials and other goods – precisely at the moment of greatest need. By 2009, 65% of Haiti's budget already came from external sources⁵⁰, and such far-reaching dependence breeds far-reaching deference. Although most of Haiti's crippling international debt was slowly forgiven over the course of 2010 (as a result of public pressure the IMF reluctantly cancelled Haiti's outstanding debt of \$268 million on 21 July, while simultaneously insisting that urgently needed credit should take the form of a new \$60m loan, to which the usual macroeconomic strings will apply), needless to say donor countries have stubbornly refused to acknowledge let alone discuss the several far-reaching ways in which *they* owe money to Haiti, rather than the reverse.⁵¹

Even in the wake of January 2010, no significant steps have been taken to palliate let alone reverse the neo-liberal privatisation process. Even now, the depth and urgency of domestic needs are not enough to overturn the basic 'development' model that has been imposed on Haiti for decades: orientation of the country's economy in line with the interests of local sweatshop owners and international consumers, privileging export-oriented agriculture, low-wage jobs, and tourism.⁵² Punitive trade measures drove small Haitian farmers out of business and led to the

⁴⁸ 'Denis O'Brien's Digicel is Upwardly Mobile in Haiti', *Irish Times*, 20 June 2008.

http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/finance/2008/0620/1213810625861_pf.html

⁴⁹ Isabeau Doucet, 'The Drama of Haiti's Internally Displaced', part two, *Haiti Liberté*, 25 August 2010. <http://canadahaitiaction.ca/content/drama-haitis-internally-displaced>

⁵⁰ Yasmine Shamsie, 'Export Processing Zones: The Purported Glimmer in Haiti's Development Murk' *Review of International Political Economy*, October 2009.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content%7Econtent=a916488781%7Edb=all%7Ejumptype=rss>, cited in Regan Boychuk, 'The Vultures Circle Haiti at Every Opportunity, Natural or Man-made', *MR Zine*, 2 February 2010. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/boychuk020210.html>

⁵¹ Cf. Bill Quigley, 'Why the US Owes Haiti Billions -- The Briefest History', *Huffington Post*, 17 January 2010. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-quigley/why-the-us-owes-haiti-bil_b_426260.html; Naomi Klein, 'Haiti: A Creditor, Not a Debtor Nation', *The Nation*, 12 February 2010. <http://www.thenation.com/article/haiti-creditor-not-debtor>. The earthquake did at least provide an occasion to put restitution of the old French debt (see above, page 000) back on the agenda, in a manner of speaking, when in July an audacious 'Yes Men'-style prank announcing French intentions to repay the money they extorted over the course of the nineteenth century attracted some prominent supporting signatures and considerable attention in the press. See 'M. Sarkozy, rendez à Haiti son argent extorqué', *Libération*, 16 August 2010. <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/0101652216-m-sarkozy-rendez-a-haiti-son-argent-extorque>; Kim Willsher, 'France Urged to Repay Haiti Billions Paid for its Independence', *The Guardian* 15 August 2010.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/15/france-haiti-independence-debt>

⁵² Ashley Smith, 'The "Shock Doctrine" for Haiti', *Socialist Worker*, 8 February 2010.

<http://socialistworker.org/2010/02/08/shock-doctrine-for-haiti>. To anticipate some of the implications of a new 'tourist boom' in Haiti, see Polly Patullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1996).

massive population explosion in Port-au-Prince in recent decades; when so little aid materialised in the first weeks after the earthquake, more than half million a people retreated to their villages and farms, or what remains of them. With a little support they might well have stayed there. With modest job creation and credit facilities in the countryside, with small amounts of money for seeds and fertiliser, Jeffrey Sachs pointed out in late January, 'Haiti's food production could double or triple in the next few years, sustaining the country and building a new rural economy.'⁵³ But as usual, Haiti's small farmers received little or nothing. Only a paltry \$23 million of the UN's initial request for emergency funds was intended for the agrarian sector, and by the end of February the UN admitted that even this money still hadn't been received. 'In the countryside', Reed Lindsay observed in early March, 'there is no evidence of any humanitarian aid, much less for agriculture.'⁵⁴ As a result, confirms Mark Schuller, 'with no jobs, no aid, no prospects of rural development, nothing to keep people in the provinces, the bulk of this reverse migration was undone, and Port-au-Prince is once again a magnet for those seeking jobs.'⁵⁵

IV

Although the rhetoric has recently evolved to take more notice of local sensibilities, over the last several decades the substance of international development policy has remained remarkably consistent. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, up in the higher, wealthier and mostly undamaged parts of Pétionville everyone already knew that it's the local residents 'who through their government connections, trading companies and interconnected family businesses' would once again pocket the lion's share of international aid and reconstruction money.⁵⁶ At the same time, their counterparts in the US, represented by powerful think tanks and lobbyists like the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute or the RAND Corporation, were quick to see that (as RAND's James Dobbins, one of Clinton's former special envoys to Haiti, put it) 'this disaster is an opportunity to accelerate oft-delayed reforms', including 'breaking up or at least reorganizing the government-controlled telephone monopoly. The same goes with the Education Ministry, the electric company, the Health Ministry and the courts.'⁵⁷ Of course, Eduardo Almeida of the Inter-American Development Bank admitted in mid-February, there many 'large construction companies who are already contacting us, since the investments are going to be huge; it's going to be attractive for any company.'⁵⁸ And of course, as an Associated Press reporter would point out five months after the earthquake, 'most of the companies seeking work in Haiti won't

⁵³ Jeffrey Sachs, 'Haiti's Road to Recovery', *The Guardian*, 31 January 2010.

⁵⁴ Reed Lindsay, 'Haiti's Excluded', *The Nation*, 11 March 2010.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20100329/lindsay>

⁵⁵ Mark Schuller, 'Rained Out? Opportunities in Haiti Washing Away', *Huffington Post*, 21 July 2010. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/rained-out-opportunities_b_653672.html

⁵⁶ William Booth, 'Haiti's Elite Spared from Much of the Devastation', *Washington Post*, 18 January 2010.

⁵⁷ James Dobbins, 'Skip the Graft', *The New York Times*, 17 January 2010.

<http://www.rand.org/commentary/2010/01/17/NYT.html>; cf. Isabel MacDonald, 'Same Old Interests Have Plan for "New Haiti"', *The Independent*, 29 January 2010.

<http://www.independent.org/2010/01/29/plan-for-new-haiti/>

⁵⁸ Quoted in Avi Lewis, 'Haiti: The Politics of Rebuilding', *Fault Lines*, Al Jazeera English, 12 February 2010. <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2010/02/12-1>

talk about it, in part to avoid seeming like they are capitalizing on catastrophe',⁵⁹ in part because public distribution of substantial reconstruction funds will only begin in earnest in late 2010.

Some of Haiti's most powerful businessmen, however, have already paired up with multinational logistics and disaster recovery companies in order to take full advantage of the unprecedented influx of development funds. The Vorbe group, for instance, is one of the largest construction and logistics companies in Haiti, run by one of the powerful families that supported the 1991 coup; it has joined with the Alabama-based disaster recovery company DRC, which was awarded more than \$100 million in contracts after Katrina (and which was investigated for fraudulent billing after Hurricane Mitch in Honduras). Haitian magnate Gilbert Bigio, likewise, has become a partner of Florida-based AshBritt Inc. AshBritt's CEO Randal Perkins is a prominent and well-connected political donor in the US, whose lobbyists helped him secure a \$900m contract for helping clean up post-Katrina New Orleans.⁶⁰ By early June, AshBritt had already invested \$25 million preparing its Haitian reconstruction operation on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, in anticipation of substantial government contracts later in the year.⁶¹ Other US companies that have profited from disaster in recent years may well calculate that finding a Haitian partner is an unnecessary expense: Leslie Voltaire, currently serving as a mediator between the Haitian government and the IHRC, reportedly told one local businessman that 'only 15% of the [reconstruction] contracts will be going to Haitian contractors.'⁶²

In addition to foreign investors, so far it is mainly foreign-funded NGOs that have benefited the most from Haiti's misfortune. 'All of the millions that are coming into Haiti right now are going into the hands of NGOs,'⁶³ complained Préval in early March, and in the estimation of one veteran social worker (Ruth Derilus), 'of all the money they send here, only 10% actually makes it to the ground. The rest is spent on foreign experts, hotels, car rentals, hotel conferences.'⁶⁴ The NGO sector has grown to become a 'state within a state', agrees former Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis: 'We've seen the NGOs performance in Haiti, by experience, and there's been no development!'⁶⁵

As anyone who visits Port-au-Prince will readily confirm, there is a 'massive gulf between people from the UN and the NGOs, and the people they're here to help.'⁶⁶ Foreign NGO workers 'continue to humiliate and discriminate [against] poor and respected Haitian citizens', regrets Haitian journalist Wadner Pierre, 'by

⁵⁹ Ben Fox, 'Foreign Firms in Haiti Ready for Construction Boom', *AP*, 7 June 2010.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory?id=10850521>

⁶⁰ Martha Brannigan and Jacqueline Charles, 'U.S. Firms Want Part in Haiti Cleanup', *Miami Herald*, 8 February 2010. <http://www.miamiherald.com/582/story/1470013.html>; cf. Jacqueline Charles, 'Groups Jockey for Role in Haiti Revival', *Miami Herald*, 9 March 2010.

⁶¹ Ben Fox, 'Foreign Firms in Haiti Ready for Construction Boom', *AP*, 7 June 2010.

⁶² Kim Ives, 'Only 15% for Haitians: Interim Commission Prepares to Dole Out Reconstruction Contracts', *Haiti Liberté*, 16 June 2010.

⁶³ Cited in Jacqueline Charles, 'Groups Jockey for Role in Haiti Revival', *Miami Herald*, 9 March 2010.

⁶⁴ Cited in Reed Lindsay, 'Haiti's Excluded', *The Nation*, March 11, 2010.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20100329/lindsay>

⁶⁵ Interviewed in Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines*, *Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/faultlines/2010/07/20107614463473317.html>.

⁶⁶ Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', 12 July 2010.

assuming they are all dangerous, violent, or savage people, and they do not know anything, not even how to put up a tent.⁶⁷ Tim Schwartz is probably the best-placed foreign observer of the NGOs that now control most of what happens in Haiti's 'public' sphere. 'The NGO sector in Haiti is best described', he writes, 'as an uncoordinated mass of organizations de facto unaccountable to any governing or regulatory institution, i.e. no accountants, no auditors, no reviews, and no publication of poor or dishonest performance [...]. My own research on this matter suggests that at least 90% [of NGOs in Haiti] are rife with corruption, functionally inert, or give money intended for the poor to people who do not need it.'⁶⁸ Surveying the performance of relief organisations during the first half of 2010, the Disaster Accountability Project was struck by a 'shocking lack of transparency',⁶⁹ and in early July, even CARICOM leaders began to speak openly about the ways in which the ever-growing influence of NGOs threatens 'to undermine the democratic institutions in Haiti.'⁷⁰

Foreign investors and foreign NGOs, needless to say, also tend to need foreign protection to guarantee their security. True to form, once the initial wave of foreign troops began to subside, private, neo-military security companies like Triple Canopy (which took over the Xe/Blackwater security contract in Iraq in 2009 and Overseas Security & Strategic Information began promoting their services.⁷¹ As an Al-Jazeera report on a 9-10 March meeting of security companies in Miami explained, firms like GardaWorld, DynCorp and their ilk naturally 'see new disaster areas as emerging markets.'⁷²

Their 'humanitarian' counterparts in the UN and in USAID have done everything possible, within the limits of public decency, to facilitate such emergence. During the March donor conference John Holmes, the UN official in charge of Humanitarian Affairs, confirmed the essential development priority, telling the Associated Press that 'the best sign that recovery was under way in Haiti would be an uptick in private investment.' The president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce and leading Haitian member of the IHRC (and a prominent supporter of both anti-Aristide coups), Reginald Boulos, reminded donors that a boost of foreign investment would depend on publicly-funded 'improvements in infrastructure' and 'a climate change in the business environment.'⁷³ According to Boulos, the agenda for change includes a reduction in government interference and corruption; what it

⁶⁷ Wadner Pierre, 'Haiti Post-Earthquake: Discrimination and Prejudice', *The Dominion* weblogs, 24 June 2010. http://www.dominionpaper.ca/weblogs/wadner_pierre/3518

⁶⁸ Tim Schwartz, 'How to Save the NGO Sector from Itself', 10 March 2010.

http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2010/03/10/part_i_how_to_save_the_ngo_sector_from_itself

⁶⁹ *Report On Transparency of Relief Organizations Responding to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake*, Disaster Accountability Project, 12 July 2010. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/34223667/Report-On-Transparency-of-Relief-Organizations-Responding-to-the-2010-Haiti-Earthquake>

⁷⁰ Peter Richards, 'Flooded with NGOs, Haiti Looks to Fall Presidential Polls', IPS, 7 July 2010. <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=52077>

⁷¹ Cf. Anthony Fenton, 'Haiti: Private Contractors "Like Vultures Coming to Grab the Loot"', IPS, 19 February 2010; Bill Quigley, 'Mercenaries Circling Haiti', *Haiti Liberté*, 3 March 2010; Martha Brannigan, 'Haiti Rebuilding Summit Under Way in Miami', *Miami Herald*, 10 March 2010.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/03/10/1521400/haiti-summit-under-way.html#ixzz0xM0gbm00>

⁷² Rob Reynolds, 'Al Jazeera reports on the Haiti 'Summit' for Private contractors', *Al-Jazeera*, 10 March 2010. Al Jazeera reports on the Haiti 'Summit' for Private contractors.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkNCdy0GXyc&feature=player_embedded

⁷³ Jonathan Katz, 'Private Investment Key to Haiti's future', *AP*, 1 April 2010.

most definitely doesn't include is any significant improvement in the pay or conditions of Haitian workers.

The year before the March 2010 conference, Boulos was a prominent opponent of a sustained campaign to increase Haiti's pitiful minimum wage to the equivalent of US\$5 a day (at a time when in terms of actual purchasing power, Haitian wages have dropped to less than a fifth of their 1980 value). A series of well-organised strikes over the summer of 2009 helped encourage the Haitian legislature to approve the \$5 rate; less public sorts of pressure encouraged Préval to overrule parliament and cap the increase at just \$3 a day. Soon afterwards, in the autumn of 2009, Préval and the UN's special envoy to Haiti (Bill Clinton) announced plans for a new Free Trade Zone on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, and Clinton has been drumming up new garment sector business ever since.

There are currently around 25,000 garment-sector workers in Haiti, making T-shirts and jeans for labels like Gildan, Hanes, Gap and New Balance. Factory profit margins average about 22 per cent.⁷⁴ Canadian garment manufacturer Gildan is one of several companies that expanded production in Haiti after the 2004 coup, reassured by a post-democratic regime that promised a tax holiday and a moratorium on wage increases. In April 2005, CIBC World Markets analyst Ronald Schwarz found that 'Gildan's manufacturing is among the most cost-competitive in the industry [...]. Gildan's labour costs in countries such as Haiti and Honduras are actually cheaper than those in China.'⁷⁵ As things stand, companies like Gap (which already indirectly hires around 4000 Haitian workers) are planning to develop their own 'made-in-Haiti' clothing lines, and Grupo M, a large DR-based contractor whose Haitian operations include work for companies like Levis and Banana Republic, is planning to double the size of its facilities in Ouanaminthe.⁷⁶

The US-driven recovery strategy for Haiti turns on legislation (the Haiti Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act, or HOPE) that promises, over a limited period, US tariff exemptions for clothes assembled in Haiti. Clinton and the UN hope that in the coming years a new round of HOPE legislation will help create tens of thousands of new low-paid jobs. As several seasoned observers have pointed out, the same strategy was first used almost 40 years ago, in partnership with 'president for life' Jean-Claude Duvalier.⁷⁷ Then as now, the investors promise that the creation of low paid jobs will somehow lead to more and higher paid jobs, and thus lift Haiti out of poverty.

The promise is belied, however, by the fact that these same investors and their apologists have always strenuously opposed even modest increases in the wages of Haitian workers, who are now so intensively exploited that a full-time job is no longer adequate for the barest necessities. Previous rounds of investment have

⁷⁴ Jonathan Katz, 'Post-quake Haiti's Economic Revival: Is Low-Paying Garment Industry the Answer?', *AP*, 21 February 2010. <http://www.canadaeast.com/article/961385>; Ashley Smith, 'The "Shock Doctrine" for Haiti', *Socialist Worker*, 8 February 2010. <http://socialistworker.org/2010/02/08/shock-doctrine-for-haiti>

⁷⁵ Carolyn Leitch, 'Analysts Upsize Gildan Targets', *Globe and Mail*, 12 April 2005, cited in Regan Boychuk, 'The Vultures Circle Haiti at Every Opportunity, Natural or Man-made', *MR Zine*, 2 February 2010.

⁷⁶ Sean Gregory, 'Entrepreneur Manufactures a Haitian Recovery', *Time*, 3 May 2010. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1983898,00.html#ixzz109rriZpq>; Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines, Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/faultlines/2010/07/20107614463473317.html>.

⁷⁷ See for instance Kim Ives, 'Who Will Lead Haiti Reconstruction?', *Haiti Liberté*, 24 March 2010.

in fact led to further real-term reductions in Haitian wages and incomes, and not the reverse: today, without the money sent home to their families by slightly better paid Haitian workers (trapped in many of the most heavily exploitative sectors in North America and the Caribbean) the Haitian economy would collapse overnight. As some investors and their advisors are candid enough to admit, Haiti's most significant 'comparative advantage' remains the stark fact that its people are so poor and so desperate that they are prepared to work for no more than a twentieth of the money they might receive for comparable employment in the US.⁷⁸ If workers are 'barely able to scrape by', as David Wilson argues, 'their spending can do little to stimulate job creation either in Haiti or in the region as a whole.' Even this pathetically inadequate stimulus, moreover, is unlikely to last longer than the momentary effects of an injection of foreign-funded investment in infrastructure: in the Caribbean region as a whole, the light assembly sector has been shrinking rather than growing, as a result of competition from China and a drop in US demand, with tens of thousands of jobs lost in recent years in neighbouring Dominican Republic alone. The UN/US proposal, in other words, is less a matter of creating new jobs than of temporarily re-locating some old ones – moving them from places where the pay is poor to a place where it's frankly obscene.⁷⁹ Given his commitment to this old agenda, notes Richard Morse, UN envoy Bill Clinton isn't bringing change or hope to Haiti. 'Clinton, along with USAID, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations are bringing more of the same to Haiti: more for the few and less for the many.'⁸⁰

In 2002-2003 the Aristide/Neptune government, under exactly the same sort of 'investment' pressure, reluctantly and controversially went along with the creation of a World Bank funded free trade zone on the border of the DR, at Ouanaminthe. In those years, the government was at least able to take the small step of doubling the minimum wage. This time around, as an Al-Jazeera report observed in July, post-quake plans for the new zone are proceeding without any discussion of wages at all.⁸¹ The sweatshop owners who were the driving force behind the 2004

⁷⁸ 'Due to its poverty and relatively unregulated labor market,' Paul Collier writes, 'Haiti has labor costs that are fully competitive with China, which is the global benchmark. Haitian labor is not only cheap, it is of good quality. Indeed, because the garments industry used to be much larger than it is currently, there is a substantial pool of experienced labor' available for use (Collier, 'Haiti: From Natural Catastrophe to Economic Security: A Report for the Secretary-General of the United Nations', January 2009, <http://www.focal.ca/pdf/haiticollier.pdf>).

⁷⁹ David Wilson, 'Rebuilding Haiti' -- the Sweatshop Hoax', MR Zine, 4 March 2010. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/wilson040310.html>

⁸⁰ Richard Morse, 'Haiti: Stuck in a Trap', *Huffington Post*, 28 March 2010. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-morse/haiti-stuck-in-a-trap_b_516164.html. As Morse points out, 'Importing cheap rice and sugar were concepts sold to Haitians by Haitian Economist Leslie Delatour during the mid to late 1980's. It was called Chicago economics: free markets. The concept destroyed rural production and incentives in Haiti and sent an additional 2 million people to go live in Port au Prince [... Today,] lobbying is still taken care of by a Delatour, Leslie's younger brother Lionel. Right now the younger Mr. Delatour is looking to attract more people out of the countryside and into the city with his HOPE2 garment bill, which is the crux of Haiti's economic future if Mevs, Soros, Boulos, Ban Ki Moon and Bill Clinton get their way. Mr. Delatour is also busy trying to funnel reconstruction monies to brother Patrick Delatour, Minister of Tourism and reconstruction "expert", and sister-in-law Elizabeth Delatour Préval who has helped turn the Haitian government, led by husband President Rene Préval, into a lobby machine for Haiti's elite families' (ibid.).

⁸¹ Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines, Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010.

coup – Andy Apaid, Charles Baker, and their associates – are now in a more blatantly abusive political position than ever before.

V

For the great majority of Haiti's people, preservation of such a profitable and deferential 'business climate' comes at a truly devastating price: the transformation of poverty into misery, the decimation of local food production, and the loss of any government capacity to cope with changes in global food prices or supplies. In the spring of 2008, global food prices soared and many Haitians began to starve. That April, their anger took on a political shape. Hundreds of thousands protested, and the pressure forced Préval's prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, to resign.⁸² But in 2010 as in 2008 and previous years, the main response has been to increase rather than reduce reliance on a major source of the problem itself: international food aid. 'In 2006/07, the entire budget of the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture was a measly \$1.5 million', Robert Fatton notes, 'a figure that contrasts sharply with the \$69 million spent on the UN World Food Program. Instead of reconstructing its rural sector and promoting domestic food production, Haiti has remained a country of malnourished and hungry people alarmingly dependent on external assistance and charity.'⁸³ If development organizations were 'serious about improving agricultural output', Tim Schwarz agrees, 'they should stop undermining the local market with foreign produce and instead buy Haitian surpluses, use them in nutritional supplement programs for mothers and children as well as store them for redistribution in lean seasons.'⁸⁴ Instead, as Schwarz demonstrates in convincing detail in his 2008 book *Travesty in Haiti*, food aid has been deployed systematically and deliberately, from the beginning of its intensive use in the 1980s, to 'destroy the Haitian economy of small farmers.' Ostensibly humanitarian assistance has transformed the country into a captive market for highly subsidised US surplus production in grains and rice. Much of the support that USAID gives to charities like CARE comes 'in the form of food and the requirement is that the food must be sold on the local markets', at prices that undercut the local competition. Schwartz shows that in recent years food aid has increased not just when local harvests are weak, but also in years of local *surplus* – with predictable consequences for Haitian farmers.⁸⁵ In 2010, intensification of this predatory policy amounted to little less than full-scale economic sabotage.

⁸² Nazaire St. Fort and Jeb Sprague, 'Anti-Hunger Protests Rock Haiti', *NACLA*, 25 April 2008; cf. Nazaire St. Fort and Jeb Sprague, 'Once-Vibrant Farming Sector in Dire Straits', *IPS*, 4 March 2008.

⁸³ Robert Fatton Jr., 'Toward a New Haitian State', *The Root*, 9 February 2010. <http://www.theroot.com/views/toward-new-haitian-state?page=0.0>; Caroline Preston and Nicole Wallace, '6 Months After Earthquake, Haiti Struggles to Rebuild', *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 8 July 2010. <http://philanthropy.com/article/Charities-Struggle-to-Help/66199/>

⁸⁴ Tim Schwartz, 'Program of Development in Interest of Impoverished Haitians', 7 March 2010. http://open.salon.com/blog/timotuck/2010/03/07/program_of_development_in_interest_of_impoverished_haitians. By the spring of 2010, even Bill Clinton could see that his own neo-liberal assault on Haitian farmers, in the 1990s, had been counter-productive. 'It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake,' Clinton admitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 10 March (Katz, 'With Cheap Imports, Haiti Can't Feed Itself', *AP*, 20 March 2010. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=10156545>).

⁸⁵ Tim Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti* (Charleston: Booksurge, 2008), 108, 94.

Meanwhile, the majority of people affected by the earthquake are obliged to wait for the humanitarian investor-saboteurs to determine the course of their future exploitation. It's likely they will wait for a long time. The 2010 donor conference was the third such conference for Haiti since 2004; it's been difficult if not impossible to verify the actual conversion of pledges into payments in the wake of the first two conferences, and a year after the 2009 conference 'only 15 percent of the pledges that were made had actually been met.'⁸⁶ So far, the 2010 conference fits the same pattern. By mid summer, only five countries (Venezuela, Brazil, Norway, Estonia and Australia) had contributed to the UN's Haiti Reconstruction Fund, and less than 10% of the \$5.3 billion pledged in March had actually been paid.⁸⁷ So far, the governments of France and the US have paid almost none of the millions they promised. US citizens, by contrast, responded to Haiti's plight with exceptional generosity, paying \$1.3 billion to relief oriented charities.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, these charities then opted to keep much of the money for themselves, or for an undetermined future. In May, CBS investigated five of the largest charities: CARE, the American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund, and the Clinton Foundation Haiti Fund. The last two on the list refused to answer questions, but their websites indicated that they had spent less than 15% of the \$52m they collected; CARE had spent 16% of the \$34.4 million it collected, and the Red Cross has around a quarter of its \$444 million. Two months later, ABC news confirmed that of the \$1.138 billion donated to the 23 largest charities, 'at least 62.7 percent, \$714.3 million, has been allocated for future Haiti relief efforts or is unassigned.'

Lack of accessible funding, predictably, translates into a scarcity of discernible improvements 'on the ground'. All through the spring of 2010, press reports described the incredulity of both local residents and foreign observers as they watched the reconstruction effort proceed with a complacency and incompetence that beggar belief.⁸⁹ 'Real recovery and reconstruction efforts have yet to begin', a Danish Church Aid worker observed in late June, and 'international standards defining what people are entitled to after a disaster are in no way being met.'⁹⁰ Incredibly, as of late summer 2010, only 2% of the rubble has been cleared from the streets of Port-au-Prince.⁹¹ Incredibly, 98% of the 1.5 million people made homeless continue to live in more than a thousand desperately inadequate camps, alternately baked by the tropical sun and flooded by torrential rains. Most of these people still lack a waterproof tent, let alone a transitional shelter capable of withstanding the hurricane winds that batter Haiti most summers, often with devastating effect.⁹² An IJDH survey of internally displaced families conducted in

⁸⁶ 'Partners In Health's Medical Director and Director of Advocacy and Policy Urge Donor Countries to Support the Haitian Government', Partners In Health, 27 March 2010, www.pih.org, accessed 31 March 2010; cf. Annis, 'Canada's Failed Aid', *Haiti Liberté*, 4 August 2010.

⁸⁷ Isabel Macdonald, 'Where's Haiti's Bailout?', *Huffington Post*, 12 July 2010.

⁸⁸ Caroline Preston and Nicole Wallace, '6 Months After Earthquake, Haiti Struggles to Rebuild', *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 8 July 2010.

⁸⁹ See for instance Kathie Klarreich, 'Haiti Relief: Anger, Confusion as Authorities Relocate Homeless', *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 April 2010; CBS Evening News, 'Relief Efforts "Certainly Not Good Enough"', 22 April 2010.

⁹⁰ E. Thomas Johnson, 'Haitians Still Wait for Recovery', *LA Times*, 25 June 2010.

⁹¹ Tamara Lush, 'Just 2 Percent of Quake Debris in Haiti Cleared', *AP*, 11 September 2010.

⁹² Mark Weisbrot, 'Washington and International Donors Have Failed Haiti', *Sacramento Bee* (CA), 13 August 2010; cf. Katie Kane, 'A Country "Forgotten"', *The Missoulian*, 6 June 2010.

July found that 'aid has trickled to a halt in most camps', leaving 75 percent of the families surveyed suffering from systematic under-nourishment and 44 percent dependent on untreated water.⁹³ Rates of rape and violence against women have rapidly increased, and in most camps residents have no access to any sort of legal process or protection, or even any means of communicating with the foreign troops who continue to patrol their city.⁹⁴

Today, Isabeau Doucet writes, 'tens of thousands of families are subject to a relentless cycle of exodus, dispersal, and brutality at the hands of the Haitian National police and privately hired armed groups, in violation of Haitian and international law.' In some places, 'rather than clearing rubble from the streets, bulldozers are plowing over the tents of undesired "squatters" only to resettle IDPs expelled from elsewhere.'⁹⁵ Many thousands of the unwilling residents of these camps have been evicted or threatened with eviction by putative private landowners, forcing them to retreat to still more precarious or out-of-the-way locations.⁹⁶ The IHRC and the government has been unwilling to oblige other owners to sell land needed for more adequate resettlement camps, or even to oblige putative owners to prove the legitimacy of their titles with deeds or tax records. This too is no surprise, since as the AP reports, the government 'appointed Gerard-Emile "Aby" Brun, president of Nabatec Development, a consortium owned by some of Haiti's most powerful families, to be in charge of relocating the squatter camps in Port-au-Prince.'⁹⁷ According to BAI (Bureau des Avocats Internationaux) lawyer Mario Joseph, almost 'all land in Haiti is controlled by the elite through years of bribery and corruption [...]. In as much as 70% of forced expulsions, the

http://missoulain.com/news/state-and-regional/article_53238992-71ed-11df-b3ab-001cc4c002e0.html; Mark Schuller, 'Haiti's Resurrection: Promoting Human Rights', *Huffington Post*, 5 April 2010. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/haitis-resurrection-promo_b_525104.html

⁹³ IJDH, "'We've Been Forgotten': Conditions in Haiti's Displacement Camps Eight Months After the Earthquake,' 23 September 2010, pp. 1-2, <http://ijdh.org/archives/14633>.

⁹⁴ See in particular BAI, 'Our Bodies are Still Trembling: Haitian Women's Fight Against Rape', IJDH, 27 July 2010. <http://ijdh.org/archives/13361>

⁹⁵ Isabeau Doucet, 'The Drama of Haiti's Internally Displaced', part one, *Haiti Liberté*, 11 August 2010. Needless to say, when the IHRC finally met on 17 August to rattle off an initial round of reconstruction targets and plans, 'there was no mention of the humanitarian disaster and human rights violations suffered daily by 1.7 million internally displaced, many of whom have not yet received emergency supplies after seven months' (Doucet, 'IHRC Promises Millions for "Sustainable Development"', *Haiti Liberté*, 18 August 2010).

⁹⁶ Ansel Herz, 'Haut-Turgeau, Haiti: The Camp That Vanished and the Priest Who Forced Them Out', *IPS*, 9 March 2010. <http://www.mediahacker.org/2010/03/haut-turgeau-haiti-the-camp-that-vanished/>; Herz, 'Displaced Fear Expulsion from Makeshift Camps', *IPS*, 8 April 2010. Cf. 'Forced IDP Relocations', *TransAfrica Forum*, 12 April 2010. http://www.transafricaforum.org/files/Memo_on_Forced_IDP_Relocations_041210.pdf; IAT, 'Vanishing Camps at Gunpoint', 14 July 2010. http://www.internationalactionties.org/IAT_vanishing_camps_report_haiti.pdf. 'Though there are some programs to relocate people back to their homes', Sasha Kramer points out, 'the majority of displaced people were renters with uncertain property rights and 50% of the buildings in Port au Prince are now uninhabitable. Most of the camps are located on private property and pressure to relocate has been intense and at times violent. With nowhere else to go, many families are forced to endure terrible conditions and human rights violations only to sleep under a leaky tarp' (Sasha Kramer, 'Haiti 6 Months Later; Frozen in Time', *Our Soil*, 12 July 2010 <http://www.oursoil.org/content/haiti-6-months-later-frozen-time>).

⁹⁷ Jonathan Katz, 'Fights Over Land Stall Haiti Quake Recovery', *AP*, 11 July 2010. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/07/11/world/main6668155.shtml>

land claims are disputable,⁹⁸ but 'the poor have been excluded from their land for years, and are now excluded from the process determining their rights to lodgings.'⁹⁹

In this as in so many other ways, Kim Ives confirms, the aftermath of January 12 reveals that

the principal fault-line in Haiti is not geological but one of class. A small handful of rich families own large tracts of land in suburban Port-au-Prince which would be ideal for resettling the displaced thousands [...]. However, these same families control the Haitian government and, more importantly, have great influence in the newly formed 26-member Interim Commission to Reconstruct Haiti (IHRC) [...]. The IHRC is empowered for the next 18 months under a "State of Emergency Law" to seize land for rebuilding as it sees fit [...], but the elite families on this body in charge of expropriations are not volunteering their own well-situated land to benefit Haiti's homeless. As a result, only one major displaced person camp, Corail-Cesselesse, has been built, about 10 miles north of the capital, on a forbidding strip of sun-baked desert situated between Titayen and Morne Cabrit, two desolate zones where death-squads dumped their victims during the anti-Aristide coups.¹⁰⁰

This 'model' camp at Corail-Cesselesse remains the showcase of the reconstruction effort to date, an obligatory stop on the itinerary of every visiting journalist. Corail's tents are laid out in symmetrical rows, and it boasts latrines, showers, and a small clinic. But nothing else: there no markets, shops, or schools within walking distance, and there is no work. 'There really is nothing to do', a resident told Mark Schuller. 'You can't stay in your tent because of the heat. You can't go outside because of the dust. And you can't leave the camp because there's nothing to do.'¹⁰¹ Camp Corail is little more than a holding pen, and a flimsy one at that: most of its tents collapsed during a storm the night of 12 July, injuring six people. By that stage, months after their construction was announced, only one of the hundreds of 'transitional houses' anticipated for the camp had been built.¹⁰² Camp Corail is itself located on land owned by Nabatec, incidentally, which stands to gain handsomely from both the government's compensation scheme and from an anticipated industrial park planned for the new neighbourhood. In this way, Ives concludes, 'the bourgeoisie keeps its best land and sells its worst for a huge, guaranteed profit.'¹⁰³

Most of the homeless, meanwhile, have no choice but to continue camping on the first patch of earth they were able to find – one camp, for instance, is perched on the strip of concrete, two meters wide, that divides the Route de Carrefour. By

⁹⁸ Cited in Doucet, 'The Drama of Haiti's Internally Displaced', part one, *Haiti Liberté*, 11 August 2010.

⁹⁹ Miles, 'Haiti Earthquake Survivors To Peacefully Demonstrate to Call Attention to the Horrific Conditions in Camps', *Let Haiti Live*, 12 August 2010. <http://lethaitilive.org/2010/08/12/haiti-earthquake-survivors-to-peacefully-demonstrate-to-call-attention-to-the-horrific-conditions-in-camps/>

¹⁰⁰ Kim Ives, 'Six Months Later: Land Ownership at the Crux of Haiti's Stalled Reconstruction', *Haiti Liberté*, 14 July 2010; cf. 'Sean Penn on Haiti Six Months After the Earthquake', *Democracy Now!*, 13 July 2010. http://www.democracynow.org/2010/7/13/sean_penn_on_haiti_six_months

¹⁰¹ Schuller, 'Rained Out? Opportunities in Haiti Washing Away', *Huffington Post*, 21 July 2010.

¹⁰² Miles, 'Rain and Weeping at Camp Corail', *Let Haiti Live*, 30 July 2010; Edward Cody. <http://lethaitilive.org/2010/07/30/rain-and-weeping-at-camp-corail/>, 'Despite "all that money," More Than 1 Million Haitians Remain Displaced by January Earthquake', *Washington Post*, 22 August 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/21/AR2010082102882.html>

¹⁰³ Kim Ives, 'Six Months Later: Land Ownership at the Crux of Haiti's Stalled Reconstruction', *Haiti Liberté*, 14 July 2010.

early June a grand total of 7,500 people had been moved from the most vulnerable campsites to 'planned' resettlement zones, and by the end of July, the UN admitted that only 6,000 of the required 125,000 durable shelters required had been built. At the height of this misery, in July, the UN mission chief Edmond Mulet acknowledged that 'we have lost the sense of urgency.'¹⁰⁴

VI

As you might expect, there is no such sense of loss among people more directly concerned by the disaster. Perhaps the most striking feature of the whole post-quake period has been the extraordinary hardiness and discipline of the hundreds of thousands people who have lost their relatives, homes and possessions, and who from day one began to organise themselves into new communities. They have pooled their resources, arranged for the distribution of food and water, improvised informal systems of justice. The camps are the product of desperation, but the unprecedented concentration of people also affords unprecedented opportunities for association and assembly: the same factors that have turned Cité Soleil into a centre of popular political power in recent decades have also begun to take effect in Champs de Mars and the other larger camps. 'In the camps', Camille Chalmers observed a few weeks after the quake, 'people are talking a lot about solidarity, fraternity, mutual aid.'¹⁰⁵ In the face of dramatic vulnerability and marginalisation, camp residents have also begun to exert some political pressure. 'Citizens regularly take to the streets', Beverly Bell wrote in July,

to demand housing for the displaced, good education, and support of national agricultural production. They have recently protested violence by the U.N. security mission, non-payment of wages to state workers and teachers, and the introduction of toxic Monsanto seeds, among other complaints. Grassroots organizations still meet regularly to develop their strategies for political change, as they have throughout history. Across the country on any given day, small groups perch on broken chairs under tarps in refugee camps, huddle amidst rubble in the courtyards of earthquake-destroyed schools, or sweat under thatched-roof gazebos [...]. They are developing pressure points for housing rights and protection against rape for those in camps. Some plan information campaigns aimed at sweatshop workers, others programs to politicize youth. The agendas are seemingly endless.¹⁰⁶

On 22 March, hundreds protested the flying visit of former US presidents Clinton and Bush. On 10 May, several thousand people were dispersed by police tear gas after they converged on the ruins of the national palace, calling for Préval to resign. On 17 May, thousands more of people demonstrated against Préval and the 'state of emergency law' passed the previous month, which gave de facto control of Haiti to the foreign-dominated IHRC. UN tear gas, rubber bullets and arrests ended a more militant student demonstration on 24 May¹⁰⁷, and the next day thousands more people converged on the palace ruins.¹⁰⁸ Hundreds rallied in Port-au-Prince to

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines, Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Interviewed in Avi Lewis, *Haiti: The Politics of Rebuilding, Fault Lines*, Al Jazeera English, 12 February 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Beverly Bell, "'We've Lost the Battle, but We Haven't Lost the War:' Haiti Six Months After the Earthquake', *The Wip*, 12 July 2010.

http://thewip.net/talk/2010/07/weve_lost_the_battle_but_we_ha.html

¹⁰⁷ Ansel Herz, 'U.N. Clash with Frustrated Students Spills into Camps', *IPS*, 25 May 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Yves Pierre-Louis, 'Broad Mobilization Against Préval Continues', *Haiti Liberté*, 19 May 2010.

denounce the UN occupation on 1 June, the day of its sixth anniversary; six weeks later, several thousand marched in celebration of Aristide's birthday, calling for his immediate return.¹⁰⁹ Then on 12 August, residents of a dozen or so IDP camps, threatened with imminent eviction, organised the first of a growing and open-ended series of protests against abuse of their human rights, against the expulsions, and against illegitimate land claims.¹¹⁰

In the election year of 2010, as in the previous elections of 2000 and 1990, the key political difference remains the division between (a) critics calling merely for a more efficient deployment of reconstruction resources and more 'reasonable' forms of cooperation with the occupying troops and aid workers, and (b) activists working to rekindle popular mobilisation for fundamental political change as the only viable means of regaining national sovereignty and establishing social justice. Spokespeople for the NGOs, the UN, the US and other 'friends of Haiti' freely grumble about local inefficiency and corruption, but tend to leave political questions to one side. From this perspective, after all, the fundamental decisions have already been taken, and it only remains to find 'willing partners' prepared to carry them out; the only roles left for the Haitian people themselves are those of dignified beneficiaries on the one hand or of resentful 'obstacles to reform' on the other. The UN's humanitarian chief, for instance, remains concerned first and foremost with 'the potential consequences in terms of both politics and security of large demonstrations in some sensitive places.'¹¹¹ Stability, i.e. docility, remains the top priority. As the CEPR noted in early June, a review of 'the last five Joint Operations and Tasking Centre (JOTC) reports reveals that the MINUSTAH [UN stabilisation mission] is still focusing almost solely on security. Combining data from the previous six days, the JOTC reports show that MINUSTAH has undertaken 5,092 security operations, involving 29,537 troops, and 56 maritime patrols. On the other hand, there have been 51 humanitarian assistance missions, involving just 359 troops.'¹¹²

By contrast, activists organising in and around the BAI and the new coalition PLONBAVIL (National Platform of Base Organizations and State Victims) focus on the mechanisms of exclusion that have pushed the vast majority of Haiti's citizens to the outer margins of politics. 'There is a sort of merging of the Fanmi Lavalas base organizations and former PPN members happening there', Kim Ives observes, 'one which has happened without the consent (and maybe somewhat to the chagrin) of the leaders of both parties. It was really an attraction and elopement of the "bases," and my sense is that the centre of anti-imperialist resistance to the Préval plan and crew was and is really coming out of that crucible. This is where the progressive and revolutionary leadership for this post-quake era is emerging from.'¹¹³ Patrick Elie, likewise, stakes everything on a renewal of the popular movement that opened the door to political change in the late 1980s: 'I put all my money on our ability, at the level of the grassroots movement, to remobilise

¹⁰⁹ Randall White, 'Thousands in Haiti March on Aristide's Birthday', *Haiti Action*, 16 July 2010. http://www.haitiaction.net/News/HA/7_16_10/7_16_10.html

¹¹⁰ Doucet, 'The Drama of Haiti's Internally Displaced', part two, *Haiti Liberté*, 25 August 2010.

¹¹¹ Reed Lindsay, 'Haiti's Excluded', *The Nation*, March 11, 2010; cf. Ansel Herz, 'Looking More and More Like a War Zone', IPS, 30 March 2010.

¹¹² 'MINUSTAH Continues to Prioritize Security Over Relief', CEPR, 2 June 2010.

¹¹³ Kim Ives, letter to the author, 25 May 2010.

the Haitian people, to make them believe, once more, that they are the key players in politics.¹¹⁴

Unfortunately, the main institutional legacy of the Lavalas mobilisation – Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas (FL) party – is itself both divided and largely excluded from the political process. After its landslide election victory in 2000, opposition politicians anticipated that FL might remain hegemonic for 'sixty years'.¹¹⁵ The second anti-Lavalas coup and its aftermath have helped level the political playing field. In 2004 Aristide and many of his ministers were forced into exile; his Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and dozens of other high-level members of FL were imprisoned. In the run-up to the 2006 presidential elections the leading FL candidate, Father Gérard Jean-Juste, was jailed on trumped up charges and prevented from standing. In August 2007, the country's most prominent human rights activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine was 'disappeared' (and is presumed dead) shortly after he announced his intention to stand as an FL candidate for the senate. Préval's hand-picked Provisional Electoral Commission (CEP) went on to block FL candidates from participating in senate elections in April 2009, on bogus procedural grounds.¹¹⁶

In response, FL campaigners and supporters organised a boycott, and only a tiny fraction of the electorate turned out to vote – 11%, according to Préval's officials, but less than half that according to his opponents and most observers.¹¹⁷ In public, US and UN officials condemned the CEP decision and called for the inclusion of all political parties. Curiously, however, when the CEP stuck to its guns the US and the rest of its 'international community' quietly abandoned calls for free and inclusive elections, and instead agreed to cover most of the election's costs. Brian Concannon draws attention to the double standard: 'all of the international agencies that had 'criticized the exclusion when it was made, praised the elections when they were held without the participation of FL or over 90% of Haitian voters.'¹¹⁸ In November 2009, the CEP again barred FL again (along with several other parties) from registering for legislative elections originally planned for February 2010, despite the fact that FL went out of its way to meet the new procedural requirements invented the previous spring; again the CEP won international support and funding. After the earthquake obliged the CEP to push this next round of elections back to November 2010, they renewed (on 21 July) the

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines*, *Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010.

¹¹⁵ *Damming the Flood*, 75.

¹¹⁶ The final FL list of candidates was endorsed by the party leader (Aristide) by fax, but at the last minute the CEP invented a new requirement, knowing FL would be unable to meet it: Aristide, still exiled in South Africa and denied entry to Haiti, would have to sign the list in person. In the 2006 elections, by contrast, several former FL senators claimed to represent FL without the endorsement of either Aristide or the membership, and the CEP made no objection (Jeb Sprague, 'Fanmi Lavalas Banned, Voter Apprehension Widespread', *IPS*, 17 April 2009; cf. IJDH, 'International Community Should Pressure the Haitian Government for Prompt and Fair Elections', 30 June 2010; Ira Kurzban, 'Unfair and Undemocratic', *Miami Herald*, 8 September 2010).

¹¹⁷ Wadner Pierre, 'Empty Streets, Empty Boxes: Haitians Reject Manipulated Election', *HaitiAnalysis*, 30 June 2009. <http://www.haitianalysis.com/2009/6/30/empty-streets-empty-boxes-haitians-reject-manipulated-election>

¹¹⁸ IJDH, 'International Community Should Pressure the Haitian Government for Prompt and Fair Elections', 30 June 2010. <http://ijdh.org/archives/13138>

exclusion of FL yet again, and again in apparent defiance of US and international recommendations.¹¹⁹

As a result, the next Haiti parliament and president will be elected, once more, without the participation of the most popular political organisation in the country. So long as the result is an apparent endorsement of the status quo, no doubt these elections too will receive the international stamp of approval in due course.

The FL leadership has made matters worse by indulging in years of sterile post-Aristide in-fighting. By early 2008, animosity between rival factions had grown so intense that they had become more or less separate organisations, and by the spring of 2009 a number of leaders with grassroots support had defected to Préval's camp. Government harassment coupled with the lack of unity deprives the popular movement of any imminent opportunity to use what Samba Boukman could still call, in 2006, its 'greatest weapon' – its ability to win elections.¹²⁰ At the time of writing (in September 2010), the presidential election scheduled for November 2010 held out little prospect of significant change. For a brief moment in mid-summer, the singer Wyclef Jean's celebrity candidacy rekindled a brief burst of media interest in Haiti. Some commentators were charmed by his youth and 'energy', while others drew attention to his support for the 2004 coup and for neo-liberal policies, his lack of political qualifications, programme or experience, and the financial scandals that have plagued the Yele Haiti charity he fronts.¹²¹ The journalist Ansel Herz summed him up best by describing him as Haiti's Sarah Palin: 'incoherent, incompetent and in it for himself.'¹²² Having lived most of his life in the US, Wyclef (along with the formerly Miami-based militant Lavarice Gaudin and a dozen other hopefuls) was declared ineligible to stand in August. The remaining candidates include Préval's former Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis, Jean-Henri Céant (Aristide's former lawyer and a veteran behind-the-scenes FL operator), and Aristide's last Prime Minister, the moderate FL loyalist Yvon Neptune – Neptune probably represents the most powerful degree of institutional continuity with the pre-2004 régime, but many in or with the FL base still condemn him as a de-facto collaborator with the coup. The two anti-Lavalas coups have gone a long way towards eliminating any residual belief that genuine social change in Haiti might still be possible by 'formal' democratic means. 'In all the camps I've visited', writes journalist Isabeau Doucet, 'there is no interest in the elections let alone any enthusiasm for any particular candidate.'¹²³ Like many like-minded observers, the progressive weekly newspaper *Haiti Liberté* has dismissed the

¹¹⁹ 'Haiti's Leader Rejects U.S. Election Proposals', *Reuters*, 30 June 2010; Wadner Pierre, 'Haiti Gears Up for Polls – Again, Sans Lavalas', *IPS*, 30 July 2010.

¹²⁰ *Damming the Flood*, 32.

¹²¹ Cf. Kevin Edmonds, 'The Assault on Haitian Democracy', *NACLA*, 23 August 2010.

¹²² Ansel Herz, 'Stay in the States: Incompetent, Egotistical Wyclef Jean Offers Only False Hope for Haiti', *New York Daily News*, 7 August 2010.

http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2010/08/07/2010-08-07_opinion_stay_in_the_states_incompetent_egotistical_wyclef_jean_offers_only_false.html#ixzz0xQ5HQ4xi 'The very fact that he is taken seriously' in the foreign press when he has no qualifications of the job, adds Robert Fatton, is another indication of the fact that the US tends to 'look at the typical Haitian population as a bankrupt kind of species' (cited in Tamara Lush, 'Haiti Ruling Ends Wyclef Jean's Run for President', *AP*, 21 August 2010).

¹²³ Isabeau Doucet, letter to the author, 16 September 2010.

upcoming 2010 election as a 'charade' rigged up by the foreign 'friends of Haiti' in order to legitimate the occupation, and will not back any of the candidates.¹²⁴

In many ways Lavalas is today less an organisation than an idea and a memory, and the lack of adequate organisation and leadership leaves the renewal of popular mobilisation vulnerable to all kinds of opportunistic manipulation. According to some of the mediators that serve as go-betweens between various political interests and the captive residents of the camps, many of the people who participate in demonstrations for or against the government do so for the sake of (pitifully small) financial reward. 'Nobody protests without money in this country', one such mediator told Al-Jazeera in July: 'the rich people keep us in misery, to make us do whatever they want'¹²⁵ – which is to say, more often than not, to do nothing at all. The May 2010 protests, the most substantial since the quake, were endorsed by politicians from all sides of the political spectrum, including veteran Lavalas partisans like René Civil and prominent 2004 coup supporters like Hervé Saintilus, Evans Paul, and Himmler Rébu.¹²⁶ The most important political question in Haiti today concerns the direction, priorities, and integrity of this incipient protest movement. Along with many of his allies, PLONBAVIL's Yves Pierre-Louis is 'very aware of the dangers posed by allowing former putchists into our alliance and demonstrations', while insisting that 'the unity and consciousness of the progressive forces in this mobilization are strong.'¹²⁷

In the election of 2010, as in the last four presidential elections in Haiti, everything will depend on whether this unity and this consciousness are strong enough to prevail over the vast and diverse array of forces drawn up to oppose them. The earthquake has sharpened and accelerated the basic political choice facing Haiti: either renewal of the popular mobilisation in pursuit of equality and justice, or long-term confirmation of the island's current status as a neo-colonial protectorate.

23 September 2010.

¹²⁴ 'Notre Position sur la conjoncture politique', *Haiti Liberté*, 11 August 2010; English translation at <http://canadahaitiaction.ca/content/haiti-libert%C3%A9-editorial-political-situation-upcoming-election>. 'The CEP and Préval have excluded the most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, and are trying to corrupt its members', argues Yves Pierre-Louis, 'but 'the masses remain attached to Jean Bertrand Aristide as their national representative [...]. The priorities of [their] mobilization are to demand the resignation of René Préval and the CEP, to form a transitional political power capable of organizing inclusive elections [...], and to get rid of the international community's imposed occupation forces' (Yves Pierre-Louis, interview with Isabeau Doucet, Port-au-Prince, 17 Sept 2010).

¹²⁵ Carlos Jean-Charles, interviewed in Sebastian Walker, 'Haiti: Six Months On', *Faultlines*, *Al-Jazeera English*, 12 July 2010.

¹²⁶ Kim Ives, 'With Strange Bedfellows: Mobilization Against Préval Gains Momentum', *Haiti Liberté*, 12 May 2010.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Kim Ives, 'With Strange Bedfellows', *Haiti Liberté*, 12 May 2010; cf. Yves Pierre-Louis, 'Broad Mobilization Against Préval Continues', *Haiti Liberté*, 19 May 2010.