

My Experience Working with the UN, the OAS, IFES, IRI, USAID, and other International Organizations on Haiti's Elections, from 1987 to 2000

by Jean Paul Poirier

Historical Context

Haiti has the distinction for defeating the Napoleonic Armies¹ and for being the first black republic.² Although this was a historic undertaking, it led to many difficulties in the development of the burgeoning nation.³ That the war against France virtually destroyed the capital Port-au-Prince, as well as the infrastructure of the economy, which was mostly oriented in providing sugar and other agricultural goods to France, was a crippling consequence.⁴ The fact that most developed nations boycotted the new nation in its early stages⁵ also contributed to the slow development of the new republic. As Hauge stated, "A symbiotic relationship developed between the two most powerful groups in Haiti, the military and the merchant elites." He further added, "By 1938 Haiti had transferred more than 30 million Francs to France." The alliance between the military and the merchant elites was countered in 1957 by Dr. François Duvalier coming to power, and retained his power by creating his own personal armed militia, the feared Tonton Macoutes.⁶ This violent and brutal force assisted Duvalier in maintaining a reign of terror, depleting the country of many of its elites who took refuge in the U.S., Canada,⁷ and France. At Duvalier's death in 1971,⁸ he was succeeded by his son Jean Claude, aged nineteen years old. As Wenche brought forth, "Jean Claude reestablished the traditional relationship between the state and Haiti's elites and in doing this lost support of the old Duvalierists."

Although Haiti gained considerable economic support during Jean Claude's tenure, he lost his grasp on power though a number of factors, including the development of popular and peasant organizations in the 1980s,⁹ It all came to a head when Pope Jean Paul II's famous phrase "Il faut que sa change,"¹⁰ rocked Duvalier's regime to its core. On 7 February 1986, all these factors led to the departure of Jean Claude Duvalier from power strongly explored in this CBC report in 1986.¹¹ The void in power was soon filled by the National Governing

1. Philippe R. Girard, *The Slaves who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801–1804*, University of Alabama Press, 2011.

2. Declaration of Independence, January 1, 2004, UK Archives.

3. Mats Lundahl. "Haitian Underdevelopment in a Historical Perspective," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Volume 14, Issue 2 (November 1982), pp. 465–75.

4. Colin McKay. "The Economic Consequences of the Haitian Revolution," Thesis for Robert D. Clark Honors College, June 2016.

5. Wenche Iren Hauge. "Haiti: A Political Economy Analysis," Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, May 2018.

6. www.britannica.com/topic/Tontons-Macoutes.

7. Histoire de l'Immigration Haitienne a Montreal, archipel.uqam.ca/11427/1/M15471.pdf.

8. www.nytimes.com/topic/person/francois-duvalier.

9. Robert Maguire and Scott Freeman (eds.). *Who Owns Haiti?: People, Power, and Sovereignty*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

10. www.nytimes.com/1983/03/10/world/pope-in-haiti-assails-inequality-hunger-and-fear.html

11. Jean-Claude Duvalier's last days in Haiti (1986). www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1gDMiPeivE.

Council (CNG),¹² which was mandated to lead the country to democratic elections. A new constitution¹³ was drafted by the elected Constituent Assembly.¹⁴ The constitution was enacted by referendum on 29 March 1987. One of the first acts of the CNG after the promulgation of the Constitution was to name the Provisional Electoral Council on 29 May 1987.

Bienvenu En Haiti

In May 1987, little did I know or research the events going on in Haiti. I had been fully aware of the upheaval in the Philippines as a friend had been the lead Canadian Broadcasting Corporations' journalist covering the events around the departure of President Ferdinand Marcos and his family. At the same time, similar chaos had been unfolding in Haiti.¹⁵

I was offered a job by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) being the new lead consultant on a power sector utility Électricité d'Haïti (ED'H for Haiti Electric Utility) management restructuring program financed by the World Bank.¹⁶ I packed my bags and at the Port-au-Prince Airport was met by the PwC responsible partner. The weather was quite warm and not too humid. I will always remember my arrival at the El Rancho Hotel,¹⁷ where I was greeted by none other than Joseph Namphy, who I would soon find out was the brother of the president of the CNG, a military-dominated, transitional government. They had been ruling Haiti by force in the wake of longtime dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier's 7 February 1986 departure from Haiti, after the twenty-nine years that he and his father François had ruled the country. After check-in, I was led to my room and turned on the TV. I was astonished to see a NHL hockey game in progress. Little did I know the chaos and culture shock I was to experience the next day.

After breakfast, the PwC partner, picked me up and drove to the downtown office. Along the way, I was to see some of the ramshackle slums of Port-au-Prince. Everything was dirty, unpainted, and run-down. At the office, I was introduced to the staff and to my predecessor, who briefed me on the state of the consulting project. He also invited me to dinner the next night at his residence. I remember being served an avocado, which I proceeded to eat whole, never having seen a raw avocado before. We concluded after dinner that the residence was going to be available in two weeks, after their departure, so I naturally agreed to take over the lease.

The work at ED'H was quite interesting, as PwC was in the process of installing a new tailor-made, financial and commercial computer system, using a most up to date Wang mini-computer system. I also was introduced to the general manager and finance manager. Right away, I got along well with the GM but somehow was unable to develop a positive relationship with the finance manager. Therefore, I knew I had to make a quick positive impression to gain management's confidence. The accounting manager was developing the budget for the next financial year, and to my astonishment he was reading the draft budget to the directors and manager like a litany, nobody but him having a copy. Quickly, I obtained a copy from the accounting manager's assistant and proceeded to enter it into a spreadsheet. At the next budget meeting, I provided all members of the management team with their individual copy, much to the surprise of the accounting manager. This led to a highly productive session with managers giving quality input on the budget.

Another early memory is the meeting one Saturday morning by the GM and IT Consultant to the ED'H office. Apparently, the IT manager had manipulated several electrical customer accounts, including that of his mother. This meant instant dismissal for cause. So we

12. Helen Scott. "200 Years of U.S. Imperialism: Haiti Under Siege," *International Socialist Review* Issue 35, May–June 2004. www.isreview.org/issues/35/haiti_under_siege.shtml.

13. Constitution of Haiti 1987, <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Haiti/haiti1987.html>.

14. www.cidh.org/annualrep/86.87eng/chap.4c.htm.

15. www.nytimes.com/1986/02/08/world/duvalier-flees-haiti-end-family-s-28-years-power-general-leads-new-regime-20.html.

16. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/184101468249876563/pdf/PUB6113000Hait0c0expenditure0review.pdf>, pp. 50–57.

17. www.nh-hotels.com/hotel/nh-haiti-el-rancho.

changed all the passwords of the entire staff. On Monday, the IT manager was quite surprised not to log-in to his terminal and obviously knew what that meant. He was never seen again.

The next few months were interesting, for more reasons than work. Apparently, the interim president had made changes to the Electoral Law¹⁸ that displeased many factions. They caused havoc in the city by setting up roadblocks and attacking cars. One day we were let off early at the office, and I was to escort one of the new secretaries to her home nearby. Not two blocks from the office, I glanced at someone who was running toward the car with a large steel pipe. Thankfully, I swerved, and he only hit the A pillar, sparing the windshield. The rest of that trip is but a blur in my memory. Further unrest led to the office being closed for much of the next two months. This was quite stressful to me, as I had been told nothing of the turmoil to be expected by the PwC Montreal office during recruitment.

Elections 101

During this time, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) was busy setting up its offices and getting to the tasks of organizing the elections. One day I was asked to attend a meeting at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) regarding the upcoming elections and the management of the accounting needs of a Costa Rica-based agency¹⁹ that was providing technical assistance to the CEP. It was led by a former education minister of Guatemala. I agreed that PwC would handle the stated requirements. Little did I know how deep into the electoral process this work would propel me.

The supervision of the Electoral Restructuring Project and the Elections Management would soon overwhelm me, requiring me to put in seventy-hour weeks, much to the delight of my boss, the PwC partner. The Guatemalan consultant was unable to fulfill his mandate, USAID requested that PwC increase its involvement in the elections process. The next few months proved to be quite tumultuous as I was drawn in deeper into the electoral process. Essentially, the Elections Project was to provide the Electoral Council with any and all reasonable services and goods required. I was drafted into the confidential council meetings and asked to provide a wide range of goods and services, from buying Polaroid film for ID badges to renting twenty SUVs to arranging for helicopter service²⁰ for a few days from Miami. This kept me quite busy, as I had to learn USAID's procurement regulations along the way. This involved many meetings, including one with the minister of finance regarding a security guarantee for the rental of the SUVs. He offloaded the task to his assistant who reluctantly agreed to provide the State Financial Guarantee.

Ironically, some of the procurements were not so successful. The Polaroid film was not compatible with the cameras used by the council. However, two days before the election, some foreign observers noted that the film they had received was not compatible with their cameras. Communication proved that by pure coincidence, the exchange of the two formats of film meant that both the council's and the observer's needs were met. Also, the helicopter was denied permission by the Haitian military to fly over Haitian soil. The compensatory payment to the helicopter company was approved by USAID.

Two nights before the election the U.S. Mission hosted a reception at the U.S. embassy residence. I lot of my fellow foreign election workers and observers were present. At one point, a tall gentleman approached, addressed me by name and complimented me on the work I had put in to make the elections a success. I thanked him. A few minutes later I asked a USAID staff member about the identity of that gentleman. He said, "Oh, that's the U.S. ambassador." I was dumbfounded.

18. www.cidh.org/countryrep/Haiti88eng/conclusions.htm, pp. 50–57.

19. *Ibid.* pp. 48–53.

20. www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-11-28-mn-5979-story.html.

All in all, the elections would have gone on as planned had it not been for a commando of thugs in disguise, thought to be highly trained military personnel, who ransacked and destroyed many polling stations as well as killing quite a few voters who were lined up to vote. The chaos was so widespread that the Electoral Council called off the elections by noon on Election Day.²¹

The next day was one of eerie calm in Port-au-Prince. I was escorted to USAID by armoured vehicle. We checked the location of the various consultants. We found the Guatemalan ex-minister holed up at the Holiday Inn downtown. He was quite terrified as he had heard sustained gunfire during the previous day. We escorted him to the USAID office for debriefing. Also, the head of the provincial office from the west region called me, stating that he was in hiding and requesting permission to escape the city with one of the rented SUVs. Fearing for his life, I agreed that he could use the SUV for the required time.

The Haitian government decreed that the disruptions had been the work of dissident mercenaries and that all election offices would be closed for security reasons. The council was dissolved²² and would be reconstituted at a later date.

At USAID, I was thoroughly briefed and officials were quite upset and angry at the obvious military acquiescence of the attacks. I was clearly instructed to secure as much of the purchased equipment as possible. This proved quite difficult as most electoral office sites were guarded by the Haitian military.

Through all this, I managed to squeeze in my wedding one week after the elections. All the PwC staff was elated to attend a Haitian wedding. In view of the public tension from the aborted election, it was quite subdued. The honeymoon for one week in Hawaii was quite welcome. I had even scored two, first class tickets from PAN-AM.

Returning to Port-au-Prince, I was beset by regret over the failed elections. I had done my utmost for them to be successful. And I began to feel a sense of responsibility over the people who were murdered. Had I not worked so hard, the elections would not have been ready on time, and the massacre would have been avoided.

The government soon reconstituted a council,²³ termed permanent, although the method of formation did not follow the 1987 constitution. The new council took possession of all the electoral offices, assuring a notable military presence at each one. Elections would be held in a period not exceeding six weeks.

One incident that shook me was while going by the main council offices on my way to the electric utility offices, I spotted one of the SUVs I had rented. Curious, I saw there was nobody nearby and stopped and inspected the vehicle. It appeared intact. About one minute later, several soldiers approached the vehicle and asked me for identification. After reporting to base by radio, I was “invited” to follow them in to the Central Council offices, where I was met and questioned about the missing equipment and vehicles. Obviously, those present were aware of who I was and my role as consultant to the previous council. And as I only had knowledge of the one vehicle and did not know its whereabouts, I answered that I was unaware of the location of the equipment or vehicles. I was dismissed and was free to go about my business. I quickly reported this incident to USAID who instructed me to stay away from the area for my personal safety. USAID terminated all semblance of elections support shortly thereafter.

Elections were held in January and results were quickly announced. Leslie François Manigat was sworn in as president²⁴ and parliament was convened. To all keen observers this whole process had been a sham and wholly orchestrated by the military including President/General Henri Namphy. The international community cut off most economic

21. Ibid.

22. www.cidh.org/annualrep/86.87eng/chap.4c.htm, para 128.

23. Interamerican Commission of Human Rights, “Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Haiti,” Sept. 7, 1988. www.cidh.org/countryrep/Haiti88eng/TOC.htm, para 153–57.

24. www.universalis.fr/evnement/6-24-janvier-1988-election-de-leslie-manigat-a-la-presidence-de-la-republique/.

aid to Haiti during the Manigat presidency. He faced a legislature made up largely of former Duvalierists and armed with strong powers under a constitution approved in March. Skeptical Haitians suspected Manigat would be a puppet of the army leaders who opposed civilian rule. Supporters of Manigat believed he was strong enough to resist the military and receive the support of legislators.

Manigat's task as president was compounded by Haiti's extreme poverty and social divisions. In addition to the lack of foreign aid, Manigat received little support from the legislators.

The Manigat government was overthrown by Namphy after about nine months and the military assumed absolute power. This was succeeded by several other coups where General Prosper Avril took power.

Temporary Exile

During the time of the Manigat presidency, I returned to ED'H and assumed my duties. After two years of difficult stewardship, there was an upheaval in management, leading to my disenchantment with the system, as this turmoil had severely curtailed the electrical utility's ability to exert proper management control. When the former GM approached me with an offer to join him in a project to solidify electrical supply to the neighboring Dominican Republic,²⁵ I quickly agreed. The project was well financed and a 40 MW barge was prepared for service in less than ten months. After commissioning the barge, all consultant personnel were given severance, as the Finnish supplier had decided to take over the project and manage it as of December 1989.

Siren Call

After my return to Haiti, some twelve hours by car, due to frequent stops and searches in nearly every town, I set about celebrating Christmas. At a local restaurant, an agricultural consultant acquaintance remarked that if I was in Haiti, there must be elections upcoming. On Boxing Day, I was asked by the USAID deputy director to drop in for a meeting. As I had previously worked with the deputy director's daughter on a computer assignment, I knew him well.

At USAID, I was escorted to a room with a long slim table. On the other side were approximately ten people, most of whom I had met in my previous USAID work. I was asked to describe my role in the previous, aborted election after which I was briefed on the new proposal. I was to act as a consultant to the Permanent Council²⁶ that President Prosper Avril had named in the summer of 1989 and which had yet to make any progress. I was to begin this mandate the next week, after New Year's Day.

My first contact with the new council was facilitated by a USAID official who offered my services to help in organizing the next elections. As several staff had worked on the previous elections process in 1987, I soon established trust and credibility. Of particular note was Jacques Jovin, a representative from the Protestant churches in Haiti. We discussed at length on the elections process methodology and other matters. However, soon in the process, an acquaintance confided that he had been contacted by President Avril's office to run as a candidate in the forthcoming elections and guaranteed a victorious campaign. I reported this to the USAID Director Gerald Zarr and Ambassador Alvin P. Adams. Soon thereafter, I was called to a meeting with both UN Resident Representative Reinhart Helmke and U.S. Ambassador Alvin Adams. At this meeting, my information was confirmed that other sources also had been approached and guaranteed parliamentary seats. At the same time, President Avril had written to the UN Secretary General Koffi Annan requesting technical assistance in organizing the elections. In a matter of a few weeks the response was delivered to the UN Mission in Haiti.

25. Wartsila DR Project, www.wartsila.com/dom/en/about/history.

26. Prosper Avril. *Livre Noir de l'Insécurité*, pp. 300-01.

One morning around 6:00 a.m., I received a call from Helmke to meet him at his office at 8:00 a.m. This call coincidentally spooked my wife, who inquired as to why I had received this call. I told her this was a routine meeting, and they had forgotten to inform me.

At that meeting, Helmke showed me the original letter received from Annan and addressed to President Avril. In that letter, the secretary general chided Avril for his handling of the human rights in Haiti and refused the technical assistance request. President Avril never saw the letter. Several days later, Avril was seen being escorted to a U.S. military aircraft by the U.S. ambassador,²⁷ who had been nicknamed “Bourik Chage,” Haitian Kreyòl for the “laden mule that goes on forever.”

At the time, I would estimate about 85 percent of the population and consultants had a negative opinion as to whether elections could be held in Haiti in 1990. In short order, a grouping of civil society notables was formed to ponder on the route going forward. This led to the constitutional provision of the presidential vacancy being filled by the president of the Supreme Court. Several judges of the court had clear ties to the previous Duvalier regime, so consensus fell on Justice Ertha Pascal-Trouillot,²⁸ considered independent and impartial.

She quickly formed her cabinet, which included my acquaintance who had tipped me off on the elections scam, as defense minister. The Elections Council was disbanded, and the new members were chosen from the original 1987 council.²⁹ Several members were replaced by former election officials. The council elected Jean Robert Sabalat as president, the very individual I had helped escape retribution after the 1987 elections massacre. Staff was quickly recruited and included many former workers from the 1987 staff. Of note, the operations manager was a former cleric who had managed the Artibonite Regional Office in 1987, Luciano Pharaon. I was introduced by the USAID director as an initial contribution by USAID to encourage the setup of elections in 1990. The welcome was heartwarming, as I knew most of the members from my 1987 work, and President Sabalat openly welcomed me as an “old friend.” Most of the other CEP had quietly disappeared three years earlier.

President Pascal-Touillot lost no time in asking Secretary General Kofi Annan for assistance in organizing the elections. As a start, a high-level mission³⁰ was dispatched to Haiti to analyze the possibilities, including the former head of the Electoral College of Nicaragua, the UN technical elections manager, a former Haitian Council member, and several other technicians. At the same time, USAID had extended my contract for a period of six months.

Ironically, the members of this mission had their first informal meeting at dinner, which I hosted at my residence. Events were occurring so fast, that to this day, I do not remember why this dinner came to be, other than my desire to be helpful. On that afternoon, Horacio Boneo of the UN and I sat at my dinner table and reviewed plans I had made for the upcoming elections. We estimated that elections could be held in a timeframe of six months. A timeline was reviewed and amended, the budget was generally accepted and through all this I cooked dinner, the main dish being my version of green pepper steak.

The next day, the mission went about its work, and in less than two weeks we had a recommendation to President Pascal-Trouillot. To my satisfaction, 90 percent of its content confirmed my initial plan that had been submitted to USAID and the U.S. ambassador.

UN Bureaucracy

In June, the UN sent two staff members to assist in organizing elections. In essence, they were to lead the process with the CEP, as the council was called. In practice, these technicians were tasked with analyses by Director Pharaon and myself. We assumed offices in what

27. www.nytimes.com/1988/09/19/world/man-in-the-news-artful-career-officer-prosper-avril.html.

28. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/189075/ertha-pascal-trouillot-la-premiere-femme-presidente-dhaiti>.

29. www.haiti-reference.com/pages/plan/politique/elections/cep_1987-2000/.

30. <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/western-hemisphere-region/haiti-1908-present/>.

was described to us as Jean Claude Duvalier's bedroom at a guest villa (Villa D'Accueil) kept for visiting dignitaries and officials during the Duvalier regime.

A quite ironic incident happened during this frenzied period. I was asked by CEP President Sabalat to finalize the elections budget for presentation to a group of U.S. Department of State officials one Monday. At the same time, I was asked by Director Zarr to brief a couple of USAID Washington officials on the elections plan and budget. In the afternoon, they had a meeting with CEP President Sabalat and asked that I accompany them. As the guests were being screened through security, I rushed and handed the budget to CEP President Sabalat. Shortly afterward, they were introduced to the council and sat down to a cordial meeting. Sabalat handed them a copy of the budget, which they perused and then handed to me as a USAID consultant, not knowing that I had prepared the document.

Shortly thereafter, a U.S. NGO, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)³¹ was awarded a contract to manage the remaining electoral assistance. Several conditions were that they would continue with the previous elections consultant, i.e., me. The office was officially set up and several people hired.

Elections planning and preparation continued unabated and candidate registration was forthcoming. The council seemed to slow down activities, which to technical personnel made no sense as there were no major problems. My position as budget advisor to the CEP and concurrently to my employers USAID and the U.S. embassy meant that I wielded considerable influence, although to me, everything seemed to be overwhelming. As I had a rather large house with four bedrooms, one of the UN consultants wishing to reduce his living expenses as well optimize his work time, rented room and board from me. Our stress levels went down as we worked out some procedures in the evening while relaxing. This was to prove a significant negative factor for the CEP.

Actually, as budget allocations were being made, less and less discretionary financial resources were left in the budget. The axe soon fell as the council made a plea to the U.S. ambassador for more funds. Present at the meeting were U.S. Ambassador Adams, Steve Kashkett, Adams' principal political advisor, CEP President Sabalat, Marc Antoine Noel, another of the nine CEP members, and myself. The U.S. ambassador politely responded that the request would be analyzed because resources were tight. After the meeting, I stayed behind to confer with the Adams and Kashkett. His candid comments indicated the request seemed bogus, and he would not offer any more assistance. Kashkett and I agreed.

Betrayal

Very shortly, IFES consultant Jeff Fischer came to Haiti and conferred with the CEP. That afternoon Fischer took me aside and bluntly told me the council was complaining about my interference in election matters.³² I was given ten minutes to clear my office. I returned home, stunned and downtrodden. I had worked for USAID for eight months with no problems, and now after seven weeks under IFES, I was now considered a liability. The ambassador was incensed at IFES' decision and insisted that I be generously compensated. He saw this as a retaliation for the budget snub to the CEP. In the end, IFES gave me the equivalent of four months salary, having worked for them less than two months. The UN consultant, who was renting rooms from me, Ralph Haag, was also let go, and CEP President Sabalat also wanted Pharaon to be fired. Only the intervention of Marc Antoine Noel, another CEP member, prevented this by telling Sabalat that Pharaon was the top Haitian official and was essential to the process.

For the remainder of the elections process, I stayed at home and met with Adams and Kashkett on a weekly basis. The council received no new U.S. funds. Ironically, I received daily visits from election officials and civil society leaders at my home, wanting guidance on the process. This included the operations manager, computer systems suppliers, and members of the Haitian Business Council.

31. IFES Haitian Election Project Final Report, p. 5.

32. *Ibid.*

Some time after my dismissal, I was invited to a friendly lunch at the French ambassador's residence. France had just announced it was providing a \$2 million contribution to the CEP.³³ Over lunch, I told the ambassador that a good portion of his country's contribution would be absconded by CEP members. He was not surprised.

Shortly thereafter, a terrorist bombing caused a few casualties following the final rally of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the CEP announced that a delay in holding elections would place Election Day on 7 December 1990.³⁴ Most technicians were dumbfounded as they saw no technical reasons for this delay.

During one of my weekly visits to the U.S. embassy, Kashkett asked me my estimate of who would win the presidential elections. After some reflection, I responded that former Priest Jean Bertrand Aristide would win with at least 60 percent of the vote.³⁵ I also told him that without massive donor support, I gave Aristide a maximum of six months in power.³⁶

Having devoted most of my year to the election process, I was suddenly called to Canada as my father was taken quite ill. I left immediately and returned after my father was out of danger, ironically one week after the first round of elections was over.

A New Hope

Inauguration Day, 7 February 1991, was a regal affair. Aristide held a fiery speech in which he called for the elite to assist in the building of a nation that had been divided for too long. In an apparent snub to the previous administration, he received the presidential sash from a peasant woman and not from former President Trouillot.³⁷

With Aristide firmly in power, strong support for the fledgling democracy was essential. Too many of the previous regimes had gone the dictatorial route, so safeguards needed to be established. Therefore, institutions such as the Supreme Court and the auditor general positions were key.

What happened in the early days was unfortunate. First, Aristide named several of the key CEP directors to lush positions in the Diplomatic Corps.³⁸ For some, such as Emmanuel Ambroise, named ambassador to Canada, it seemed a just reward after a lifetime of public service. To others, such as CEP President Sabalat, named ambassador to France, it seemed like a reward for service rendered to Aristide's party. In order to forestall protest objections, all ambassadorial posts were presented to the Senate as a group.

During this time, I was working with several engineers on a realistic plan for ED'H. One of these engineers was also a member of the Haitian Communist Party led by René Théodore. During one of our work sessions, the party leader and a senator joined us for a discussion. I mentioned to the senator that the ambassadorial nominations seemed premature, as some of the candidates had yet to receive their "clearance" from the auditor general's office. He agreed and brought this objection to the senate, causing some consternation in the nomination process. Defiantly, Aristide withdrew Sabalat's name from the ambassadorial position³⁹ and two weeks later named him minister of foreign affairs in his cabinet. This upset the balance of power and led to protests. Recalcitrant factions called for cool heads to prevail, but Aristide increased the tone of his rhetoric using the "Pere Lebrun" or tire collar approach to all opponents. This practice of burning opponents alive had first surfaced during the uprising that led to Duvalier's demise four years earlier.

33. National Democratic Institute. "The 1990 General Elections in Haiti," p. 36.

34. Henry F. Carey. "Electoral Observation and Democratization in Haiti," in Kevin Middlebrook (ed.), *Electoral Observation and Democratic Transitions in Latin America* (San Diego: Center for US-Mexican Studies, 1998), pp. 143-66.

35. Donald C.F. Daniel, Bradd C. Hayes, with Chantal de Jonge Oudraat. *The Coercive Inducement and the Containment of International Crises* (1999), p. 151.

36. Amy Wilentz, "Return to the Darkest Days, Human Rights in Haiti after the Coup," p. 1.

37. Transfer of Presidential Sash by Peasant Woman to Aristide.

38. Henry F. Carey, "Electoral Observation and Democratization in Haiti," CEP officials named to diplomatic posts, note 19.

39. *Ibid.*

In short order, Aristide was removed from power in a seeming bloodless coup on 30 September 1991.⁴⁰ A Military Junta led by General Raoul Cédras took power and established martial law. This was to last some four years and many sympathizers of Aristide were murdered and tortured.

Democracy Enhancement

During this time, USAID wanted to reinforce the civil society checks and balances on the Aristide regime and financed the Democracy Enhancement Project to foster dialogue and train people from all walks of life in the rule of law and political advocacy. Led by America's Development Foundation,⁴¹ over four years they trained a large number of civil society members to be vocally and substantially critical of any untoward actions by members of the government or elected officials. I was chosen as the financial director and served until the project's end in 1995. The DEP was to start its operation on 1 October 1991. Among the DEP's main critics was the military junta that saw the presence of this project as an unwanted impediment to its free rule of the country. The junta had to be warned several times that the DEP was not to be disturbed. As the project had yet to formally start operations, the principal staff of the project were quietly evacuated to the U.S. This was to last for five months, and when operations started in earnest, the first project was the establishment and support of a volunteer human rights legal aid. Named L'Amicale des Juristes⁴² and led by Rene Julien and Camille Leblanc, it defended people in cases of arbitrary arrest and was quite successful over time. Also supported was the Centre Eocumenique des Droits de l'Homme (CEDH) led by Jean Claude Bajoux, a former priest, and Micha Gaillard, the son of a prominent intellectual writer. A training program was set up to educate a vast number of people from all walks of life in the principles of democracy and political advocacy. During the project's four-year duration, a Federation of Municipalities was supported and established. This federation was the brainchild of Evans Paul, the mayor of Port-au-Prince. During this time, I lost several friends and colleagues who collaborated with the DEP on various attacks from police and paramilitary groups.

In 1994, a group of mediators led by Jimmy Carter and General Colin Powell,⁴³ assisted by Robert Pastor, negotiated the peaceful surrender of the military junta. Although I was briefed on the meetings by a participant in the talks, I do not feel comfortable in relaying the details of these talks. The gist was that the junta surrendered several days after and were led into exile.

New Elections

In order to assure the smooth re-integration of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President Bill Clinton was present during Aristide's return. Members of the DEP project adapted with some difficulty to the new reality, as we had been under high stress and tension for the four previous years. Ironically, there was an incident when the U.S. military in charge of re-establishing main utilities in Haiti gave a briefing at USAID.⁴⁴ I was stunned by the in-depth knowledge of ED'H that the presenting officer professed. After the briefing, the head of the Democracy Office at USAID confided that she had given the officer my Utility Status Report prepared four years earlier.

The main order of the day was organizing the elections less than one year after the "re-establishment of democracy." Although Aristide argued that he should be allowed to complete

40. Amy Wilentz, *Return to the Darkest Days: Human Rights in Haiti after the Coup*, p. 1.

41. www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/America's_Development_Foundation.

42. <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/100945/vers-la-re-lance-des-activites-de-lamicale-des-juristes>.

43. www.nytimes.com/1994/09/17/us/showdown-with-haiti-overview-holding-off-clinton-sends-carter-nunn-powell-talk.html.

44. www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1996/op-restore-democracy_uphold.htm.

a five-year mandate, in country, national and international officials and observers retorted that he had been recognized as the legitimate president of Haiti during the years in exile.

The DEP was contacted by the Carter Center to provide technical assistance to its “Mission to Haiti” in June 1995.⁴⁵ The mission consisted only of Carter Centre Administrative Director Robert Pastor so our assistance was welcomed. Being the only member of the DEP with electoral experience, I was dispatched to assist Pastor. The weekend was a whirlwind of eighteen–twenty hour days. As the Pastor Report speaks for itself, I will endeavour to highlight only a few of the main points. On election day, we split up the voting place assignments between us. The day of the election went well and vote tallies were quite orderly. However, around 10:00 p.m., we received a call that something untoward was happening at the Port-au-Prince regional office. Pastor and I immediately left for the office and witnessed strange behavior. Although a senior CEP member was escorting us through the office, we observed CEP staff marking up formerly blank ballots. This behavior was noted throughout the building. As we were not allowed to take pictures, we mentally noted the actions. After nearly one hour, we returned to Pastor’s hotel where he proceeded to call U.S. Observation Mission Chief Mark Schneider, bureau chief of the Latin America and Caribbean office at USAID in Washington at 3:00 a.m. The intervention had little impact on U.S. acknowledgement of the success of the elections. The next day, as an additional intervention, Pastor met at 9:00 a.m. with Aristide where he conveyed the substance of our observations. During Pastor’s meeting with Aristide, I waited patiently in the outer office and dozed off from a lack of sleep. The Carter Center report was published shortly thereafter⁴⁶ to sharp criticism from the Clinton administration.

Going Forward

The DEP was wrapped up in the next year and was succeeded by a follow project with entirely new personnel. In August 1996, I was struck with an unusual bug that resulted from coffee poisoning and hospitalized me for nearly one week. It was after that when I noticed a job posting for the elections coordinator position at USAID. As I saw the posting some four hours prior to the closing date, I immediately prepared my job application. After several weeks, I was called to a job interview at USAID. From my previous experience with elections, I was successful in obtaining the job. However, I received a strange warning during the interview. I was told to refrain from any contact with the Carter Center or Pastor if I was successful in obtaining the position.

My two-year stint at USAID went quite well, managing grants given to the U.S. National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and IFES. Although an official protest was filed by IFES against my appointment, due to my firing by IFES some six years earlier, I started my appointment in September 1996. I reiterated my impartiality to IFES President Richard Soudriette during one of his visits to Haiti. The organizations proved quite capable and were generally very receptive to my comments and suggestions. Being familiar with the staff involved from previous work, we engaged in substantially productive elections work during the 1997 legislative elections. I also represented USAID Haiti at the Washington presentation of a new book on elections in post-conflict democracies.⁴⁷

One ugly incident that happened during a weekly project meeting was when the representative of IRI openly accused the representative of NDI of sleeping with one of Aristide’s close advisors. As a reaction to this accusation, I requested as meeting chair that the comment be retracted. As the IRI staffer refused, I withdrew from the meeting along with my USAID colleague and immediately reported the incident to the USAID director. She met with the IRI

45. www.cartercenter.org/documents/1248.pdf.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Krishna Kumar (ed.), *Postconflict Elections, Democratization and International Assistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

representative, as well as the regional IRI delegate who had been in Haiti that week. Quite emphatically, she warned IRI to retract the statement and present an apology or risk the grant being terminated. IRI refused. Upon consultation with LAC Director Schneider, the USAID director was told to drop the issue, as the political fallout from the U.S. could be worse than the incident. Shortly thereafter, my contract with USAID was not renewed.

Renewed Hope

As a new legislative and presidential election was planned for 1999, I was contracted to establish a budget for the upcoming elections by IFES, which I prepared according to input from IFES staffers. This was reviewed and accepted by IFES headquarters.

I was soon contacted by my colleague and friend Luciano Pharaon to assist in setting up an operations team for the upcoming elections. Infighting in the CEP, again reformulated in 1999, led to delays in planning an organizing the elections. Early in 2000, we had all the necessary structure and resources to start the process. First was the candidate and voter registration. For some reason, IFES staff were reticent to share the contents and quantity of voter registration materials with the operations team. Since I had consulted in 1999 with a local computer company to develop an innovative and thoroughly modern national ID and voter registration system, IFES may have expected me to torpedo their rudimentary voter registration system.

As registration approached, the materials finally arrived in Haiti and quantities were revealed.⁴⁸ I compared the estimates of the voting population in 1999 with the 1997 figures, and I noted the numbers were unchanged. In my previous elections consulting work in 1990, I had scrupulously analyzed the correlation of population to voting population and had established relevant aging of the population. As Haiti's population was quite young, the number of voters attaining voter registration at age of eighteen was quite high. According to my 2000 calculations, this resulted in a voter population that had been underestimated by close to 600,000 or nearly 20 percent by the IFES staffer. This registration system was new and included pictures of the voters, many civil society observers were sceptical of the feasibility of the new system. I was quite aware of this and tried to convey the risks associated with the lack of registration materials. The operation manager quickly saw the downside and joined in getting the CEP to react. However, the registration period was quite near, and I sensed the entire elections process could be compromised. Also during this period, the administrative director of the CEP allowed my contract to lapse.

Career Gamble

Feeling free as a concerned elections expert, I thought of a way to push the registration issue. In the previous DEP, I had contact and credibility with the Haitian Association of Journalists, to whom the project had given a small technical grant. I called one of my journalist friends and told him I would be holding a press conference in two days on a sensitive subject regarding the elections.

The conference was attended by nearly twenty journalists. I explained the consequences of the lack of registration materials in detail. That noon, the news was a headline including the mention of my initials (JPP), which coincidentally were the same as that of a highly visible and disruptive youth group.

In the meantime, Pharaon had pleaded for my return to work, and the administrative director had agreed to pay me unofficially. I reluctantly returned to work but in a low-key manner. Candidate voting ballots still had to be verified and our first attempt was unsuccessful as too many errors were creeping in. We decided that I would concentrate on the legislative and mayoral ballots. The other staff would vet the local ballots. In all, nearly 1,600 ballots were verified over a two-week period. In all, two ballots were found to be erroneous, compared to over 250 in the 1995 elections.

48. www.oas.org/sap/docs/permanent_council/2000/cp_doc_3383_00_eng.pdf, p. 15.

Through all this, I received a call while vetting ballots. A very polite voice requested whether I would be available for a meeting with President Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis that afternoon. I had no choice but to agree and in a panic move went straight to my apartment for a change to a suit and tie. As usual, I kept my passport in my back pocket in case I was deemed “*persona non grata*” by the officials.

After being driven to the National Palace in the printer’s nondescript SUV, I registered with palace security and was escorted to a second floor waiting room. Waiting nervously, I was fully conscious that I was about to put my entire career’s credibility on the line. After about fifteen minutes, the door opened, I was expecting an assistant to escort me to the president’s office. I was stunned to see President Preval himself greet me and usher me to the next room where Alexis was waiting. The president began by stating that he had heard my press conference and wanted to know more about the issue.⁴⁹

I thanked him and slowly explained the problems I had discovered. After about two hours of discussion, he requested I put the misgivings in writing and deliver the report to him. I thanked him and promised the report would be ready in a few days. Anticipating a firestorm of protest from IFES and other international agencies, the same driver took me to the U.S. embassy where I was greeted by a political attaché whom I had met previously. I explained I had just had a high-level meeting with President Preval and he had asked me to flesh out the issues. She responded that the embassy was aware of my meeting. I detailed the issues and she responded sympathetically. I vowed to give her a confidential copy of my report for embassy use only.

Several days later, I produced a full color report, complete with Haitian Kreyòl citations containing ten recommendations and delivered it personally to the Palace Security office. A secretary came down and took possession.

Several days later Pharaon told me of a Saturday evening meeting with the president to which I was requested to attend. As I had no official status, I was silent throughout the meeting. Attending were IFES, the Organization of American States (OAS) delegation, UN technicians, and several other government officials, including the prime minister and finance minister.

The president slowly read off the ten points in my report, not revealing the source of this document. After each point, participants were invited to share their comments. Although at first IFES was quite dismissive of the report, others including the UN were highly supportive. As the evening was getting late, the president suggested that we convene on Sunday morning for breakfast at the palace to come up with solutions. IFES was the only dissenting party, openly stating that Sunday was their only day off, and they planned to go to the beach—they were quickly shamed by the other parties for being so bold.

On Sunday morning, we were escorted to a brightly lit room for a breakfast that the president proudly proclaimed came from his palace chicken coup. His professional agricultural background shone through. After breakfast, the eager group of attendees quickly came up with solutions to the ten points and promised to provide financing. Only one point, the computerization of voter registers, was dismissed, as it would require nearly \$2 million to complete.

The next day, I was welcomed at the CEP with handshakes and hugs by the very same people who had banished me less than two weeks before. They got word that I had convinced the president to make the changes and mistakenly somehow thought that I was very influential. Election preparation and voter registration would resume some two weeks after IFES had provided the additional materials.

After a clumsy comment about Haitians, the IFES project manager⁵⁰ was declared *persona non grata* and given forty-eight hours to leave the country. In a note addressed to me, she blamed me personally for the expulsion, of which I had no knowledge until two days after the fact.

49. www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti/adviser.htm.

50. *Ibid.*

Boom and Bust

Enthusiasm filled both the CEP and political parties. The legislative election day was to be 21 May. More than 4.2 million voters (60 percent of those registered) voted that day, the highest in Haitian history.⁵¹ Observers lauded the elections preparation and professionalism without precedent. I personally attended about twenty poll closings and saw no flaws. The next morning I was awakened very early and told there were problems downtown. I rushed downtown and upon arrival at the CEP offices was flabbergasted by the sight of thousands of ballots strewn in the street in front of the CEP office. I was so shocked that I locked myself out of the pickup truck I was driving. I immediately tried to find out what had transpired. Before I could get my bearings, I had a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation microphone stuck in my face. After assurances from CEP officials, I stated that the ballots had already been counted, tally sheets certified, and staff had mistakenly thrown them out on the street instead of storing them in the warehouse. I stated that in the worse case, only elections in Port-au-Prince would have to be redone. I was subjected two other interviews by the Associated Press later on that day.⁵²

My CBC interview, including comments on redoing elections in Port-au-Prince was broadcast, after editing, that evening. I received a call from a presidential aide who was furious at what I had allegedly said. I vowed to get the original tape from CBC staff, which I did two days later and was vindicated.

More turmoil was to ensue shortly after. I had prepared tally sheets for all senatorial elections, leaving the others to other staffers. The sheets included the name of all candidates. Upon discussing with a CEP colleague, he remarked that my sheets were erroneous, only the top four candidates' results were to be tallied. I protested and was quickly drowned out. Sensing manipulation, I left in a huff and gave my resignation.

Having obtained all senatorial results, I completed the sheets privately with all candidates and leaked these to the Haiti Democracy Project in Washington.⁵³ They never found out who had sent these.

I received a surprise visit at my unofficial office on Delmas Street one day. Along with my long-time confidant and friend was a distinguished visitor, Orlando Marville,⁵⁴ head of the OAS delegation to Haiti. We discussed the situation and the upcoming boycott of the results by the opposition parties, the U.S., Canada, the OAS, and the UN. The OAS and the UN concluded that former President Aristide persuaded or forced President Preval to only count the top four positions in the Senate election, thereby excluding about a quarter or a third of the Haitian electorate. Aristide pursued the technique of many illiberal democracies, to obtain a super majority in the Senate to facilitate constitutional amendments and protect the elected ruling party leaders from losing their criminal immunity. I remarked that only nine election seats were disputed and that close to 1,600 people had been elected on 21 May among the five levels of elections in Haiti's hyper-federal system. It would be a shame to nullify what had been the best election in Haitian history and, instead, should have only led to those nine Senate seats to be recounted with the ballots that Preval and Aristide had ordered not be counted. The crisis led the mounting protests that would lead to Aristide's exile in four years at the end of what would be his four-year term.

I made plans to take a long vacation. In Miami, I rented a convertible and relaxed for a few days. Finding it agreeable, I sought to buy an older convertible and was soon headed to Canada. The summer of 2000 was the best on record in Canada, going sixty full days with no rain.

51. www.counterpunch.org/2004/10/11/the-untold-story-of-aristide-s-departure-from-haiti/.

52. Jean Paul Poirier, Haiti. Associated Press and CBC.

53. Haiti Democracy Project, "Results 1990," www.haitipolicy.org.

54. www.oas.org/sap/docs/permanent_council/2000/cp_doc_3383_00_eng.pdf.

Financial Woes

In August, I was contacted by Pharaon, who requested that I rejoin the CEP in Haiti. I initially refused, feeling betrayed by the Senate kaffuffle. However, the financial pressure was mounting, and I later agreed to give technical assistance from Canada. I prepared the polling stations lists for the presidential elections and sent them by e-mail. I was duly paid by wire transfer. Requesting my presence in Haiti, Pharaon insisted the administrative director⁵⁵ would pay me full international rate for my work in the presidential elections. I agreed to return to Haiti the next week. My invoicing was defined on deliverables, and work proceeded accordingly without a hitch. In late October, all work was completed, and I sent in my final invoice. This was disputed by the administrative manager. I waited for the presidential elections and expected Aristide to win yet again and expecting him to be a worse president the second time, I made plans to leave Haiti forever.

I requested that Pharaon drive me to the airport and bid farewell to Haiti, after thirteen long and memorable years. My outstanding invoices were his to collect. I said farewell to no one else. That led to speculation among acquaintances that something untoward had happened. I reassured a long-time friend and colleague Micha Gaillard that I was fed up and wished to relax with my parents in Canada.

Prologue

In February 2001, I was contacted by Stanley Lucas of the International Republican Institute (IRI, of the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy), who invited me to Washington for a meeting of opposition parties to discuss the prerequisites for an acceptance of the disputed May elections in Haiti.⁵⁶ At the same time, I was contacted by Pharaon asking advice on how to solve the quagmire. I sent him a list of eight points that would be required to solve the issue.⁵⁷

Misjudging the distance, I spent twenty-two of the next twenty-fours driving to Washington, arriving two hours before the meeting. I gave verbal advice and after the two-hour meeting drove back to Canada. The gospel truth. I was later quite satisfied that the agreement reached in Haiti included six of the eight points in my submittal to Pharaon.

55. www.oas.org/xxxiiga/francais/documentos/rapport_haiti.htm.

56. Lucas was implicated in The New York Times in the successful effort in 2004, by advising former military in their armed rebellion against Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

57. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/.../haiti-oas-election-runoff.



