

transition process particularly difficult. It proved inevitable that there would be a conflict between dealing with these calls for reform and the implicit "mission" of the National Governing Council which was widely seen as being the child of the collapsed dictatorship.

From April 1986 onwards the National Governing Council (CNG) – which for all practical purposes is indistinguishable from the Army – retained the political initiative. After an abortive attempt to achieve a political comeback in November 1986, supporters of Duvalier found themselves politically outlawed by Article 291 of the new Constitution, introduced in 1987.

As for the new forces, these covered a wide range, from the traditional political class which had regrouped, to a nebulous conglomerate of organizations and small groups comprising the popular democratic movement. In the case of the former, they were not really political parties rooted in national life but at best an agglomeration of various platforms, generally at the centre or centre-right of the political spectrum, serving mostly as vehicles for the political aspirations of various contenders for office.

The main features of the popular movements were their fragmentation and absence of a central focus. This despite the fact that they were the ideological polar opposites of the Governing Council and the Duvalieriste rear-guard. From these popular movements would emerge the Group of 57 and later, in the autumn 1987, the National Front for Concerted Action (FNC).

On the margins of this game, which had become particularly lively by June 1987, the Catholic Church sometimes encouraged action and sometimes temporized. Through the Conference of Bishops it adopted positions, interpreted the situation to its followers and tried to intervene, but it did not always speak with a united voice. The unions also, particularly CATH (central autonomous union for Haitian workers), would come to play a very active role, though not always a well-advised one, in the political in-fighting with the Governing Council. Another factor in the situation was the influence,

both direct and indirect, which the United States exercised in order to channel the transition process according to its own best interests.

DESPITE ALL THIS ACTIVITY, AFTER the plebiscite on the Constitution of 29 March 1987, the action focussed on the organization of general elections by the Provisional Electoral Council (Conseil Electoral Provisoire or CEP), as laid down by the new constitution. Various incidents set the Provisional Electoral Council and the National Governing Council at odds with each other. After the latter had given in to the Electoral Council's proposal concerning the electoral law – quite a reverse for the CNG – the confrontation between the two entered its last phase, with devastating political and human results: the cancellation of the November elections and the deliberate massacre of electors in the voting booths in Port-au-Prince.

The "elections" which followed on 17 January 1988 under the auspices of a new Electoral council and under the control of the Governing Council conformed to the earlier pattern. Nonetheless, they did at least have the merit of giving rise to new alignments among the forces that had emerged in the transition period. Thus a Committee for Democratic Understanding brought together the leaders of the centre and the centre-right as well as the National Front for Concerted Action. Likewise, a "Manifesto for democracy after the massacre of 29 November" was signed by a variety of groups including Catholic and Protestant religious organizations, unions

representing both workers and peasants, as well as professional associations. This manifesto – which termed the results of the 17 January elections null and void – marked a new solidarity among the opposition forces.

TODAY, MORE THAN FIVE MONTHS after the installation of President Leslie Manigat (he received thirty-four percent of the votes cast on 17 January), what are the chances for democracy in Haiti? First of all it seems clear that in taking what he himself has called the "calculated risk" of playing ball with the Governing Council, in other words with the Armed Forces, Manigat is playing to win, to the considerable dismay of his opponents who thought they enjoyed the support of key figures in Armed Forces. And he has had to make various compromises and concessions which sooner or later will catch up with him.

On the other hand, Leslie Manigat must have proved a great help to the Armed Forces in helping them escape from the political deadlock of 29 November, especially since the United States – which was no doubt caught unaware by the unexpected magnitude of the disaster – was attracted by the idea of some solution other than that of a Governing Council led by General Namphy. Indeed, compared to his pro-CNG rivals, Manigat has the double advantage of benefitting from valuable international support (the Christian Democrat International and the Socialist International) and of having shown himself sympathetic to those Haitians who had been "led on" by Duvalier.

And what of Haiti's international relations? Some countries such as France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and Venezuela have essentially accepted the *fait accompli* of Manigat's accession to power. Canada may follow suit in the wake of a report presented to Parliament in late April by M.P. Jean-Guy Hudon.* The US continues to adopt a position of wait and see, while refraining from applying new economic sanctions against Haiti.

Last but not least are the people whose basic demands will be the real test of any progress towards democracy in Haiti. Is there anything new which can be said to the poor to win back their confidence and attract their support?

Manigat has begun a series of televised talks – *Koze anba tonel* (essentially fire-side chats) – which are exercises in truth telling. Having failed to be elected by a clear popular majority, the president of 17 January 1988 is trying to attain a *de facto* legitimacy in order to enhance his constitutional and executive powers.

Leslie Manigat seems sufficiently sure of himself to have stated recently that he intends to serve his complete term of office, "Not a day more, not a day less." Whether he can do so remains to be seen, given the precarious balance of forces of which he was the main beneficiary. The best test of whether he can survive, and for how long, is still whether he can satisfy the basic demands of the poor. It would be one of the strange ironies of history if he succeeds in doing this thanks to the 17 January end-run which the army took around the Haitian constitution. □

*Report of the Parliamentary Group on Haiti, Jean-Guy Hudon, M.P. – Chairman, Ottawa, April 1988.

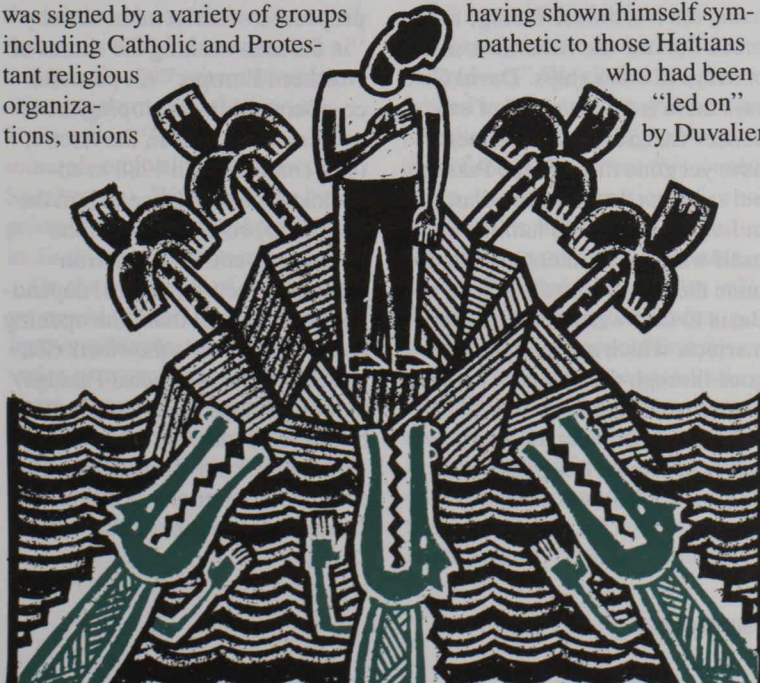
Further Reading

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Cary Hector, "Du 7 février 1986 au 7 février 1988 : *quo vadis* Haiti?," *Collectif Paroles*, Revue culturelle et politiques haïtienne, Montreal, no. 33, January 1987.

Caroline Jarry, "Le mouvement populaire haïtien. L'exigence de la démocratie," *Mouvements*, Montreal, vol. 4, no 5, May-June 1987.

(Translation by Mary Taylor and Michael Bryans)



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