

Haiti election called a fraud

By Melynda Jarratt

Five days after condemning the results of Haiti's first free elections in 30 years, the Canadian government is still divided over whether it should cut foreign aid to that country.

In Ottawa, Minister for External Affairs Joe Clark called the election a "miscarriage of the electoral process" while in

Haiti, Opposition leaders have labelled it a "fraud" and have welcomed Canada's pledge to review its ties with the tiny Caribbean country which is the poorest in the Western hemisphere.

The election, which independent observers say was littered with hundreds of irregularities, saw an estimated 10% of the 2.6 million eligible

voters cast their ballots. In contrast, opposition leader Mark Bazin, a centrist candidate who withdrew from the election because he believed that the outcome was predetermined, estimates that only 5% to 7% of the population turned out to vote.

Bazin said immediately after the election that the potential for future problems in his country is high. "The level of misery here is such that if you add the disappointment that the people had after the aborted November 29th election to the charade of Sunday's election, you have all the ingredients for tension, chaos, and social troubles."

On November 29th the planned election was cancelled after 34 people were killed when they tried to cast their votes. Their deaths have been linked to the shadowy Tonton Macoutes - the secret police under the former dictator Jean Claude Duvalier.

Meanwhile, in Port-au-Prince thousands of people began returning to the capital after fleeing for the safety of the countryside last weekend. Their absence, and the calls for a boycott of the election by opposition candidates have been blamed for the low voter turnout.

Nevertheless Leslie Manigat considered to be one of the leading presidential candidates, contends that despite some "irregularities," Sunday's election was legitimate. Manigat, a political-scientist and pro-military candidate who is expected to win when the results of the election are released, dispelled international cries of fraud. "This is to be expected when a country holds an election like this for the first time."

If Canada cuts assistance to Haiti, some important social programs could be finished.

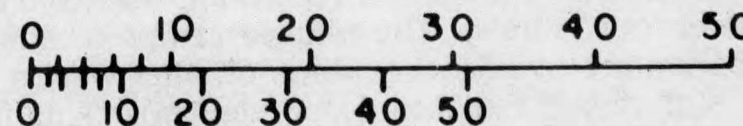
Canadian commitment to Haiti comes mostly in the form of developmental assistance such as Mission Alpha - a literacy program which has received nearly 3 million dollars. According to Mission leader Franklin Midy, a former professor at the University of Quebec, nearly 5 million of Haiti's 6 million citizens are illiterate. His program teaches basic reading skills to adults and it could be axed if Canada cuts assistance to that country.

Outspoken leaders such as Jean-Jacques Honarat,



This university extension has been hailed by Haitian officials as Canada's most successful education project.

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spokesman for a civil-rights group welcomed with joy Canada's condemnation of Sunday's election. He called on Canada to end all assistance to his country - including humanitarian aid through social organizations - which he said suffer from government interference anyway.

Many who run assistance programs are in hiding, he explained, and Midy admits that some of his own people have been arrested by the army for allegedly encouraging peasants not to vote.

"We are supposed to be starting a new term this

month," Midy said, "but ... we have to wait until the tension comes down a little bit."

The Canadian government has in the past helped generously to build Haiti's fragile democracy; social programs such as Midy's Mission Alpha represent only a small part of the nearly \$15 million earmarked for developmental assistance this year. Joe Clark's commitment to help the Haitian people despite Canada's disappointment with this election is a significant indication of this country's role in Haiti's future affairs.

Get rid of stereotypes, says Soviet writer

by DMITRY FONICHKIN, Novosti Press Agency

People perceive the world as populated by "one's own kind" and "aliens". And science tells us this helps them realize their identity, both personal and national.

It is neither necessary or possible to destroy this phenomenon. Images and stereotypes will persist. But we must fight narrow negative stereotypes, which present a warped picture of reality and insult particular nations.

The Soviet and American nations treat other's peoples differently. The image of America in the Soviet mind does not viciously misrepresent Americans, their national traits or customs. Our idea of that country is not insulting for Americans' national pride and dignity, though we do not conceal our disapproval of the US social system and the ruling elite's policy. Soviet people treat Americans, as a people, with friendly respect -- even though cartoons of Uncle Sam appearing in our press are sometimes unwitty, disrespectful and badly drawn.

US and other Western propaganda networks, on the other hand, disseminate a negative image of the Russian nation. It is often seen as a gloomy and aggressive enemy of liberty. So many people in the West are wary of Russians.

Even in this stage of mass communications and globe-trotting most people do not maintain personal contacts with people of other nations. They draw their ideas of other countries and nations from the media. But first-hand information, through direct human contacts, is vital. "It's better to see once than to hear a hundred times," the saying goes. It is just as vital to disseminate and receive broad, unbiased information about other nations' customs and life-styles.

But information alone will not fight down negative stereotypes. We can't do away with cliches in one fell swoop, even when we overcome cultural differences shaped in the past. The social factor is prominent in forming the image of another country or nation. Nations and other groups of people see "aliens" through the prism of class and social interests, and of social patterns predominant at home and in multi-ethnic countries.

As humanity entered the nuclear age though, a new barrier to wars arose. International strife and conflicts are much more dangerous now as they can trigger off a global disaster. Peaceful coexistence is imperative. Even if social patterns remain diverse nations now have greater opportunities - and an overwhelming reason - to overcome alienation and negative ideas of each other.

A mighty impetus to destroy society's barriers now exists. Ever-widening circles in the world realize that global survival is at stake. By "our own kind", we more and more often mean the human race as a whole. "Us" must no longer be opposed to "them". When we refer to "them", we should no longer feel enmity and alienation. Let us offer "them" coexistence and cooperation.

It is high time to do away with stale stereotypes, and replace the enemy image with that of friendly partner.

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