

FDR, not Obama: Bring Back Haiti's 'Valleys of Hope'

by Cynthia R. Rush

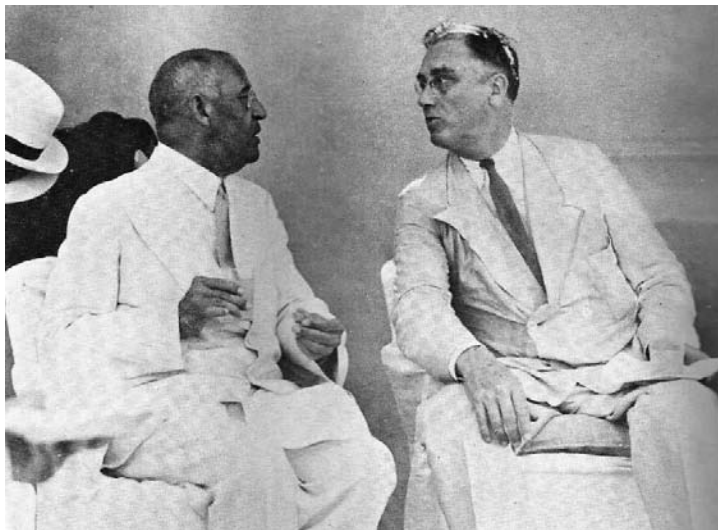
Oct. 12—In March of 1939, Robert Fechner, then head of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), sent a memo to President Franklin Roosevelt, suggesting that the Administration work with Haiti to devise a soil and forest conservation program. In his April 4, 1939 reply, Roosevelt welcomed Fechner's proposal, and asked that he speak with Agriculture Secretary Henry Wallace and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, "on the possibility of somehow helping the Haitian government to establish ten CCC camps under American direction."

These camps are necessary, FDR explained, for "(a) the improvement of roads and trails; (b) the elimination of soil erosion; (c) the encouragement of irrigation; (d) experiments in diversification of agriculture."

President Roosevelt's response was typical of his approach toward Haiti under his Good Neighbor Policy. Dating back to July 5, 1934, when he announced the end of the U.S. Marines' 19-year occupation of Haiti, Roosevelt had always shown a special interest in this very poor nation. In fact, he made that announcement from the city of Cap-Haitien—the first American President ever to set foot on Haitian soil. He would visit Haiti a second time before his death in April of 1945.

In his Oct. 14, 1943 toast to Haitian President Elie Lescot, during the latter's state visit to Washington, Roosevelt said that "when I die, I think that 'Haiti' is going to be written on my heart, because for all these years, I have had the most intense interest in the Republic of Haiti, and the development of its people in a way that *will never mean exploitation by any other Nation*. They ought to develop for themselves, and they have every opportunity in the world to do so."

The Artibonite Valley Agriculture Program was one of the projects Roosevelt promoted for Haiti, to ensure that its economic development, free from foreign interference, became a reality. It was often referred to as a



President Franklin Roosevelt, shown here in Cap-Haitien in July 1934, with Haitian President Sténio Vincent, took a special interest in that impoverished nation, approaching the country under the rubric of his Good Neighbor Policy.

smaller version of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and viewed as a powerful economic driver for the whole country.

Contrast this to narcissist Barack Obama's sadistic "let them die" policies, which have, in the ten months since the Jan. 12 earthquake that killed an estimated 300,000 people, and plunged the majority of Haiti's people into a Dark Ages hell, where survival is a daily struggle.

Immediately following the deadly earthquake, Obama was presented with the option of adopting the measures proposed by economist Lyndon LaRouche, which included deploying the Army Corps of Engineers to assist in an emergency evacuation to higher ground of the almost 2 million people left homeless in the capital of Port-au-Prince; the creation of CCC-style projects to employ and train Haitian and U.S. youth to aid in reconstruction; and the signing of a 25-year bilateral agreement between the Haitian and U.S. governments, whereby the U.S. would take primary responsibility for

ensuring Haiti's development, while respecting its sovereignty.

"Nero" Obama rejected these measures and instead handed Haiti's rebuilding efforts over to the army of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private contractor-profiteers which have overrun the country, with disastrous results. While NGOs fight with each other over foreign aid funds, of which the Haitian government sees none, 1.3 million homeless people *still* live in temporary camps in Port-au-Prince, barely eking out an existence. Most free food and bottled water distribution ended in March and April, justified by the NGOs' specious argument that providing life-saving necessities "fosters dependency."

As journalist Bill Quigley aptly headlined his article in *Truthout* Oct. 11, "nine months after the quake—a million Haitians slowly dying." Haiti today "looks like the quake could have been last month."

Hence the urgency of removing Obama from office. Every day that he remains there, moves Haiti one day closer to national extinction.

A 'Valley of Hope'

The Roosevelt Administration's optimistic view of how the Artibonite Valley could be developed, is found in the January 1952 report entitled, "Report on the Proposed Artibonite Valley Project of Haiti," published by the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA), based in Turrialba, Costa Rica. The IICA was founded in 1942, by Henry A. Wallace, as Vice President. The 1952 report evaluated the proposal made several years earlier to build the Péligre dam and hydroelectric project on the Artibonite River and develop the valley through which the river ran.

When the Péligre dam construction got underway in 1953, observers referred to the project's location as the "Valley of Hope," because of the enthusiasm it generated among local residents, and its potential for creating jobs, expanding food and other commodity production, controlling floods and soil erosion, and raising living standards through an expanding tax base. *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews wrote, in an article



FDR's Agriculture Secretary, and later, Vice President, Henry Wallace, was tasked to work with Haiti, to develop CCC-style camps there. Wallace was also involved in the development of plans to construct the Artibonite Valley Project. Wallace is shown here (center, left), with students and professors at the University of São Paulo, Brazil.

published in the March 10, 1953 edition, that "a stranger cannot help being caught up by the enthusiasm of the valley people and the great promise of its project.... The Artibonite Valley project, which is to be the TVA of Haiti, and much the most important development of its kind in the history of this poor country, is off to a good start."

Haitian engineer Raoul St. Lo, a member of the Haitian government's Artibonite Valley Development Authority (ODVA), who had been involved in planning the project for the previous 20 years, told Matthews that there had never been enough water for half the river valley, as there was no rain for five months out of the year. But when it did rain, "the slope of land is such that disastrous floods occur." In 1953, he explained, "the income of a family of five in the valley runs around \$75 to \$100 a year."

Under FDR's first administration, the Army Corps of Engineers designed the plan for the Péligre dam, and the IICA report showed that the dam's construction could improve the Haitian economy and living standards of its people. Cheap electricity generated by the hydroelectric project would be essential for fostering the creation of small industries in Haiti, as well, the IICA argued. "Even with the dissemination of technical knowledge and the execution of great works of land reclamation, the people

of the country cannot depend solely upon agriculture to reach a satisfactory standard of living,” the IICA asserted. “Industrialization depends largely on readily available sources of energy.”

The development of manufacturing in Haiti is not at all “against our interest,” Roosevelt emphasized in his 1943 toast, “because there are a great many things that we can make that they can’t make, and there are lots of things that they can make that we can’t make. That forms the basis of trade. . . .”

The report points to fertilizer production and textiles as two potential industries to be developed in Haiti.

It never suggests, as today’s green fascists do, that Haitians must accept a fixed, primitive technology, “appropriate” to their backward economy. Instead, in his letter of transmittal to the ODVA, for which the report was written, IICA director Dr. Ralph Allee explained, quite beautifully, that “modifying the course of nature, and at the same time intervening in the established train of human events is, by its nature, a complex undertaking. However, except for a few basic considerations, most of which have already been made, problem solutions can be taken up as the [Artibonite] project develops.”

‘Haitians Must Be Involved’

The IICA’s primary goal was the *defense of the Haitian people’s welfare*. “The necessity of involving the people of the Valley in the development and operation of the project transcends all other recommendations of the report,” Dr. Allee wrote. The project is of national importance, “as flood control is an obligation of the State, which owes security to its citizens.”

Hence, he continued, “the program becomes one of education, in which the absolute necessity for technical accuracy and administrative soundness is auxiliary to discovering the real desires and needs of the people and assisting them in adapting their behavior to a more optimum use of the rich endowment which nature has given to the Artibonite Valley.”

The report stressed that the project’s economic feasibility would largely depend on the ODVA’s ability to both



UN/Marco Dommino

Only a fraction of the \$10 billion pledged internationally to aid in the reconstruction of Haiti, following the January 2010 earthquake, has materialized. Not one cent of the \$1.15 billion pledged by the U.S. government has been delivered. Haitians are still living in inhuman conditions, as shown in this photo of a makeshift camp in Port-au-Prince.

“improve natural conditions,” and “increase the ability of the people to use these improved resources.” That is, increase “the productive capacity of both land and people.” Education and rural welfare, “including health and social work, should be considered as integral parts of the project and essential to its success,” IICA emphasized.

Education, the report asserted, “is functionally related to all the most important and fundamental aspects of the program. To neglect it is to neglect the program.”

The U.S. Export-Import Bank provided a \$40 million loan for the construction of the Péligré dam, and the IICA predicted that “the potentialities of the valley could be developed to a point that it would not only be able to amortize the loan, but *so increase the prosperity of the country that the Haitians could advance other phases of the economy.*”

While some experts predicted that the project’s effects on the economy would be similar to those the TVA produced for the Tennessee Valley, the IICA argued that “the proportion of the Haitian nation to be affected by the Artibonite development is much greater than that of the TVA,” and thus “the effects also would be much greater.” In fact, the benefits would be international in scope, the report asserted.

“In general, as any one nation improves economically, it aids other nations by increasing the wealth of the

world and by increasing its purchasing power. It shall also be of value as an example for other such projects in Latin America.”

‘We Became Garbage to Them’

Anything less than the approach that FDR took in the 1930s, and which Lyndon LaRouche advocates today with his call for building the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA), guarantees Haiti’s annihilation. As LaRouche explained in his Oct. 6 “LPAC-TV Weekly Report,” the building of NAWAPA would bring about a “wave of development” throughout the Americas, including the Caribbean region. Aside from the emergency measures required to address Haiti’s current disaster, this would mean building a series of urgently needed infrastructure projects, in collaboration with the U.S. and other nations, to ensure that the British Empire and its local hangers-on will never again enslave the precious minds or bodies of Haitian citizens.

Several studies carried out over the Summer, and just recently published, reveal just how urgently this policy is needed.

As of July, 40% of the 1,000 camps for displaced citizens in the capital had no access to water, and 30% lacked toilets of any kind. Prof. Mark Schuler of York College at the City University of New York (CUNY) reported in his survey that the average number of people sharing a toilet in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area is 273! In the 30% of camps with verifiable information that had no toilets at all, Schuler reports, people are forced to urinate and defecate in a plastic container or in an open area.

In the middle of the rainy season, with hurricanes looming, camp residents are “housed” in precarious tents—only an estimated 10% of families living in the camps do have tents—or otherwise use tarps or bed-sheets which can’t possibly protect them from scorching heat, rains, winds, and mudslides. An estimated 14 people have already died from recent violent rainstorms and winds that slammed the country beginning on Sept. 24.

That there haven’t been major outbreaks of cholera or malaria is miraculous; but signs of acute medical problems—chronic infections, malnutrition, hunger, and untreated psychological trauma—are everywhere. Mobile clinics visit camps sporadically. Given the lack



UN/Marco Dommino

When the Péligre Dam construction got underway in 1953, Haitians referred to its location as the “Valley of Hope,” because of its potential for creating jobs, expanding food production, controlling floods and soil erosion, and raising living standards.

of public health and sanitation facilities, and the pitiful supply of clean drinking water, the question is not *if*, but *when* Haiti’s weakened and vulnerable population will be stricken by a medical catastrophe.

Despite the efforts of former President Bill Clinton and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Belerive, who co-chair the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC), only a handful of the nations that pledged a total of \$10 billion at a donors meeting last March, have come through with the funds pledged. Moreover, not a cent of the \$1.15 billion pledged by the U.S. government, has yet materialized. Housing of any kind is almost non-existent in Port-au-Prince, and the few units that are available, labeled as “green” because they are reportedly safe to live in, are prohibitively expensive.

It is estimated that only about 2% of the 25 million cubic yards of debris on the streets has been removed. In recent weeks, landowners began forcibly evicting camp residents, and shutting down the camps on the pretext that they are illegally occupying private property. Those evicted have nowhere to go; yet the bogus issue of Haiti’s chaotic system of documenting land ownership is used as an excuse for not building any emergency housing. This, despite the fact that Haiti’s Civil Code, and the 1921 Decree on the Recognition of Public Interest, grant the State the right to use private property for social and housing purposes—that is, to defend the general welfare.

No wonder the common refrains among the dis-

placed are, “We became garbage to them,” and “We’ve been forgotten.”

Build More Dams!

The Péligre dam’s completion in 1956, which created the Péligre reservoir, and subsequent construction of a hydroelectric generator, provided power to the capital of Port-au-Prince to the southeast, while irrigating the Artibonite Valley to the northeast. It generated a total of 54 MW. As a result of the dam’s construction and the expanded irrigation of the Artibonite District that followed, by the 1970s, the Artibonite Valley region produced 80% of Haiti’s rice across 80,000 acres—there were 100,000 acres in the valley—and had two large state mills, and over 200 smaller mills to collect and clean domestic, American, and Taiwanese varieties of rice.

In subsequent years, lack of funds and equipment for maintenance and dredging of Lake Péligre, along with imposition of London’s globalization and privatization policies, hampered the proper functioning of the hydroelectric generators. Were Haiti’s economic development and protection of its people a priority, all of these problems could be easily addressed.

Nonetheless, several malthusian green organizations

use these and related problems to charge that the project was a giant boondoggle, meant only to benefit greedy foreign looters who were in cahoots with the evil regime of dictator “Papa” Doc Duvalier. The Engineers Without Borders group based at the University of Wisconsin’s Madison campus, labeled the dam “inappropriate” for Haiti, and proposed instead building “micro-hydro plants” that produce power in the range of 5-100 KW.

The most appropriate response to this drivel comes from Max Everett Massac, of the Haitian-American Association of Engineers and Scientists (HAES). In a presentation before the 2009 Haitian Diaspora Unity Conference, Massac described the Péligre dam as “one of the greatest construction feats of Haiti that all Haitians should be proud of, and that the new generation of leaders should seek to emulate.... Its construction spurred much economic activity for the country in the mid-20th century, and the country still benefits economically from it.” Today, Massac stated, there are many “readily accessible technologies, potential projects, and development strategies that can contribute to providing solutions to the water and energy dilemma in Haiti, while simultaneously creating many thousands of jobs and improving the quality of life and of the environment in Haiti.”

Lyndon LaRouche On Glass-Steagall and NAWAPA

The North American
Water and Power Alliance

“The greatest project that mankind has ever undertaken on this planet, as an economic project, now stands before us, as the opportunity which can be set into motion by the United States now launching the NAWAPA project, with the preliminary step of reorganizing the banking system through Glass-Steagall, and then moving on from there.”

“Put Glass-Steagall through now, and I know how to deliver a victory to you.”

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