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# *The G184's Powerbrokers — Apaid and Boulos:* Owners of the Fourth Estate; Leaders of the Fifth Column

By Richard Sanders, editor, *Press for Conversion!*

**A**ndy Apaid and Reginald Boulos may be Haiti's most despised men. Despite this obvious shortcoming, the media—or “fourth estate”—often presented them to the world as Haiti's greatest saviours.

This farce was only possible because most of the country's major media firms are owned by the anti-Aristide elite, including Apaid and Boulos. Apaid, for instance, is the “founder of Tele-Haiti,”<sup>1</sup> the “main cable television network,”<sup>2</sup> while Boulos “owns...the USAID-funded Radio Vision 2000...and *Le Matin*,”<sup>3</sup> which describes itself as “a non-partisan, non-ideological newspaper.”<sup>4</sup> While Haiti's elite-owned media pretends to be neutral, it was instrumental in the political successes of the Group of 184 (G184).

Being two of Haiti's richest white businessmen—the owners of numerous factories and mass media outlets—Apaid and Boulos were poorly suited to representative anything but an exceedingly thin slice of Haiti's population. And yet for years, as leaders and spokesmen for the G184, they presided over a multimillion-dollar coalition “of wealthy individuals, businesses, professional, media, and other associations.”<sup>5</sup> Dominated by the country's biggest corporate entities and funded by foreign governments, the G184 brought together the cream of Haiti's civil society.

Under the guidance of Apaid and Boulos, the G184 successfully pushed the ultraviolent, antidemocratic agenda of Haiti's elite to its logical conclusion—the brutal 2004 coup. Their dream come true was to rid Haiti of its elected government and supplant it with a more business-friendly regime. Because CIDA, and other government agencies from the U.S. and Europe, blessed them with tremendous financial, logistical and diplomatic support, and made their dream a bloody reality, it is worth examining the backgrounds of these two industrial magnates.



**Andy Apaid, Jr.**

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## **Andy Apaid, Jr.**

Although he is widely known as “the founder and the leader of the Group of 184, the political ‘movement’ or association” that was so “ardently opposed to the elected Aristide government,”<sup>6</sup> Apaid is not even a Haitian citizen.<sup>7</sup> But the fact that he was born in the U.S. and holds an American passport is not the least attractive of his qualifications for representing Haiti's largely-destitute, black population. Unlike most Haitians, Apaid is not descended from African slaves. In fact, being of Syrian heritage, he hails from the “large middle eastern segment of the Haitian elite.”<sup>8</sup>

It is not difficult to understand Apaid's virulent hatred of all things Aristide. Advocacy for the poor was not his strongpoint. The Apaid family's business empire—Alpha Industries—is the biggest sweat-shop operator in Haiti, with 15 or 16 garment-assembly plants,<sup>9</sup> where workers sew clothing for such profitable foreign firms as Canada's Gildan Activewear. Since his factories reportedly paid only a paltry, wage-slave salary of as little as “68 cents a day” at the time of the 2004 coup,<sup>10</sup> it was no wonder that Apaid so feverishly opposed Aristide's increases to the minimum wage.

The Apaid empire also includes Alpha Electronics, a components exporter to U.S. war industries like Sperry/Unisys, IBM, Remington and Honeywell for use in radar and sonar.<sup>11</sup>

The family patriarch—André Apaid, Sr., founder of Alpha Sewing in



**Reginald Boulos**

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the 1970s—was “close to dictator ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier.” Apaid Jr. followed “the political footsteps of his father” who had led a so-called

“‘civil society’ campaign to support the 1991-1994 military coup against President Aristide which successfully eased U.S. sanctions on the export of goods from Haiti's assembly sweat-shops.”<sup>12</sup>

Apaid Sr. was “one of the chief lobbyists in the U.S.”<sup>13</sup> for the military junta that ousted Aristide eight months after his first landslide election in 1990.

Despite all this, the National Commission for Haitian Rights—Haiti (see pp.3-32) described Apaid as “the public voice behind” the G184, “as well as its best salesperson.”<sup>14</sup>

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## **Reginald Boulos**

The other most frequently quoted mouthpiece for the G184, was Reginald Boulos. Like Apaid, his credentials would appear to make him less than desirable as a candidate to represent Haiti's populace. For one thing, Boulos—like Apaid—is a multi-millionaire of middle-eastern, not African, heritage. What's more, Pharval Labs—the pharmaceutical company he leads—is infamous throughout Haiti for having sold a poisonous, cough syrup that killed 88 children in 1996 when it was “distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital.”<sup>15</sup> Distributing Pharval's deadly product in poor Port-au-Prince areas was the Caribbean Canadian Chemical Company.<sup>16</sup>

Another incident “victimizing innocent Haitian children and implicating Dr. Reginald Boulos,” occurred in the early 1990s when more than 2,000 babies in Cité Soleil, a dirt-poor Port-au-Prince area, were given an experimental measles vaccine up to “500 times” stronger than “normal.” This “U.S. government test” was conducted by the U.S.-funded Centres pour le Développement et la Santé (CDS), which Boulos then headed.<sup>17</sup> The result was a “higher than expected death rate,” though “how many Haitian babies died as a result” is unknown.<sup>18</sup>

This was not the only time that Boulos’ CDS used the dirt-poor people of Cité Soleil as medical guinea pigs. Many women in this pro-Aristide area “suffered extremely severe side effects”<sup>19</sup> when, “without...informed consent,” CDS used them to test a subdermal contraceptive called Norplant.<sup>20</sup>

Such willingness on the part of this Boulos-led organization to repeatedly sacrifice the health of impoverished Haitians did not prevent him from leading the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one of the most prestigious members of the G184.

In September 2005, Boulos was among a handful of Haitian business and coup-regime officials flown in for a meeting at the government’s Meech Lake resort near Ottawa. These hand-picked Haitians, who Joe Clark described as “really excellent people,”<sup>21</sup> met with a dozen bankers, 15 top CIDA bureaucrats and Foreign Affairs officials, and representatives from agencies funded by the U.S. and Canadian governments. On the agenda were such controversial topics as the privatization of Haiti’s publicly-owned resources.<sup>22</sup>

## Media complicity

One would think that their backgrounds would invalidate Apaid and Boulos from becoming leaders of a supposedly popular, neutral “civil society” organization—like the G184—which loudly proclaimed its neutrality in trying to bridge the political chasm between Haiti’s rich and poor. However, with tremendous hubris, they pushed aside their blatantly obvious, image problems and became—with incredible panache—media darlings for the G184.

This preposterous affront was

only conceivable thanks to wondrous personality makeovers staged by the Haiti’s corporate media and by the G184’s allies abroad. Because they received consistently favourable news coverage, the gulf between their elitist agenda and the will of Haiti’s poor citizenry was maliciously ignored.

The G184’s membership included several large media groups, like the Haitian National Media Association,<sup>23</sup> which brought together “the owners of the largest Haitian commercial media stations in Port-au-Prince” to “combat the dictatorship” of President Aristide.<sup>24</sup> As such, Haiti’s media was never likely to expose the major lies told by this phony grassroots organization. Likewise, with all the complimentary sound bites about the G184 emanating from their cheerleaders, coaches and corporate sponsors in foreign governments, the leadership of Apaid and Boulos was rarely questioned abroad either. If anything, the G184 was constantly being egged on by the media, both at home and abroad, to take their anti-Aristide struggle to its ultimate conclusion.

Indeed, Apaid, Boulos and their cronies in the G184 could never have fanned the flames of class hatred against Haiti’s poor, or set the stage for the 2004 coup, without such unrelenting media support. Whenever they spoke at a G184-sponsored protest or fired off missives denouncing Aristide as an insane dictator, they were sure to garner the most positive media results that money could buy.

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