
Haiti

Crisis remains after Aristide scuttles talks

An all-party conference on Haiti, organized by Haitian Prime Minister Robert Malval and backed by both the Clinton administration and U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was scuttled at the last minute when ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide denounced the effort as a U.S. plot to dump him, and withdrew his support.

The disgusted Malval, who was appointed by Aristide, told the Dec. 20 *New York Times* that Aristide clearly has “a serious ego problem,” and lamented the implications of this latest sabotage for the dying nation of Haiti. “Everything Aristide is doing is meant to preserve his image among Haitians from Miami to New York,” said Malval. “The problem is that [Haiti] is going straight to hell, and one day the myth is just going to collapse.” Malval added that Aristide is “playing with our lives, playing with the future of Haiti.”

The puppet-masters

Aristide’s infamous “ego problems” notwithstanding, he was not acting on his own in sabotaging this latest effort to resolve the Haiti crisis. His strings, in fact, are pulled by what is known as the “Project Democracy” faction in Washington, centered in the policy think-tank the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD). Aristide’s top adviser in Washington is former congressman Michael Barnes, a member of the IAD.

It is the IAD which controls at least four cabinet posts and several other high-level positions inside the Clinton administration, and which is responsible for the disastrous “democracy and free trade” policy hold-over from the Bush administration which has led President Clinton to simultaneously endorse the murderous Aristide and a genocidal trade embargo against impoverished Haiti.

It is also the IAD which insists that Clinton must now take “concrete actions” to create a “Western Hemisphere Community of Democracies,” presumably modeled on the terrorism and mob rule that characterized Aristide’s short-lived rule in Haiti. According to IAD president Peter Hakim, in a Dec. 23 *Christian Science Monitor* commentary, the United States must back “the incipient Organization of American States’ efforts to tackle the thorny problem of civil-military relations in Latin America.”

In Hakim’s view, smashing the Haitian military, whose efforts to preserve their country’s sovereignty against a multinational assault have enraged the globalist “democracy” crowd, is the key to imposing such a “community of democracies” in the Western Hemisphere. Thus, writes Hakim, “It is vital that the U.S. not retreat from its pledge to restore civilian leadership to Haiti, including its expressed willingness to join other nations under U.N. auspices in establishing a military presence in the country” (emphasis added).

A glimmer of sanity

After Aristide pulled the plug on Malval’s all-party conference, there were some hints that the Clinton administration was considering giving up its all-out efforts to restore Aristide. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the White House was even thinking of “abandoning all but a symbolic economic embargo” against Haiti. But the power of the “Project Democracy” crowd should not be underestimated.

On the same day that Hakim’s commentary appeared, Barnes held a news conference in Washington to announce that Aristide might withdraw his backing for the U.S. policy—conceived by Bush and enforced by Clinton—of interdicting and “repatriating” Haitians caught fleeing from the death-camp conditions the trade embargo has created on that island-nation. He added that Aristide has called for a Jan. 15 conference in Miami to replace Malval’s initiative—but from which *the Haitian military would be excluded!* As the *Washington Post* put it, Aristide can still, “with a word, send thousands of Haitians scurrying to build boats and embark for the open seas.”

This blatant blackmail attempt prompted Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) to comment: “Raising the threat and encouraging a mass exodus from Haiti exposes the cynical side of Aristide. Keeping in mind that thousands of lives would be lost, this is not a good indication of Aristide’s commitment to his people.”

Nonetheless, the blackmail appears to be working—at least for the moment. Just before Christmas, the Clinton administration announced that it was joining France, Canada, and Venezuela (the ironically-dubbed “Four Friends” of Haiti) to press for yet tougher sanctions unless the Haitian military moves by Jan. 15 to permit Aristide’s restoration to power. This, despite the recent authoritative study that 1,000 Haitian children are dying *monthly* as a direct consequence of the multinational trade embargo and naval blockade.

Regardless, the Haiti crisis remains as unresolved as ever. Haitians continue to starve to death under the embargo, which is purportedly designed to reinstate Aristide as president. But it is universally acknowledged that nothing short of a U.S.-backed military invasion and long-term occupation of Haiti could put, and keep, the terrorist Aristide in power—which is a policy option that Clinton has so far wisely rejected.