

Pettigrew Met with Coup's "Political Mastermind"

By Richard Sanders

Paul Arcelin, a Haitian who lived in Canada for many years and taught at the Université du Québec à Montréal in the 1960s¹, played a central role in planning, carrying out and promoting Haiti's 2004 coup. On February 5, 2004, the very day that Arcelin's rebel colleagues began their coup-sparking assault on Haiti, burning down police stations and killing supporters of President Aristide, Arcelin was representing their cause in a one-on-one meeting with Liberal cabinet minister, Pierre Pettigrew.

The media described Arcelin as "political mastermind"² or "architect"³ of the coup, and as "political advisor"⁴ or "political lieutenant"⁵ to rebel commander, Guy Philippe. Arcelin fawned adoringly over him, saying he was "brilliant" and "the star" of the coup, which he called "Guy's show."⁶

Describing his own role, Arcelin said "I'm head of the political arm of the rebels."⁷ One of his main roles as "political spokesman"⁸ was PR. In his many media interviews Arcelin described, acceptably as possible, the political views of the murderous band of former military, police and death squad leaders who headed the rebel army.

So, what was Pettigrew doing with the rebels' political envoy? "I explained the reality of Haiti to him," said Arcelin, and Pettigrew "promised to make a report to the Canadian government about what I had said."⁹

As Foreign Minister, Pettigrew was an unabashed apologist for Haiti's brutal, illegally-installed coup government, voicing Canada's unblinking support for their two-year reign of terror.

After playing diplomat with Pettigrew, Arcelin soon had his boots back on the ground in Haiti where he basked in his role as rebel frontman. In early March 2004, he bragged: "We are the law and order from now on... We control the country."¹⁰ Using his media platform he said: "We need military help. We need more guns."¹¹ As for the guns they already had, many of which were supplied by the U.S., Arcelin "publicly boasted that the rebels will not disarm. Asked what they are doing



with their weapons, he said, 'We hide them.'¹² But, they did not need to hide them too carefully. Although later mandated to disarm these Haitian thugs, UN forces focused instead on helping Haiti's newly-militarised police to target the rebel's enemies, namely pro-democracy, Aristide supporters.

When Arcelin boasted that "in less than 25 days, we took control of two-thirds of the country and part of the capital," he added, "We planned it in a way that the world was surprised."¹³ Further detailing his *planning* role in the operation, Arcelin said he and rebel-leader Philippe "spent 10 to 15 hours a day together, plotting against Aristide": "From time to time we'd cross the border...to conspire against Aristide, meet with the opposition and regional leaders to prepare for Aristide's downfall."¹⁴

Many preparatory meetings also took place in the Dominican Republic (DR) where the U.S. International Republican Institute¹⁵ sponsored large, monthly meetings so Aristide's enemies could plot their return to power. At that time, Arcelin was "the official representative of the Democratic Convergence"¹⁶ in the DR. This was a key role because the Convergence was the main U.S.-supported, anti-Aristide group in Haiti, and the DR was the coup's staging ground. But not only was Arcelin "raising funds for the Convergence in the DR and in Florida," he was "also the main fundraiser for the rebels, both in Florida and in the DR."¹⁷

Back in 1991, when a coup deposed Aristide (just eight months after his first landslide election), the military junta "appointed [Arcelin] as ambassador to the Dominican Republic."¹⁸

The DR was crucial to the 2004 coup because it helped house, train and equip the rebels and provided the base for staging and fomenting their incursions into Haiti. For example, in May 2003, DR-based, Haitian rebels attacked a Haitian power plant, killing two workers, wounding two policemen, setting the facility ablaze, and cutting electricity to much of Haiti. On the previous day, five Haitians in the DR were arrested for an anti-Aristide coup plot. They included Philippe, Paul Arcelin and a former Haitian police academy inspector named Presler Toussaint. Released the next day by DR authorities,¹⁹ their criminal conspiracy continued unabated until—with the backing of the DR, the U.S., France and Canada, Aristide was kidnapped and his duly-elected government was replaced with a UN-enforced, puppet regime.

References

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