

Did he Jump or was he Pushed?

By Peter Hallward, author, *Damning the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment*, 2008.

In late February 2004, France, the U.S. and a few other old “friends of Haiti” called on the country’s elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide to resign.

During his last few days in office, these countries threatened Aristide with a “bloodbath” if he chose to serve out the remainder of his term in office. By early 2004, Haiti’s oldest friends had done everything to make such a threat look imminent. Even before he returned to office in 2001, they went to considerable lengths to promote both a political and a paramilitary opposition that adopted the elimination of Aristide as their very *raison d’être*. Relentless pressure from these opponents, combined with punitive economic measures implemented by their foreign patrons, eventually backed Aristide into a corner from which he couldn’t escape.

By February 28, 2004, the area of the country that remained under the government’s control had shrunk to little more than Port-au-Prince. A small but well-armed and well-funded military force led by ex-soldiers Guy Philippe and Jodel Chamblain was apparently poised to attack the capital. The government’s rather less well-armed security forces were no longer reliable, and the international community made it clear that it would only intervene if Aristide stepped down.

With his back to the wall, did Aristide choose to save his skin and accept a U.S. offer for safe passage to a friendly third country? Or, was he forced to resign by hostile foreign troops before being led, *manu militari*, onto an American plane?

Did Aristide leap to safety, or was he pushed into captivity?

In my opinion it’s blindingly obvious that Aristide was pushed out by the immediate prospect of overwhelming violence against unarmed civilians, coupled with the longer-term prospect of a debilitating civil war.

Aristide’s government wasn’t perfect, but its violent removal was an outrageous political crime.

“Aristide’s Departure”



“Aristide Resigns and Flies Into Exile”

—WASHINGTON POST, FRONT PAGE HEADLINE, MARCH 1 2004

The “Big Lie”

The U.S. government’s account of what happened on February 28 is pretty straightforward. Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.S. Ambassador to Haiti James Foley say that as the international community began to turn its back on him, even so intractable and violent an autocrat as Aristide could see he was doomed. They say that as Guy Philippe’s small group of ex-army rebels started to overrun Haiti’s police stations, Aristide realised his “bandit” militias were no match for their ruthless firepower.

Powell and Foley say that on that evening Aristide sent a desperate appeal for help to the U.S. embassy. Foley says Aristide asked him for a way out that would “guarantee his security” and “protect his property.”¹

According to Foley and his versatile deputy Luis Moreno, Aristide

made a perfectly free and voluntary choice. “He decided himself to leave. He feared he faced death if he could not get out.”² Therefore, the U.S. resolved to mount a last-minute operation to save Aristide’s life.³

No doubt the U.S. could have endorsed the Caribbean Community’s urgent appeal to the UN for a hundred or so peacekeepers, or, they could have instructed Philippe’s men to lay down their M16s and return to their U.S.-sanctioned exile in the Dominican Republic. But as Powell’s chief of staff Lawrence Wilkerson explained, rather than discourage Philippe and his “ragtag band,” Foley preferred instead to talk “with President Aristide; he confronted him...with the devastation that was likely to take place, and President Aristide, to his credit, made the decision to take Ambassador Foley’s offer and to leave the country.”⁴ As far as the world’s most powerful democracy

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was concerned it was clearly Aristide, the elected president of Haiti, rather than Philippe, the paramilitary insurgent, who needed to leave the country.

The U.S. government quickly arranged for a plane that took off from a U.S.-occupied Port-au-Prince airport around 6:15 am, February 29. Before he left, Aristide was induced to sign a letter which, as far as his U.S. minders were concerned, appeared to provide constitutional grounds for a democratic transition, saying: “If my resignation prevents the shedding of blood, I agree to leave.”⁵ (See sidebar below.)

The U.S. says that Aristide chose the safety of the Central African Republic (CAR). He would be safer there, presumably, than in a lawless place like Miami, or in openly supportive neighbouring countries like Venezuela, Jamaica or Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. “We did not force him on to the airplane,” Colin Powell insisted on March 1, “he went onto the airplane willingly, and that is the truth.” George Bush’s spokesman Scott McClellan likewise insisted that Aristide’s departure was “entirely his decision,” and that going to the CAR was “his choice.”

Colin Powell also firmly rejected Aristide’s insistence that he had been kidnapped by U.S. troops:

“Aristide wanted to discuss with our Ambassador the possibility of departure and he had several questions.... Aristide... talked about ...protection of his personal property,... and would he have some choice as to where he was going....

We gave him... positive answers.... and he... said that it was his decision ...that he should leave.”⁶

As for the protection of Aristide’s property, Powell’s “positive answer” is easily verified. There was an immediate withdrawal of all security from Aristide’s house, thereby allowing it to be comprehensively looted and trashed for several days. (Back in 1994, by contrast, the U.S. didn’t just protect the property of the dictatorial general Raoul Cédras—who had ousted Aristide—they actually rented a couple of his houses for several months.)

Powell’s spokesman reasserted the same basic line “There was no kidnapping, there was no coup, there were no threats.” Instead, he said, “we ended up rescuing him by taking him out of

the country in the face of almost certain violence.”⁷

Foley too insisted that Aristide’s claim to have been kidnapped was a simple fabrication:

“He was not kidnapped. He is lying.... He asked for the help of the United States... He begged me—everyone knows Washington does not keep secrets.... All this is to say that it is a big lie.”⁸

Broadly speaking, the mainstream press accepted, and still accepts, this official U.S. explanation. But leaving aside the question about whether it was Aristide (winner of 92% of the vote in 2000) or Philippe (winner of 2% of the vote in 2006) who might most reasonably be held responsible for the imminent prospect of a bloodbath in Haiti, there are awkward problems with the U.S. version of events.

All through February 2004, Aristide repeatedly insisted on serving out the remainder of his term in office, and he never seems to have told anyone, up until midnight or 1 am on February 29, that he would consider leaving office before his mandate ended in February 2006. The last time his chief

Aristide’s so-called “Resignation” Letter

The U.S. needed an official letter of resignation from Aristide so that they could claim legal cover for whatever action they might then find themselves ‘obliged’

to take, in keeping with a super-power’s occasional ‘responsibility to protect’ the leaders and populations of its less powerful neighbours. Without such a letter, they stood little chance of gaining rapid, i.e., automatic, UN approval for further imperial intervention.

Sometime in the early hours of February 29, Aristide put his name to a resignation letter of sorts. In early March, Aristide told journalist Kim Ives that U.S. and French embassy staff “drafted a resignation for him, which he refused to sign.... In the end, he drafted his own letter, which had a conditional clause” and which remained deliberately ambiguous.¹ After trying to translate the key passage as “tonight I am resigning in order to avoid a bloodbath,” the State Department was obliged to hire Kreyol expert professor Bryant Freeman to provide a more accurate translation. Freeman pointed out that Aristide’s letter never said, “I am resigning,” and that its actual meaning was more evasive: “Thus, if this evening it is my resignation which can prevent a bloodbath, I agree to leave...”²

When dealing with so “momentous an event as the resignation of a President,” notes lawyer Brian Concannon, “common sense would require a clear statement that demonstrates an unequivocal and freely-made decision to re-

sign. Instead, this letter seems closer to something written by someone who did not intend to resign, but was not free to express that intention.”³

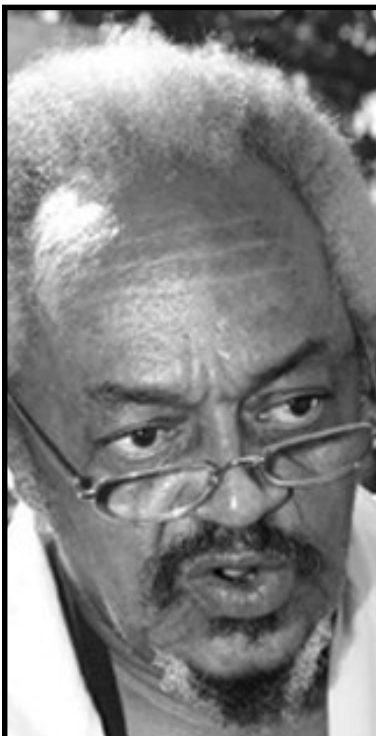


When pressured to sign a letter that U.S. officials had written, Aristide refused. Instead, he drafted a 90-word note in Kreyol that referred to Haiti’s constitution six times. In it, he said, in part: “if this evening it is my resignation which can prevent a bloodbath, I agree to leave.”

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Source: Peter Hallward, *Haiti Liberté*, Oct.-Nov. 2007



John Maxwell
Veteran Jamaican
journalist

Taken for a Ride

In 2004, U.S. “soldiers and diplomats armed and provisioned a criminal aggregation of rapists, mass murderers and putschists to go into Haiti to finish what all the American NGOs and enhancers of democracy had not been able to do: to subvert the lawfully and overwhelmingly elected President of Haiti. When the mercenaries proved unable to do that job, the U.S. itself stepped in with its Ambassador and its Marines making a predawn call on the President to inform him that if he didn’t leave the country his life was worthless. They put him on a cargo plane and rendered him to Africa. It was not only Aristide and his family who were taken for a ride. The world was conned by official propaganda, and journalistic pimps, which managed to paint a picture of the mild-mannered slum priest as a violent, corrupt demonic oppressor of his people.”

“A Basket to Carry Water,” February 26, 2006.

legal counsellor, Ira Kurzban, spoke with him was on the morning of February 28, and there was no hint that Aristide was toying with the idea of resignation.⁹ Late that night, members of Aristide’s entourage confirmed arrangements for interviews at the National Palace the following day. And, Jamaican Prime Minister and CARICOM chairman P.J. Patterson, who was “in touch with Aristide until very late Saturday night February 28,” confirmed that “Nothing that was said to us indicated that the president was contemplating a resignation.”¹⁰ Without exception, Aristide’s closest allies and confidants all testify to the same point.¹¹

It’s still more puzzling that Aristide would have chosen the Central African Republic as his preferred place of refuge. CAR is a violent, dictatorial and heavily-policed client state of Aristide’s most implacable international enemy, France. As soon as he arrived he was kept under house arrest and blocked from virtually all access to the media or the telephone.¹² Powell and Roger Noriega said Aristide’s “first choice” had been South Africa, but that President Thabo Mbeki—Aristide’s staunchest international ally—suddenly reneged on a promise to grant temporary asylum. The *New York Times* and other papers dutifully reported this

assertion. However, Aristide and his pilot and confidant Frantz Gabriel (who accompanied the Aristides into exile) insist that they never asked South Africa for asylum. Gabriel says when led onto the plane, Aristide “had no idea where he was going.”¹³ On March 2, Dumisani Kumalo, South Africa’s ambassador to the UN, said Aristide never requested asylum, and that South Africa had “not denied him amnesty...as alleged by the U.S. State Department and *The New York Times*.”¹⁴

A Surprise Attack?

Aristide’s old friend and counsellor Randall Robinson insisted that

“Aristide did not resign. He was kidnapped.... Had he resigned, we wouldn’t need blacked out windows and blocked communications and military taking him away at gunpoint.... He was abducted by the U.S.: a democratically elected president, abducted by the U.S. in... an American-induced coup.”¹⁵

This explanation is certainly much closer to reality than the absurd story invented by Foley, Powell and Moreno.

On March 1, Aristide told CNN that he’d been the victim of “modern kidnapping.” He said he’d fallen prey

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to a “modern coup d’état,” one based more on the imminent threat of violence than the literal use of force:

“I was told that...I better leave. And under a kind of diplomatic cover, they talked to me. And military talked to me. American agents talked to me. Haitian agents talked to me. And I finally realized it was true. We were going to have bloodshed.... They told me in a clear and blunt way that thousands of people will get killed once they start. So I had to do my best to avoid that bloodshed. They used unintelligible to push me out. That’s why I call it again and again a *coup d’état*.”¹⁶

A few days later, Aristide provided (via a concealed cell phone) what was his most detailed account of what happened on February 28/29:

“The 28th of February, at night, suddenly, American military personnel who were already all over Port-au-Prince descended on my house.... they told me the foreigners and Haitian terrorists alike, loaded with heavy weapons, were already in position to open fire on Port-au-Prince. And right then, the Americans precisely stated that they will kill thousands of people and it will be a bloodbath. That the attack is ready to start, and when the first bullet is fired nothing will stop them and nothing will make them wait until they take over, therefore the mission is to take me dead or alive.

At that time I told the Americans that my first preoccupation was to save the lives of those thousands of people tonight....

It was more serious than a bluff. The National Palace was surrounded by white men armed up to their teeth. The...residence was surrounded by foreigners armed to their teeth. The airport...was already under the control of these men.... the truth was clear. There was going to be a bloodbath because we were already under an illegal foreign occupation which was ready to drop bodies on the ground, to spill blood and then kidnap me dead or alive.... The forced signing of the letter of resignation, was not able to cover the face of the kidnapping.”¹⁷

Later, on March 8, 2004,

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“Aristide said he had been told by the U.S. ambassador to Haiti that he would be taken to a press conference in Port-au-Prince on February 29, but was instead driven to the airport. ‘They put me in a car and I found myself at the airport.’”¹⁸

Frantz Gabriel backed up this version of events:

“Luis Moreno... knocked at the door of Aristide’s...house. I opened the door and saw with him there with two special operations guys—obviously military ... carrying some serious hardware Moreno said ‘we’re going to have a news conference at the embassy.’ Then we were led down the steps, and in the compound there were only U.S. troops, and a couple more Delta-type guys. Aristide, Mildred his wife and I were taken *manu militari* into Moreno’s embassy car....

“There were around a dozen U.S. cars lined up across the street.... We all set off in a single convoy.... We got to the airport at dawn.... Foley was there too. We were led onto the plane, along with... around twenty U.S. troops.”¹⁹

The difference between Aristide’s “truth” and Foley’s “big lie” shouldn’t be too difficult to understand, since it is simply the difference between freedom and compulsion. Foley can only say that Aristide freely “agreed to leave” Haiti if he can explain how an agreement prompted by the threat of an imminent bloodbath can be described as free and voluntary. As Patrick Elie insists

“it was still a kidnapping, there’s no doubt about that. It’s as if you push someone...into their house, then you nail all the windows shut, and throw a Molotov cocktail inside. Then, when he comes running out..., you say he came out ‘of his own free will.’ That’s ridiculous. He could have stayed inside and died. Instead he came out, ok—but it certainly wasn’t of his own free will.”²⁰

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20. Interview, Patrick Elie, March 3, 2007.

Source: This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the newspaper *Haiti Liberté*, Oct.-Nov. 2007. www.haitianalysis.com/2007/12/7/did-he-jump-or-was-he-pushed-aristide-and-the-2004-coup-in-haiti

CIDA-funded “NGOs” Herald Aristide’s “Departure”

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

Canada’s parliamentary committee hearings on Haiti during the 2004 coup were a farce. Top CIDA-paid agents of the government, spouting Canada’s official propaganda line on Aristide’s kidnapping and the Canadian-backed overthrow of his government, appeared before MPs to represent so-called “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs).

The prime example of this charade was on March 25, 2004, less than a month after the Canadian-backed regime change that illegally ousted President Aristide. At that time, the dismantling of all levels of Haiti’s government had begun. (Some 7,500 elected officials were eventually sacked by the coup-empowered regime.) Despite the travesty of justice then underway, Canadian MPs were treated to a rather positive review of Haiti’s supposedly encouraging “transition” to democracy.

Thus, while Haiti experienced one of its most violent periods in decades, Parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade heard nothing of the brutal repression and intimidation of Aristide’s supporters. Instead, the Canadian government’s loyal retinue of agents from contracted “NGOs”—those purportedly dedicated to promoting human rights, peace, justice and Third World development—proved their worth to the powers-that-be by parroting the official narratives on Haiti.

For example, these recipients of government largesse—unanimously ignoring evidence to the contrary—presented President Aristide’s kidnapping as if he had voluntarily resigned and left the country on his own accord. This they all concurred was a positive step in Haitian affairs. They treated with utter contempt Aristide’s contention that he had been “kidnapped” and that there had just been a coup d’état in Haiti. They also agreed that Aristide himself was to blame not only for his demise but for trying to stir up even more vio-

lence by having the audacity to say that he had been kidnapped and forced out of office in a putsch.

The four CIDA-funded agencies that were hand-picked to testify before this committee were the:

- Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (aka Development and Peace)
- International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (aka Rights and Democracy)
- International Centre for Legal Resources (ICLR), and
- Oxfam Québec



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Instead of referring to Aristide’s “kidnapping,” “forced removal” or “exile,” the term used repeatedly by these quasi-government agencies was his “departure.” This bland-sounding term was used 14 times during the hearing and on three occasions it was simply stated that Aristide had “left” Haiti.

The first witness to mention Aristide’s “departure” was Jean-Louis Roy, the president of Rights and Democracy. This agency was created by the Canadian government and is funded almost entirely by CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. However, putting on the airs of an NGO official who was frustrated in his efforts to lobby the government, Roy began in this way:

“Mr. Chairman, I first want to express

our very deep disappointment with the work of the Canadian government on this file in the six months preceding President Aristide’s departure.”

Of course, Roy was not complaining that the government had bankrolled R&D (or the other assembled organizations) to destabilize Haiti’s government. Nor was he critiquing the government’s role in financing Haiti’s elite organizations to lead the drive demanding Aristide’s ouster. Neither was Roy complaining that Canada’s government had drastically reduced development assistance to Haiti. His view was, rather, that Canada had not been hard enough on Aristide!

Then, it was the ICLR director’s turn to chastise the government. Catherine Duhamel pushed MPs to enact legislation criminalizing Aristide’s elected government as a “terrorist” regime in the same class as the Duvalier dictatorships, the Afghan Taliban and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. She argued that the lack of RCMP resources going into investigations and laying charges against Aristide’s “cronies” was “not only unacceptable,” it was “absolutely ridiculous.” She did not suggest charging those who had just kidnapped Aristide. Nor was she interested in laying charges against those then murdering hundreds of Aristide supporters, and illegally imprisoning thousands of government supporters. Her only reference to Aristide’s “departure” that: “certain members of the Aristide government and some of his cronies have been going back and forth between Canada and Haiti with ease since the departure of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.”

The next up against Aristide was Michel Verret, director of Oxfam-Quebec’s Overseas Programs. After mentioned Aristide’s “departure” three times, he referred to “the end of the Aristide regime,” saying:

“The events leading to President Aristide’s departure are known to all of us. Pressure from the civil society, the opposition and the international community, and failed nego-

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tiations between the various stakeholders, prompted President Aristide to leave.”

Verrett did not mention that U.S. diplomats with heavily armed forces entered Aristide’s home in the middle of the night and threatened him with a “bloodbath” if he didn’t leave. Nor did he or the CIDA-funded representatives mention that Haiti’s “civil society” also included hundreds of pro-Aristide groups. Also ignored was the minor fact that Aristide and his party had been empowered in two landslide elections.

Verret did however euphemistically express Oxfam-Quebec’s support for the U.S.-led occupation of Haiti that had so craftily facilitated the coup process after Aristide’s forced exile:

“Oxfam-Quebec can only applaud the decision of the Security Council on February 29 to authorize the deployment of an international stabilization force to Haiti.”

The first MP to speak at this hearing was Deepak Obhrai, the Conservative MP for Calgary East. After thanking the government’s carefully-selected anti-Aristide witnesses, Obhrai began with an astute observation:

“From all of your testimony, it seems to me you are all in agreement that Aristide had to go. You seem to accept his departure from Haiti.”

Then, this MP displayed his ignorance about Haiti by saying:

“Here we have a fellow [Aristide] who was put back in power [by U.S. Marines in 1994] and now—I don’t know how many years after that he came into power [in 2000 elections]...we intervened [in 2004]. We put him in power, and then what? We walked away and totally ignored Haiti. We didn’t do anything, didn’t put any kind of pressure on Mr. Aristide to fix up the political situation in that country.... We had good leverage when we put him back in power, so how come you never used the leverage?”

Then, admitting that he really knew nothing about Haiti, Obhrai went on: “I’m asking as a layman. I haven’t been to Haiti and you guys are involved in Haiti. It will be interesting.” The chair then gave the floor to the delegation’s defacto leader, Marthe Lapierre of the Catholic church’s D&P. Her response

began with “Aristide’s departure” and degenerated into the official lie regarding the supposed unpopularity of Aristide’s elected government.

“We’re not talking about a situation where a rebel group suddenly orchestrated Aristide’s departure. We’re talking about a situation where the Aristide government, since 2000, had gradually lost all legitimacy.... [T]his was a profoundly undemocratic government....”

“Conspiracy theories”

“The international media has shrouded the departure of Aristide on 29 February 2004 with conspiracy theories, going so far in some cases as to claim that the CIA deposed the president in a coup d’état.... In fact, Aristide himself was largely responsible for the circumstances that led to his forced departure.”

“Background Paper on Haiti,”
Development and Peace, March 2006.

“People went down in the streets and for two months, there were practically daily demonstrations, not only in Port-au-Prince, but in every major city in the country, where people were demanding that Aristide leave.”

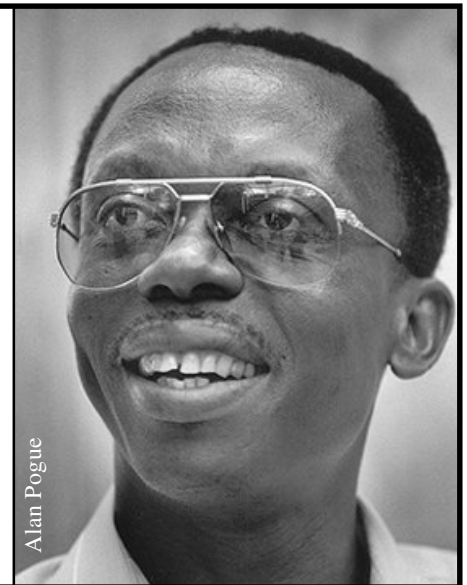
Following these untruths—and noting in the most neutral of terms that “Aristide had left”—Lapierre was eager to take some credit for having helped oust Haiti’s government:

“We support a network of community radio stations that reach people living in the most remote areas of Haiti and civil organizations as a whole. All these organizations took a position as early as December 2002 in support of Aristide’s departure; they were demanding he leave. They are the people that have the strength, and that made the difference... The entire population was mobilized.”

This was, of course, simply not true. In the months before Aristide’s kidnapping, his supporters organized mass rallies attended by hundreds of thousands of poor Haitians. These events, such as the one on January 1,

2004, were far bigger than the relatively puny, anti-Aristide protests sponsored by U.S.- and Canadian-government funded groups and led by Haiti’s elite, even though their events were supported by Haiti’s corporate media.

Then, R&D’s director, Jean-Louis Roy, tried to rationalize how it was that so-called “NGOs” could support the ousting of an elected government. His explanation used the now familiar “D” word (“departure”) in a novel



way to refer not merely to Aristide but to his entire government.

“Nobody can take any satisfaction in the fact that an elected government, even inappropriately elected, could be overturned by people in the street. That cannot be considered to be a viable way of organizing societies across the globe, recognizing at the same time that the Aristide government had acted in a way that led to its eventual departure.”

Bloc Québécois MP Francine Lalonde then raised a very troubling matter. After being held incommunicado during his forced exile, Aristide had managed to get the word out that he had been kidnapped. By the time of the SCFAIT meetings this fact had been widely reported. To deal with this elephant in the room, Lalonde posed a leading question revealing her position that Aristide’s accusations were now to blame for Haiti’s “insecurity”:

“Aristide’s departure is the subject of controversy. The United Nations resolution is clear, but newspapers close to Aristide, and Aristide him-

self, are promoting the idea that he was kidnapped and that what occurred, consequently, was a coup d’État. Are these statements by Aristide helping to maintain the sense of insecurity there?”

In response, Carlos Arancibia, Oxfam-Quebec’s regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, made no reference to the kidnapping or Haiti’s coup. The closest he came to this delicate matter was to echo what D&P’s representative had said earlier, namely, “Aristide has left.” Arancibia wanted to make sure he was perceived as a team player. In response to the question of Aristide’s accusations, Arancibia said: “I fully agree with the analysis presented by others. It’s important to understand that things went off the rails starting in the year 2000, with the election.”

Then, Arancibia fell back on the official narrative of Aristide’s unpopularity and voiced support for “civil society” which is always equated, by the government and CIDA-funded agencies, with the forces that opposed Aristide: “In the wake of the crisis... we have witnessed people mobilizing.... But the Haitian people and the civil society sent a very clear message. When people went down into the streets..., they declared that they didn’t want to see a return to dictatorship, that they wanted democracy.... There was a democratic opposition, an opposition that was taking peaceful action.”

Oxfam-Quebec’s position clearly ignored the inconvenient fact that the so-called “democratic opposition” was a small minority and that the masses of Haiti’s “civil society” wanted Aristide to finish his five-year mandate to govern. This after all was why they had democratically elected him.

After the discussion of Aristide’s “departure” was further sidetracked, Roy finally picked up Lalonde’s line of questioning about Aristide’s accusations that he had been kidnapped:

Roy: “Is Aristide a factor, Ms. Lalonde? Are his statements... Yes, because I believe there are still people who support Aristide.”

Lalonde: “We’re talking about achieving consensus, when Aristide is saying the kinds of things he has

been saying.”

Roy: “Yes. That does complicate matters, but we can’t prevent him from talking.”

The issue of Aristide’s forced removal from office and from Haiti was again dropped until the NDP’s Alexa McDonough had the floor. After asking about CIDA funding cutbacks to Haiti, she returned to Aristide’s allegations and very cautiously asked whether there may have been “a kind of illegitimate regime change”:

“To what extent is there some problem associated with the manner in which Aristide’s departure took place? There is I think a strong consensus that clearly this is not a government that was working and Aristide was not going to be able to re-establish legitimacy. Around the real questions of the illegitimate manner in which his departure took place, is there a problem about Canada’s credibility, whether we’ve compromised our own ability to be seen as a trustworthy independent nation? Have we become contaminated somewhat by having been associated with what may be an exaggeration, but a kind of illegitimate regime change, that has now aroused a lot of mistrust in the community, notwithstanding people’s concerns about the Aristide administration?”

In response, Lapierre took another stab at “the circumstances under which Aristide left the country”:

“I see there is some concern about this. We certainly can’t prevent Mr. Aristide from now alleging that he was the victim of a coup d’État. But I ask you: if there really was a coup d’État, who seized power?”

“That is not what happened. What happened is that the entire population turned against him. This was a movement for which there was unanimous support in Haiti, except in those areas armed by Aristide himself. Aristide did in fact sign a letter of resignation. Even though some people are now talking about that and perhaps interpreting what it says differently, the fact remains that is what he did.

“I want to come back to this just to clarify. Ms. Lalonde referred a little earlier to an opposite concern in

Haiti. Given that Aristide is in Jamaica, that the *Chimera* have not been disarmed and that there is always the possibility of a putsch, that is a concern. I think we have to be attentive in that regard and not allow that kind of situation to recur.”

The irony of Lapierre’s “concern” is laughable. The spectre she raised was the “possibility of a putsch” led by Aristide’s so-called “*chimère*” to overthrow the coup-installed regime. (See “Epithets without Borders, pp. 14-15.) It is ludicrous to believe that the poorest of the poor in this hemisphere’s most impoverished country had the ability to violently oust thousands of U.S., Canadian, French and Brazilian troops then occupying Haiti. Her “concern” was even more absurd considering the fact that these troops were working in concert with death squads and Haiti’s former military, that Aristide had disbanded more than a decade earlier.

Under the pretext of enforcing security, a “putsch” had *already* taken place enforced by the US, French and Canadian troops that occupied Haiti.

But in the topsy-turvy world of CIDA-funded “NGOs” who kowtow to government propaganda, the “possibility” that supporters of Aristide’s democratically-elected government might somehow reverse the illegal coup process, restore the constitution and put their elected president back in power was seen as a possible “putsch.”

While MPs and representatives of Canada’s quasi-governmental agencies discussed the finer points of Aristide’s “departure,” they completely ignored the unconstitutional regime change process then taking place. In this way, the parliamentary hearing about the 2004 crisis in Haiti was a shameful coverup in which government-funded “NGOs” disguised Aristide’s kidnapping, the ouster of his elected government and the mass murder of his supporters as a great stride towards democracy and human rights.

Reference: The quotes throughout this article are from a meeting of the Canadian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, March 25, 2004.

cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteePublication.aspx?COM=8730&SourceId=76218&SwitchLanguage=1