

5 years of unknown occupation, 5 years of ignored resistance

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“Bay Kou, bliye. Pote mak, sonje”

(“He who strikes, forgets. He who’s scarred remembers”- Haitian proverb)

5 years have passed since *Ayiti*, paradoxically the first Latin American republic to emancipate itself from the yoke of colonialism, found itself under foreign military occupation. Strictly speaking, it is the only Latin American country under military occupation at the present moment.

Situated in the middle of the Caribbean, sharing a landmass with the Dominican Republic and facing Florida and Cuba, this small nation has for a long time been occupied by 7,036 U.N soldiers and 2,053 U.N policemen (which form part of a “humanitarian” mission – MINUSTAH). It is not the first time *Ayiti* has been militarily occupied: profound traumas still remain from the North American occupation which from 1915 to 1934 cast a shadow over every poor Haitian household. Since then, imperialist political intervention, mainly North American, but Canadian and French also, has been constant.

But this occupation, which started on February 29th 2004, is different: and not only because it is a U.N occupation, which gives a certain veil of “legitimacy” to this violation of the dignity of the Haitian people. **This occupation is radically different from those previously because for the first time Latin American countries have invaded and occupied another.**

In February 2004, following a month of armed insurrection, financed and prepared by the CIA against the populist government of Jean Bertrand Aristide, troops from the U.S, France, Canada and Chile landed in *Ayiti* and kidnapped president Aristide, who had managed to earn the distrust of Paris and Washington, and who had always faced the bitter opposition of the *makout* oligarchy, reluctant to hand over an inch of their power, nurtured by two centuries of republican life. The excuse for this landing is the apparently altruistic task of restoring order and protecting the security of the Haitian people (It is important to point out that these altruistic feelings were conspicuous by their absence during the years of economic sanctions and open looting of the Haitian economy on the part of the North Americans and French). The ousted president is sent to the Central African Republic by plane, the “rebels” working for the CIA perpetrate innumerable massacres of thousands of president Aristide’s supporters in the less well off neighbourhood, the *bidonville*, and established a regime of terror in the Free Trade Zones (tax-free zones), where important multinational companies such as Levis and Walt Disney are operating. This, without the self proclaimed defenders of the Haitian people even getting upset. Then, a puppet of the Haitian oligarchy and the White House, Gerard Latortue, is installed in power, the end result is a coup d’etat in a country without an army, with the participation of armed groups working for the CIA and foreign armies.

***Ayiti*, a protectorate guarded by the Blue Berets**

In the middle of 2004, as a way of giving a certain veil of legitimacy to the occupation, and in the middle of growing military difficulties for the U.S in Iraq, the U.N is called in order to look after the chaotic situation in the country. This way, the U.S leaves the main scene and the presence of the U.N gives a “humanitarian” certificate to the occupation. Such is the origin of MINUSTAH: it is the continuation of the military forces, those involved in the coup and the occupation, that

are imposing the bloodshed of that ever distant coup of 2004¹. But for the humanitarian facade and democratic face to be still stronger, and so that nobody could say that *Ayiti* was once again a victim of imperialism, it was assured that the command, as well as the bulk of the troops of MINUSTAH were Latin Americans. Brazil, as was expected, took the leading role in MINUSTAH, backed up by Chile and Argentina. But practically every Latin American country has troops in *Ayiti*. Even “progressive” countries like Bolivia or Ecuador.²

This occupation, even though there are some who have something more concrete to gain beyond just the favours of Washington³, reflects the changes in the balance of power in the region and the power of the local actors in to maintain “hemispherical security”, demonstrating that there are other potential interested parties in establishing that, after all, they also have a back garden.

The election of Preval in February 2006 has not altered the character of the occupation, and he has shown himself to be nothing more than a president in the pocket of the Haitian oligarchy and his foreign masters, who has continued the path of Latortue and the looting of *Ayiti*, by means of free trade agreements such as the EPA with the E.U and the HOPE law with the U.S.⁴

At the moment, there are no signs of any intention of ending the occupation. Or at least this is how it seems from U.N resolution 1840(2008), passed on October 14 2008, which ironically begins with the following words: “*reaffirming its firm determination to preserve the sovereignty, independence (...) of Haiti*” to then conclude with the decision to extend MINUSTAH’s mandate until October 15 2009, “*with the intention of revitalising it again*”⁵. Or possibly, it is so that there is an occupation for some time, with the intention of a protectorate more or less permanently at the service of the multinationals...

The slow death of occupied *Ayiti*

The effects of the occupation on the people have been disastrous. We have already included a detailed analysis of these in various other articles⁶. The main effect has been that it has deepened, by force, hunger, misery and exclusion. And it has deepened to such an extent that in April 2008, following grotesque news that Haitians had no other option to ease their hunger other than to resort to eating mud and dirt, rebellions exploded all over the country because the people, literally, were starving to death.⁷

An article in “The Economist” magazine (12/02) ludicrously claims that the occupation is reducing two things. It says, without embarrassment, that “*the U.N mission has improved security:*

¹ For further information on the coup and its immediate aftermath, you can check the previous article “Ayiti, una cicatriz en el rostro de América” www.anarkismo.net

² The following Latin American countries have troops in Haiti: Argentina, Bolivia. Brasil, Chile, Colombia (police only), Ecuador, El Salvador (police only), Granada (police only), Guatemala, Jamaica (police only), Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay.

³ Brazil has used the occupation as a means of pressure its permanent membership in the Security Council of the UN.

⁴ For more details on the politics of Preval in power and the Neoliberal strategy to plunder Ayiti, check “Ayiti, entre la liberación y la ocupación” www.anarkismo.net

⁵ daccessdds.un.org

⁶ Check “Ayiti, entre la liberación y la ocupación” y “Ayiti, una cicatriz en el rostro de América”, but also “Ayiti, ¿hacia un nuevo dechoukaj?” www.anarkismo.net which deals largely with malnutrition and famine.

⁷ Check “Ayiti, ¿hacia un nuevo dechoukaj?”

*reported kidnappings have fallen from 722 in 2006 to 258 last year (...) The streets of Puerto Principe are much cleaner.*⁸ It is hard to know whether to laugh or cry at this farce which pretends to pass for “success.” More than 9,000 soldiers and police occupying an island just to have cleaner streets! Only 258 kidnappings! Nor does it say how much is spent on MINUSTAH: in the year July 2008 to June 2009, a budget of U\$601,580,000 was approved... half of the entire annual Haitian fiscal budget.

It shamefully results in the occupation spending money that could be used in constructing infrastructure, improving living conditions, hospitals, schools, etc. Money is used to maintain the occupation that should be used by cancelling Haiti's external debt, a costly legacy of the dictatorship years of Duvalier. There is money for guns, but not for bread. What is clear is that this military force, adept at massacring some 10,000 Haitians, has been completely ineffective in helping the thousands affected by the hurricanes which devastated the Caribbean island after an outbreak of cholera in September, killing 793 people, more victims of poverty than of the weather.⁹

The same “Economist” article claims that the Haitian economy will contract by 0.5% during 2009, which is difficult to imagine for an economy so devastated and weakened and which has been reduced to rubble by two decades of violent suppression of democratic movements which emerged in post-Duvalier *Ayiti* and North American military interventions and economic sanctions. This recent history is the reason that *Ayiti* is today a country that survives “thanks” to charity, with a national budget of which 65% is dependent on borrowing and international help.

In keeping with other occupations the Blue Berets have also shown themselves to be less than compassionate in their treatment of the local population: they have been tolerant of selective makout reprisals against activists, they have themselves participated in massacres and have carried out systematic rapes of Haitian women and minors.¹⁰

The ignored resistance

Sadly, this occupation happened under our noses, and before a shameful silence on the part of the majority of Latin America's social movements. Except for certain declarations of support, such as in Lima during The Peoples Conference (May 2007), the norm has been to ignore the responsibility of our own governments in the occupation of a fellow Latin American nation... For so long now we have been used to suffering from the actions of “the cold country from the north” that it seems we believe our own governments incapable of being involved in acts of imperialism. It seems Latin American social movements do not realise the grave precedent being set with *Ayiti*: from now on military occupations in our continent will not have to be directly carried out by the North American imperialist, as long as it can count on efficient networks of local support from Latin American countries acting as mercenaries.¹¹

⁸ “Rebuilding Haiti –Weighed down by disasters”, The Economist, 12th February 2009.

⁹ Check the brief article dealing with the hurricanes and the political context in which they took place, “Ayiti, mucho circo, pero nada de pan” www.anarkismo.net

¹⁰ More information on the massacre and ion repression, as well as about the collusion with the makoutes, can be found in the articles already mentioned. Information on the rape cases can be found in the article: “La violación en (de) Ayiti” www.anarkismo.net

¹¹ for a more detailed discussion on this check “Ayiti y los Anarquistas” www.anarkismo.net

But within this never-ending protectorate, which is what *Ayiti* is to be transformed to, a culture of persistent resistance can be found, a culture forged by a secular resistance to the foreign occupation, and to an elite as far removed from the people as their imperialist paymasters. A culture in which the rebellious pride of the slave that broke from his chains at the end of the XVIII century still persists, that pride that gave meaning for the first time to the word “liberty” and which gave birth to a country through a libertarian maelstrom that inspired all anti-colonial struggles for the last two hundred years.

Haitians are a patient people and their resistance is also. They can renew MINUSTAH’s mandate as often as they like and the Haitian people will continue to play the manducuman, the Rada and Congo drums, the drums of Boukman, the drums of the Great Oath, all of the Voudoun drums. It is because of this that every protest ends up as a demonstration of condemnation against the occupiers: this happened with the protests against hunger in April 2008, which quickly turned into a demonstration against the occupation¹², and it also happened at the commemoration of Aristide’s 1990 election victory which was celebrated on December 16 by tens of thousands of demonstrators¹³. We know that today, acknowledging the fifth anniversary of that fateful coup d’etat which opened the doors to the occupation, tens of thousands of Haitians will once again go to the streets to demonstrate. Those same “clean” streets, which according to “The Economist”, is thanks to the occupation. Resistance has very strong roots in *Ayiti*, and it will continue to beat in the hearts of the Haitian people.

¹² Check “Ayiti ¿hacia un nuevo dechoukaj?”

¹³ www.haitiaction.net

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