

Haiti Is the Microcosm of the Crisis of Development in the South

Summary: Haiti is a microcosm of the disastrous outcome of foreign interventions and the failed so-called "development" policies of the last thirty years -- from Somalia to Bangladesh to Haiti. The paper proposes the formation of an "Alternative International Community" (AIC) of the South whose objective should be to take decision-making out of the agents of foreign capital and into the hands of the people.

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Haiti is a tragedy for us all. It is a tragedy for you and me. It is a tragedy for Africa, for the poor countries of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Earthquake is a global phenomenon, it can happen anywhere. It can happen in the US, in Europe and in Japan. So why then is it so destructive in its effects in the countries of the South? It is because of the failure of development. Haiti is a microcosm of the disastrous outcome of the failed so-called "development" policies of the last thirty years in the South, and the destructive effects of foreign interventionist policies in the affairs of the poor countries of the South -- from Somalia to Bangladesh to Haiti.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, in his passionate book, *The Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization* gives a graphic account of what happens when local economies and local initiatives of a poor country like Haiti are subordinated to the will of global finance and corporate power masked by the ideologies of "free trade" and "development aid". "In a world oriented only toward profit, it may be difficult for us to hear God's voice among the din and the racket of the moneychangers who have filled the world's temples", he writes.

He describes how he had to wrestle with his heart and mind to resist the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that was being forced on him as a condition for donor aid. When he remained faithful to his heart and mind, he was forced out of power. The government that replaced him relented to the pressure of the donors and the IMF/World Bank. In 2004 in what he described as his "kidnapping" with the connivance of France and the U.S., he was forced into exile. He was unceremoniously transported first to Jamaica and then, eventually, to South Africa.

The so-called International Community (IC) of the North is organising a conference in Montreal, Canada, for Haiti. It will, for sure, fail to bring development to the people of Haiti for it will put Haiti back under the heel and control of the local power and economic elite which, in turn, is under the control of the very forces that have ruined Haiti's economy; the IMF/WB imposition of SAPS and the "benevolent" dictatorship of "donor aid". This is behind the present tragedy of Haiti, and this is behind the tragedy of most of Africa, and the poorer nations of the South.

An "Alternative International Community" (AIC) of the South -- an ad hoc body that should be set up comprising of individuals and intergovernmental organisations of the South and welfare-oriented organisations of the United Nations such as the FAO and the WHO -- should organise its own counter conference in a spirit of genuine solidarity for the people of Haiti. It should aim at putting power in the hands of the people themselves. The initiative can come from, for instance, the government of South Africa, the South Centre in Geneva, or a body of sympathetic non-governmental organisations from the South and the North -- or by all of these working in cooperation, under an initiative taken by one of them.

The objectives of the conference should be:

1. To identify from among the Haitian population those community organisations and ad hoc groups which may have emerged from the ruins and which are engaged in self-help activities of relief, care of the injured bodies and souls among the survivors, and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the society and economy;
2. To help build the capacity of these groups to take charge of the relief assistance now being airlifted, shipped or sent via the Dominican Republic;
3. To help institutionalise these efforts into a government of the people by putting in place self-governing councils at local levels going up to the apex at the national and state level;
4. To expose the fake “solidarity” of the Montreal initiative;
5. To demilitarise the occupation of Haiti which is currently under way by the US and US-led NATO forces; and
6. To join and support Haiti peoples` demand for the return of Aristide, who still remains the beacon of hope for Haiti. He has the support of the poor. He has faith in his people's strength to oppose the domination of donors and the IMF/World Bank, and to put in place democratic institutions that are accountable to the people, and not to the false gods of “moneychangers who have filled the world's temples.”

This is a call to all those who are inspired by a humane spirit and who wish to assist our brothers and sisters ("our families") in Haiti, from a sense of genuine solidarity.

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