
Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Haiti's version of genocidalist Pol Pot

The stated policy of both the United Nations and the Clinton administration is to forcibly reinstate Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President of Haiti. What is the real character of the man whom Washington appears prepared to go to war to defend? Even the CIA has prepared studies which describe Aristide as mentally unstable. But the reality is far worse: Aristide is a Haitian version of Cambodia's Pol Pot, a genocidal psychopath who is prepared to physically wipe out his opposition, as the facts below document.

Ideology

- Aristide is an ardent devotee of the Marxist "theology of liberation." Although ordained as a Catholic priest, Aristide was expelled from the Salesian Order in 1988, accused of "incitement to hatred and violence" and of appealing to "class struggle" in his sermons, according to the Washington newspaper *The Catholic Standard*. Aristide relies heavily on voodoo superstitions among his supporters to build up his own image as a "demi-god." For example, it is widely believed in Haiti that Aristide turned himself into a dog or other animal to escape three separate assassination attempts.

Aristide has not hesitated to turn against his own church. After Catholic Archbishop François Wolff Ligonde, in a 1991 New Year's homily, denounced Aristide for installing a "bolshevik" government, the clergyman was forced to flee Haiti when thugs from Aristide's Lavalas movement targeted him and went on a rampage against the church. One of Port-au-Prince's oldest cathedrals was torched, as well as the Vatican embassy, the Nunciatura. The papal nuncio (Vatican ambassador) was stripped nude and forced to parade through the streets, while his African assistant, a priest, was seriously wounded.

- In an interview in October 1991, when asked to comment on the devastating effects of the international embargo on Haiti's impoverished people, Aristide responded: "Don't worry about the people. The Haitian people have been suffering for centuries."

Mental instability

- A classified CIA profile of Aristide that was prepared shortly after his September 1991 ouster portrays the man as suffering from depression and nervous breakdown. The Washington-based *Accuracy in Media* (August 1993) reports

that, according to a neurosurgeon and former dean of the Haitian medical school where Aristide had studied psychology in 1978-79, he found Aristide "tremendously unstable." According to a statement made available by the physician, "My ultimate diagnosis took the direction of the bipolar disease called 'psychotic manic depressive,' and I prescribed for Jean-Bertrand carbonate of lithium, which stabilized him completely." Although Aristide denies he was on any medication or has any nervous disorders, the doctor is quoted: "He could function very well if the condition was monitored and treated regularly." *Accuracy in Media* notes that "Haitian exiles say that some of Aristide's worst excesses come when he is not taking his lithium."

Recently asked to comment on allegations that he is unstable, Aristide responded, "Jesus was a God and they said he was crazy and they even killed him because they couldn't understand how he said he was a God." A senior Clinton administration official responded to the CIA profile of Aristide: "It was decided that it was not our responsibility to pass judgment on his mental health. . . ."

Actions in government

- During his seven-month term as President, Aristide encouraged use of the most brutal terrorist tactics against his political enemies. One of these is "necklacing," or "Père Lebrun" as it is known in Haiti: usually, chopping off the victim's arms, placing a gasoline-filled tire around his neck, and setting it afire. On Sept. 27, just two days before his overthrow, Aristide told a mob of supporters from the steps of the National Palace that Haiti's rich should get "what they deserve" and that Père Lebrun is "a beautiful instrument." Press reports quoted Aristide: "What a beautiful tool. What a beautiful appliance. It's beautiful . . . it's pretty, it looks sharp. It's fashionable, it smells good and wherever you go you want to smell it."

- On Oct. 26, 1991, the president of the Haitian Patriotic Union (formerly the Social Christian Popular Party), Paul Casagnol, sent a letter to U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), criticizing the U.S. spearheading of an embargo against Haiti and its support for "dictator" Aristide. Casagnol established his credentials by noting that he had been invited to join Aristide's cabinet as ambassador to the United States, but that he was forced to refuse the offer when the new government began to systematically violate the Haitian Constitution.

Casagnol wrote: "It is now well documented that during his short tenure, Aristide proved to be an authoritarian on a par with many dictators who have been in power in the countries of this hemisphere during the last century. Among the most flagrant grievances, one may mention: his method of appointing his cabinet in disregard of the Constitution; refusing to submit the Cabinet for the approval of the legislative body; intimidating the congressmen by amassing a menacing mob around the legislative building; tolerating—some say

sending—someone among the mob to heckle a senator talking on the Senate floor and threaten him with the ‘surplice of Père Lebrun’ (necklacing); inciting the mob to burn and/or pillage the downtown stores; condoning the burning of the U.S. flag. . . .”

- Following his election, Aristide packed the Haitian Supreme Court with five new justices, and refused to submit their nominations to the Senate for confirmation. He also appointed his cabinet and his ambassadors without consulting the Congress. Whenever the Congress balked at these blatant violations of the Constitution, Lavalas mobs would appear with tires and gasoline in hand, sometimes invading the congressional chambers and even assaulting congressmen.

- Despite the fact that the Haitian Constitution bars the formation of presidential paramilitary forces, Aristide created a personal militia, the Special Presidential Service, or SSP, which was trained by French and Swiss military experts. According to a late 1991 *EIR* interview with then-Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Jacques Honorat, a longtime human rights activist who had suffered persecution from the Duvalier regime for decades, “former Tontons Macoutes were being recruited throughout the country, to be incorporated into that new militia. There were already more than 3,000 people registered.”

- In September 1991, the same night that the Army gave Aristide the choice of resigning or facing trial on abuse of power, a Lavalas mob beat and hacked to death the leader of the Haitian Christian Democratic Party, Baptist minister Sylvio Claude. Photographic evidence and eyewitness accounts confirm that it was Aristide henchmen who struck the first blows, mutilated the body, and then “necklaced” the corpse.

- Roger Lafontant, a Duvalierist who had been condemned to life imprisonment—under Lavalas pressure—during a 22-hour marathon trial in July 1991, was taken out of his jail cell on the night of the coup against Aristide, and murdered. Lafontant had been condemned for plotting against the state after his failed coup attempt in early 1991, a crime which, according to the Haitian Constitution, carries a maximum 15-year sentence.

- Although Aristide campaigned for the presidency on an anti-International Monetary Fund platform, immediately upon taking office he made a pact with the IMF, outraging some of his parishioners who knew that the IMF’s austerity conditionalities would finish off the impoverished nation. Aristide assured his angry followers that he was confident he could “turn the IMF to the people’s advantage.”

UPI interviewed an unnamed Haitian economist shortly after Aristide was ousted, who explained U.S. support for Aristide this way: “Whatever you could say about Aristide’s government, they undertook negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for the signing of a stand-by agreement for \$21 million, and loans from bilateral and multilateral partners were estimated at \$511 million for the current fiscal



Deposed dictator Jean-Bertrand Aristide at the White House in October 1991, shortly after his ouster from power. Even former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft calls him a certifiable psychopath.

year. Now all of this has vanished. That’s why serious people have to demand the reinstatement of Aristide.”

Diplomacy

- Aristide’s most prominent backer, former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, was not only notorious for his personal corruption, but also for his use of terrorists and assassins to intimidate his political adversaries. It was Pérez and his gang of thugs who welcomed Aristide to Caracas after his overthrow.

- Aristide sought to consolidate relations with both Fidel Castro and Muammar Qaddafi immediately upon taking office as President. Castro sent a 23-person delegation to Aristide’s February 1991 inaugural ceremony, and Aristide sent a cabinet minister to Libya, to initiate contact with Qaddafi.

- Aristide’s repeated sabotage of the Governor’s Island negotiations, and the refusal by Aristide’s choice for prime minister Robert Malval to enforce crucial aspects of that pact—specifically, the military amnesty—confirm that seizure of power and *not* national reconciliation is Aristide’s ultimate purpose. As one aide to Aristide, who asked to remain anonymous, characterized Aristide’s position during the Governor’s Island talks: “They believe that an upsurge from the people is coming, and they don’t want to give away anything at the negotiating table.”