

Haiti invasion plan runs into opposition

by Valerie Rush

The campaign to arm-twist the Clinton administration and the nations of Ibero-America into backing a so-called surgical strike into Haiti ran into resistance on the opening day of the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in Brazil on June 6, when Venezuelan Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Burelli insisted that "non-intervention is the backbone of American law," and that the solution to the Haiti crisis does not lie "in armed action by one country or by the region collectively."

Despite the drumbeat for invasion sounding in certain quarters in Washington, including the bankers' lobby group Inter-American Dialogue, and Jean-Bertrand Aristide's provocative presence at the OAS gathering, where he demanded that "swift and determined action" be taken against Haiti's entrenched military leaders, there is growing resistance in Ibero-America to this idea. There is also an escalating sense of outrage over the genocide being imposed on Haiti by the U.N.- and OAS-sponsored embargo in the name of democracy.

A tragic taste of things to come occurred in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and whose newly reelected government is being blackmailed by zealots within the Clinton administration to seal its border with Haiti or face the Haiti treatment itself. On June 4, Dominican soldiers, under orders to tighten border surveillance, fired on a group of impoverished Haitians attempting to smuggle a few gallons of gasoline into their country. One was killed, shot in the chest twice. It is also reported that many Dominican towns dependent on cross-border trade are paralyzed by the border crackdown.

According to sources with access to United Nations authorities, the 15,000 Dominican soldiers monitoring the border are refusing to allow food and medicine into Haiti, ordered by the United Nations to let *nothing* through until there is "clarification" of the embargo conditions—despite the fact that the U.N. provisions clearly permit food and medical supplies to enter Haiti. Norge Botello, president of the Dominican Congress, warned on June 7 that thousands of starving and desperate Haitians are preparing to cross into the Dominican Republic, raising fears of new and more terrible massacres on both sides of the border.

Archbishop speaks out

In his June 2 homily during the feast of Corpus Christi, Cardinal Nicolás de Jesús López, archbishop of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and president of the Latin

American Bishops Conference, denounced the brutality—and hypocrisy—of Haiti's would-be invaders and demanded that foreign policy be informed by elementary principles of justice.

Cardinal López also made reference to Theology of Liberation networks inside the Dominican Church who have openly thrown their support to voodoo practitioner and former presidential candidate José Francisco Peña Gómez. Peña Gómez, who has charged Dominican President Joaquín Balaguer with stealing the presidency by fraud, is, along with his liberation theology backers, an ardent supporter of ousted Haitian dictator Aristide.

Declared Cardinal López: "We are moved by the cadaverous images brought to us by news reports from areas such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, the Sahel, and elsewhere. . . . This concern extends for obvious reasons to the brother country of Haiti. I cannot begin to understand what the 'Friends of Haiti' think they're doing, with the total embargo they have just imposed on that martyred people. They claim it is to pressure the military government to leave and to restore the democracy represented by Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide. But there are more direct and effective ways to force out the Haitian military, without subjecting an entire population to the most savage, inhuman and cruel of abuses, on top of what they already suffer. And this is known above all by the United States, which has recently carried out adventures against other brother countries, a decision that has earned them much condemnation.

"On the other hand, I have more than enough reason to doubt that Mr. Aristide wants to return to Haiti, although the 'Friends of Haiti' are determined that he do so, and I doubt even more that he is the man to deal with a situation as complex as that of Haiti at this time, unless the Friends become permanent occupiers, and this is perhaps what they don't want. They will not know what to do with Haiti after they achieve their feat.

"The way in which this highly delicate matter has been handled demonstrates absolute unfamiliarity with the idiosyncracies of the Haitian people and of their history. That is the only explanation for so many blunders in a diplomacy which until now has only succeeded in aggravating an already explosive situation, and only for some democratic scruples which have not proven valid in other cases, such as in the case of the Dominican Republic in 1965.

"Out of personal conviction and for elementary reasons of human concern, I absolutely condemn the total embargo against Haiti, which I consider abuse of the weakest by the most powerful, and I urge that a solution for the Haitian crisis be sought more in line with the basic principles of justice.

"With regard to dissident sectors [within the church], from the time of Judas Iscariot until today we have known legions of them. Many of them have disappeared, others still exist. But their presence isn't depriving anyone of sleep; we generally feel sorry for them."