

Haiti: The Coup D'Etat of April 3, 2000

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Global Research, October 11, 2004

[Autonomy and Solidarity](#) 11 October 2004

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Once again, tragedy has struck Haïti!

On the very year of the Bicentennial of her exemplary Independence, she finds herself under foreign military occupation. Adding insult to injury, French boots are this time, part of the contingent desecrating her soil.

The vast majority of her people, poor peasants and their urban descendants, have once again been brutally disenfranchised, robbed of their hard-won citizenship by the Most Repugnant Elite, allied and subservient to hostile and racist foreign powers.

Although this tragedy came to a sudden conclusion on that fateful February 29, 2004, it was the result of a carefully and patiently crafted and executed plot. In a perverse kind of way, Haïti has made History again, proving unique albeit this time in her victimization. Coups d'Etat are usually swift operations, and even when announced by a long period of destabilization orchestrated and funded by imperialist power(s), as in the 1973 Chilean coup, the final blow is delivered by the local military. However, in the February 2004 "regime change," the usual puppet masters had to step unto the stage and quite openly deliver the coup de grace themselves.

This "new and improved" coup d'Etat, resembles a slowly unfolding chess game, where unfortunately the Haïtian people was finally checkmated last February 29.

But, as is often the case, things are not what they appear to be; the outcome of that game had in fact been decided quite sometime ago, almost exactly 4 years before, on April 3, 2000, at 6:00 a.m. to be precise. Following this most tragic day all the agitation, maneuvers, feints and counter-feints, amounted to little more than the pathetic moves of a headless chicken, still trying to run away from the butcher's knife. The minute those 7 bullets were pumped into Jean Dominique's body, the Lavalas phase of the Haïtian popular democratic movement was, for all intents and purposes, dead on its feet.

In fact, the permanent silencing of Jean Dominique, was THE logical and indispensable prerequisite for the success of this new coup against the Haïtian people; the third in less than 20 years, if one includes as indeed one should, the pre-emptive strike of November 29, 1987, when voters were mowed down by the army assisted by FRAPH's precursors. This conclusion, though reached in hindsight, is indisputable upon analysis of the nature and mechanism of the coup as well as the nature and extent of Jean's influence on the popular democratic movement.

We are convinced, as were Haïti's enemies, that JanDo would have detected this new conspiracy, exposed its sponsors, objectives and mechanisms, identified its local

accomplices and rallied the national forces necessary to foil it. Using his microphone to project his great voice, harnessing his hard-won moral authority and his legendary powers of persuasion in face-to-face discussion, Jean would have single-handedly defeated this criminal plot.

We know many will doubt our assertion; indeed how could one man armed only with a microphone and a radio station stop the two juggernauts conspiring against Haïti; how could he have made a difference when the two imperialist powers who had done the most harm to the Haïtian people all through its history, combined their forces, one to subjugate, the other to humiliate and extract revenge.

Such doubts might come easy to those who don't know the realities of Haïti and who have not witnessed Jean's career and his tremendous impact on Haïtian politics during the last 20 years. Given the short attention span of international public opinion, specially where Haiti is concerned, they certainly would not remember how Jean had ridiculed and defeated a last ditch attempt by hired intellectuals to derail Haiti's first democratic elections, in December 1990, by warning against a plebiscite; how he had exposed and unraveled the attempt by the economic elite to harness the just frustrations of a significant fraction of the Haïtian masses and trick them into serving their project to strengthen their hold on the economy while regaining their monopoly on political power. The white knight of the bourgeoisie was Oilvier Nadal then, rather than Andy Apaid, and Jean paid dearly for daring to stand in his way: almost overnight most of Radio Haïti's publicity contracts were cancelled. Later on, JanDo would similarly defeat a clever US sponsored plot to effectively disenfranchise the poor people of Haïti, but this time by cunning rather than by violence: electoral cards were to be issued sparingly in with a bias guaranteed to exclude most of the electorate likely to vote Lavalas.

Much more than a radio anchorman, much more than a political leader, Jean Dominique was our collective radar spotting the traps of our enemies long before they could spring shut on us; our lighthouse cutting through the fog of confusion that has slowly descended upon the Haitian popular democratic movement since 1994; our alarm siren whose blast would have awaken and chastised our political leaders the minute they started drifting into corruption or indifference to the plight of our people. For if Jean had friends in power, he never was a friend of power and he spared no one in his defense of the Haitian masses true interest. There is no doubt in our mind, that even someone as head-strong as Jean-Bertrand Aristide, would have been forced to hear Jean and thus avoid at least the most fatal errors and mistakes accumulated in the last 4 years.

As mentioned before, a close examination of the coup of February 29, 2004, would show why Jean would have been its most formidable opponent. For despite the spectacular saber-rattling of the small band of thugs armed and trained in the Dominican Republic before being let loose upon our country, they were but a small cog in the vast machine of political destabilization. Key to the success of the plot was the role played by the self-anointed "independent press." From 1994 on, but specially since 2000, the majority of radio stations in Haïti had joined into an informal but very effective alliance against the Lavalas movement. Jean, ever the astute observer of Haïti's political scene and a master at sniffing out the plots of our international foes, had noted as early as the end of 1994, the incredible number of new radio stations that had sprouted in the country under the military dictatorship of Cedras, at a time when there was no freedom of the press and the country was under economic embargo to boot. For him, it was clear that something was amiss: the

enemy had decided to turn our most important weapon, radio stations, against us. Jean was the fiercest defender of freedom of the press, but he also understood this freedom to be at the service of a greater good: the right of the people to untainted information. All during these last 4 years, this right was being grossly violated by both the State-owned media, spewing a steady stream of indecent pro-Aristide propaganda, and by the “independent” radio stations drumming up a coordinated climate of insurrection and intolerance. No doubt Jean Dominique, even alone, would have remained the Haitian people’s trustful compass in these times of confusion and treachery. Moreover, the tremendous respect he commanded, even from his worst enemies, would have carried enough weight to force all his colleagues, whether state-employed or IRI-sponsored, into at least a modicum of respect for objectivity and ethics in journalism. With Jean gone, the press ran amok, with overzealous partisans of President Aristide making open threats on the State-owned television and commercial radios opening their microphone to convicted criminals, for their daily “address to the Nation”.

Jean Dominique was our “army of one,” the political immune system of the popular democratic movement. For the abomination of February 29, 2004 to succeed, he had to be permanently removed from the scene.

We must fight relentlessly for his killers to be brought to justice and for the truth to come out about this brutal assassination. We stand convinced today, that if the triggermen and local planners were Haitians, the masterminds of the crime are the same who engineered the February coup and who have always considered targeted assassination as a normal tool of foreign policy.

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