

# The UN Mission in Haiti

OAS official Ricardo Seitenfus speaks out

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The Special Representative for the Organisation of American States Ricardo Seitenfus was relieved of his duties 24 hours after he gave a candid interview to the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* on Monday December 20th in which he lambasted the UN occupation of Haiti.

In an interview with the Swiss paper *Le temps* (December 20th 2010), Ricardo Seitenfus, blamed international capitalism for the ills of Haiti. Referring to Haiti's 200 year national liberation struggle the Brazilian born academic said:

"The original sin of Haiti on the international scene was its liberation. Haitians committed an unacceptable crime in 1804: a crime of *lesé-majesté* for a troubled world. The West was a world of colonialism, slavery and racism whose wealth was based on the exploitation of conquered lands. So the Haitian revolutionary model scared superpowers. The United States did not recognize Haiti's independence until 1865. And France required payment of a ransom to accept this release. From the beginning, independence was compromised and hampered the development of the country. The world has never known how to deal with Haiti, so it ended up ignoring it. This led to two hundred years of solitude for Haiti on the international stage. Today, the UN has blindly applied Chapter 7 of its charter; it deploys its troops to impose its peace operation. It is solving nothing, and even making things worse. We want to make Haiti a capitalist country, an export platform for the U.S. market. It is absurd."

In 2004 Jean Bertrand Aristide was removed from office after a coup organised by the governments of France, the United States and Canada. Aristide's *Fanmi Lavalas* party enjoyed overwhelming support among Haiti's poor population.

Aristide's emphasis on social justice, equality and participative democracy threatened the interests of the financial and political elites of the developed world whose conception of democracy involves private control by multinational corporations over all means of production, education and health.

According to Seitenfus, Haiti's tragedy has always been its proximity to the USA, who have ruthlessly oppressed the island in the pursuit of their own economic interests.

Seitenfus went on to denounce the role of NGOs in Haiti stating that many NGOs behaved more like businessmen than humanitarian workers and were using Haiti as a laboratory to test out new technologies and recruiting young people with neither experience nor knowledge of the Haitian people.

Seitenfus lamented that fact that Haitian doctors trained in Cuba were emigrating to the United States, Canada and France rather than staying in their own country to help the poor. Seitenfus also criticised the attempt by the 'international community' to keep Haiti dependent on aid, citing fair trade and sustainable local agriculture as well as a tourism industry based on respect for Haitian identity and culture as the way in which the country should be developed.

Speaking about his experience in Haiti Mr Seitenfus said:

"In two months, I completed a two-year mission in Haiti. To stay here and not be overwhelmed by what I saw I had to create a number of psychological defenses. I wanted to remain an independent voice despite the weight of the organization I represent. I stayed because I wanted to express my profound doubts and tell the world that is enough is enough. It is time to stop playing with Haiti" [1]

Approximately 24 hours after this interview Mr. Seitenfus was no longer the Special Representative of the Organisation of American States. Speaking the truth about Haiti cost him his job. But Mr. Seitenfus can take comfort in the knowledge that he spoke up for the people of Haiti when others were too greedy, too cowardly or too indifferent to do so.

Setenfus referred to Haiti's geographical misfortune, being so close to the USA. This is indeed true, but Europe's role in Haiti's misery has been no less destructive than that played by the United States.

There is a common conception in Europe that the problem in the world today is the United States, that if the European Union were to be sufficiently centralized, it could play a more constructive role in the world, providing a balance to US global hegemony.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The EU is every bit as cruel, corrupt and despotic as the United States of America. Every time the subject of Haiti is mentioned in French media, maudlin pity and condescension infuse the mendacious discourse. The French media have never honestly acknowledged France's direct role in the destruction of Haiti from their support for the Duvalier dictatorships in the Cold War to the kidnapping of the democratically elected president Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Nor have the French media ever reported on the atrocities committed by the MINUSTAH UN troops currently occupying the island, against the wishes of the population.

The European Union has arrogated to itself the role of international arbiter in matters concerning democracy, sending out anonymous delegates to other countries to judge their political systems in terms of 'human rights' and 'democracy'.

In 2003, the European Union worked with *Initiative de la Société Civile*, an offshoot of Group of 184, headed by André Apaid, an American sweat shop owner with an impressive record on 'human rights'. The European Union gave Apaid's 'civil society' organisation 773,000 Euro. According to the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, Apaid paid Thomas "Labanye" Robinson to murder members of the Fanmi Lavalas party. Apaid's opposition to Jean Bertrand Aristide intensified when he doubled the minimum wage of workers in Haiti. Raising the wages of the world's poorest workers is clearly a 'human rights' violation in the eyes of the EU and the USA!

In the elections in December 2010, approved by the US and the EU, the country's most popular party Fanmi Lavalas was banned from participation. In other words, the European Union and the United States advocated the exclusion of the majority of Haitian citizens from the democratic process. Until such a time as the rebellious slums of Haiti realize what the rich countries mean by 'democracy' and 'human rights' UN troops will patrol the streets of Port Au Prince keeping, in the words of Mr. Seitenfus, 'the peace of the cemetery'.

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