

The perfect neocolony

Via [Viento Sur](#)

In the early hours of Wednesday 7, a paramilitary commando entered the home of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in Port-au-Prince and shot him dead. His wife was seriously wounded. Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who was leaving the government (Moïse had appointed a replacement for him on Monday), declared a state of emergency and brought the armed forces onto the streets. Investigations had not yet begun when reports began circulating that the attackers spoke Spanish, with some suggesting they were Venezuelan (obviously Chavistas) and Colombian (obviously “from the former FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]”). On Wednesday morning, Colombian President Iván Duque called for the intervention of the Organization of American States (OAS), whose Permanent Council was convened in the evening. This is an intolerable assassination, he said. In some European countries and the United States, the possibility of sending troops back to Haiti has begun to be discussed, which would recreate the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (Minustah), which was maintained between 2004 and 2017. In the statements of some leaders, the tribute to Moïse went beyond the memory of a murder victim: there were those who praised his administration. Haiti an ungovernable country, Haiti a minor country that cannot fend for itself without a father to take care of it: the commonplaces of all these years to justify militarization, the succession of corrupt governments, hunger and misery as natural evils of a backward society, the imperial presence – more or less open, more or less disloyal, as the case may be – came to the fore once again. They have been heard so many times before.

It may not be known for years, it may never be known how Moïse really died, Danny Shaw, an American activist who has lived in Port-au-Prince for several months, told Telesur on Wednesday.

The assassinated ruler had so many enemies that the shots could have come from almost anywhere. Except from the popular camp. Because if there are sectors that are not at all interested in a scenario like the one that is likely to unfold, with a possible return of MINUSTAH or an equivalent intervention mission, now or in the near future, it is those who really want to change things. There is no mourning in the streets, because Moïse was directly and indirectly responsible for dozens of murders, for some 12 collective massacres in popular neighborhoods in the last four years, because he was complicit with the most rancid Haitian oligarchy and gangs, which are growing like mushrooms (see Mafia State, Brecha, 26-II-21), because he ruled like a dictator; but there is no joy either, because his fall, under these conditions, is far from meaning the fall of the system of which he was a part. If only there were a Wikileaks to shed light on how this execution was planned, Shaw said, and he reminded us that it is not uncommon for dictators to be made uncomfortable by being unrepresentative, as happened 60 years ago in the neighboring Dominican Republic with Rafael Trujillo, assassinated because a liberal was more convenient than an uncontrollable beast. And then there are the gangs, and there is drug trafficking.

The day before Moïse was assassinated, Brecha interviewed Henry Boisrolin, coordinator of the Haiti Democratique Committee, which has been based in Argentina for years. The idea was to talk about what was happening in his country, so silenced, so silent, so little present in the media, so miserable. There had been a chain of murders, plus one: 19 people shot dead in the middle of the street on the night of June 29-30, among them journalist Diego Charles and feminist activist Antoinette Duclaire; it was striking that this was the umpteenth massacre of social leaders in a very short time and that it barely made the news; there was talk of the open action of armed gangs unified in a commando led by a former policeman who presented himself as a "revolutionary," who controlled entire neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince, extorted

money from the poor and the rich, and caused population displacement: What was that? The news was not the only one; on Monday 5, Moïse appointed a new prime minister, the eighth since he took office in 2017, a politician linked to the liberal opposition, which gave an idea of the extent of the government's decline; the news barely registered the street demonstrations, some very large, that had been going on day after day for several months... Lots of talk. Boisrolin began by putting them in context.

"We need to contextualize so we don't get lost amidst so much murder, so much crime, so much misery, because when we talk about Haiti it's to talk about it and we lose the thread," he said. He said that the crisis Haiti is going through is a non-stop crisis, a slow-motion movie about the collapse of the system of domination, a system that started working after the first US military occupation in 1915. Since then, the country has become a perfect neo-colony and the most impoverished in the Americas. Today, this system is in a phase of decomposition and those in power want to reformulate it, with a different kind of legal and political order, to give more power to the Executive and weaken the Parliament. The constitution that was secretly drafted by the government, which was to be submitted to a plebiscite in September, is along these lines, but is worth very little to ordinary people, Boisrolin said, just as the presidential and legislative elections called for the same day as the constitutional plebiscite are worth very little ("It's not that they are inept, they are wicked: they are holding the election of the next parliament, which will be composed of two chambers, at the same time as a plebiscite on a constitution that abolishes one of those two chambers, the senate. It sounds absurd, but it shows how little they really care about the democracy they claim to adhere to).

Like all elections that have been held recently, this year's elections, if held at all, will be marked by fraud. Any

candidate from the popular camp who stands can win them if they are held in good faith, Boisrolin believes. "But the dominant sectors will not let that happen. The only truly free election held in the country after the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship was won by a representative of the popular camp, Father Jean Bertrand Aristide, in 1990. He won overwhelmingly, but was overthrown in a US-sponsored coup.

What serious election can be held under the current conditions, where people will not vote, as they have not gone to vote in the past and in previous elections, because they are not sure that the results will be respected, because in a subsistence economy like Haiti's, in a society as brutally pyramidal as Haiti's, it has lost all meaning to put a small vote in the ballot box? "Today in my country there are 6 million people suffering from severe hunger, 70% of the active population is unemployed, and life expectancy is less than 60 years," says Boisrolin. And he points out that to understand the Haitian structural crisis, its geopolitical position must be taken into account: "It's in the center of the Caribbean, on the sea route to Venezuela, it's the closest country to Cuba and, if since the Monroe Doctrine Washington considers all Latin America as its backyard, the Caribbean is its first backyard. This is where important goods circulate for them. They cannot allow Haiti to become too destabilized, they must maintain the status quo in any way they can, if necessary by sacrificing political leaders, no matter how functional they may have been."

Jovenel Moïse is gone. But is he gone?

Perhaps. Today, there is an internal struggle between the dominant sectors. There is a business sector that is directly dependent on the United States. There are 11, 12 families that control power and that supported Moïse, who was a big banker businessman. And there is a sector that still has very little weight that is making an effort to raise the level of development of this very special capitalism. They also have

relations with the empire, but they aim at a more presentable institutional functioning, with a certain respect for legality, something that the last governments did not have. Moïse had ruled by decree for a year, after dissolving parliament. His management was scandalous from all points of view. On Monday, he released all politicians who had been prosecuted in corruption cases, in order to allow some of them to run in the next elections. It was only maintained on the basis of this corruption and, above all, repression. When, after a fuel [price] increase in 2018, huge popular demonstrations erupted, the repression intensified. The government alternated between selective and non-selective assassinations. It resorted to collective massacres: 12 in four years, with dozens killed. And it aimed to break the backbone of the popular movement. That is what those who come after it will continue to aim for.

And, of course, the executive was maintained by the support of the powers that be, who, although they had no one else, supported him, gave him money, covered him. Since the departure of MINUSTAH, the Cogroup has been in place, made up of representatives from the United States, Canada, France, Spain, Brazil, the OAS, the UN [United Nations] and the European Union. It is the real government, and it is obviously under Washington's control.

The Cogroup knows about the human rights violations committed by the Moïse government, just as MINUSTAH knew about the atrocities committed by previous administrations. Recently, Moïse called Luis Almagro, the Secretary General of the OAS, to ask for his support. He was beset by popular demonstrations, the rise in crime was overwhelming him, kidnappings for ransom were widespread, gangs were swarming, some of them bothered him, and he wanted his support. Almagro sent a mission, which produced a long report that did not even mention political repression. The OAS proposed a political solution consisting of a government of national unity with

Moïse and, institutionally, demanded only a change in the composition of the Electoral Council, in which Moïse had placed friends of his. Less than a cosmetic change. The opposition rejected it.

Who embodies the opposition today?

There are three main sectors: the right-wing democratic forces, the social democratic forces, and the left, which a few years ago finally began a process of confluence in the Patriotic and Popular Front, made up of seven parties that define themselves as socialist, social movement, human rights, and feminist. There is a consensus among the social democratic sector and the left to move towards a government that we call a transitional government of rupture, in which all the opposition sectors would be present, all of them, and in which none of the current rulers would be part. Such a government would function for about two years, would be in charge of establishing a new institutionality, affirming national sovereignty, promoting social reforms, judging crimes against humanity and corruption scandals of the current administration, reestablishing relations with all countries including Venezuela, calling a Constituent Assembly, and then calling general elections. There is no one in a position to lead this process alone, it will require all the current opposition and we will have to be creative to make our way towards a more just society. They must not humiliate us as much as they are doing now. That is the essential thing.

Boisrolin says that if the street demonstrations have been so numerous since 2018, it is because there is a substratum of rebellion in the people that neither repression, nor famine, nor pandemic (what's one more plague in a country exposed to them all?) have been able to subdue. He thinks that there is a long tradition of struggle in this country, which led the only successful anti-slavery revolt in history, and that, despite all the difficulties, much remains of that tradition. And that now "there is a greater degree of organization in the popular

camp” than there was some time ago. He says that it is no wonder that state terrorism has reached the paroxysm it did under Moïse, and that this will require the “popular sectors to increase their level of self-defense.” “The efforts of all recent governments to discipline the people have failed,” says Boisrolin, but he emphasizes that this does not mean they are close to success. “The current situation is highly explosive and it is very difficult to predict where it will evolve. The opposition is divided on what to do. Some are betting on a popular uprising, others want to negotiate a moderate change with the US. If I had to bet, I would say that we are close to a general explosion. I don’t know who will lead it, but the conditions are in place.