



### Imperialism's Humanitarian Mask

This is the actual record of foreign intervention in Haiti, an intervention that is once more escalating in the wake of the earthquake. In the modern world, imperialism almost always wears a humanitarian mask, we are told the 10,000 US Infantry now being deployed in Haiti are there to help the people despite the M4 rifles they carry, their authorization to use lethal force and the long and bloody history of the US Military in Haiti. Very quickly after the earthquake the US Heritage Foundation advocated taking advantage of the earthquake to impose neoliberal restructuring on the people of Haiti, putting a statement on their website that argued that, "the U.S. response to the tragic earthquake in Haiti earthquake offers opportunities to re-shape Haiti's long-dysfunctional government and economy." This was only up for a couple of hours before someone realised it was perhaps a little too honest and it was removed, however it had already been copied and has been put into widespread circulation by Naomi Klein among others.

Klein's book, *The Shock Doctrine*, looks at how capitalism uses crises to impose restructuring on people that would otherwise resist. In recent years the mass of the people of Haiti have suffered greatly under occupation-imposed restructuring programs. Of course, as usual, there is also that narrow ruling layer that have done well out of acting as local agents for the occupation, or which have been able to use the occupation forces to suppress protest at the poor pay and conditions they offer to those who work from them and rent from them. Historically, as we have seen, the interests of early capitalism saw the original inhabitants worked to death for the gold that fueled the expansion of European capitalism and then saw millions of Africans enslaved for the sugar plantations that enabled the young capitalist system to expand. It will be a tragedy if the huge social needs created by this earthquake are allowed to once more create the conditions under which future generations of Haitians are enslaved by poverty and desperation.

A week after the earthquake it is becoming clear that this is what is in

process. On Thursday the IMF announced a further \$100 million loan, pushing Haiti's debt to the IMF to \$265 million. By 2003 Haiti's debt service was already approaching 150% of the amount being spent on education, health care and other services. The previous IMF loan was conditional on Haiti raising prices for electricity and refusing pay increases to all public employees except for those on the minimum wage, and although the strings attached to the latest loan are not yet visible, the history of IMF policies, in Haiti and around the world, in utilising loans as a tool for the implementation of neoliberal policies.

The people of Haiti made an enormous contribution to the struggle for freedom when they rose up and overthrew slavery in the 1790's. But as we have seen the history of imperialist powers imposing economic and social policy did not end then, it carried on to the present day when it appears the earthquake will be the 'opportunity' to force the survivors to accept what they would otherwise have resisted. A popular Haitian proverb says 'Tanbou prete pa janm fè bon dans' or 'A borrowed drum never makes good dancing' illustrating a general awareness of what the role of outside intervention has really been and if imperialist intervention did not end in the 1790's nor did the resistance of the people of Haiti to that intervention, that also carries on to the present day. Solidarity with the people of Haiti does not start and end with this tragic earthquake but must extend to the struggles they will fight in its aftermath against the 'disaster capitalism' that is now being imposed.

Andrew Flood - Jan 2010

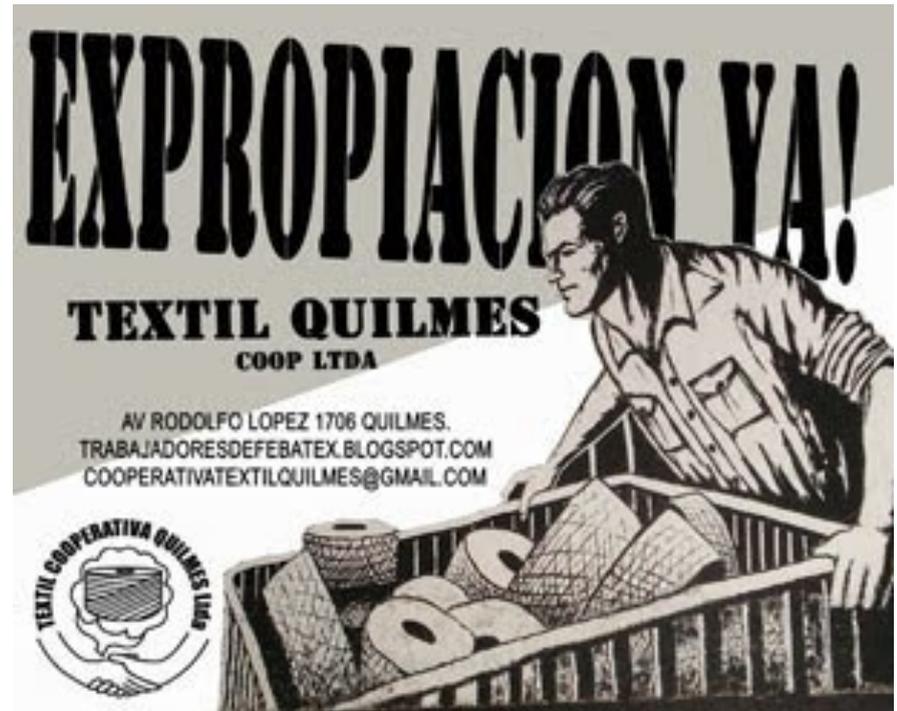
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### Some sources and further reading

Noam Chomsky, Year 501: The Conquest Continues.

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic  
CLR James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution

# Argentina: Factory Occupations End With Workers Control



In December last year two factories in Argentina were socialised after almost two years of struggle by the workers.

The factories are Disco de Oro and Febatel- Febatex. The first makes dough for pastries and cakes and the second is a textile factory.

At the beginning of 2009 the boss of Disco de Oro used the economic crisis as an excuse to cut workers pay. Holiday pay and salaries were then withheld. Finally he decided to send the workers home claiming that there wasn't enough raw material to produce dough in the factory and that he wanted to fix some of the machinery.

In reality he planned to strip the factory and shut it down. When the workers realised what was going on they decided to occupy the factory and spend night and day there watching until they could start using the factory by themselves. They eventually started working as a cooperative, making the same products they used to make. And last

month after a year of struggle the workers are finally the legal owners of the factory.

Febatex, now called Cooperativa Textil Quilmes, also had a boss who owed them pay and who tried to close down the factory. Before the economic crisis there were 120 workers at Febatex - the boss started firing people until there were only 10 left. The workers decided to resist and occupy the factory to prevent the owners taking away the machinery and started camping on the doors of their workplace. They stayed there for 14 months until last December when they socialised the factory with all 120 workers running it themselves without a boss. They received the support of neighbours and workers associations all over the world, which helped them to get through those difficult days.

<http://trabajadoresdefebatex.blogspot.com/>  
<http://obrerosdiscodeoro.blogspot.com/>

Elisa

