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Camille Chalmers “We call for solidarity between the people”

José Antonio Gutiérrez D.

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On January 28th, we had the chance to have a telephone talk with Camilla Chalmers, from the Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (Haitian Platform in Defence of an Alternative Development, PAPDA), in Port-au-Prince. Here we transcribe the questions and answers we could exchange in spite of the natural difficulties of communication in these circumstances. We believe his opinions represent a contribution to understand what’s really going on in Haiti, they contradict the official version of the media and give us a very precise notion of the type of solidarity that the Haitian people need –and that we should not fail to give.

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1. What do you think of all the signs of solidarity of the people around the world with the Haitian people?

We are very touched by this international solidarity. Haiti is a country that has been isolated since 1804 and now that is

back in the eyes of the international public opinion, we have a chance to establish more real and permanent ties, beyond calls for charity. We call on the people to found an international solidarity network in the same spirit as the Sandinista International Brigades, that helps us in the reconstruction tasks, but also to come out of our social crisis. We are talking of people-to-people solidarity, not of that solidarity that States use in order to dominate the people.

2. Which is the situation currently with the US occupation?

What the US is doing, the militarisation of Haiti with the pathetic excuse of humanitarian aid, is unacceptable. This is part of a strategy to militarise the Caribbean region, as a way to confront the people's awakening in Latin America and to also threaten the Bolivarian Venezuela Republic. This is no isolated action. There is the military base set up by US imperialism in Curacao, with the complicity of the Dutch government. There are the military bases in Colombia. And now we have this military response to a fundamentally humanitarian problem.

3. But the US say that this is a “humanitarian” mission... what do you think of this?

We have to state things clearly, because imperialism has a propaganda campaign in the international media that lies ceaselessly. This military presence of the US brought no relief to the human catastrophe we are living; quite the contrary, they delayed humanitarian aid of countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, of European countries, of Caricom, in order to privilege Haiti's militarisation. What's going on in Haiti is really scandalous. What is being pursued really is the geopolitical control of the Caribbean and it is really outrageous that they use shamelessly for this purpose such a painful situation that the Haitian people are going through at the moment.

Together with this geopolitical control we believe that the militarization of Haiti responds to what Bush called a “preventive war” logic. The US fear a popular uprising, because the

life standards in Haiti for a long time are intolerable, and this is even more so the case now, they are inhumane. So the troops are getting ready for when the time to suppress the people comes.

4. What do you think of the international community projects for the “reconstruction” of Haiti?

That is another scandal. The Haitian people's movement and their organisations have been excluded by the international community from decision making on solutions to this crisis. This only shows the reactionary and anti-popular nature of the measures they want to impose to reconstruct our country. We have, for instance, the IMF loan which is not a grant that matches the dimensions of this human tragedy, not such a thing, but an extortionist and cynical loan, tied to conditionalities in order to facilitate a more favourable environment for transnational investment in Haiti.

5. What is the role of the people in this crisis?

In the face of this humanitarian farce to justify militarization and of an international community which pursues to reconstruct Haiti according to their own interests instead of those of the Haitian people, our people showed a great capacity. They got organised to face this crisis, they practiced solidarity in a very touching way... here you can see people sharing all they have, living on the streets and sharing their clothes, their food, whatever they have is shared with those behind you. Our people reject militarization, they don't want it, they are outraged to find so many weapons being sent instead of food, medicine or fresh water. But it is among this self-organised people where the foundations for a much necessary alternative project can be found. Not more of the same, but something really alternative and popular.