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Our Policy Is A Mistake on Every Level

By Ed Koch

President Clinton has said our stay in Haiti will be short. But that's what he said about Somalia, where we stayed for more than a year, sustaining many casualties, including deaths.

If we are lucky, our "peace-keeping" troops in Haiti won't end up in guerrilla warfare, but don't count on it. Already, our soldiers have had to stand silently by as the Haitian police continued to assault and murder citizens. Being physically present and doing nothing makes us a party to the atrocities. One of our soldiers summed it up best when he told *The New York Times*: "I'm disgusted."

I was struck earlier this week by former President Carter's statement that, while he was still in Port-au-Prince negotiating with the Haitian leaders, he had been "disturbed" to learn that 61 U.S. warplanes were heading to Haiti to begin a military invasion. I suspect he felt somewhat like Secretary of State Cordell Hull did on December 7, 1941, when he learned that Japanese planes were attacking Pearl Harbor while he was conducting negotiations with Japanese envoys. Not exactly parallel, but close. FDR said that was "a day that will live in infamy." How will that day in Haiti be described by historians?

The fact that the planes were called back should not end the debate on President Clinton's actions: Did he have the right to order the invasion without congressional authorization, or is it an impeachable offense?

If the United States had common-sense immigration laws, we wouldn't even have considered invading Haiti. In his "pep rally" speech last week, Clinton said, "Three thousand more Haitians — 5 percent of their entire population — are hiding in their own country. If we don't act, they could be the next wave of refugees at our door."

Norman Mailer once asked in a book title, "Why are we in Vietnam?" Millions of Americans are now asking, "Why are we in Haiti?" The answer: to prevent Haitians from fleeing to the United States. Undoubtedly, one of Clinton's fears is that in Florida, one of the major ports of entry for these refugees, voter backlash may help the Republicans win this fall's gubernatorial race.

The Clinton administration's current affection for the rights of Haitians is at variance with the way it distinguished between Cubans and Haitians. Cubans were encouraged to flee their country and were allowed

immediate entry, while the Haitian refugees were not permitted to land in the United States. Most observers who are not Clinton sycophants would acknowledge the disparate, and disgraceful, treatment was racist.

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I am not one of those who believe it is inhumane to limit the entry of anyone into the United States. Our immigration laws are already among the most generous in the world, allowing 1 million people to enter every year. Those laws, however, are not effectively enforced, and that is what is driving concerned Americans crazy.

Such frustrations have caused California Governor Peter Wilson to foolishly urge a constitutional amendment barring children born in the United States to illegal immigrants from having automatic citizenship. His extreme position stems from the fact that annually tens of thousands of Mexicans cross the border illegally. They are arrested by border-patrol officers and sent back, only to return again and again until they finally make it across undetected. They then fade into the community, burdening California's hospitals, schools and welfare programs.

While I was in Congress, the Jackson-Vanik legislation, denying economic loans and most-favored-nation status to the Soviet Union, was passed. Now that Russia no longer prevents its citizens from freely emigrating, that sanction has been removed, as it should have been. But what about Cuba? One couldn't blame Castro if he were puzzled. Where once our chorus to him was, "Let your people go," we now say, "Keep your people there." So, ironically, even if Cuba were to move toward democracy and a market economy, we still wouldn't grant it MFN status, because it's preventing its citizens from leaving — at our request.

President Clinton has engaged in another irrational immigration decision. Five years ago, President Bush issued an executive order allowing the Chinese entering the United States to claim political asylum here based on China's limiting the number of children allowed per

family. The State Department recently informed me that, bizarrely, Clinton has ordered the continuation of that policy.

Here they come: 1 billion, 200 million Chinese, if they can get out of China. If that's our logic, we should, conversely, grant political asylum to every Irish national, because Ireland's constitution prohibits abortion

It appears we are agreeing to an amnesty for the Haitian leaders who only last week Clinton described as "armed thugs who have conducted a reign of terror, executing children, raping women, killing priests." And Raoul Cedras says the agreement doesn't require that he go into exile. Will Clinton agree to amnesty for those in Bosnia who have engaged in ethnic cleansing, murder and rape? Will amnesty be given to those in Rwanda who are responsible for murdering perhaps 500,000 people in three months? Shouldn't all of these people, including the Haitian generals and their thugs, be charged and tried as war criminals in accordance with the principles of the Nuremberg trials?

We will now be spending hundreds of millions of dollars to occupy Haiti, and perhaps billions resurrecting its economy and infrastructure. Clinton should consider pouring that money, instead, into Washington, D.C., which has more murders annually per capita than Haiti. It wasn't too long ago that D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly asked that the National Guard, the local counterpart of the 82nd Airborne, be sent there as "peacekeepers."

One final note: *The Wall Street Journal* reported this week that the "U.S. military will be feeding as many as 1.2 million Haitians a day." The day before, the Haitians were feeding themselves. ■