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Haitian Media as a Political Press

Viv Demokrasi Popile.
Long Live Popular Democracy

Introduction

Haiti is a country whose history of authoritarianism dominates much of its literature. It is a country where politics and economics have made international news—not because of successes—but because Haiti has been a very good example of how authoritarian politics can prey on a society and oppress its people. The authoritarian structure seemingly ingrained in the Haitian memory permeates every institution. For a variety of very complex reasons, this authoritarian structure solidified in the post revolutionary period of the 1800s, and only got stronger over time. At the apex of this structure was the military, which had grown strong in the revolutionary period and remained strong in the post revolutionary period because of external threats to Haitian independence. This structure reached its apogee in the reign of the two Duvaliers, whose end will be the starting point of this analysis. This authoritarian structure will need to be dismantled if a democratic society is to emerge in Haiti. This dismantling means that a restructuring will be needed in the relations among government, the marketplace, and the media.

Haitian media, as an institution, have been ignored by scholars due to the political and economic chaos within Haiti.¹ The country has been viewed as being too insignificant to study in depth. Haiti is a small territory with a large poor population. Occupying the western third of the island of Hispaniola in the West Indies, Haiti has a land area of only 10,714 square miles, about the size of Maryland,² and a population of 6,039,000,³ about the same as the state of Georgia in the United States. Haiti has a population density of 535.75 per square mile while Georgia has a population density of 94.0 per square mile.⁴ Besides the small size of Haiti, another feature that limits Haitian media studies is that Haiti's communication infrastructure is often limited to three cities: its administrative and commercial capital, Port-au-Prince, with a population of over a million in 1997; Cap-Haitien with 75,000 people in 1997; and Les Cayes with 50,000 people in 1997. Haiti's size, violent politics, lack of a communications infrastructure and high illiteracy rate

contribute to the impression that Haitian media is not important enough to study.

Through this study of Haitian media, the role of the press in securing Haitian democracy is to be examined. Using media to become more democratic can be useful only if one believes that democracy is a state of mind created when the political, economic and communication institutions operate separately as institutions but together as enabling democracy. If this is believed to be true, then to have a more democratic government, media must be encouraged to win a more equal role with the political and economic institutions of Haiti. An assumption used in this analysis is that media play a major role in any society's political economy. Schramm suggested that economics and communications were organic to society and that neither can develop without a corresponding development in the other.⁵ Schiller declared that the economic role of information was a factor in the maintenance of the material system of power both domestically and internationally.⁶ He suggested that the typical history of communication development in countries where it was furthest advanced was a chain of interactions in which education, industry, national income, urbanization, political participation and the mass media have all gone forward together. Finally, Nordenstreng suggested: "Thus we do not want to view the media and their content in isolation from socio-politico-economical structures: We should be careful not to over-differentiate between the establishment (including the government and the private sector) and the media system."⁷

This tri-foundation includes media due to the support the state and media can give each other to create a freer society. Media are important to the state for three reasons: (1) media are part of a larger socioeconomic system, (2) media create and sustain beliefs in collective goals, and (3) media define, preserve, or weaken national identities. On the other hand, the state is important to the media based on the assumptions that state ideology directs media, that politically imposed restrictions are based on how secure leadership feels; and that empowerment is based on social, cultural and economic systems such as unions, community-based groups, banks, airlines and political organizations.⁸

The relationship between media and the state will be examined here using the Haitian media within Haiti and the development of the independent Haitian-American media. This analysis of the Haitian press both in Haiti and in the United States attempts to make clear the role of these presses in the development of Haitian democracy. The starting place for the analysis is during the Duvalier period in Haiti, around 1979, with the exile of journalists. These exiles established the Haitian-American press. When this exiled independent press is examined, we find not a traditional ethnic press but a political press. This political press has a clearly defined role in the democratization of Haiti. By using the theoretical basis of political versus commodity press, I will describe the options the Haitian-American press will have to confront as a consequence of Haiti establishing a democratic infrastructure.

Political Press Theory

In the introduction, both Haitian and Haitian-American media were described as political. This characterization, however, could remain both vague and unclear if a more precise theoretical term was not specified. At the most general level, it can be agreed that media are instruments through which information is publicly disseminated. As more concrete and particular aspects get included, conceptions of the press begin to vary quite widely. Thus, it is not surprising that societies have different conceptions of the press, with different consequences for press freedom and democracy.

The Haitian press, although operating in an authoritarian society, does not fit comfortably in the definition of an authoritarian press.⁹ It does not, precisely because the Haitian press is fighting the attempt to impose an authoritarian definition on it. Although the Haitian press is committed to developmental goals, this is not the conception of the media that Haitian media owners are struggling to establish. Within Haitian political culture, the media are conceptually constructed as a political resource. When constructed primarily as a political resource, press freedom has been difficult to regulate, as illustrated in significantly less authoritarian Caribbean states like Antigua and Grenada. Thus the uniqueness of the Haitian press derives from the challenge of trying to establish and regulate the freedom of a political press in a society with a strong tradition of political authoritarianism.

Whether or not the press can be categorized as developmental, Western, revolutionary, socialist, libertarian or authoritarian, which I believe to be arbitrary categorizations, I argue that there are four aspects of press life that such different categories consistently include or presuppose.

Theoretical Models of the Press

The role of the Haitian media can be examined in terms of four interrelated aspects which have consistently appeared in theoretical constructions of modern media. These four aspects are as follows:¹⁰

- (1) the business aspect: information and media used to disseminate it are viewed as commodities with systematic ties to a competitive market and to the process of capital accumulation;
- (2) the political aspect: information and media are viewed as political resources, and therefore are systematically linked to the accumulating and managing of power;
- (3) the cultural aspect: information and media are viewed as religious, educational, or other cultural resources, and therefore are crucial instruments in spreading the learning, skills, messages, or symbols of particular cultural organizations;

- (4) the truth aspect: the media are viewed as disseminators of information that is produced with an interest in the truth and healthy public debates.

As pointed out in other research, the business aspect or commodity status recognizes the limits the state places on its own competitive activities, and supports legislation that guarantees such things as proprietary rights and the right to criticize government actions without fear of retaliation. Freedom from state retaliation is crucial for the press as a stable and attractive area for private investments.

As a political resource, the conceptual and institutional elaboration given to the Caribbean media in the post-independence period derived largely from the norms and values of Caribbean political culture, which are often based on traditions of authoritarianism. Within the Haitian context, this authoritarianism can be defined as a militarized patrimonialism that combines colonial authoritarianism with African traditions of kings and chiefs. This strong authoritarian practice has been in constant tension with democratic practices.¹¹

Haiti illustrates many of the cultural aspects of media. The church has long played a dominant role in the political, economic and communication institutions of Haiti. Religious media have fostered Creole as the dominant language. Religious radio programs and religious newspapers have used the national language, Creole, instead of French, the official language, even before a bilingual policy was initiated in 1991. The religious media have also been instrumental in encouraging education and in supporting the messages ordained by the church. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches produce magazines in Creole to promote literacy, health and religious values with some news thrown in as a way of helping the people assess the news.¹²

Finally, the truth aspect is largely absent in Haiti. The media must be disseminators of information that is produced with an interest in the truth and in healthy public debates. The political and economic crisis in Haiti has prohibited this aspect of media to fully develop. There were serious attempts, but these have been repressed. The media climate in Haiti is one where the weekly newspapers are politically oriented and openly ideological. The religious press is often biased in favor of the church and at times rather naive. These voices of church radio stations, however, were no match for the total control with which the government gripped Haitian society. In sum, the commodity and truth aspects of media have yet to form fully within Haiti. Until a free market economy can be built, there will be little or none of the advertising revenue to support the kind of free press systems that exist in the West. The private and state media practice self-censorship and the economic crisis limits any commodification of the media. None of the functions which are commonly assumed by the public media in transitional societies were ever developed in Haiti.¹³ These functions include being a watchdog of government performance for the public, being a reliable distributor of information so the people can make informed decisions, and being an educator both to provide society with a

range of information and to uncover truths over a range of social and political issues. These functions have not developed in Haitian media.

The restrictions and repression under which the media have worked for so long have created problems in the quality of the journalistic product, the expertise of the journalists working in Haiti, and the reliability of the information. Now that there are talks about democracy being established in Haiti, the crucial question becomes: how and under what conditions have newspapers, radio and television been making their transition of exclusion to one where they would play a developmental role within Haitian society?

These are the business, political, cultural and truth aspects of the press. Hence I have proposed that we base our typologies of different media on the extent to which they emphasize one or more of these aspects. From the business perspective, information and media used to disseminate information are viewed as commodities that are to yield profits in competitive markets. When this aspect is emphasized both institutionally and ideologically, this is a commodity model of the press. From the political aspect, information and media act as political resources that are to generate political power and influence in specific arenas of competitive politics. When this aspect is dominant, we have a political resource model of the press. From the cultural perspective, information and media are viewed as religious, educational or ethnic resources that yield greater recognition for the messages and practices of particular cultural organizations when these aspects are emphasized. This is a religious, ethnic or cultural model of the press. Finally, when media are viewed primarily as disseminators of information whose production is motivated by an interest in truth and healthy debate, we have a truth oriented model of the press.

For each of these models, the problems of establishing and regulating press freedom will be different. In the West, liberal conceptions of press freedom are largely tied to commodity models of the press. This is particularly the case in the U.S. where the state legally has barred itself from domestic production, as it has from most other markets. Closely related, but by custom rather than law, the major political parties have also stayed out of media production, viewing it as a private market. This degree of marketing media is less in Europe as governments do participate, making European media a limited commodity model. In short, liberal press freedoms have been most successfully established in cases where the press participates in the larger *quid pro quo* that exists between the state and the private sector but becomes the major advertising client and source of information for the private sector. In turn, the media must carefully gauge the manner in which its daily output affects crucial balances of power in a variety of competitive political situations.

In countries where the political resource model is dominant, no such underlying compromise has been established and institutionalized between government and media owners as members of a commercial private sector. First, governments are major players in media markets along with private individuals. These private individuals, for the most part, have not seen themselves as capitalist but as political

aspirants or as players in the political process. Consequently there is a blurring of the lines here between the political process and private commercial activity that is absent in both the commodity and limited commodity models. In the political resource tradition, dominant and rising political parties do not refrain from entering the media arena. On the contrary, this is standard operating procedure, with the result that they often capture the major share of the press as in the case of Antigua.¹⁴ Consequently, regulating press freedom has been much more difficult in societies where this model of the press has been dominant.

Like much of the Caribbean, Haiti inherited a limited commodity model of the press from Europe, specifically France. Thus the tradition of the state production of information was well established. During the past revolutionary period, as competition between classes and factions intensified, the political resource model eclipsed the limited commodity model of the press. As the press became more political and the government more authoritarian, the more the war escalated between the two, culminating in the exiling of members of the Haitian press during the Duvalier period. It is in this theoretical sense that I want to apply the term political to Haitian media. For it is only from such a view of state-media relations that we can both understand the extraordinarily high level of conflict described below and also see ways to get beyond it.

Political Nature of Haitian Press

Long before 1979, the Duvaliers, father and son, controlled and repressed the media. An independent press did not function within Haiti. During both Duvaliers' reigns, there had been a silencing of the independent press in Haiti through terror and repression. François Duvalier had assigned his own people to editorial positions at newspapers. This enabled him to close 46 newspapers.

Both Duvaliers managed to suppress and control the media for 30 years. Then, for reasons that are still not clear, there was a relaxing of control by Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1978. It was believed that Jean-Claude's incompetence to run the government was one reason for relaxing control over the media. Another reason was the perception by the people in power that media were not a major player in the controlling power of the regime. Whatever the reason, compared with the previous decade, the Haitian press seemed to enter a period of rebirth.¹⁵ The years 1978–1980 produced an increasing number of small volumes of poetry, newscasts and commentary on independent radio stations, and the emergence of at least 10 independent general interest or cultural magazines.

This rise of the independent voice did not last long. Censorship was re-established in 1980 based on Duvalier being reminded by his political elites that he should be in charge. A stricter press law was passed. Journalists were harassed and their lives threatened. After a five-month forced silence, *Le Coquerico* printed the following:

It [the independent press] was the catalyst of the whole intense combat of the year [1979]. The barometer telling the political temperature. The thermometer telling the social fever. The photographer. It was courageous, objective, nationalist in this struggle for Haitian democracy and liberty.¹⁶

But as the *Coquerico* article suggests, the independent press rallied, finding an even greater sense of its role as the agent most likely to bring to Haiti the reality of "liberalization and democratization."¹⁷

Broadcast journalists began giving political dialogues on the air. The emergence of an independent media was also reflected in the magazines published. The magazines that appeared during this period were no longer general interest but organs of political parties. *Fraternité* was produced by the Christian Democratic Party. *Verite sou tanbou* was produced by the Haitian Christian Democratic Party. The Government ordered it closed because of infractions of press laws. The journal defied the order and, while continuing to publish, brought out a second journal, *La Conviction*.¹⁸

The independent media voice was silenced in 1980. The Port-au-Prince chief of police, Jean Valm  , announced the arrests of national and international agitators. These agitators whom the government believed to have Communist loyalties were connected with the media. Many arrests were made.

On Friday, November 28, 1980, the arrests began in earnest. The police rounded up Jean Robert H  rard and Pierre Clitandre of *Le Petit Samedi Soir*, Mich  le Montas, Anthony Pascal, Liliane Pierre-Paul and Richard Brisson of Radio Haiti Inter, the entire staff of *Inter-Jeunes*, two journalists from *Regard*, Nicole Magloire and Constant Pognon of *Le Coquerico*, Gr  goire Eugene of the Social Christian Party of Haiti and *Fraternit  *, Marcus of Radio Metropole, Mme. Sylvio Claude and a son, of the Haitian Christian Democratic Party and *La Conviction*. Radio Cacique was smashed. Radio Haiti Inter was occupied by armed guards. Jean Dominique, owner of Radio Haiti Inter, sought refuge in the embassy of a South American country and Yvens Paul and Jean Claude Carri   went into hiding.¹⁹

On November 27, 1980, radio journalist Elsie Eth  art's house in Port-au-Prince, Haiti was robbed. She and her husband filed a police report. The next day the police called and told her they had located her stolen items and caught the thief. All she needed to do was to come to the police station and identify her items. She went to the station and was arrested. They put her on a plane to Miami.²⁰ This was the month when Jean-Claude Duvalier rounded up hundreds of journalists and academics and exiled them from Haiti. Pierre Clitandre arrived in exile severely beaten about the head, so much so that his appearance was altered. With facilities destroyed and the most vocal elements shipped out of the country or in hiding, the independent press of Haiti seemed to be effectively silenced.

Exiled Journalists Develop Haitian-American Press

As a result of the exiles, three primary Haitian-American newspapers started. *Haiti en Marche* publishes out of Miami, and both *Haiti Progrès* and *Haiti Observateur* publish out of New York. All three are independent papers with bureaus in Haiti and the U.S. All three publish in French with some Creole and some English. All three newspapers have been freely distributed in Haiti. The subscribers in Port-au-Prince are government employees, government ministers, grass-roots leaders, business and labor leaders, priests, journalists, teachers and foreigners who reside in Haiti. Combined circulation is 125,000. The three weeklies are filled with political analyses and commentaries and are considered the Haitian "think tanks." The expulsion of the independent press from Haiti changed the media from being cowed or irregular in Haiti to being strong in the United States. The exiled media developed into a socio-political force.

There are many weeklies, monthlies and radio stations catering to the Haitian communities located in all 50 of the United States, and in Canada and France. However, the concentration in this discussion will be on the three U.S. based weekly newspapers because they have been distributed in the U.S. communities and in Haiti. Viewpoints vary, but the influences of these three weeklies are powerful. They have an assumed authority level based on frequently being quoted and rebroadcast. Wilentz used quotes from these three newspapers in her book on Haiti without ever referring to them as foreign presses.²¹ Fritz Longchamp, who was the executive director of the Washington Office on Haiti in 1986 and then the Haitian ambassador to the U.N. in 1991 before becoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1995, said Haitian radio stations use these three newspapers exclusively to rebroadcast news.²²

Haiti en Marche

Elsie Ethéart had been a radio journalist in Haiti. Exiled to Miami with its big Haitian community, she continued her radio involvement. Then in 1987, she felt it necessary to go outside her radio area. "Radio has limits on the area, but a paper can reach past those limits," said Ethéart. Her desire was to be a voice for the people. Thus she and another radio journalist, Marcus Garcia, founded *Haiti en Marche* in February 1987. The weekly was billed as an independent newspaper, and according to Ethéart, its pages were open to all voices.

We were going to close the paper after the first year. But before we did, we made a survey of our readers. The people responded and said, 'You don't have a right to do this. You don't have a right to close the paper.' We don't regret continuing the paper. There is a space to fill in Haiti and we are filling it.²³

Haiti en Marche distributes copies in Port-au-Prince and other cities in Haiti, in New York, Miami, Montréal, Chicago, Boston, Switzerland, and Africa.

Haiti Progrès

Ben Dupuy and Firmin Joseph began *Haiti Progrès* as an independent press in April 1983. At the time, Joseph was running another newspaper called the *Haiti Tribune*. He was a businessman who ran the operation alone out of a 42nd Street office in New York City. Joseph was assassinated in Brooklyn in 1983 not long after the new paper was started.²⁴

By early 1990, *Haiti Progrès* was sharing space in Brooklyn with two other organizations: the Committee Against Repression in Haiti and the Association of Haiti Workers, a charitable organization. Wilentz referred to *Haiti Progrès* as the radical New York based newspaper.²⁵ The newspaper's masthead called itself: Le Journal qui offre une Alternative (the Newspaper which offers an Alternative). Copies of the newspaper are distributed in Port-au-Prince and other Haitian cities, in Canada, the United States, France, and Central America.

Haiti Observateur

Raymond Joseph, co-publisher of *Haiti Observateur*, left Haiti and went to New York to study in 1954. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1961 with a degree in anthropology. By 1965 he was working in broadcasting in New York, and by 1969, he was raising funds to begin a newspaper with his brother, Leopold. He explained: "We had \$12,000 in pledged financing but at the last minute everyone pulled out. We started the paper with \$3,000 that I had saved and with my brother's time."²⁶

Joseph began working on the *Wall Street Journal* in 1971 to continue to finance the newspaper. *Haiti Observateur* began publishing on July 23, 1971 in Manhattan. From the beginning the focus of the newspaper has been anti-Duvalierist.

People said that when Duvalier leaves, the paper will fold. That did not happen. The paper broadened to include all issues and with an office in Haiti, we were able to broaden the news base. We are the voice of the democratic reformist. Our editorial policy is to support the democratic process.²⁷

The newspaper publishes 20% of its editorials in English with a strong emphasis on the arts and leisure. "We are known as the newspaper of the artist. We have turned from being political to stressing the aspirations of the people," said Joseph.²⁸ He also said that the paper had a centralist point of view; and he did not consider either *Haiti en Marche* or *Haiti Progrès* to be in competition with his newspaper. Copies of the newspaper are distributed in Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haitien, Les Cayes, Paris, Montréal, New York, Miami, Boston, Chicago, Moscow, and South Africa.

Voice of the Tenth Department

Why did the independent press develop more fully in the United States and not in Canada or in France where many Haitians have immigrated? One reason is the proximity of the U.S. cities to Haiti. Another reason is the development of the U.S. Haitian Diaspora into a powerful political force.

Jean Jean-Pierre, a New York-based radio journalist who hosts the short-wave English and Creole program "Radyo Neg Mawon," has written that politics is often a major topic of discussion among Haitians. He attests that Haitians in the Diaspora are no exception to the rule. Prior to 1971, the single purpose of most Haitian political groups in the Diaspora was the overthrow of the Duvalier regime. In 1993 he noted that the Haitian Diaspora's "size and strong ties with the homeland have made [it] a political and economic force that every Haitian government must reckon with."²⁹

When Jean-Bertrand Aristide took office in February 1991, he suggested to a visiting group of Haitian emigres that they form a "Tenth Department" organization. Haiti is divided into nine governmental departments. Aristide understood that the so-called "Tenth Department" had tremendous financial and political clout. Haitians living abroad annually send over \$100 million back home to families and relatives, estimated Fritz Martial, a prominent Haitian economist in New York.³⁰ The September 29, 1991 coup caught the "Tenth Department" organization in the middle of consolidating and defining the roles of the many groups working under its umbrella. Yet it was able to manage several political actions. On October 11, 1991, over 60,000 people blocked downtown Manhattan for hours to protest U.S. support of the military coup. Then 260,000 to 300,000 Haitian-Americans voted in the last U.S. presidential election. The coup had the effect of bringing together the different factions of the Tenth Department.³¹ Haitians not previously involved in politics became active. They discovered that the decision-making center affecting Haiti's future is not Port-au-Prince, but Washington, D.C.

The one thing all the groups forming the Tenth Department seem to have in common has been the opposition to the Duvalier regimes and their military successors. But Jean-Pierre suggests that even this basis of unity is the knot of conflicting political and social interests. These conflicts are reflected, he suggests, in the fractious relations among the three major competing Haitian weeklies located in the United States.³² Published mostly in French, these newspapers were before the advent of daily radio programs the way that the Tenth Department kept abreast of events in Haiti. The rivalry among these weeklies often borders on ideological war.

First, *Haiti Observateur* started 12 years before *Haiti Progrès*. *Progrès* said they were going to bury the *Observateur* much like Khrushchev banged his shoe on the table and said he would bury the United States. *Progrès* said that we were the newspaper of the bourgeoisie and that *Progrès* was the alternative. But I don't consider

them in competition. *Haiti en Marche* is a moderate paper. They are a French newspaper. Whereas we are still provocative, *Haiti Progrès* is extreme left, *Haiti en Marche* is left of center, and *Haiti Observateur* is center and center left. We have no rightist here.³³

Haiti Observateur staunchly opposes Aristide. Many consider the paper the voice of the putschists, according to Ridgeway. When Joseph became the Haitian ambassador in Washington, D.C., objectivity in the newspaper was perceived to decline. The paper has run FRAPH stories (Front Pour l'Avancement et le Progrès Haïtien, the civilian arm of the coup government).³⁴ *Haiti Progrès* has a Marxist-Leninist political slant. An early supporter of Aristide, the paper now accuses Aristide of selling out to the international community. The newspaper has openly criticized *Haiti Observateur* for articles and endorsements. *Haiti en Marche* follows a more moderate line. This paper is the most recognized among the three by the international community. Its editors won the 1990 Maria Moors Cabot Prize awarded annually by Columbia University for excellence in journalism.

As the Haitian-American press developed, it established itself from the beginning as rivals in an ideological war to free Haiti. The papers are published in French for a Haitian audience outside and within Haiti.

Movement to Democracy Using the Media

Returning to the original argument that media should be in partnership with economic and political institutions to enable democracy to flourish, there are signs that media are growing and getting stronger within Haiti. A plethora of radio stations in Haiti represents one of the most significant measures of Haitian democracy. If the political and economic climates were still unsuitable for media to function, new media could not begin and existing media would not grow.

Media aid is also potentially one of the best, and cheapest, methods of consolidating democracy in Haiti. The European Union is funding a range of media aid projects with half a million Euros. Radio stations, a news agency, a Creole-language newspaper, a rural radio network and training is being created by Kouchner Foundation, a French-based organization.³⁵ Edwige Balutanski, a former Reuters journalist, directs the Haiti Info Services funded by US\$600,000 from the UN Development Programme. Info Services provides resources for journalists: training, technology, reference materials, library of other periodicals, and a news fax service.³⁶

Training is another sign of media gaining strength. Institutions are interested in providing basic and advanced training for journalists. The University of the West Indies, CARIMAC, in Jamaica, provides a summer training program for Haitian journalists.³⁷ The University of Massachusetts in Amherst has provided a lengthy training program for journalists. Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince has developed a communications program.

All of these—the increase in the number of media outlets, the monies being

contributed toward media aid from foreign sources, and the increased training opportunities for journalists, have created a climate in Haiti where media have begun to flourish. With this growth, media can get on with the task of creating the basic functions needed to perform its role in the Haitian society. In defining its role, the media will need to learn how to be a responsible press, how to be a reliable distributor of information, and how to uncover truths over a range of social and political issues.

This new role for Haitian media cannot be defined within the existing authoritarian structure. The restructuring of the media will include a restructuring of its relationship with political and economic institutions in Haiti. As media develop, the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic state will cause new tensions between the state and the media. These tensions may well include how to use the media. Should the media be watchdogs or advocates of the government? If the media are to become watchdogs, the government must cooperate. The government must provide access to information, must encourage free debate, must curtail its control of information, and must be willing to be evaluated by people outside the government. A democracy can exist only if the press is free to publish, is pluralistic, and provides alternative means of communication.

If the media become advocates of government and take on the developmental role of nation-building, then the government must accept more responsibility for being joint caretakers, with the media, of the public. Through the government information office, professional personnel must be willing to collaborate with the media to encourage acceptance by the public of political and economic decisions that are seen by the government to be in the best interest of the people. The collaboration does not include ownership of media nor does it include censorship. It does include providing government statistics to make the information more reliable, granting access to key decision makers for interviews, and finding monies to subsidize educational, ecological and health coverage in the media. It also includes working closely with production and distribution facilities to assure that media information is widely distributed.

With the authoritarian history of Haitian government, the rise of Aristide's leadership gave hope to journalists that the press would be free. The press was not free. The coup involving Cedras and the reaction the Cedras regime had to the press, imposed new repression and new restrictions on the press. The military presence emerged quickly and dominated Haiti to reestablish the authoritarian structure. Even during the second Aristide government and Preval's government, the media have been under attack.

Today in Haiti, journalists still maintain self-censorship. Journalists are still concerned about being arrested, beaten or killed. The reporters are not covering the prisons or the courts. In addition, the embargo crippled the media industry. Energy shortages limited the amount of time independent radio stations broadcast. Parts have been impossible to obtain. Antennas, smashed during the Cedras coup, have

not been repaired. Sanctions bankrupted the few existing advertisers. According to foreign press reports, proposals from Western embassies to assist media have been rejected. A UN proposal offered to establish an offshore radio station to broadcast from one of the international naval vessels enforcing the sanctions. Another offer came from the U.S. embassy to have the independent broadcasters operate a common station out of an embassy office.³⁸ None of the offers was accepted or even deemed feasible considering the safety of the personnel after hours and the intrusion of foreign broadcasting into Haiti.

The question of whether or not the media will be a watchdog or an advocate of the government cannot be answered under the present Haitian structure. When all of the UN peace-keeping force departs, another coup, another military regime, another dictator, can take over the fragile Haitian government and economy. This fear of authoritarian repression controls the media. Until the structures that maintain authoritarian rule are dismantled, the media cannot function effectively in ways to encourage democracy.

Consequences of Establishing Democratic Infrastructure

The movement to create a Haitian democracy will have consequences for both the Haitian-American press and the Haitian press. For Haitian media, the democratization process will have to re-define the state's role in information production. The transition from using primarily political sources to using commodity resources will take place. The question of whether or not the press will act as a free press or an advocate of government will need to be answered. It may be necessary to create steps for the media to reach the goals of being a free press. The press may need to be an advocate to create the structures necessary to function as a free press and ultimately to become a watchdog. This would probably best be accomplished with legal support from the government to ensure the goals are met. Laws providing freedom of the press will need to be enforced.

The theoretical options the Haitian-American press will have to confront will be the possible loss of its primary revolutionary function: to bring democracy to Haiti. If all three weekly newspapers published as the Haitian-American press see themselves as promoters of democracy in Haiti, then if democracy arrives, their function must be redefined. That redefinition has already begun in minor ways. The newspapers encourage local advertising and promote local cultural events. Free markets in advertising bring about improved information. They stimulate product innovation, reduce prices and enhance competition among enterprises. Additionally, the weekly newspapers are already including English pages. Next they will need to reevaluate their mission and change their patterns of advocacy. The need to encourage and to maintain democracy will continue and that maintenance can be aided through the press. These newspapers already have the structures in place to report on government achievements and atrocities. Under democracy,

they can be more reliable in quoting sources, giving bylines, and encouraging pluralism within Haiti. Many Haitians who emigrated to the United States and Canada have built their lives and created families in their host countries. These people will choose to remain in the Diaspora but are still emotionally connected to Haiti and will need information. The newspapers will continue their function of providing news of Haiti to the diaspora. This will be the new role of the Haitian-American press.

The Haitian-American press will also lose their exiled status. Many journalists may return to Haiti. They have risked their lives for years to report on the authoritarian governments. The idea of going home and being able to continue to investigate the government and other power structures with more freedom would be very appealing to a journalist who has dedicated his or her life to the truth aspect of media.

In summary, Haitian media both in Haiti and in the United States will go through major transformations when democracy forms within Haiti. If the training and the aid continues, and if the experienced journalists who have faithfully operated through all the repression stay in the business, there will be media structures in place, ready to meet the challenges that come with democracy.

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Together We Will Rebuild Haiti*

Notes

¹ See Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1989).

² See G. Arnold, *The Third World Handbook* (London: Cassell Educational Ltd., 1989) and Rod Prince, *Haiti: Family Business* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985).

³ United Nations Population Fund, 1997.

⁴ See generally Prince and Suzanne Anthony, *Haiti: Places and Peoples of the World* (USA: Main Line Book Co., 1989), p.9.

⁵ Wilbur Schramm, "How Communications Works," in K. J. McGrarry (ed.) *How Communication Works in Mass Communication: Selected Readings for Libraries* (London: Bingley, 1972), pp. 317-38. Also in K. Nordenstreng; Y. Littunen; A. Jyrank; N.B. Stormbom; Y. Ahmanaara; and E.S. Repo, "Lessons of the Past and Potentials for the Future" in K. Nordenstreng (ed.) *Informational Mass Communication* (Helsinki: Tammi Publishers, 1973), p. 179.

⁶ Herbert I. Schiller, "Whose New International Economic Information Order: And the Infrastructure of the Information Society," in H.I. Schiller (ed.) *Who Knows: Information in the Age of the Fortune 500* (Norwood, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 1-72.

⁷ Nordenstreng, p. 179.

⁸ Jane Leftwich Curry, "Conclusion: Media Management and Political Systems" in Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin (eds.) *Press Control Around the World* (New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 254–270.

⁹ William Hachten, *The World News Prism* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1992), pp. 14–23.

¹⁰ Rhodes and Henry, p. 654.

¹¹ Pierre-Charles, p. 654.

¹² Paul Bouchard, Personal Interview, Editor *Bon Nouvel*, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (November 20, 1991).

¹³ Peter Haberman, "Mass Media in Haiti," in S.H. Surlin and W.C. Soderland (eds.) *Mass Media and the Caribbean* (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1990), pp. 193–208.

¹⁴ Leara Rhodes and Paget Henry, "State and Media in the English-speaking Caribbean: The Case of Antigua," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1995), pp. 654–665.

¹⁵ C. Fowler, "The Emergence of the Independent Press in Haiti: 1971–1980 Background to Repression," *The Black Collegian*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (April/May 1981), pp. 149–151.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁰ Elsie Ethéart, Personal Interview, Editor/Publisher of *Haiti en Marche* (Miami, Florida, February 23, 1989).

²¹ See generally Wilentz.

²² Fritz Longchamp, Personal Interview, Director, Washington Office on Haiti (Washington, DC, March 1989).

²³ Ethéart, Interview.

²⁴ Ben Dupuy, Personal Interview, Editor/Publisher of *Haiti Progres* (New York, 1989).

²⁵ Wilentz, p. 134.

²⁶ Raymond Joseph, Personal Interview, Editor/Publisher of *Haiti Observateur* (New York, February 1990).

²⁷ Joseph cited in J.C. Miller, *The Plight of the Haitian Refugees* (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1984).

²⁸ Joseph, Interview.

²⁹ Jean Jean-Pierre, "The Tenth Department," in James Ridgeway (ed.) *The Haiti Files: Decoding the Crisis* (Washington, DC: Essential Books, 1994), p. 56.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³³ Joseph, Interview.

³⁴ Ridgeway, p. 61.

³⁵ P. Wearne, "Free-But Hardly Healthy," *IPI Report*, Vol. 44, Nos. 3-4 (March-April 1995), pp. 16-17; and M. Schacochis, "Letter from Haiti," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (July-August 1995), pp. 26-33.

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³⁷ Hopeton Dunn, Personal Interview, Professor of Communications at CARIMAC at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica (June 1997).

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