

# Contents

Introduction: Minding Your Business	1
Francophobia in Retreat	5
Where is Philippe Markington? (Part One)	9
Where is Philippe Markington? (Part Two)	14
“Interrogatoire” (Part Three)	18
But Where is Markington? (Part Four)	21
Reading from Africa	25
Turf Issues	29
An Overnight in Mainz	33
The Dog is Well	38
Vladimir	42
And a Third Russian	47
Emperors’ Clothes	50
Inauguration Transfiguration	53
Remembering Todman	56
Thought’s Colors	60
Believing is Seeing	64
A Class Act from Bangui	68
Safety in Numbers	71
Gone but Not Forgotten	75
Ward Just and <i>American Romantic</i>	78
Woman in the Dunes	82
Sandra’s Moment (Part One)	86
Sun Tzu in a Cubicle (Part Two)	89

Not Funny Any More	93
This Happened March 20, and It Could Happen to You	97
Faulkner Trending	101
Small Enough to Succeed	105
Looking Before You Leap	108
Bronx Cheer for a Danish Court	111
Saved by a Tux	115
Not Taking Sides Yet	118
My Three Weapons	122
Voice of... Reason	126
Sometimes He Wondered	129
There They Go Again	134
Overnight to Ystad	137
Ruthless	142
The Great James Baker	145
Cable to Nowhere	148
Potato, Potahto, Monogamy, Polygamy	152
Homicide Fine, Fax Not So Good	154
"Mister Bratton, I Presume?"	157
"Je m'en vais"	161
Revenge of the Clowns	165
An Appreciation of Pat Nixon	169
The Man No One Would Be	173
A Cure Worse than the Disease	177
Keeping the Memory	181
Haiti's Amazing Language	184
The Center Folds	187
Old Wine, New Battles	191
You Say Boots, I Say Rubbers	195
The Old Block	198
Late Lunch	202

Answer Coming Soon	206
Finding Common Ground with Lester	210
While I Was Out of Town	213
Trash Tree in Malabo	217
Walking Dschang	220
Restless	224
Ambassador to the Mountain	228
Managing Information Technology for a New Us	233
Uh Oh, Nativism is Not Only Offensive	237
Arounothay's Tux	240
Why I Learned French	244
Kindly Make Sense of This	247
Linear Thinking	251
Village Fool	256

# Introduction

## Minding Your Business

One crisp, fall day in 1989, Secretary of State James Baker gave a short press conference in Copenhagen, maybe the shortest ever. The briefing papers had gone to him from our embassy, but something had gotten lost or overlooked; when a journalist asked him about nuclear ship visits (the main sticking point in our bilateral relationship), he went blank. A chorus of “Thank you Mister Secretary”’s ended the whole ordeal within about 35 seconds of the start. The next time he came, a year later, he was prepped and ready.

Irony—the introduction of the unexpected in a series of predictable events or patterns—is the working element in comedy, tragedy, art, and music. The patterns neither get nor deserve much interest, while the interruptions do. Foreign policy dreads irony, but endures it all the time.

That is the texture of these blog postings. They follow an earlier collection, *Blaming No One*.

I was going to call this series “Dining with Murderers,” but that was a bit *tiré par les cheveux*. What I had in mind was the life-sucking evenings around the table with people we never liked much. Ambassadors suffer these evenings the most; the rest of us in the Foreign Service get a taste, which instructs us to avoid high positions if we have our wits about us.

Ambassadors represent sovereigns (presidents, kings, dictators). This becomes an outmoded concept in an age where digital com-

munication restricts—does not liberate—freedom of expression from the highest levels of government and business.

Think of it this way: Ambassador Chipski meets with key local contacts. Some represent or lend intellectual ferment, but 73.9 per cent are likely to be boring. The guests—bad, good, indifferent—find themselves at his table, alongside the occasional murderer. By this I mean those who harm their own communities. If you widen the definition to include the latter, you get up to the 85 per cent range. No footnote here because of course I'm faking it.

But these dinners can be lonely and enervating affairs, and can go long into the night, leaving the ambassador and colleagues dispirited and sleep-deprived. I saw one once (the hostess!) slumped forward over her own couch like a Stravinsky puppet, softly snoring through a tedious monologue by her Brazilian counterpart. How I admired and respected her! How I pitied her!

At my own lower level as public affairs officer, refilling wine glasses usually gave little joy. On a few occasions, days later someone would say, "You had So-and-So to your *house*? Really, for a meal? You mean the one who murdered five of his workers with his bare hands? Or was it the brother, who copped a plea and got to walk home after the indictment was lifted?" This was an actual case, not something I have made up here to spice an argument.

Compassion, please, for those who subject themselves to this form of toil, and the many more who fancy doing so, but never make it through the vetting process to land these coveted positions.

Diplomacy is a noble and energizing adventure, but the evenings – the evenings!

George F. Kennan, who got seventy percent of his things right and helped us make it through the Cold War, said this:

The Foreign Service... can so easily become an unhealthy mode of life – unhealthy in the sheer physical and nervous sense. It does involve, and always will involve an intensity of social entertainment which goes far beyond what the human form, and in particular the human gastro-intestinal tract, was never meant to endure.

...They have eaten one too many a diplomatic dinner. They have pumped one too many a hand. They have exhausted the capacity for spontaneity. Let us not be superior! We all face these dangers—and some of us sooner than we like to think—and it will take our best efforts to avoid them.

*[Foreign Service Journal, May 1961]*

The Foreign Service is one leg of this three-legged stool. Great practitioners are not lacking, but there is more. What choice do we have but to crowd onto the shoulders of our predecessors? Those who threaten to retreat to holographic traces merit full attention. The great ones break patterns and startle. The latter is what we live by, reminds us that we live.

In the chapters ahead, my questions, my answers appear to me like unfired clay. The binary human brain requires dialogue, Q&A. I enter the stream, do not originate or resolve it. The great Colman McCarthy said, “Do not answer the questions. Question the answers.” By this he meant, do not be intellectually supine. To me the phrase means, “Keep the conversation going.”

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Now to the anecdotes. As before, we recall the late Verlin Cassill saying, "All wisdom is contained in stories."

# Francophobia in Retreat

*June 17, 2012*



To decipher the arcana, we used to tell students, “The World Bank is the one that messes up the economies of poorer countries, the International Monetary Fund for richer countries.

The dictum is now outworn, as should be any lingering bitter-ender Francophobia these days, with the remarkable Christine Lagarde now heading the IMF. Francophobia met strong headwinds June 12, at her presentation at the Center for Global Development (CGD) in Washington.

The managing director spoke to an audience of 200 and conversed on mic with CGD’s founder, the redoubtable Nancy Birdsall, herself a former senior official in the InterAmerican Development Bank.

Lagarde understands the IMF’s needs for informed friends. Her impressive ability to win them over puts the Fund in one of its finest moments so far.



As former finance minister of France, Lagarde knows about fiscal reform, monetary policy, tax incentives, stimulus... But she said up front that these were all short-term items in a classical toolbox, and that long-term development was her main interest. More intriguingly, as former agriculture minister as well, she sees beyond money alone. The innovation was to see the IMF in tandem with a larger development community, rather than the lever of one-armed bandits of cash transfers in emergency situations only.

"I'm not here to talk about the Euro crisis," she said. It was a moment of welcome humility, underscoring that the IMF can inform, guide, direct, coach, but can't fix big cash crises by itself, or just with money.

"It's true that the Eurozone is the epicenter of the problem, but the crisis is much wider."

Rationed bits of humor emphasized the point: when the Reuters correspondent asked if the IMF would bring any "pledges" to the Rio + 20 meeting next week, she paused and said, "Well, I'm only the managing director of the IMF." (The French artfully put negative concepts in affirmative turns of phrase, and vice versa.) Bottom line: the World Bank donates, the IMF calibrates. "I wish I were in that business [donations] but I'm not," she said.

Then she got to her business. "The poor suffer when the rich make the wrong decisions." Imagine: hurting the poor financially hurts us all. No touchy-feely here.

*"Les pollueurs sont les payeurs,"* she said in the sole phrase uttered in her native language. ["The polluters should be those who pay."] Here we approach the core of her thinking: finance, labor, and environment can no longer be disaggregated. If they ever functioned as independent units, they are now fully intertwined. This point is not mere rhetoric, I think, but a way of turning traditional and worn developmental models on their head. Hence, the need for friendships and alliances with governments, but also with the International Labor Organization, non-profits like CGD, environmentalists, and others who can succeed only through teamwork.

"I'm not trying to remake the IMF as an environmental organization, but this issue is more important than the Euro crisis."

With Gallic insistence, challenging some pretty big names, Lagarde sees stimulus as a reductionist notion: "Not stimulus alone. We must rekindle demand."

The French provide ideas that are hard or sometimes impossible to implement (viz., the Declaration of the Rights of Man!), but without these admittedly cerebral frameworks, where would we be?

Identify problem, state goals. This simple practice eludes governments and practitioners, and yields disappointments from well-intentioned world-menders.

"We need to get the green economy right," she says, apologizing even for using the charged word "green." The calculating eye notes that the region in the world which least produces pollution (Africa) is the one to suffer most from its effects, through drought, flooding, and low crop yields. Thinking of this dispassionately, as a broken machine, might just lead to reversing the dysfunction.

Lagarde was coy and even hilarious in evading questions about U.S. domestic politics or even policy. Few whack-a-mole players get it better. She never said, "I don't speak about U.S. domestic politics" — she just plain doesn't.

She was equally charming in taking a young graduate student's question about IMF assistance to entities other than countries, for example, cities, states, and provinces which make efforts to break out of stagnation on environmental policy. She wrote the idea down, and said, "In fact I never thought of that. It will be on my to-do list." Home run for the grad student, likewise Lagarde.

Here is the notion Lagarde wanted most to drive home: something called "Getting the Price Right." She defined this concept by saying, "The harm we do would be reflected in the price we pay." Hence, fuel consumption, water use, dipping into resources should be cali-

brated and restored by the user to the common—and shrinking—pool available to others. There is nothing punitive in this, but it is a bold proposal to calculate the price of what we use and waste. This could come through direct taxes, cap and trade, carbon pricing, or any other way you want to work it. As she said, “You break it, you buy it.”

The pricing and measuring of natural resources: if the IMF did nothing else, this alone would be the invention of a new approach to value and basic human relationships.

The occasion was the publication of an IMF report at midnight of June 11-12, now on its website. Lagarde hadn’t had time to read the whole thing overnight. But Birdsall had. That’s where the teamwork comes in.

## Where is Philippe Markington? (Part One)

*July 30, 2012*



[Part one of four] On April 3, 2000, Haitian journalist Jean Léopold Dominique was shot dead in an ambush at his own radio station (Radio Haiti-Inter) on the Rue Delmas in Port-au-Prince. Maybe coincidentally, former and future president Jean-Bertrand Aristide flew to Miami the next day.

The date resonates in Haitian history as does November 22, 1963, in the United States. In a "Talk of the Town" piece in *The New Yorker* of April 20, long-time Aristide apologist Amy Wilentz described Dominique as "Haiti's JFK and Walter Cronkite."

I had tangled with the crotchety Dominique myself two months before, when as U.S. Embassy spokesman I had accepted his invitation for a live interview on his morning program "Face à la Nation." The bitter, brilliant Dominique had real and imagined issues with the United States, where he had taken refuge during the Duvalier and military regimes years earlier. He'd been a staunch supporter of Aristide after the latter's return to power in 1994. Like many others, Dominique repatriated himself at this earlier, auspicious time.

Dominique was no one's lapdog, however, and publicly criticized Aristide the first weekend of April 2000, for "surrounding yourself with filth." Haitians knew this referred to the drug and contraband trade among the president's subordinates. Seventy-two hours later, Dominique was dead.

Dominique maintained his credibility and the public's trust by having no real friends. He had lit into me February 8 for hypocrisy in U.S. policy toward Haiti, but then lightened up by the end of the hour when he seemed to take a liking to me. I'd met him once before (he had begged me in private not to "resist the galloping horse" of Aristide and his entourage, which he said was Haiti's future. He made very dramatic gestures with his expansive arms, leaning toward me and indicating his human version of a galloping horse).

Jonathan Demme's movie *The Agronomist* some years later looked into the nature of the country's leaders' backgrounds in agronomy, and the importance of the land in the people's identity. Dominique had made the same point to me during our conversation. It all sounded like Masonic gobbledygook to me, but Demme did nail the character and spirit of Dominique when he called him "a composite of Edward R. Murrow and Paul Revere."

Dominique knew he was skating on thin ice, and realized daggers were drawn on him. As early as October 18, 1999, he had said on the air that he thought drug kingpin and Haitian senator Dany Tous-saint might want him dead. In his defiant (and eerily prophetic) public response, Dominique said, "If I am still alive, I will close down the station after having denounced the plot hatched against me and I will return into exile one more time with my wife and children." In a retrospective of his early sense of betrayal, he continued, "In 1991, I told Jean-Bertrand Aristide and René Préval [Haiti's president in 2000] to watch out for Cédras [the military leader who overthrew Aristide in 1992]. Titid said, 'Cédras and I are married! One sad marriage!' ("Titid" was Aristide's public and affectionate nickname.)

Then with one of his marvelous classical flourishes, Dominique ended his October 18, 1999, broadcast, "Earlier I quoted another

free man [Choderlos de Laclos, author of *Dangerous Relations*]. I end with Shakespeare: “The truth makes the Devil blush.”

I guess Dominique liked his 2/8/00 interview with me, because he kept airing and re-airing it over the following days and weeks. Shortly before his assassination he put it on the air repeatedly – some said he knew he was in the regime’s crosshairs, and wanted the implied protection of the U.S. Embassy he had so often vilified on his show. The day of his assassination, April 3, *Radio Haiti-Inter* broadcast the interview over ten times.

People are popped all the time in Haiti. In this case, for a few weeks things went fine for the poppers—until the international community got hold of the story and called repeatedly for “justice, and an investigation.” Someone in Port-au-Prince had underestimated Dominique’s prestige outside his own country.

As Jean Jean-Pierre said in *The Village Voice* April 18, “Dominique gained prominence in 1973 when U.S. ambassador and Duvalier apologist Clinton Knox was kidnapped by a group of leftists... Dominique’s nonstop reportage and the subsequent cave-in of Baby Doc emboldened journalists and activists. Dominique’s work...laid the foundations for an independent press in Haiti.”

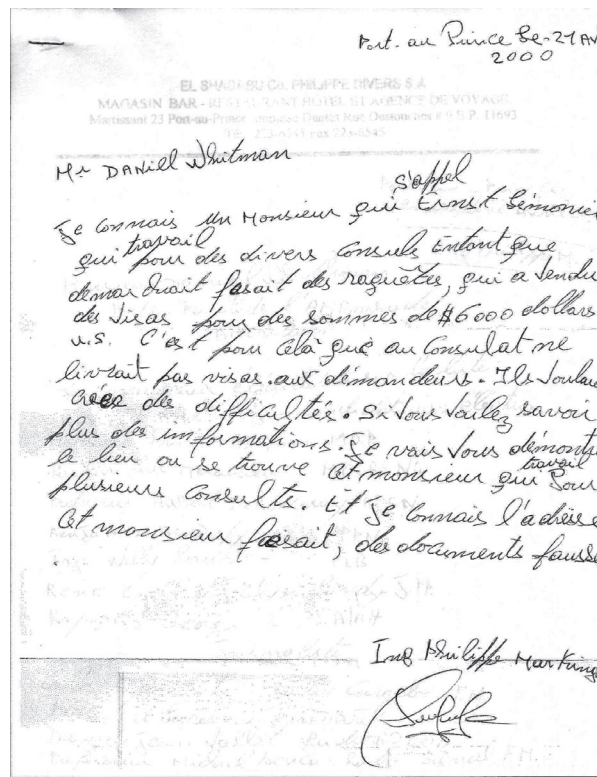
The April 3 affair gained in prominence, with the Inter-American Press Agency and Reporters sans Frontières calling for clarity. By April 25 a petition demanding a “timely response” from the government was signed by Richard Gere, Robert Redford, Jonathan Demme, Taylor Branch, Spalding Gray, Robert De Niro, Spike Lee, Paul Newman, Woody Allen, Edwidge Danticat, Harold Pinter, Martin Scorsese, Toni Morrison, Norman Mailer, Nora Ephron, Amy Wilentz, Denzel Washington, William Styron, Katherine Dunham, Gregory Peck, Paul Farmer, Lauren Bacall, Kenneth Starr, David Dinkins, and 184 others.

Uh-oh! Not the quiet removal of the pre-Internet era. Too many observers in the amphitheater this time.

Someone had to come up with something to explain Dominique’s death, notwithstanding the state funeral in the national stadium

April 8, the highest pomp ever accorded a non-head of state in Haiti. Deflecting and refracting attention was indicated.

Meanwhile, the Haitian National Police (HNP) had some, mmmm, reshuffles. April 24, HNP Inspector General Luc Euchère Joseph slipped out of the country and made it to Switzerland. May 26, the HNP spokesman turned himself into the U.S. Embassy and asked for political asylum (he didn't get it).



The bizarre and louche Philippe Markington (identified as “engineer” on his ID cards) had begun visiting me in my office earlier in the year, and on April 24 handed me a handwritten, supposed “hit list” with names he said Aristide’s Lavalas party was planning to knock off in the near future. He never asked for money or services in return, and I never gave him any. I said that as Public Affairs Officer in the embassy, I had no interest in corridor plots or hocus-pocus, but he left the list with me anyway.

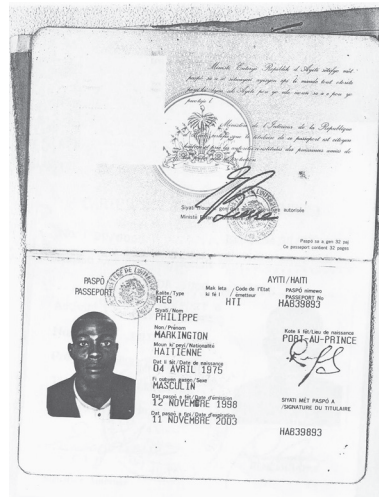
Markington said he was with something called “The Aristide Foundation,” and said he was appalled at what it had turned into. If true, this was a praiseworthy change of heart, but you never know. I offered him a public forum if he wanted to say something to the press, but he declined. I asked my embassy colleagues what to do, and they said, “Keep the contact; it’s the only one we have.”

So I did, until June 24, when my phone rang at home early on a Saturday morning. That would be the next segment of our little potboiler.



## Where is Philippe Markington? (Part Two)

*August 1, 2012*



[Part two of four] If I said, “Markington dressed like a pimp,” I would mean no disrespect to him or to pimps. He wore heavy, black, wool turtlenecks in the 90-degree heat, and a chest medallion that looked something like an Aztec calendar. He had the wandering eyes of a cocaine user, but I don’t mean to draw conclusions here.

I had his phone number but never used it. I took his calls and allowed him to visit my office not for the pleasure of it, but because my embassy asked me to do so. His ID card said, “The Aristide Foundation,” and no one else on the staff seemed to have this sort of contact. For good or ill, the idea was to keep communication channels open.

Markington was always nervous, and seemed to fear that his transfer of information to me might have dire consequences. Or it could

have been an act. Not knowing their provenance or accuracy, I really had no interest in the contents of his lists. But my staunch and stated policy in the office was, "Any lunatic gets a moment with me." And I admit I was curious what was behind them, and why he came to me.

I took his hit lists in early May, then filed them away and forgot I even had them, until July, 2012, when I thought it would be time to write this up.

I didn't know Markington had been picked up temporarily in May 2000 as a suspect in the Dominique killing. Whether he was set up as "bait" to get the U.S. Embassy or me implicated, I never figured out. He was not "arrested" or "detained" or "indicted," but in the lacking vocabulary of Haitian justice, was accompanied by someone, involuntarily, somewhere.

June 24, a Saturday, my home phone woke me up at 7:00 am or so. At the other end was WL, a Haitian official I'd met a year earlier. Now he was "unofficially" investigating the Dominique murder.

He said, "I have your friend here, Philippe Markington." He handed the phone to Markington and I recognized the voice.

Markington said, "Why haven't you given [WL] the \$2,000 he asked for?" He said he would send WL Monday to my office to pick up the money.

I imagined Markington in some dark dungeon with a gun to his head, which turned out to be exactly the case. I told Markington to drop the whole idea and not to send WL to see me. I said that if he had anything to tell me, he should come to my office Monday to do so. "But where are you?" I asked again, and there was no answer. WL took the phone back.

"Your friend Markington is in a bit of trouble," WL said. "It will cost you some money to get him out."

Was Markington their former collaborator, now dumped like sheep to feed the piranhas? Or had he never been taken by them in the

first place? Or was it an elaborate *trompe l'oeil* for some occult purpose?

I wrote memos the next few days to keep track of the chain of events.

June 26, the sort-of prosecutor in the case called me at home and asked to come over. I said no, but I would meet him the bar of the Hotel Montana (since rebuilt after being destroyed in the 2010 earthquake).

WL, quite agitated, was not his previous, friendly self. He said he'd seen Markington earlier the same day, and asked again for \$2,000 for Markington's release. He insinuated I must have some "debts" to Markington, and likely needed him for purposes of information.

The rest of the conversation went like this:

Him: "What did Markington give you that created a debt on your behalf?"

Me: "Absolutely nothing."

Him: "I wouldn't have wasted my time on a Friday night if I had known you don't have \$2,000 to hand over to me."

Me: "You asked for the meeting. I didn't."

Him: "You are not a real friend to Markington."

Me: "I never said I was."

The prosecutor became very aggressive, and my patience ran thin. Disdainfully I took out six *gourdes* from my pocket (about 45 cents U.S.), threw them on the table, and left. Weeks later, the act was cited as an insulting "down payment" on the \$2,000. The prosecutor stopped me on my way out. "Careful, this could be threatening to you."

Me: "Threats of what, injury? Death, expulsion?"

Him: "You diplomats all think you have special privileges."

Me: "Unfair, perhaps, but true. I know only that one day I will leave Haiti. Whether it is sooner or later is not a major factor to me."

Him: "You think you can make it to the airport any time, but even as you walk across the tarmac, you're not safe until you're in the airplane."

Friends more versed in the language of Haiti than I was later told me this was a death threat.

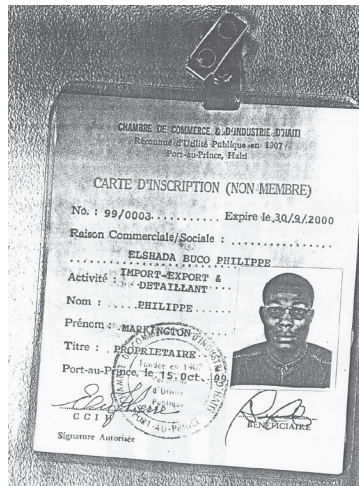
The prosecutor remained his tawdry self until the end, asking agitatedly if he himself was on one of Markington's hit lists. In an act of striking bravado, he asked me for a U.S. government-sponsored trip to the United States.

I understood then that all that was wrong with Haiti was derived from fear, the one Haitian afraid of the other. It doesn't take a genius to know this about the country, but that day I got it through the pores of my skin.

A snarky embassy colleague said to me (not exactly accurately), "Whitman, you got yourself into this, now let's see you get yourself out."

## “Interrogatoire” (Part Three)

August 5, 2012



[Part three of four] In a May 30 statement to the local daily *Le Nouvelliste*, assassination suspect and Haitian senator Dany Toussaint mentioned my name and said, “Why does an embassy spokesman need permission to maintain contact with a hired killer? Never mind. I’ll say more when the time is right.” Two years before his death, Dominique had named Toussaint as his likely assassin. This was beginning to be creepy.

The Haitian police cooked up an internal memo (leaked to the press, and from the press to me), noting that a white Jeep Cherokee had been spotted at the scene of the crime April 3, and that I owned a vehicle of that description. There were tens of thousands of others on the island, by the way. No mention of any license number.

True enough: the intrepid Jeep followed me to three continents. I had a certain affection for it, though it kept breaking down on treacherous country roads. The police memo didn’t have many

spellings correct, but cited a Markington (“Mackington”)-Whitman (“Wittman”) connection. President Préval, Justice Minister Camille LeBlanc, and Police Chief Paul Denizé were all copied on the memo. WL, the sort-of prosecutor, was mentioned in the police memo simply as “The Coordinator.”

August 10, Justice Minister LeBlanc called the embassy and asked them to send me in for a chat. Something about the impugned honor of “The Coordinator” in the case.

A helpful colleague said, “They’re not supposed to do that sort of thing except in a diplomatic note through the foreign ministry. But you’ll need a witness, so let’s go and get it over with.” We made an appointment for 9:30am, August 11. I had never been convoked by a minister in any country and couldn’t remember ever having sat down with one.

My colleague Rick (not his real name) and I got to the justice ministry that day; the building defied description but I’ll try:

A rickety mass ready to crumble on itself, the early nineteenth-century building had ghostly remnants of an ornate, earlier age. Fallen into complete neglect and disrepair, the walls and floors creaked; I think a layer of mold lay over the ancient paint and varnish, now peeled and rotting.

Rick and I were directed down the building’s longest hallway, where armed men stood in and out of uniform every two meters or so, slouched, heavily armed, each in different garb and with different weapons. Most seemed exhausted. They noticed but did not acknowledge us. An adjutant left us in the waiting area by the minister’s office.

As we waited, Rick said to me in an inspired moment, “Make sure you give the minister your business card on the way in.”

I winked back and was grateful for an insight which could later save the day, if it was well played.

The minister received us pretty cordially. There were no armed

guards in the inner office, but when we entered we saw The Coordinator already stationed there, scowling at us and especially at me. I gave the minister my card.

The ministerial style was in place, with some greetings and friendly comments. After some preliminaries, the minister gestured to the scowling prosecutor, and said to me, "My colleague says you claim he tried to get \$2,000 out of you over the Markington affair."

I said, "Well, he did."

I expected the worst, but to my surprise, the prosecutor ("coordinator") corroborated this himself, and explained to his boss that the point was to see if there was a U.S. Embassy link to the murder. There wasn't much to say on anybody's part in response.

The minister acknowledged (for the first time officially) that Haitian authorities had Markington in custody. He paused for me to react, but again, there was nothing much to say. The room was tense.

"Mr. Whitman, when Markington was detained, he claimed he was a good friend of yours, and pulled your business card out of his wallet to prove it."

I glanced at Rick for cues, then decided the time had come to wing it. I said to the minister, "Lots of people in this town have my business card. I believe *you* have one also. May I ask, does that mean you killed Jean Dominique?"

Rick was silently delighted, the minister laughed, and even the prosecutor loosened up a little. Clearly there wasn't much here to investigate.

The minister had coffee brought in, and everything was amiable from then on. If his goal was to get me and the prosecutor to shake hands and settle our differences, I guess he succeeded.

Rick and I were relieved, and stepped back out into the normal, tropical air outside, from the stale and oppressive stench of those confined hallways. We still wondered what the hell this whole thing was about.

## But Where is Markington? (Part Four)

*August 6, 2012*



[Part four of four] The question was, and still is, whatever happened to Markington? Was he in some dungeon in chains, or dead, or clandestinely running the country? Had he indeed been at the scene of the crime April 3, or even one of a passel of hitmen? And for what purpose? Paid by Dany Toussaint, or by the regime itself? A chit for the faltering government?

One afternoon in September 2000, there was a stir in the outer reception of my public affairs office. In the old days, we were on the third floor of a commercial building, 100 yards from the embassy. A lot had happened along those 100 yards over the years, and my protective employees did everything to keep me from walking the short distance twice a day to attend meetings at the chancery. The Rond-Point Harry Truman gave us a view of one of the most gruesome urban areas in the world. Gang warfare, marching mobs, and suffocating crowds populated the roundabout. We witnessed the murder of a suspected thief, killed by the market workers for lifting an avocado. We had gotten used to it.



I stepped out to see what the commotion was about in the outer office. The employees looked very afraid. They'd seen most everything and knew better than I when something was really off.

"Monsieur Whitman, the building is surrounded by armed men. They are heading upstairs."

I didn't want any massacres on my watch.

Our embassy-employed guard downstairs was a real gentleman, and not of much use in a situation like this. He wasn't even allowed to have weapons, so there wasn't much protection.

We heard the sound of boots and metal coming up the steps to the third floor. Some of my employees hid under their desks. I'd never seen them so scared.

The office door opened from the hallway, and some mean-looking hombres stepped in. What had seemed to be a platoon of gangsters was in fact a group of four armed men (two in police uniform, two not). They had a lot of rounds of ammunition, and there didn't seem much point in making a fuss. I asked them what they wanted.

They didn't say much, but brought in a prisoner from the hallway. The prisoner was handcuffed and had the vacant look of a desperado. He was gaunt, slow to move, and had burns on his arms.

I didn't recognize him right away, but it was Markington.

He wasn't the robust and swaggering young man I'd known months before, and he seemed about 50 pounds thinner.

"What's going on?" I asked the armed foursome.

One of the officers pulled out a piece of paper. "The engineer Philippe Markington has permission to spend one hour in the city under armed escort," he said. "He asked to be brought to see you."

I said, "Permission from where? Is he in detention, and are you police?" But there were no answers. Fear deepened among the staff.

Markington didn't look well, not at all. Actually he looked like a dying man. Everyone in the room was nervous, the policemen no less than the rest of us. They had all the power but didn't seem to know what to do with it, nor what was supposed to come next.

"The prisoner has asked for ten minutes alone with you in your office," one said.

I didn't know what to make of it, but had to think of something to do.

"You tell me what you want," I said to the armed men, whose weapons seemed to mean business.

One of the police shrugged and said, "As you wish." I made him repeat it.

Probably stupidly (but swayed by curiosity), I said, "He can come into my office, but only if you point those things away from my workers."

The one in charge removed Markington's handcuffs and ordered the others to lower their weapons.

With some dread, I took the ghostly Markington, alone, into my office. I still thought this could be some horrendous trick, but I couldn't think of any better options at that moment.

Markington took a seat on my couch and had some trouble sitting up. I asked him what the hell was going on.

"Monsieur Whitman, they torture me every day to get me to denounce you, but I won't."

"Philippe, many thanks, but denounce me for what? And who are these people and where do they keep you?"

"I don't even know. But they want me to say you are a spy and I'm your agent. I won't do it, because you're not, and I'm not."

"This is very honorable, Philippe," I said. "But please tell them any-

thing you need to in order to stop being tortured. Is there something I can do for you?"

"Nothing can be done for me," he said morosely. "And I won't denounce you if I have to tell a lie to do so."

I was moved and puzzled, in equal amounts.

"This is nuts," I said to the pitifully reduced being half lying on the couch. "Do they burn you?" I said, pointing at his arms.

"Cigarettes, other things."

I had never liked Markington, but always saw him as an enigma—now even more so. It seemed the least likely hypothesis, but maybe he had been telling the truth all along.

The armed men came in the room, said time was up, and took him away. I never saw him or them again.

That is exactly what happened. Expect no answers, because there were none. I was as attached and detached from Markington as I would be from any man in a dreadful predicament. I knew there was no help for him. I owed my workers my best attention to try to calm them down.

I still don't know who the engineer Philippe Markington really was or what he was about, or what became of him, or whether he is alive or dead today. I return to the original question:

Where is Philippe Markington?

They used to say of Haiti (but it applies to many places), "Believe nothing of what you hear in this place. And only half of what you see."