

# FROM INTERNATIONAL TO TRANSNATIONAL MINING: THE INDUSTRY'S SHIFTING POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE CARIBBEAN

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## *ABSTRACT*

This paper examines the historical trajectory and changing political economy of the mining industry in the Caribbean. It will trace how mining operations have occurred in the region through a fragmentation of earlier national development policies and international corporate models, shifting to a globalized industry of transnational corporations, flexibilized labor, and a host of subcontractors and exploratory firms. State interaction with the industry has gone from practices of direct or partial control (or guidance) toward policies favoring global competitiveness and transnational capitalist investment. With a specific focus on mining operations in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica, this article seeks to illuminate the transition from the international to the global phase of world capitalism. The article concludes that labor, local communities, environmentalists, and social and political movements must tackle these shifting conditions.

**Keywords:** Caribbean, mining, transnational processes, global capitalism, globalization, political economy

## *RESUMEN*

Este artículo examina la trayectoria histórica y el cambio de la economía política de la industria minera en el Caribe. Se trazará cómo han ocurrido las operaciones mineras en la región a través de una fragmentación de las políticas nacionales de desarrollo y los anteriores modelos corporativos internacionales, cambiando a una industria globalizada de las empresas transnacionales, trabajo flexibilizado, y recibiendo a subcontratistas y empresas de exploración. La interacción del Estado con la industria ha pasado de las prácticas de control directo o parcial (o guía) hacia políticas que favorecen la competitividad global y la inversión capitalista transnacional. Con un enfoque específico en las operaciones mineras en la República Dominicana, Haití y Jamaica, este artículo pretende iluminar la transición de la fase internacional a la global del capitalismo mundial. El artículo concluye que los sindicatos, comunidades locales, ambientalistas y movimientos sociales y políticos deben abordar estas condiciones cambiantes.

**Palabras clave:** Caribe, minería, procesos transnacionales, capitalismo

global, globalización, economía política

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine la trajectoire historique et le changement de l'économie politique de l'industrie minière dans la Caraïbe. Il parlera de l'émergence des opérations minières dans la région du à une fragmentation des politiques nationales de développement et des anciens modèles de coopératives internationales. Cette fragmentation sera la conséquence d'une industrie mondialisée des entreprises transnationales, du travail flexible et d'une série d'entreprise de sous-traitants et d'exploration. L'interaction entre l'Etat et l'industrie est passée de pratiques de contrôle direct ou partiel (ou de guide) à des politiques qui favorisent la compétitivité mondiale et l'investissement capitaliste transnationale. Cet article apporte des précisions sur la transition des opérations minières internationales à celles de la phase globale du capitalisme mondial notamment en République dominicaine, en Haïti et à la Jamaïque. En conclusion, il explique que les syndicats, les communautés locales, les écologistes, les mouvements sociaux et politiques doivent faire face à ces conditions changeantes.

**Mots-clés :** Caraïbe, industrie minière, processus transnationaux, capitalisme mondial, mondialisation, économie politique

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Since the emergence of capitalist globalization, industrial mining has undergone significant changes in many parts of the world (Moody 2007). The Caribbean is one such region, where transnational corporations (TNCs) have reaped extraordinary profits for their owners and stakeholders by harnessing new technologies and organizational advancements. In contrast, mining companies earlier in the Twentieth Century operated through circuits of international production and were heavily impacted by the internationally and domestically geared policies of state officials. This earlier form of production took place within and sometimes across national frontiers, and within colonies or countries where state elites often were closely aligned with the company's domicile state. Through the context of the Caribbean, this paper examines the historical trajectory through which industrial mining has shifted from nationally and internationally oriented models toward transnational practices. Important studies have emphasized the transnationality of material (economic) relations in the globalist phase of world capitalism (Dicken 2011), as well as the rising transnationality of many social and class relations (Harris 2006; Liodakis 2010; Robinson

2003, 2004, 2008, 2014; Sprague 2015a, 2015b). In this paper, I contend that globally competitive mining corporations, entwined with transnational capital and promoted by transnationally oriented state elites, have supplanted earlier international corporate models and statist developmental policies. Whereas workers in the industry have been brought under new more flexible and globalized labor regimes, at the same time, subcontractors seek out inputs into the globalized industry. These developments occur alongside continued environmental damage and often shrinking benefits for Caribbean states and local communities.

Large-scale industrial mining in the Caribbean began in Suriname and Guyana in the early twentieth century (Jong and Boersema 2006), with the industry's early formation in the region dependent upon British capital. Over time, monopolizing capitalists in North America provided the impetus for growth in export-oriented mining and some domestic manufacturing. By the 1950s, North American capital had ramped up mining operations in Jamaica, geared toward the extraction of bauxite, a dry mineral that is converted into aluminum through electrolysis. During the post-war period, U.S. policymakers supported national mining policies in order to build up resources for the U.S. military industrial complex, through which the bauxite industry in the Caribbean would come to supply "nine-tenths of the raw-material needs of the aluminum industry of North America, which in turn produces 50 per cent of world aluminum output" (Girvan 1967:1). Resource extraction became a central pillar of development for former British colonies in the region. Whereas labor in the mines came primarily from local communities, there was a heavy reliance on European and North American specialists and engineers. In other areas of the Caribbean, such as the Dominican Republic and Cuba, mining developed at a slower pace during the latter half of the twentieth century but would eventually receive significant foreign capital investment. Despite this growth, local inputs in mining consisted primarily of low wage jobs. Caribbean policymakers wrestled over how to engage with the industry.

By the mid-twentieth century and in the decades following the Second World War, in many areas of the world, corporate policies developed alongside the national and international policies of state policymakers, often strongest within the nations in which they were domiciled. Powerful states, such as the U.S., helped facilitate the international operations of associated capitalists (Panitch and Gindin 2013). Yet state officials, especially in many "developing nations," sought at times to manage or control (at least partially) industries operating in their nation. In developing regions such as the Caribbean, many state managers (often pressured by movements from below or influenced by different political currents) began promoting policies meant to incubate

domestic production, albeit through limited forms of import substitution industrialization (ISI) and partial state ownership of some economic sectors, such as mining.

As capital began to transnationalize (Robinson 2004) during the closing decades of the twentieth century, it sought to break free from national restraints and regulations (Harvey 1991, 2005). As Robinson (1996) observes, during this period, new political arrangements of polyarchy came about: as segments of local and foreign dominant groups pushed for tightly managed electoral systems in which political contestation was narrowly confined to competing elites. This helped solidify the rise of transnationally oriented state managers and technocrats (Domínguez 1996; Robinson 2012). These groups, as part of an emergent global power bloc, have promoted development through the fragmentation of national economies and insertion into global circuits of accumulation. Neoliberal restructuring, for example, through privatization and austerity measures, has opened further space for global networks of production (Dicken 2011) and finance (CARICOM 2005; Körner & Trautwein 2014; Watson 1985). To guarantee their own social reproduction, state managers have promoted deeper integration with the global economy. Yet as they abandon national forms of development, this leads to crises of legitimacy. This has been a contradictory process, as transnationally oriented elites attempt to maintain national political legitimacy through rhetoric and various mechanisms.

Meanwhile, transnational capitalists in many industries, including mining, have developed by operating under new globally competitive conditions. This has been a historical process replete with contradictions, as changing phases of capitalism eventually develop economic crises and stagnation or upsurges from working people and other oppressed communities (as can be seen in the many struggles against mining corporations by labor, activists, and local communities in the Caribbean and Latin America).

Consistent with many other global industries, mining has been reorganized along increasingly flexible lines. Capitalist production has become more attuned to fluctuating markets, reflected in the rise of operational intervals, where mines shutter and then reopen at a faster pace. A variety of capitalistic advancements have strengthened the hand of management and created new pressures on state policymakers, labor, and local communities. Major technological and organizational innovations, for example, have allowed capital to lessen labor costs, while at the same time gain new leverage (Moody 2007). Through capitalist globalization, the very labor power of workers has become incorporated into transnational value chains (Struna 2009), including within industries such as mining. My point here is that while residues of the previous

national and international arrangements remain, we need to understand the political economy of mining in light of the changes associated with the cross-border functional integration of global capitalism, and in the context of particular regions.

### **Industrial Mining in the Epoch of Global Capitalism**

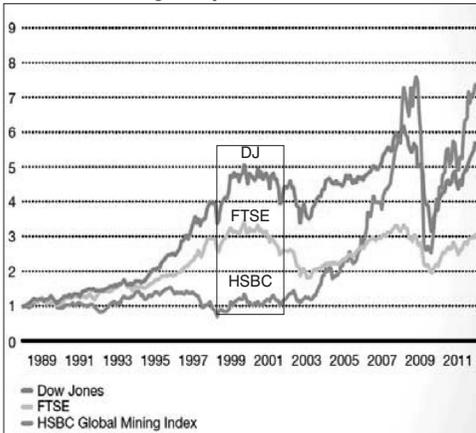
The history of mining is a history of human displacement, hard labor, and the appropriation of land, from slave labor to the labor-intensive mining of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Since the minerals extracted from mining operations are vital to an array of goods, mining has long been a socially determined process in which landed property is economically realized (Marx 1981:756). With the collaboration of powerful states and comprador elites, international monopolies dominated the mining industry during much of the twentieth century (Nwoke 1987; Fine 1994), including many areas in the so-called developing world. Through the shifting phases of capitalism, many former colonial and metropole elites transitioned to an international orientation, and then increasingly toward a transnational orientation (Robinson 2003). In this context, the political economy of mining, including in less economically built up areas of the planet, has in recent decades become contingent on chains of transnational capitalist accumulation, globally competitive markets, flexibilized labor, and the rising role of subcontractor and exploratory companies.

TNC mining operations are developed through a series of phases. First, transnational mining firms or smaller globally active exploration companies locate and assess mineral deposits. When positive results are obtained, a larger transnational mining conglomerate usually takes over, often buying out or gaining a controlling position over smaller exploratory firms. Once political and contractual guarantees have been secured, the second phase begins—the development and operation of the mine. Market pressures have thus pushed state managers (looking for global investors) to standardize their regulatory and contractual processes. As discussed further below, TNCs are utilizing a growing array of exploratory companies and are developing mining sites by relying on numerous contractors and subcontractors. This is in marked contrast to the mining operations of decades ago.

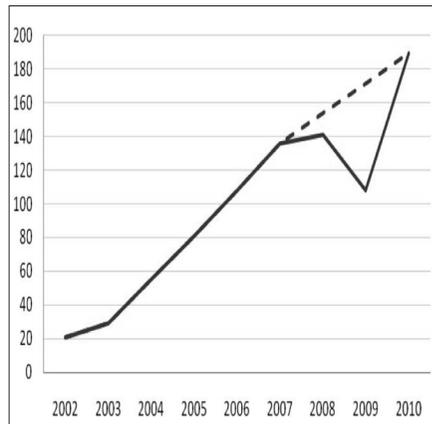
With the rise of capitalist globalization, new waves of mining projects have been spurred for a number of reasons: (1) technological advancements, (2) organizational innovations, (3) the growing concentration of global capital through corporate mergers and acquisitions (M&As), (4) the rise of successful smaller mining exploratory companies, (5) the rising value of mineral ores as a finite resource (at times offset by new

technologies), and (6) the role of transnationally oriented state elites and technocrats in promoting policies of global competitiveness and investor confidence to entice new mining projects. Together these factors, in conjunction with various specific local conditions, have resulted in the renewal of old mining sites, the upgrading of existing locations, and the launching of new operations.

**Global indices (rise in value of stocks) of mining companies, 1989-2011.**



**Earnings in the billions (USD) before interests, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) of global mining industry, 2002-2010.**



Sources: Bloomberg and Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP Analysis (Xie 2012)

The volume of cross-border corporate mergers and acquisitions (M&As) in the mining industry has increased at unprecedented levels in recent decades, raising capital for new megadeals to smaller buyouts (Ernst & Young 2012). Cross-border financial integration and the industry's growing global orientation has led to new "synergies, bolt-on growth and acquisitions that enabled companies to utilize competitive advantages" (Ibid). As the industry transforms into a globally competitive battleground for oligopolies, it is infused with transnational finance capital. Concomitant with this, the role of smaller exploratory companies and subcontractors in the industry has grown, many becoming active around the world, filling niches and providing specialized services. Mining expert Dr. Vladimir Pacheco, who has worked as an adjunct research fellow at the University of Queensland's Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRMI), explains:

Over the recent decades [mining companies] have had a trend toward cross-border investment and monopoly. In gold, for example, just around half a dozen companies now process the vast majority of gold. The amount of capital is just huge, but in many ways it's like other

global industries. They don't want to get caught up with local peculiarities and problems, so everything is standardized and tightly managed as compared to the past, such as the agreements with states, the operations, the construction. It's a turnkey, finely tuned process, with lots of subcontractors, hundreds. Some subcontractors are active globally, others regionally, and others only operate locally (Dr. Vladimir Pacheco, personal communication, 2013).

Transnational mining corporations, highly attuned to cyclical processes in the market, are competing over new markets and economies of scale in production. "Economies of scale" refers to the cost advantages that a corporation obtains through expansion. As diversified large companies continue to ramp up mining production through acquisitions and expansion, smaller start-up companies fill a niche by pioneering new deposits. Focused on "frontier" locations, "companies that have traditionally been national champions are globalizing, using their domestic scale and often privileged access to capital" (Accenture 2011). As identified in the graph above, the industry's global orientation has occurred through rising values in stocks and earnings, an attractive investment for transnational finance capital. While exhibiting caution after the global economic crisis of the early twenty first century, TNCs are benefiting from new sources of capital, spanning sovereign wealth funds to strategic partnerships and private wealth (Ernst & Young 2012).<sup>1</sup>

Investment in production and exploration has also expanded into locations with fragile local conditions and with only a marginal history of mining. With rising mineral prices, capital has an incentive to expand or renew mining ventures in the developing world, reassessing areas previously viewed as unprofitable or too risky. Between 2002 and 2012, GDP tripled in the mining industry in Latin America, the industry gaining importance in most of the countries of the region (Bamrud 2012). Many areas of the Caribbean, such as Hispaniola, are viewed as ripe for growth. Yet at the same time, the industry's operations in the Caribbean present a stark example of how the modern mining industry exists within the extremely unequal dynamics of the global economy and in a manner disconnected from locally geared development.

While mining companies have shifted toward an ever-greater reliance on private contractors, many contractors themselves have become active on a larger scale, becoming themselves more deeply integrated with global financial systems. Large amounts of credit and loans are required for contractors, especially when active regionally or globally. Newer mining operations (such as Barrick Gold's Pueblo Viejo mine in the Dominican Republic) involve a higher number of contractors than the mining operations of previous decades. This new trend is important because contractors and diverse economic arrangements serve as important spaces for local

capital and small-scale entrepreneurs to integrate into transnational production chains, a mechanism of class integration across frontiers.

To varying degrees of success, in recent decades state policymakers in the Caribbean have sought to craft conditions that promote transnational investment, including in the mining industry. Regional and supranational bodies, such as institutions of the United Nations and the World Bank (Moody 2007:16-42), and CARICOM and CARIFORUM in the Caribbean context, have pushed for heightened transnational standards and policy regimes to create a conducive climate for investment. As Pacheco observes, there has been an expanding reliance by “national governments and private companies on transnational mining policy regimes in order to secure legitimacy” and “to demonstrate they are globally competitive” (Dr. Vladimir Pacheco, personal communication, 2013). Transnational juridical frameworks and standards, as other scholars have examined, have deepened structural disparities where an “increasing technicisation of decision-making processes” sideline and depoliticize local input (Campbell 2012:140).

Transnationally oriented policy makers advocating neoliberal restructuring have lowered levies on mining companies and widely abandoned the previous statist policy initiatives. World Bank studies have advocated these neoliberal reforms, a fact that explains how such policies have been “successful in generating substantial interest in attracting exploration to the [Latin American] region which, for the first time in 1994 and 1995, was ranked as the first region in the world in terms of mining exploration expenditures” (World Bank 1996:viii). With heavy capital and technological investment involved in mining operations, many governments in the Caribbean and Latin America have altered laws, lowered taxes and levies, and in general promoted conditions enabling TNC investment. This has resulted in a period of rapid expansion in mining, as one World Bank publication explains: “Between 1990 and 1997, while global exploration investment went up 90%, it increased fourfold in Latin America” (McMahon & Remy 2001:2). In regards to regulation and controls, “the recently diminished role of the state in the mining industry” (Ibid) has had far reaching effects, such as in how environmental regulations and negotiations with local communities now feature TNCs in a more central role.<sup>2</sup>

In regards to labor, transnational corporate mining has required fewer and fewer labor inputs. In 1990, there were nearly 25 million workers in the mining industry worldwide, but as organizational advancements and mechanization has intensified, there were only 5.5 million working in the industry by 2000 (Moody 2007:69). The shrinking number of employees in Caribbean mining operations, such as in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, reflects the global decline of labor inputs

that industry requires. Furthermore the power of *minero* labor unions has declined as the industry became increasingly less tethered to state enterprises. Roger Moody explains, “the proportion of ill-paid, disempowered, subcontracted mineworkers has significantly increased” over recent years (Ibid). Thirty years ago, Caribbean miners were often paid directly through state owned enterprises, even when a multinational corporation managed operations. This is almost unheard of today. Contemporary mining workers are paid directly by TNCs or through contractors/subcontractors, forming a more flexibilized labor regime where work is more tightly managed, standardized, and monitored.

One former miner from the town of Maimón, who worked at Pueblo Viejo between 1973 and 1993 (when mining operations were owned and more directly influenced by the state), spoke to me about his career and the changes that have taken place in the mining industry. In contrast to current workers at the Pueblo Viejo mine paid directly by Barrick Gold, during the earlier period of the mine’s operations it was the Rosario Dominicana state enterprise that paid workers’ salaries (S. A. Ramírez Beltne, personal communication, 2013). He explained further how workers, as they have come to labor directly for TNCs, have faced less static duties, now being required more often to adapt to fluctuations and changes in production and efficiency. Yet the industry’s shifting practices toward labor have also reproduced many phenomena, such as racialized class relations, as historically racialized segments of society continue to make up a majority of the low-waged workforces at mines in the Caribbean and Latin America. Such social and material relations are reproduced though in a dynamic way, as racialized low-waged workers now increasingly move around to different locations and some across borders (Ibid). Managers and experts in the industry, even more so, increasingly move around to different geographic areas. Whereas these managerial and specialist groups overwhelmingly come from privileged racialized strata and nations of the “global north,” as compared with earlier decades, a rising number do hail from the “global south.”

Shifting labor regimes in the industry, alongside rising environmental and local concerns, have been reflected in the large number of protests occurring across Latin America and the Caribbean, with anti-mining movements targeting 218 mining projects in 2015 (Observatorio de conflictos mineros de América Latina 2015). Below, I examine the historical trajectory and political economy of earlier international models of industrial mining and the role of the state. I then consider the recent transnationalization of the industry and the increasingly facilitative role of state elites as they abandon forms of national development in place of transnational engagement and global competitiveness. I will discuss how these complex processes have played out, through particular case

studies on Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

### **Jamaica: From International to Transnational Mining**

Bound up with specific conditions and historical legacies, industrial mining in the British colonies and ex-colonies developed at a more rapid pace than elsewhere in the Caribbean. With the allied nations during the World War and Post-War periods requiring resources for their military industries, new state-guided investments emerged with a focus in resource extraction industries. The commercial discovery of Bauxite in Jamaica occurred in the early 1940s, and soon thereafter North American investors purchased and leased large areas of land containing deposits of ore (Hughes 1973:3). With the defeat of Jamaica's militant labor and leftwing political forces in 1938, dominant groups solidified their relative hegemony (Post 1978). In turn, the island's independence in the mid-twentieth century opened further opportunities for international investment. Jamaica's situation and experience with a relatively late independence, after a period of political tutelage, contrasted greatly with the historical context of other nearby islands.

Motivated in part by U.S. Cold War policies in the 1950s, North American capital invested heavily in developing bauxite mining in Jamaica (Hughes 1973:1). Between 1950 and 1966, the vast majority of foreign capital into the country went to bauxite mining, a magnet of economic growth that served as the single largest source of tax revenue for the country. By the beginning of the Korean War, the U.S. sought to double its capacity in aluminum through the auspices of national security. The U.S. Defense Production Act of 1950 provided generous financial support for this new policy (Ibid). U.S. international corporations, such as Kaiser and Reynolds, acquired deposits in Jamaica and in fact received a majority of the Act's money allocated for building U.S. metal capacity (Ibid):

The United States Government had a particular interest in introducing the Jamaican deposits as the chief source of incremental supplies. In the first place, the large size of the reserves made large-scale production over time feasible; secondly, the proximity of Jamaica to the Gulf Coast ports made the strategic route easier to defend. (Girvan 1971)

Initially it was the strategic requirements of the U.S. government (building up its National Strategic Stockpile) that prompted the creation of the bauxite industry in Jamaica. At the time it was considered by U.S. policymakers that "The development of the West Indies deposits is important as a security measure" (Ibid). By the 1960s the burden of financing the operations had switched to the private sector. Jamaica's bauxite was near the surface, so it could be mined with conventional mining equipment

(Ibid:26). Low extraction costs, local accessibility, and importantly, the proximity to the U.S., were all important features (Ibid: 21). U.S. reliance on Jamaican bauxite grew tremendously during this period; in 1951 imported bauxite from Jamaica supplied 61% of U.S. needs, yet by 1965 the U.S. imported 86% of its bauxite from Jamaica (Ibid:30).

Growing production in the 1960s included the advent of local mining subsidiary companies. Owned largely by foreign corporations, these subsidiaries allowed for taxation, regulation, and liability benefits for international capital. Their emergence reflected the growing international-orientation and organizational capacity of mining corporations and their capitalist owners and investors (Ibid:15).

Jamaica's national independence in 1962, with the conservative Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) first coming to power, signaled a turning point for the increasing role of the mining industry in the country. Social and political tensions heightened during the 1960s, especially as the popular classes faced hardship while major economic sectors, such as mining, reaped extraordinary profits. Jamaica's independence and the onrushing of North American capital led to shifts within Jamaica's class structure, with business interests and state elites turning increasingly outward toward international financial markets. British finance capital and London's oversight had dominated Jamaica during the mid-twentieth century, but into the 1960s following the island's independence, London's guarantees on financial support began to evaporate. Internationalizing U.S. finance capital, and, to a lesser extent, internationally geared Canadian finance capital, became increasingly present (Ibid:152-159). Besides the U.S. based Kaiser and Reynolds, Alcoa established Bauxite mining operations in Jamaica as well as in the Dominican Republic.

While international capitalism eventually expanded beyond the restraints of the earlier colonial orders, it faced new challenges with the formation of post-colonial states.

In 1972, the center-left People's National Party (PNP) swept the nation's elections, gaining a majority in Jamaica's parliament. In order to fund social programs and facilitate national production, a major plank of the PNP's political platform was to increase revenues from the bauxite sector. This meant higher taxes on mining operations and partial state ownership of the sector. Under Prime Minister Michael Manley, the PNP government acquired a sizable stake of local mining subsidiaries, with the government purchasing 51% of the local subsidiary of Kaiser and Reynolds, as well as 6% of Alcoa's and 7% of Alcan's operations. The government also repurchased most of the ore reserve lands owned by the companies. Mining companies, in return, received forty-year mining leases. By 1974, Jamaica became the world's fourth largest producer and second biggest exporter of alumina. That same year, following the

dramatic rise of worldwide oil prices, the state increased bauxite taxes through a production levy. In effect, the levy indexed the price of bauxite to the price at which the aluminum companies sold aluminum ingots.

The Manley administration developed new agencies to manage the state's enlarged role in the industry. The Jamaica Bauxite Institute began operating in 1976 to monitor, regulate, conduct research and advise the government on all aspects of the industry. Yet local and international conditions and the structural contradictions therein made it extremely difficult for the PNP's project to succeed. International capital and the U.S. strongly opposed statist developmental policies. To assuage its opponents, Manley's government sought to position itself as non-aligned during the Cold War. Yet exaggerating Jamaica's relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union, hardline militarists in Washington sought to undermine Manley's government. U.S. intelligence apparatuses and various business interests—including those connected with the mining industry—engaged in a campaign to destabilize Manley's first administration (Blum 2004:263-267). The defeat of the PNP's initial platform was symbolized by its loss in violence-marred elections held in late 1980. The smaller, Marxist oriented Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ), which had played a role in pulling the PNP to the left during the 1970s, later collapsed. The hollowing out of Jamaica's political landscape was made easier by the fact that the communist and socialist left within Jamaica's labor movement had been marginalized and brutally crushed decades prior (Post 1978).

To subvert future progressive and leftist movements, elites and allied policymakers sought in an increasingly concerted effort to restructure political systems in developing regions, such as the Caribbean (Robinson 1996). This can be seen in the context of Jamaica with the pacification of the country's heated political struggle. Throughout the 1980s and 90s under the JLP and then under a reconstituted PNP, the earlier statist mining policies were largely dismantled. Alongside an economic restructuring of Jamaica during the global era, policy and ideological differences between the two major parties have diminished (Sprague 2014). Foreign investment in mining has grown somewhat, which industry experts estimated resulted in increased output of 1.5 million metric tons of Bauxite production per annum. Over recent decades the Jamaican state's macro-economic policies have increasingly run in line with the "Washington consensus" promoted by international financial institutions (IFIs), encouraging state budgetary austerity alongside borrowing to boost capital investment and local consumption. As observed by Johnston (2013), this has led to a multilateral debt trap, in which the country's long-term economic development has stagnated, social inequality has increased, while a handful of business people have become extremely wealthy.

Policies meant to promote global competitiveness can be seen in the withdrawal of the Jamaican state from its former role in domestic mining operations.<sup>3</sup> In 1999, the government agreed to a further reduction of the bauxite levy. Since then, the levy has been eliminated altogether, bringing Jamaica in line with pro-industry conditions in many other parts of the world. Transnational capital clearly has held powerful influence over policymakers in Jamaica's state apparatus, as state managers have sought to accommodate investors by opening up local markets and eliminating barriers to capital mobility. Barclay and Girvan document how the groups operating through Jamaica's state apparatus have almost entirely dropped earlier policies of national development in regards to the industry, even abandoning taxation:

Since the late 1970s, the Jamaican government has progressively changed its policy stance vis-à-vis the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) operating in its bauxite industry from relatively confrontational to relatively accommodating. A controversial bauxite production levy was replaced by a fiscal regime based on corporate profits taxes and royalties. The changes were due to a steep decline in the government's bargaining power in relation to the traditional TNCs players and to the new players in the global industry; manifested in a dramatic fall in Jamaica's global bauxite and alumina market share and the perceived need to restore international competitiveness. Also playing a part were the deteriorating economic situation of the country and the changing ideological climate associated with the Washington Consensus. The policy changes, in the context of the global restructuring of the aluminum industry; resulted in new investment with increases in plant capacity and production; but aggregate returns from the industry have not grown significantly as per unit returns have declined; and the recent global economic slowdown has resulted in plant closures. (2008:1)

To be clear, mining has become a more globally competitive industry. By the early 1970s, bauxite production in Australia had overtaken Jamaica, with some 27 million tons a year produced as opposed to Jamaica's 11 to 12 million tons. By 2010, bauxite mining in Jamaica was producing 9 million tons per annum, in comparison to 70 million tons produced in Australia and with the mining of bauxite expanding worldwide. In total, mining and quarrying contributed 8.6% to Jamaica's GDP in 1995, with 98% of that coming from bauxite and alumina. Bauxite has remained among the country's leading industries well into the twenty-first century. Alumina and bauxite have remained the two leading export commodities, accounting for more than 50% of the total value of exports in 2000.

Bauxite mining (though in a slow decline, as it is a finite resource being depleted) appears set to continue for many more decades on the

island. There are at present four bauxite mining and refining operations in Jamaica. Half of the mined bauxite is processed on the island in the four alumina refineries, which have a combined capacity of some 2.7 million tons a year. The alumina is exported mainly to Europe and North America, but in recent decades exports have expanded to other non-traditional locations.

**Bauxite & Aluminum products as a total of Jamaican exports**

	1972	1980	1991	2001	2010
Aluminum oxide & hydroxide	38.7	57	43.8	51.8	28.7
Bauxite & concentrates of alum	24.2	21.1	9.1	7.5	9.1

Source: ECLAC-CEPALSTAT

Whereas mining companies in the mid-twentieth century were closely identified with their domicile nation, in recent years, mining companies have become more transnationally oriented, operating through global chains of production and through financial systems functionally integrated across borders. For instance, the TNC United Company Rusal, now the largest alumina producer globally, recently acquired the Jamaica operations of WINDALCO and ALPART. The company, with operations around the world, is headquartered in Moscow, but is incorporated on the island of Jersey, a British crown dependency and tax haven in the Channel Islands. The company initially formed in 2007 through a merger of the Switzerland based Glencore's alumina assets and the Russian companies RUSAL and SUAL. Major transnational capitalists hold large shares in the company, such as the American tycoon Nathaniel Rothschild and Chinese billionaire Robert Kuok (Kuok Hock Nien), while its hedge funds are managed by U.S. billionaire John Paulson and the Moscow-based state bank Vneshekonombank (Gopalan 2009).

Jamaica's mining industry, like mining operations around the world, has become integrated with transnational circuits of production and finance. In the 1980s and 1990s, as circuits of production and finance transnationalized through new organizational and technological advancements, major capitalists around the world shifted from a national or international orientation towards a transnational one. Mining companies no longer operate in Jamaica as an extension of U.S. state policies or subsidies, nor in the interests of a particular fraction of national capitalists; rather, they thrive in a globally competitive and integrated market benefiting transnational capitalists.

Transnational mining firms, like earlier multinational firms, have often operated through subsidiaries. In Jamaica these have included:



One of the Winalco operations currently owned by Rusal, which has railroad access (Photos by the author, November 2014).

Alumina Partners of Jamaica, Noranda Jamaica Bauxite Partners, URS Jamaica Ltd, Lydford Mining Co., and Winalco's West Indies Alumina Company. As a case study, Alumina Partners operates a bauxite refinery in the southern part of Jamaica. As of 2007, the company exported 1.65 million tons of alumina overseas per year, and earned gross revenues of \$1.3 billion. In 2011, however, Rusal bought out others in the company to assume a 100% stake. Rusal also has gained majority shareholder status in the Winalco West Indies Alumina Company. Winalco produces 1.2 million tons of alumina annually at its two plants, Kirkvine and Ewarton (pictured above).

Another TNC, Noranda Aluminum, previously based out of Quebec, Canada, also operated bauxite mining in Jamaica. In 2006, Xstrata purchased Noranda. Headquartered in Zug, Switzerland, Xstrata is registered in London, and holds operations in 19 countries across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. Among the numerous shareholders of Xstrata, the largest is Glencore International PLC (with a stake of approximately 34%). In turn, Glencore, a transnational commodity trading and mining company, with shareholders from around the world, is headquartered in Baar, Switzerland but registered on the island of Jersey. The world's largest commodities trading company, Glencore, had a 2010 global market share of 60% in the internationally tradable zinc market, 50% in the internationally tradable copper market, 9% in the internationally tradable grain market and 3% in the internationally tradable oil market. Glencore has production facilities around the world and supplies metals, minerals, crude oil, oil products, coal, natural gas and agricultural products to global customers in the automotive, power generation, steel production and food processing industries.

A number of other transnational enterprises have large holdings in

Xstrata. The Qatari sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Holding, has a 12% stake in Xstrata. Glencore also has ties with the U.S.-based Century Aluminum Co. and it has a 70.5% stake in one of the top three nickel producers based in Australia (Minara Resources Ltd), and a 8.8% share in Rusal. Another transnational mining firm, the Australian headquartered Ausjama Mining, began the first recorded gold-mining operation in Jamaica in 2000, in Pennants. Subsumed in a global whirlpool of finance capital, many long-standing industrial operations, such as mining in Jamaica, have actually continued into the contemporary era but as part of the global strategies and accumulation platforms of TNCs.

Local Jamaican elites have become deeply interconnected with the global economy through the sale of imports, export processing, tourism inputs, and financial flows (Sprague 2015a). Despite the integration of local elites into the global economy, economic activity around mining has remained largely within the sphere of leading transnational conglomerates. Local subcontracting ties with the industry have remained primarily through port logistic services and transportation (Jamaican Ministry of Trade official, personal communication, 2014). While the operations of mining corporations have shifted over recent decades, one long-standing dynamic persists: the lack of local inputs. This can be seen also in the continued lack of technological transfers, with Jamaica still lacking local aluminum smelters.

Yet, transnationally oriented state elites and technocrats operating through state apparatuses have played a significant role in ushering along TNC mining projects in recent decades. In Jamaica, officials from both major political parties, the JLP and the PNP, have promoted the dismantling of the state's direct role in mining while undertaking policies conducive to transnational mining capital. In one ongoing project that encourages future TNC mining operations, the Jamaican state's mining agency collaborates with the mining agency of the Government of the Czech Republic to identify local non-metallic mineral deposits "for rapid economic development" as well as other projects focused on new and continuing mining operations. While attempts to promote mining in Jamaica continue, taxation levels are dropping and repatriation of local earnings continues unabated. It now appears that the last remaining "national goal" is to maintain a minimal level of low waged jobs in the sector so as not to exacerbate the high level of unemployment in the country. In late 2014, the Jamaican state agreed to cease for two years the last remaining levies on companies active in mining bauxite within the country. With levies dropped and local operations almost completely privatized, the number of low wage jobs (albeit shrinking over recent decades) appears to be one of the few "benefits" left for the local population. As the host government and local business interests benefit

only marginally from the global mining industry, the more important overarching concerns of elites and policymakers in Jamaica appear to be in maintaining a globally competitive, investor-friendly climate.

### **The Dominican Republic and Transnational Mining: The New El Dorado?**

By the late nineteenth century, the Dominican and Haitian states had passed mining laws, yet the industry remained essentially non-existent on the island (Aitkens 1931:1-2). With the U.S. occupations of the Domingo Republic (1916-1924) and Haiti (1915-1934), (Schmidt 1995; Sprague 2012), U.S. policymakers, and eventually, the regimes they put in place, assumed the task of expanding private property rights, improving road networks, managing the money supply, and fostering development of credit institutions. By 1930, the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic had consolidated power through the local military and state, strengthened by U.S. largess. Yet suffering from fragmentation and economic fragility, few local mechanisms existed through which political negotiations and a legalistic distribution of power could occur. With a weak and repressed civil society, the Trujillo regime consolidated power, in turn reproducing exclusion and inequality. As foreign capital controlled the country's most dynamic sectors, the regime monopolized the role of local counterpart to foreign capital. As Trujillo and his coterie owned many of the largest businesses in the country, this slowed the formation of local productive capital (Espinal 1986). Buying out some of the most profitable local monopolies, and excluding foreign capital, Trujillo promoted a particular brand of ISI policies.

Not only did the island lack the infrastructure and social and political cohesion best suited for the mining industry's development, international mining companies focused on easier to reach mineral deposits in more developed countries. With limited success, local officials enticed foreign capital to invest, offering sweetheart deals to potential foreign investors that required mines pay as little as 2% of the gross product to the public treasury.<sup>4</sup> During the decades after World War II, international corporate investment in the "imperial frontier" expanded. Though to a much lesser extent than in Jamaica, U.S. state policies helped the Alcoa mining corporation begin mining bauxite in the Dominican Republic by 1959.

Deepening international economic activity occurred alongside transformative political and social processes in the Dominican Republic. Soon after the death of Trujillo in 1961, a short-lived democratically elected center-left government came to power under Juan Bosch. When a right-wing coup soon overthrew Bosch, though, the ensuing armed conflict between constitutionalist and putchist factions prompted U.S.

policymakers to occupy the country and back the local conservative forces. Ultimately, the *Trujillista* leader Joaquín Balaguer came to power, strengthened by the force of U.S. bayonets. Eventually, the Balaguer regime offered space for foreign and local business, especially those linked to productive industry, construction and finance (Espinal 1986), while continuing to repress labor and grassroots movements.

The early 1970s saw the construction of large-scale dams on the island, such as the Péligre Dam in Haiti in 1971 and the Yaque del Norte in the Dominican Republic in 1973. These infrastructure projects were important steps for capitalist development, permitting the expansion of the electrical grids and incremental improvements to the overall quality of life. With new export processing initiatives, economic relations strengthened between certain local and foreign capitalists, especially with the influx of private investment promoted by the U.S. state.

As part of what would become a broader regional and international trend (Robinson 1996), a tightly managed democratic opening occurred in the late 1970s with the election of the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD), the party founded by Bosch. Fractions of the business community, once excluded from the paternalistic system of business-government relations under Balaguer, built alliances and collaborated with PRD politicians. As the political system modernized and enshrined more basic rights, the socioeconomic conditions of the poor remained backward and the role of labor unions was marginalized. Espinal explains: “despite the democratic opening, which has largely consisted of holding freer and more competitive elections and more protection of basic human and political rights, the working class continues to be highly excluded from power and a fair share of the wealth produced in society” (1986:228). In turn, segments of the local bourgeoisie became increasingly linked with foreign investors, and helped to foster local conditions conducive to the expanding global economy.

During this period, the mining industry began to expand in the Dominican Republic. One study explains: “Mining in particular took on a greater role, as that sector’s share of exports grew from an insignificant level in 1970 to 38% by 1980” (Library of Congress 1986). While mining has continued on in recent decades its share as a percentage of “national exports” has dropped, as export processing and other production has intensified. As mining ramped up in the 1970s, state managers sought a role in managing, facilitating, and taxing operations in order to assure greater revenues for the government. By the early 1980s the Dominican state levied a 5% export tax, and charged a 40% annual income tax on the net profits of private mining operations (with, however, various exemptions).

In time, international pressure urged state policymakers to drop

the state's heavy role in various industries, including mining. Neoliberal policies called for leveraging local assets, such as mineral resources, to entice investment from abroad. These policies began to percolate during the 1980s, as the Dominican state relied on the mining expertise of corporations abroad while maintaining ownership and a partial role in management (S. A. Ramírez Beltne, personal communication, 2013). In the 1990s, as capitalist globalization intensified, a new administration under the rightist *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano* (PRSC), headed by Joaquín Balaguer, issued new mining decrees, bringing the country's mining laws in step with pro-investment regimes such as in Mexico (Gobierno de República Dominicana 1997), an important step toward deepening the confidence of capitalist investors in local mineral extraction. Under the subsequent *Partido de la Liberación Dominicana* (PLD) and PRD administrations, officials negotiated new contracts with transnational mining companies, though only some reached full-scale production. By the new century, structural dynamics developed that had turned the nation into an easily accessible node for transnational capital.

To understand the novel role of mining TNCs in the country, it is especially useful to look at the development of the Pueblo Viejo mine, founded in 1972 as a concession from the Dominican state. Between 1975 and 1999 the New York- and Honduras-based Rosario Mining Company, with support from the Dominican state authorities, initiated operations on what would become a vast 7.5 million square meter open-pit mine which contains gold, silver, zinc, and copper. Open-pit mining is a surface mining technique for extracting rock or minerals through their removal from an open pit, rather than through a shaft into the ground. Grullón and Antares (2012) observe, "The operations of Rosario Dominicana were disastrous in environmental, social and financial terms." They add, "At least four rivers of the area were polluted with Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) and with discharges from the tailings of dams, one of which overflowed in 1979 during a hurricane; and more than 600 families were displaced" to make way for the project. It is estimated that hundreds of millions of dollars would be required to clean up the environmental damage (Ibid:27-28).

Despite the mine's closure at the turn of the century, and the extensive environmental damage it had caused, production resumed nearly ten years later, with the restarted operations greatly benefiting from new technology and techniques. In 2002, a Vancouver-based transnational mining company, Placer Dome, signed mining contracts with the Dominican government, including a 25-year lease (extendable to 75 years) for the Pueblo Viejo mining area (Austen 2005). However, in 2006 Placer Dome was acquired for \$10.4 billion by another Canadian based transnational mining corporation, Barrick Gold, the largest gold

**Production of (selected) minerals in the Dominican Republic**

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

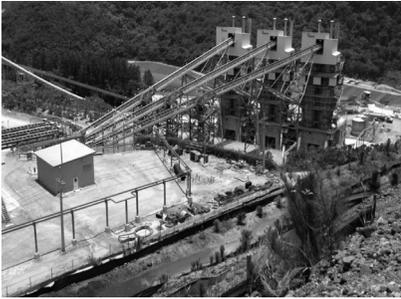
	1990	1998	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Gold/kg	4,350	1,421	173	494	490	4,106	23,019
Silver/kg	21,600	7,409	450	20,300	18,300	27,296	*
Copper	-	-	11,500	9,000	11,700	11,737	*
Nickel	28,700	40,300	500	-	1,143,000	1,301,694	*

Sources: Wacaster 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Barrick Website 2014; Goldcorp Website 2014 (\* = data not yet available).

mining company in the world.<sup>5</sup> Placer Dome's interests in the gold and silver mines of La Coipa and Pueblo Viejo were passed to Barrick Gold, potentially growing Barrick's output of gold tremendously.<sup>6</sup> That same year, another transnational mining corporation, Goldcorp, acquired 40% of the Pueblo Viejo venture from Barrick.<sup>7</sup> Despite these corporate maneuvers, Barrick remained the sole operator, through its local subsidiary, the Pueblo Viejo Dominicana Corporation (PVDC).

Consistent with its unparalleled presence in mining gold worldwide, Barrick Gold Corporation has investors from around the world. Headquartered in Toronto and founded by Canadian real estate magnate Peter Munk, it has four regional business units located in Australia, Africa, North America and South America, with mining and exploratory projects that span the globe, from Papua New Guinea, to the United States, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Australia, Peru, Chile, Russia, South Africa, Pakistan, Colombia, Argentina and Tanzania. Major investors in the company include Van Eck Associates Corp (a U.S. based investment firm with global coverage, including much of the "developing world"), the Bank of Montreal (one of the largest banks in Canada, with investments around the world), First Eagle Investment Management (a U.S. based investment management firm whose global fund has assets totaling almost \$50.92 billion invested in 172 different holdings), Allianz Asset Management (a financial assets company based in Munich, Germany with \$624.95 billion in total assets and with investors from around the world), and the Bank of New York Mellon (the largest deposit bank in the world, with \$27.9 trillion in worldwide assets under custody or administration). All of these institutional investors are themselves interconnected with a wide variety of global industries, active with investors around the world.

Barrick Gold's mining operation at Pueblo Viejo began in 2011, with the extraction of gold and other minerals and production growing since that time. According to Barrick and Goldcorp, the proven reserves of



Barrick Gold's operations at Pueblo Viejo (Photographs by the author, July 2013).

the Pueblo Viejo mine numbered 20 million ounces of gold, 117 million ounces of silver, and 424 million pounds of copper. All told, however, the total output of the mine will likely be much higher than this initial assessment.

Heightened contractor and subcontractor arrangements can also be seen at Pueblo Viejo. Whereas earlier state connected mining operations at Pueblo Viejo involved very few private subcontractors, this has changed in recent years. Barrick Gold Employee Nicomedes Acevedo explains, "We've had a huge expansion in the volume of relations with subcontractors. We've worked with around thirty subcontractors here in the Dominican Republic, but we have five main subcontractors that have around 3,000 permanent employees" (Nicomedes Acevedo, personal communication, 2013). One of the subcontractors operating at Barrick Gold's Pueblo Viejo facilities is Fluor, employing not just Dominicans but also workers from Colombia, Peru, the Philippines, and other countries. Fluor, a FORTUNE 500 company with 60 office locations on 6 different continents, serves a variety of industries for engineering, procurement, construction, maintenance, and project management for "governments and clients in diverse industries around the world."<sup>8</sup> "A global company," as Fluor's website describes, it boasts "... core strengths in strategic sourcing, material management, and contract management" that enable it to "effectively manage supplier and subcontractor information on a global basis for both . . . commercial and government clients."<sup>9</sup>

Another globally active subcontractor at the Pueblo Viejo mine is Sodexo, a company that provides meals for labor and management. As with Fluor, investor shares in Sodexo are publicly traded in the New York Stock Exchange, among other exchanges. Headquartered in Paris, the TNC Sodexo is one of the largest employers in the world with 380,000 employees, representing 130 nationalities, present on 34,000 sites in 80 countries. Reflecting the gendered relations of the workforce, Sodexo

workers at Pueblo Viejo are overwhelmingly female and paid extremely low wages. As Barrick officials explain, they take pride in their increased use of female labor in comparison to past operations in which few women were employed. Changing gendered labor have occurred as part of the heightened flexibilization and monetization of the lives of workers. Whereas in the past, for example, “workers ate lunches at the mine that their wives packed for them at home,” today workers all eat the same lunch, provided to them in plastic containers and cooked on site by Sodexo employees (who are mostly female). The growing standardization of the industry and role of subcontractors is reflected in these changing social relations.

Many smaller local subcontractors active at Pueblo Viejo are based in towns nearby, exemplifying how a growing number of local businesses have direct, albeit limited, connections with transnational mining capital. One contractor, Presecon, is based in the small town of Cotui. With the company’s owners seeking to expand across the country, leveraging the global investment they have tapped into, its website states that it aspires to “become one of the most important and recognized nationwide, seeking to be the leader in the area of sub-contracting human resource services...”<sup>10</sup> Another local subcontractor, Adesco, is also based in the nearby town of Couti and has approximately 80 local employees doing seasonal work reforesting former mining sites.<sup>11</sup> Another Cotui based subcontractor, Agencia Navarro, provides surveying resources and equipment—such as chain saws and compactors—providing transportation services for workers and management at the mine.<sup>12</sup>

State elites and technocrats operating through Dominican state apparatuses have worked to stimulate the global mining industry. For instance, as companies seek mining rights, they must first gain concessions for extraction, which requires approval from the National Assembly. State officials in the Assembly and other government bodies have thereby served as vital conduits through which TNCs secure concessions. Industry insiders regularly hold important government posts and vice versa (*Dominican Today* 2012a).<sup>13</sup> One social justice activist in the Dominican Republic, commenting on the Pueblo Viejo contract, writes, “This was actually a rubber stamp exercise by the neoliberal deputies, most of which were from the corrupt PLD of President Leonel Fernández. There were some votes against the contract, but few in comparison to the yes votes” (local anti-mining activist who requested anonymity, personal communication, 2013). Similar processes were undertaken during the preceding PRD administration of Hipólito Mejía, which oversaw the construction of a deep-water mega-port and facilitated the ramping up of the global mining industry (Gregory 2006).

Beyond Pueblo Viejo, Barrick is slated to open other operations in

the country (such as La Coipa). Furthermore, it is important to note that other mining companies are active on the island. Whereas Barrick owns 60% of the Pueblo Viejo, another company, Goldcorp, owns the rest. This is also significant given that Goldcorp had its mining operations in Guatemala suspended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 2010, shuttering for a period its Marlin mine due to human rights violations and extensive environmental damage (*Guatemala Times* 2010). In addition to these operations, nickel has been another prominent mineral mined in the Dominican Republic. From the 1970s, industrial scale nickel mining has taken place in the country, a process known for its legacy of environmental damage. By the mid-2000s the Dominican Republic ranked eleventh in the world in nickel production (Wacaster 2010).

New mining operations are on the horizon, aimed largely at the mountains of the Massif du Nord Metallogenic (the northern mineralization belt) that stretches from Haiti's north through to the southeast of the Dominican Republic. In mid-2012, the TNC GoldQuest Mining, operating in the western Dominican Republic, released results of a new massive gold-copper exploratory operation (Ibid; Keen 2012). Another transnational mining emporium based out of Canada, Everton Resources, INC, holds the concessions in the perimeter areas adjoining the Barrick Gold/Goldcorp Pueblo Viejo operation.<sup>14</sup> In addition, two other transnational companies, Novus Gold and Unigold, hold lucrative concessions in western areas of the Dominican Republic, closer to the border with Haiti, generally in the northwestern area of the country (Keen 2012). One of these concessions is nearly 1,000 square kilometers, including areas within the J. Armando Bermúdez reserve (a protected tropical forest). In 2012, a mining TNC based out of Australia, Perilya Limited, acquired the exploitation and exploration rights for a number of copper, silver, and gold operations in the Maimón area. The mining TNC, Xstrata Nickel, also continues to be active in the country. As one mining expert explains, the "...Dominican Republic is shaping up to be a new mining district that should not be underestimated" (Bassteam 2012).

In recent years there has also occurred a shuttering of some operations and a reopening or starting up of others. The transnational mining company, Xstrata Nickel (based in the UK), after shutting down its Falconbride Dominicana Corporation, which accounted for much of the nickel mining in the country, has begun new nickel mining operations near Bonao (Wacaster 2010). Another TNC, GlobeStar Mining Corp, in 2009 began producing copper, gold, and silver from open pit mining at its wholly owned Cerro de Maimón operations, also located near Bonao (Ibid).

The overall role of mining in the region has fluctuated, especially as

other economic sectors have grown in recent decades. Community and social movements in the Dominican Republic have repeatedly launched protests over the environmental damage and the high profits that transnational corporations make off of mineral extraction in the country (local anti-mining activist who requested anonymity, personal communication, 2013). Yet most indications suggest that the industry in the region will continue to expand. Incentives for continued growth include heightening values of minerals, growing investment in the industry worldwide, and the continued drive toward global competitiveness by transnationally oriented elites insulated from popular pressures. Over the next decade, the share of the Dominican Republic's GDP from mining will likely surpass 3% (Bamrud 2012). Reports suggest that Barrick's recently renegotiated Pueblo Viejo contract will pay out to the Dominican State \$377 million from the \$8 billion of gross revenue between 2012 and 2016 (Herasme 2014).

Declared by one commentator as the "investment jewel of the Caribbean," mining operations in the Dominican Republic are rapidly becoming a major spigot for the transnational capitalist class entry into the country. As will be discussed below, moreover, mining contracts pushed through after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti have been aimed at a similar outcome. Junior mining exploratory companies active in the Dominican Republic have seen their values rise, as have large mining TNCs such as Barrick. As one industry watcher explained, "Their new high-grade gold (and copper) discoveries in the Dominican Republic have caught the attention of investors, both retail and institutional" (Bassteam 2012). Today, the Dominican Republic is the largest site of foreign direct investment in the history of the Caribbean, as companies from around the world have set up shop, including companies based in the U.S., the E.U., Canada, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela (Pellerano 2012). As the Dominican case illustrates, mining increasingly reflects the speculation, demands, capabilities, and rent seeking of transnational capital, rather than statist developmental projects, locally oriented policies, or the international models of the past. It remains to be seen how a structural alternative can come about, how a humanistic alternative to the exploitative nature of the global mining industry can come into existence. One thing is clear: successful challenges to global industry require that movements from below transnationalize their struggle, working in coordination with social, political, labor and environmental movements across frontiers.

### **Haiti and the New Disaster Mining**

Mining has long remained underdeveloped in Haiti, as U.S.

government researchers explained in the late 1940s (U.S. Tariff Commission 1949:4). Since the early twentieth century the island of Hispaniola was increasingly intervened in by the United States. Eventually with the end of the U.S. occupation in 1934, the military force armed and trained by the U.S. played an important role in Haiti, crushing labor movements and carrying out coup d'états. In addition, simmering beneath the surface was the persistent divide between the *grandon* (the rural elite landowning class), the urban bourgeoisie, and the nation's popular classes. In 1959, the Cold War-era dictatorship of Francois 'Papa Doc' Duvalier came to office, monopolizing power with the aid of the military and a nationwide paramilitary force created by the regime (and trained and armed early on by a U.S. Marine expedition). Duvalier's rule propped up a political system that maintained the country's severe inequality and was continued under his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. Foreign investment intensified under Jean-Claude, as elites close to the regime profited tremendously. During the first four years of Papa Doc's dictatorship, the Reynolds Mining Company, a U.S. corporation, held a monopoly on bauxite mining in the country, paying a mere 7% of its earnings to the Haitian state. Similarly, in the 1970s under "Baby Doc," a small amount of copper mining was undertaken by a U.S. company.<sup>15</sup>

By the last quarter of the twentieth century, supranational agencies and state agencies increasingly conducted mineral exploratory operations around the world, especially where local investors or governments were unable. In Haiti, for example, the UN Development Program carried out exploratory drilling in the northwest of the country in the 1970s. During the 1980s, Germany's Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe ran feasibility studies of mining in Haiti's northeast. That same decade, the area was explored again by the UNDP and also surveyed by the French Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minière. In the 1990s, a Canadian exploratory mining venture also conducted drilling in Haiti's north (Niles 2012). For a number of reasons—lack of infrastructure, political instability, and a mineral market that did not yet justify the costs—the findings of these projects were not pursued at the time. Rural communities in Haiti's north have also protested mining operations, viewing them as providing little to the local population (Sprague 2006).

With the end of the Duvalier dynasty in 1986, the failure of successive attempts by the military and elites to crush popular protests led to democratic elections at the behest of the U.S. and other powerful international interests. Whereas elites and their foreign backers attempted to manipulate the electoral process, their plans backfired when the popular-left government of former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected with wide support. Yet only seven months into his term in office, in September of 1991, Aristide was overthrown by a military junta. The

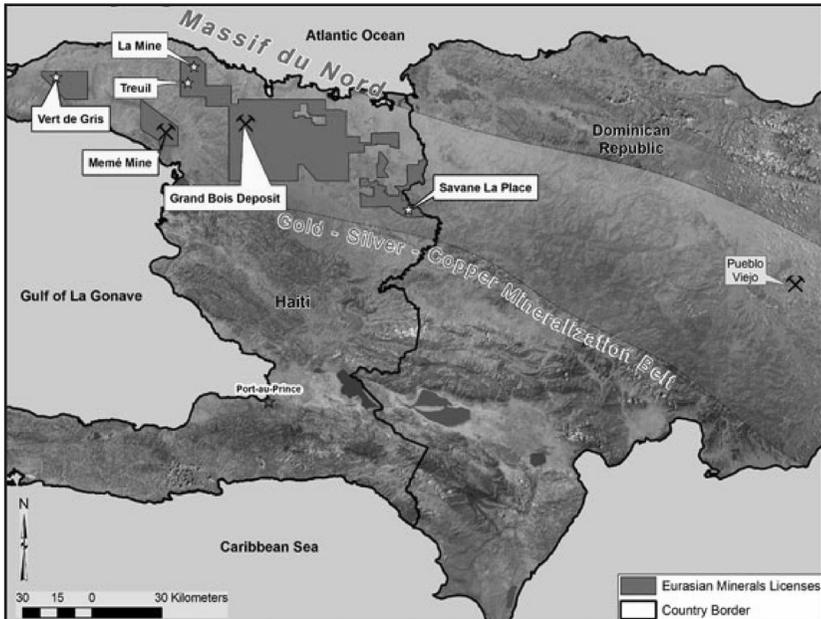
military regime, heavily involved in narcotics trafficking and death-squad repression, quickly faced international isolation. Rooted in the country's traditional power structure, the regime received support from those sectors of the elite and army who rejected the democratic transition.

Attempting to gain foreign investors, the de facto regime granted some mining concessions (Prepetit 2000),<sup>16</sup> but only after the restitution of the constitutional government in 1994 were new mineral exploratory operations begun. In 1995, a Canadian mining company, St. Genevieve Resources, began prospecting in the north of the country (Ibid). The following year, the U.S. based company Newmont Mineral Exploration gained prospecting licenses for areas of north and central Haiti (Ibid). A number of small-scale exploration operations continued on throughout the late-1990s and early-2000s (Wacaster 2010). However, renewed efforts to undermine Haiti's government by sectors of the upper class, their allies abroad and former members of the disbanded military led to another coup d'état and ultimately a UN military occupation in 2004 (Sprague 2012).<sup>17</sup> Dominant groups working with and through various state and supranational agencies have since sought to press forward with the country's economic restructuring, while blocking free and fair elections.

Haiti's fragility creates a risk that any new mining operations will result in few tangible benefits for the Haitian people, such as investment in the country's public infrastructure. In mid-2005, new mining concessions were granted by the post-coup regime of Gérard Latortue, such as with the mineral rights to the SOMINE area, leased through a Mining Convention (valid until 2020) for Majescor, a Canadian based transnational mining company. As one researcher explains, after the 2004 coup, "it did not take long for Haiti's mountains to start to glitter. For example, an exploration of the Faille-B prospect in 2007 found a gold vein that averaged 42.7 grams of gold per ton of ore (g/t) over 6 meters, including values of 107.5 g/t of gold over one meter" (Chery 2012). Leopoldo Espaillat Nanita, former head of the Dominican Petroleum Refinery (REFIDOMSA) explains bluntly that: "there is a multinational conspiracy to illegally take the mineral resources of the Haitian people. Haiti's mineral wealth is immense, with gold, valuable strategic metals such as iridium and other minerals as well" (*Espacinsular* 2009).

The immensity of this resource wealth came into view following the earthquake of 2010, when a new wave of donor-facilitated exploratory operations began. Heightened penetration by global capital has thus gone hand in hand with disaster relief, deepening the country's structural inequalities alongside so few immediate options for economic development. One commentator explains:

### 2011 Map of Eurasian Mineral mining permit zones in Haiti



Source: Eurasian Minerals (2012).

Mining companies appear to know that now is likely the best time in years to move into Haiti: the country has a low royalty rate, there are peacekeepers stationed throughout the country, a giant free trade zone and new deep-water port are being built in the north, minimum wage is the lowest in the hemisphere, and all signs indicate that the new government will write business-friendly laws. (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012a)

With the ramping up of capitalist globalization and the earthquake of 2010, the mining industry began to show signs of major expansion in Haiti. Global corporations and their allies in governments have become adept at taking advantage of situations in which natural disasters have thrown societies and their political systems into disarray. In such situations, corporate planners have learned to skirt long-standing laws, renegotiate various contracts, and remake property relations (Klein 2008). Economic development in post-quake Haiti has been intentionally channeled through transnational capitalist chains of accumulation. One group of researchers found, “If geologists’ calculations are correct, Haiti’s northern mountains contain hundreds of millions of ounces of gold. With gold prices currently topping \$1,600 an ounce, one estimate puts the eventual take at \$20 billion” (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012b).

Shifting political dynamics in the country, furthermore, are reflected

in the recent push to create large mining zones across the country. Following the controversial and poorly attended presidential primary and runoff election win of Duvalierist ally Michel Martelly, the country's rightwing bloc has had a political comeback (Weisbrot 2011). The new rightwing government has violated the country's constitutional process in order to set into motion new mining concessions (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012c). Here it is important to note the close ties between government officials with the industry, as state managers abandon national models of developments in place of transnational engagement. As one researcher explains: "Haiti's new prime minister—Laurent Lamothe—is very pro-business. A telecommunications and real estate entrepreneur with companies in Africa and Latin America, he has pledged to push through business-friendly legislation in all sectors, including mining" (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012a). In another case, former Haitian finance minister Ronald Baudin, instrumental in approving the Martelly government's new mining convention, became a consultant for the transnational mining firm Newmont immediately after leaving office. This was one of the companies for which he had helped to get the convention enacted while in office (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012c).

Two mining companies, Majescor and Eurasian/Newmont have looked to fast-track mining operations in the years following the earthquake. In April 2012, the Eurasian/Newmont venture and the Haitian government agreed for exploratory drilling to take place as a new mining convention was being ratified to permit the company's new projects. Under a memorandum of understanding, the Savane La Place gold prospect is the first project slated for drilling. The convention will cover a huge amount of land, 1,350 square kilometers (*Ibid*). Already allegations of government-mining collusion in illegality has surfaced.<sup>18</sup> The Eurasian/Newmont operation, through its local partner Marien Mining, is believed to hold more mining licenses in Haiti than any other company, so much so that their holdings amount to one-tenth of the country's landmass. Looking to stimulate mining operations after the earthquake, the World Bank's private sector agency, the International Finance Corporation, has invested \$5 million in the Eurasian/Newmont operation (*Ibid*).

Another mining company, the Canada based transnational, Majescor, has pursued mining at the copper-silver-gold rich mountain ridge in the north of the country.<sup>19</sup> Specializing in mineral surveys, Majescor's investments could potentially lead to huge profits.<sup>20</sup> Majescor and its Haitian partners, hold licenses for at least 450 square kilometers. As one investigative report explains, "Taken together, foreign companies are sitting on research or exploration permits for one-third of Haiti's north, 15% of the country's territory" (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012b).

The same report observes:

Majescor is ahead of its rivals, having recently moved to the “exploitation” phase for one of its licenses. But VCS and Newmont/Eurasian are close on its heels. All of the companies recognize Haiti’s potential. “Haiti is the sleeping giant of the Caribbean!” a Majescor partner said recently, while Eurasian president David Cole boasted on a radio show: “We control over 1,100 square miles of real estate.” . . . Because in most locations the copper, silver and gold deposits are mostly spread out as tiny specks in the dirt and rock – what is sometimes called “invisible gold” – expensive pit mining will often be the only option, but Eurasian’s partner Newmont knows its pits. The gold giant opened the world’s first pit mine in Nevada in 1962 and later dug in Ghana, New Zealand, Indonesia, and other countries. (Ibid)<sup>21</sup>

Majescor operates in Haiti through a local affiliate, SOMINE (Society Minière du Nord-Est S.A.), which is 66.4% owned by Majescor, while the rest of the company is owned by Haitian business interests. In one example of the Haitian and diasporic elite involvement in local mining ventures, a former Haitian prime minister (Jean Max Bellerive) and a president of the Haitian Diaspora Federation (Joseph Baptiste) sit on the advisory committee of VCS Mining, a company based out of the U.S. that currently holds (with its partner Delta Mining) licenses for over 300 square kilometers in the north of Haiti. From this we might ascertain that in those built economic environments where transnational mining companies have not yet begun operations, it might be easier for locally based capitalists to seek out future profits in the industry, for instance, through their knowledge of local land deeds and connections with local state officials. This is not the case in some other localities, such as in Jamaica, where earlier international operations have transitioned into transnational operations. It might be the case that it is at the beginning phases of such operations that locally based dominant groups are best situated to profit.

One clear indicator of how little the state and general population will gain from the mining is illustrated by the country’s new mining convention. Christian Aid researcher, Claire Kumar, observes that Haiti’s two previous conventions on mining appeared to have been positive, since they aimed to secure a 50/50 split of profits and put a cap on expenses. Yet the problem with the new convention is that it places Haiti’s royalty rate at an extremely low 2.5% (*Haiti Grassroots Watch* 2012d; Kumar 2009), among the lowest worldwide.

Major components of the post-earthquake development strategy in Haiti have been centered on drawing in global investors, a practice seen in the U.S. and World Bank facilitation of export processing ventures, a new deep-water port, and the new mining developments discussed

above. Policymakers and investors view Haiti as an emergency situation for which the solution is to deepen the country's integration with the global economy. The political corollary to this economic restructuring, alongside the natural and man-made disasters that have occurred over recent years, has been a UN occupation and a deepening political exclusion of the poor. Yet even the most well laid plans of policymakers have faced difficulties. Electoral uncertainties and continued organizing from below by popular and grassroots forces, in mid-2015 had pushed transnational mining corporations to put on hold plans for operations in the country (Fox 2015).<sup>22</sup> The most likely policy of transnational oriented elites will be to continue to undermine or marginalize any alternatives to the status quo, deepening polyarchy in the country in order to secure local political alignment with their interests and intensify the country's integration with global capital.

### **Conclusion: Mining and Capitalist Globalization in the Caribbean**

The mining industry's structure during the era of global capitalism has developed unevenly and in conjunction with novel transnational processes. The very nature in which landed property is economically realized has been modified: from statist oriented policies of development and international corporate models to a globalized industry of transnational capitalists, new labor regimes, and a host of subcontractors and exploratory firms. State interaction with the industry has changed from directing or maintaining partial control of local operations, with particular attempts at enticing international investors, toward policies of global competitiveness and standardization, and the seeking out of transnational capitalist investors. The newest rounds of mining, in turn, have benefited from major technological advancements, rising mineral prices, and the global scope of transnational corporations (in both finance and production).

Whereas top dominant groups connected with the industry have profited tremendously, management has worked to push mineworkers into more globally standardized operations. They have sought to enforce flexibilized labor regimes, even as labor inputs overall have declined (Moody 2007). In some parts of the region, such as in the Dominican Republic, there have been a number of anti-mining protests in recent years by labor and local community groups (Díaz 2010). Criticism has also grown over the Haitian government's role in pushing through mining contracts that violated the nation's constitution. Meanwhile, state managers in Jamaica appear to have completely abandoned levies and taxes upon the industry.

Meanwhile, the industry has come to utilize a rising number of subcontractors, ranging from globally oriented corporations to smaller locally based businesses. Yet, these contracting relations, which are more intensive than in earlier decades, do not appear to be a major source of value for leading capitalists based in Caribbean nations or the wider Caribbean diaspora. They however do appear to serve as a way in which some capitalist interests and medium sized businesses are seeking to link into transnational chains of accumulation.

Transnational capitalists and global investors, though they mostly hail from wealthier nations, now operate through globally competitive relations, transitioning from the earlier international phase to the global phase of world capitalism (Sprague 2015a). At times in recent decades, mining projects in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, as well as mining excavation in Haiti, have received infusions of transnational capital. A number of mining excavation firms and larger TNCs have proposed new or restructured projects in the region, and received the backing of top state officials.

From the 1980s and especially into the 1990s, Caribbean states undertook policies to contract out and privatize state mining operations, which by the twenty-first century resulted in local conditions highly conducive for exploratory firms and transnational mining conglomerates. Even as state apparatuses have increasingly disengaged from a direct role in mining, resource extraction remains a major “developmental strategy” for transnationally oriented policymakers in the Caribbean region. State apparatus and supranational agency officials are seeking now to jumpstart mining in more economically fragile areas, even if it means violating domestic constitutional law, as in Haiti. On both sides of the Dominican-Haitian border, resource extraction zones are being cordoned off for mining TNCs and exploration companies. A number of untapped mineral deposits remain in the region. Gold and silver are so highly valued and rare that some neoliberal state policymakers, facing protests and demands from local populations, might renegotiate contracts for these most resource rich zones, such as has occurred recently in the Dominican Republic (Jiménez 2013). In general, however, transnationally oriented state elites and technocrats, bypassing input from local communities and overlooking issues of sustainability, have promoted increasingly accessible juridical and regulatory frameworks to entice transnational capitalist investors. Across the Caribbean, transnational corporations have come to dominate mining operations. Mining in the region looks set to continue and in some locations intensify over the coming decades as extractivist programs deepen, whereas in some areas (such as in Haiti) it remains unclear how local conditions will impact the industry. How these material relations unfold will ultimately

be determined by social struggles and new initiatives on the ground. Recognizing the shifting political economy of the industry, researchers and activists need to consider how local communities, labor unions, environmentalist campaigners, and social and political movements can best cooperate to generate reforms and alternative structural conditions. As others have argued (Bieler 2012; Liodakis 2010; Robinson 2014), in the face of capitalist relations that are integrating transnationally across borders, movements and projects from below need to seek out new forms of organizing that will coordinate and link their efforts functionally across frontiers.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As one industry report observes: “By the end of the second half of 2011, the mining and metals sector had successfully ridden the storm of global economic uncertainty, emerging financially stronger and poised for growth. Balance sheets are stronger, with many companies faced with the challenging but positive decision of how best to utilize their capital—the dilemma of buy, build or return is back on many boardroom tables” (Ernst & Young 2012).
- <sup>2</sup> Unable to discuss in this paper the ecological impact of industrial mining and the new contradictory protocols that have been developed to regulate environmental impacts, readers should view other studies that discuss this, for example: Moody 2007.
- <sup>3</sup> Such as its 7% share in 2011 in the West Indies Alumina Co. (Wacaster 2012).
- <sup>4</sup> In the case of mines situated on land owned by others, companies were required to pay an additional 2% to owners of the topsoil. Officially all land beneath topsoil was owned by the government, so mining companies (domestic or foreign) had to obtain a permit from the government to undertake mining operations and excavate. Laws on the ownership of land beneath topsoil can be traced back to the legal codes of the European monarchies that colonized the Caribbean (Aitkens 1931:2-3, 7).
- <sup>5</sup> See Barrick Gold’s official website at: <<http://www.barrick.com>>.
- <sup>6</sup> Placer Dome at the time of being acquired was the world’s sixth largest producer of gold, with many of its most successful operations in Australia, South Africa, and North America. Prior to the merger, around 60% of Placer Dome’s production came from mines in North America. Other top gold mining TNCs include Newmont mining of

Denver, and AngloGold Ashanti of Johannesburg.

- <sup>7</sup> See Goldcorp's official website at: <<http://www.goldcorp.com>>.
- <sup>8</sup> "A Letter to Suppliers and Contractors," Fluor Website, Accessed July 2014. Available online at: <[http://www.fluor.com/services/procurement/supplier\\_and\\_contractor\\_registry/pages/a\\_letter\\_to\\_suppliers\\_and\\_contractors.aspx](http://www.fluor.com/services/procurement/supplier_and_contractor_registry/pages/a_letter_to_suppliers_and_contractors.aspx)>.
- <sup>9</sup> "A Letter to Suppliers and Contractors," Fluor Website, Accessed July 2014. Available online at: <[http://www.fluor.com/services/procurement/supplier\\_and\\_contractor\\_registry/pages/a\\_letter\\_to\\_suppliers\\_and\\_contractors.aspx](http://www.fluor.com/services/procurement/supplier_and_contractor_registry/pages/a_letter_to_suppliers_and_contractors.aspx)>.
- <sup>10</sup> Presecon, "¿Quiénes Somos?," Accessed July 2013, Available online at: <<http://presecon.blogspot.com/p/que-es-presecon-vision-convertirnos-en.html>>.
- <sup>11</sup> Adesco stands for Agencia de Empleo y Servicios Cotuí.
- <sup>12</sup> Agencia Navarro S.R.L., Company's Facebook website, accessed July 2013, available online at: <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Agencia-Navarro-SRL/136580319725075>>.
- <sup>13</sup> Illustrating well the revolving door between elites operating through government and global industry, former U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic (nominated by President George W. Bush), Hans Hertell, a Puerto Rican and member of the U.S. Republican party, while the sitting ambassador lobbied extensively for Barrick Gold and Goldcorp during the companies negotiations over Pueblo Viejo with the Dominican state. After he finished his ambassadorship in Santo Domingo, a law firm representing Barrick Gold in the Dominican Republic hired Hertell.
- <sup>14</sup> See the Everton Resources website here: <<http://www.evertonresources.com>>.
- <sup>15</sup> Also in the mid-1980s a marble quarry briefly operated. (Prepetit 2000).
- <sup>16</sup> See for example Prepetit's (2000) discussion on Société minière Citadelle's silver deposit concessions in the Grand-Bois and Morne Bossa.
- <sup>17</sup> Ancillary evidence suggests that at least one mining interest provided financial support to anti-democratic ex-army paramilitaries. In his investigation into Haiti's 2004 coup, Hallward explained: "In Cap-Haïtien I spoke to people who say they were party to meetings

of leading local businessmen, for instance at the Hotel Saint Christophe, which served to raise funds on [Guy Philippe and the FLRN's] behalf. I was also told that some international companies, for instance the Québec-based mining firm Saint Geneviève Resources (with gold-mining interests in northeastern Haiti), contributed money to [the paramilitaries] cause." See: Hallward 2007.

- <sup>18</sup> The authors add that: "Eurasian and Newmont Mining, its partner and the world's Number 2 gold producer, are also drilling illegally in one area—La Miel, in the northeast—in collusion with certain government members."
- <sup>19</sup> Observing the property's underdevelopment, Chery (2012) explains: "The official story is that an abundance of copper had until recently obscured the fact that the area's ore is also rich in silver and gold, and this was discovered from Majescor's recent prospects of Douvray, Blondin and Faille-B. However, the story could just as well be that the mining executives were biding their time and waiting for a "stable" non-nationalistic government to take effect before initiating their projects."
- <sup>20</sup> Chery (2012) explains: The SOMINE property is surrounded by other mining properties owned jointly by Majescor and much larger concerns like Eurasian Minerals and Newmont Mining. Once Majescor's surveys are complete, it plans to find a big partner, like Eurasian, Newmont or Barrick (or some partnership of these like EMX-Newmont), to handle the extractive part of the project.
- <sup>21</sup> *Haiti Grassroots Watch* lists some of the recent allegations made against Newmont: "In Peru, Newmont runs one of the world's largest open pit gold mines: the 251-square kilometer Yanacocha mine. Not long ago, Newmont was accused of influence peddling there when it was linked to former Peruvian spymaster Vladimiro Montesinos. After allegedly assisting Newmont negotiate favorable terms, a former US State Department employee ended up on the Newmont payroll. The company was also accused of mercury and cyanide spills."
- <sup>22</sup> For my brief perspective on the current political and social struggles in Hispaniola and Jamaica, see my recent pieces (Sprague 2013, 2014).

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