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Franklin W. Knight

THE CRISIS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN*

IT SEEMS TO ME that when serious thinkers ponder the reality of Latin America and the Caribbean, sooner or later they turn to the poets and writers. Who would ever consider trying to understand Latin America without ever having read, and re-read, *Cien años de soledad,* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez? And having read that marvelous novel, who still doubts that every nation has its own version of Macondo?

I have often had the curious experience of a bright undergraduate or eager graduate student barging into my office to get a quick short list of reading material on Caribbean history. I would often begin the list with a novel or two, or a think piece: George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin,* or Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance,* or John Hearne's *The Sure Salvation,* or V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas.* Then I would say something like, "Do not forget to read C.L.R. James' *Beyond a Boundary;* it is the most insightful book on Caribbean society."

Of course, the students would display a painful disappointment, and the bolder of them would declare with undisguised hostility that those were not *histories.* The shy ones would slink away and I would never hear from them again. The less bright ones would never know the difference until they had spoken to the smarter students—after reading one or two!! "Well," I would reply, calmly, "yes, I know! But you ought to be trying to understand the societies. And such keys to understanding the societies are not encased in disciplinary molds."

I have been interested in the Caribbean for a very long time, not simply because I was born there, nor have the latest headlines forced my attention that way, but because I find the region of enormous intrinsic importance and interest. It is a most fascinating region of the world. But it is not an easy place to understand. The Caribbean is a place where history, reality, and the contrived perceptions of the reality have a way of merging and mingling in tragic combination.

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When I think of the long, complicated history of the Caribbean, I always find myself reflecting on that wonderful play by Derek Walcott, *Pantomime*. Those of you who have seen it, or read it, will recall that it is a simple situation of an English expatriate trying to make a new beginning as a hotelier on Tobago, with a solitary Trinidadian jack-of-all-trades and fugitive from the law. Walcott describes the characters with his inimitable verbal economy:

> Harry Trewe, English, mid-forties, owner of the Castaways Guest House, retired actor.
> Jackson Phillip, Trinidadian, forty, his factotum, retired calypsonian.

If you recall, toward the end of Act One, Harry Trewe is quite exasperated by Jackson's improvising lines for his play, which is supposed to be a lighthearted comedy. He thinks Jackson is clowning about too much, or trying to be too serious. In either case, it is the wrong cue to his expected audience. He therefore decides to call the whole show off—just at the time that Jackson is really getting excited about the play:

> **Harry:** No, Jackson. You will not continue. You will straighten this table, put back the tablecloth, take away the breakfast things, give me back my hat, put your jacket back on, and we will continue as normal and forget the whole matter. Now, I'm very serious, I have had enough of this farce. I would like to stop.
>
> **Jackson:** May I say what I think, Mr. Trewe? I think it is a matter of prejudice. I think that you cannot believe one: that I can act, and two: that any black man should play Robinson Crusoe. A little while a back I came out here quite calmly and normally with the breakfast things and find you stark naked, kneeling down, and you tell me you were getting into your part. Here I am getting into *my* part and you object. This is the story . . . this is history. This moment that we are now acting here is the history of imperialism; its nothing less than that. And I don't think that I can—should—concede my getting into a part halfway and abandoning things, just because you, as my superior, give me orders. People become independent. Now, I could go down to that beach by myself with this hat, and I could play Robinson Crusoe, I could play Columbus, I could play Sir Francis Drake, I could play anybody discovering anywhere, but I don't want to tell you when and where to draw the line!
> (*Pause*)
> Or what to discover and when to discover it. All right?
>
> **Harry:** Look, I'm sorry to interrupt you again, Jackson, but as I—you know—watching you—I—realized it's much more profound than that; that it could get offensive. We are trying to do something light, just a little pantomime, a little satire, a little picong. But if you take this thing

> seriously, we might commit Art, which is a sort of crime in this society . . . I, mean, there'd be a lot of things there that people, . . . well, it would make them think too much, and well, we don't want that . . . we just want a little . . . entertainment.

Walcott may be the most sophisticated Caribbean poet, but his sentiments are not alone.

I have read many books on the premature demise of the ill-fated West Indian Federation, but none has managed to cut through to the basic cause of its disintegration as did the Mighty Sparrow in his prize-winning calypso when he exclaimed:

> Is dog eat dog,
> And survival of the fittest!

Oh, yes, to understand the Caribbean, one must read the novelists and listen to the poets.

Consider Peggy Anthrobus from Grenada, who joins a long and distinguished poetic lineage in commenting on the Caribbean situation: Claude McKay, Aime Cesaire, Nicolas Guillen, Martin Carter and Mervyn Morris. Mrs. Anthrobus has two poems of which I am especially fond, and parts of which I will share with you:

CHOICES

Who would choose slavery over freedom?
    oppression over liberation?
    death over life?
And yet, sometimes the choice is
  not that clear:
A loaf of bread is purchased with a
  tear
The sweetest rose protected by a
  thorn,
A seed must die before new life is
  born.
The people suffer:
Oppressed by other's lust for power,
  gain—
A selfishness transcending reason.
They see their children die in hunger
    poverty and pain,
Themselves enslaved by ignorance,
  enforced idleness,

The oppressors reign.
The Liberators come.
The People follow.
They see the dawning light of
better days to come,
And journey through a night of
death and pain,
Only to find themselves enslaved again.

GRENADA—OCTOBER 1983.
A Work in Progress

IV

Survival came through living in
the spirit:
Through keeping faith with
ourselves,
With the spirit in ourselves,
Holding on to something within
ourselves,
Outside the wretchedness of our
lives here.
Survival came
Through manifesting that
spirit to others,
Building new lives, new families,
Seeking each other in love.
When there was no justice there
was love.

V

Our music tells it all:
Rhythms of survival;
First the spirituals
—song when we did not
dare to speak.
Here in this New World
We began with the Spirit.
A spirit of African retentions
linked with Christ.
Then the calypsos
—song and movement when
we did not dare defy.
A spirit of African rhythms
linked with

Creole Movement, Caribbean
breezes, Asian festivals.
Finally the reggae:
—song when we did not
dare to move.
A spirit of pain and struggle,
faith and survival
when we are.

Synthesis.
Our music unites
the cultural richness of our heritage
To express a rhythm uniquely
ours,
Caribbean:
Neither African, nor European
nor Asian
But all of these combined
Someway, out of these ashes
Expressing a way of life
uniquely ours.

VI

We must return to ourselves
Rejecting East and West, and
North and South.
We belong to none.
We are a people of a New World,
Born of a Middle Passage
We must seek a Middle Way.
A Caribbean Way.
We should have learnt by now
Not to place trust
In guns or baubles,
In Big Brothers, Uncles or
Mother Countries.
We should have learnt by now
To lean on no one but ourselves:
To rely on our experience
Rather than on that of other
countries;
To keep faith with each other
Holding together against those
Who would tear us apart to serve
their purpose.
We should have learnt by now

That we owe our survival
To our faith in the spirit
Manifest in our love of life,
In our music,
In ourselves.

These reflections of Peggy Anthrobus tell us a lot about the present crisis in the Caribbean. Indeed, she almost says it all. But Peggy Anthrobus merely provides some new words for an old song. Caribbean societies have always been in crisis. They have been perpetually in crisis because they are inherently artificial societies. And artificial societies are inherently revolutionary societies. Make no mistake about that.

During the eighteenth century when the United States of America was thrusting itself forcefully outside the bonds of empire, and when the French were testing the divinity of their king by beheading him, and while the slaves in the French colony of Saint-Domingue were testing the slogans of their masters—*Liberty, Fraternity, Equality*—the Jamaican planter and member of the British Parliament, Bryan Edwards, warned his colleagues:

> *. . . the time in which we live will constitute an awful period in the history of the world; for a spirit of subversion is gone forth, which sets at nought the wisdom of our ancestors and the lessons of experience.*

That spirit of subversion has never ceased in the Caribbean. Nor should it while vestiges remain of "the wisdom" of Bryan Edwards' ancestors and "the lessons of experience." Their "history" was certainly not the same history as that of Derek Walcott/Jackson Phillip, or of Peggy Anthrobus. The passing of the world mourned by Edwards was celebrated in the English poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, when he wrote in *Le Morte d'Arthur,*

The old order changeth yilding place to New
And God fulfills Himself in Many Ways
Lest One good custom should corrupt the world.

Today in the Caribbean, the Caribbean peoples are desperately trying to fashion their own world, build their own experiences, and control their history. It is not easy—it never was—and the forces have not always been with these people. So the results have been tinged sometimes with tragedy; sometimes with comedy; but the effort continues "even against wind and tide." But the prospects and problems of the Caribbean reflect the wider world. And they are a microcosm of the entire developing world.

Not many years ago, in 1979, Richard Millet and W. Marvin Will published

a book on the Caribbean with Praeger which they titled *The Restless Caribbean.* In this book they asserted that the region was experiencing unusually "rapid, diffuse, and at times conflicting patterns of change in both internal and external relations."

Of course, five years ago, if you listened to the news out of Washington you would have thought that Bryan Edwards had been resurrected. Approaching presidential elections in the United States always seem to have that impact on the press. To hear them tell it, terrible things were happening in Grenada, because Maurice Bishop had thrown out the corrupt, ridiculous regime of Eric Matthew Gairy. Worse things were happening in Nicaragua, where, after years of toil, the Sandinistas had finally overcome the terrible Somoza regime. The Cubans, were, in their opinion, not behaving themselves, and importing more "brigades" of Soviet troops—it turns out that Richard Stone and Jimmy Carter did not know what a brigade was. And Michael Manley's government in Jamaica was giving the State Department all sorts of apoplexy.

At the time, when I was asked—which was not very often—I would reply that, sure, the region is volatile. But that is not new. Political change and socio-economic metamorphosis have been constant factors in the Caribbean since Christopher Columbus misadventured thither, mistakenly believing that he was on the outskirts of China, and looking for something. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the most intrepid and intelligent soldier who ever served in the Americas in that age of adventure boldly and confidently asserted why all that European restlessness and expansion:

> We went thither . . . to serve God and His Majesty. To bring light to them that dwell in Darkness. And to get rich, as all men desire to do.

From that day forward there have been some serious changes going on in the Caribbean. And today's socio-political omelette is the result of many, many broken eggs.

Yet, I would insist that the crisis of the 1980s is new, and is different. What is different, and is more likely to be so in the coming years, is the strange impact of the tragic events of Grenada in October 1983. At stake is the degree of control which the peoples of the Caribbean will have over their societies, and the increased external attention which their internal actions will attract. In short, the brave thoughts of Peggy Anthrobus about Caribbean people finding truths and strengths, and forging their own ideology have no chance in today's cynical world.

When I was a small boy growing up in a Jamaica which is quite different from

the one I visit today, I remember well that we used to chant as we walked down King Street, which was then a fashionable street of elegant department stores:

> Ashes to ashes, dust to dust
> If Issa don't get you, Matalon must.

In those days that was considered humorous, and reflected the reality that, despite the different stores with their different names, they were all owned by Issa Brothers enterprises or Matalon Brothers enterprises. Those days are gone now, as I said before. But the choice has risen to a higher plane, and now may be parodied—if you do not mind a parody of a parody—as

> Ashes to ashes, dust to dust
> If Reagan don't get you, the IMF must!

Small states in today's world face the difficult choice of falling between a rock and a hard place. It is the harsh reality of Sancho Panza in *The Man of La Mancha* when he explained:

> Whether the stone hits the pitcher or the pitcher hits the stone,
> In either case it is going to be bad for the pitcher.

The Reality: Let us start with the present reality. The natural beauty of the Caribbean masks what anyone who has lived there can tell you. The 30 million inhabitants live in one of the most resource-scarce regions of the world. The land room is limited. The internal linguistic, ethnic, and cultural problems are complex and varied. With few exceptions—Cuba, Puerto Rico, Barbados—the population growth rates are considered to be extremely high. With more than 50 percent of the population below the age of 18 years, the school-leaving age in most states, the numbers of those productive in the society, even under the best of economic conditions, face a formidable task of supplying the needed services.

All the Caribbean states find difficulty in providing productive, full-time employment for their citizens. Unemployment rates are disturbingly high throughout the region, varying between 10 and 50 percent of the labor force. The lowest rates are in Cuba, the Bahamas, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, all at about 10 percent. Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Martinique, Guadaloupe, Haiti, Dominica and Guyana have between 20 and 30 percent unemployment, while the Dominican Republic hovers around 40 percent. The constant rates of high unemployment, coupled with the high expectations of the population, provide a potentially explosive political force just below the surface of the Caribbean.

One of the consequences of the United States-sponsored invasion of Grenada was to boost the unemployment rate in Grenada back up to the approximately 50 percent experienced in 1979, during the last days of the Gairy government.

At the national level, all the governments are in serious financial difficulties; and it does not seem to make much difference what political ideology they pursue. For example, Cuba has just begun to embark on deficit financing, although it gets a hefty 3-billion-dollar economic package per year from the Soviet Union, amounting to about 20 percent of its GNP. The consistently favorable support of Cuba, far higher than any other Caribbean state with the possible exception of Puerto Rico, did not prevent 125,000 Cubans from leaving the island, essentially for economic reasons, in 1980. Another Mariel is a possibility in Cuba if the economy cannot be made more productive.

Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, all the smaller islands without exception, and Guyana are virtual economic basket cases. Their economies are both fragile and debt-burdened, and their export capacity non-existent, sluggish, or badly drained by the repercussions of OPEC II. The situation is more favorable in the Bahamas, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago: the first two are peculiar cases; the last one still is riding the tail of the good fortune of the oil-price explosion in the early 1970s.

Politics: The political situation throughout the Caribbean has, in cases where there have been free elections, shown a tendency toward restoring to office or electing to office the more conservative of the political rivals. But it is not fair to say that the political winds are blowing from left to right, as *Time* magazine and others insist. Of course, the post-Grenada world has made the situation more difficult for the more overtly leftist parties, and the lunatic left will have a very hard time recovering their political respectability in the near future.

It is worth making some comments about the overall political situation, some of which appeared clear before the demise of the Grenada revolution, others of which were accentuated by the aftermath of Grenada:

1. The first is that political skills are no higher than the general level of administrative skills in the region. With few exceptions, corruption is rampant; and incompetence is the order of the day. And this incompetence is not a monopoly of the right or the left.

2. Ideology is not a major factor among the populations at large. And this is true even in Cuba, where it is less true than elsewhere. But ideology is part of the rhetoric of the political leadership, which tends to be pragmatic, with an uninhibited capacity for divorcing rhetoric from action. These leaders are having an increasingly harder time maintaining their support, because the support is

based on producing tangible rewards, which, because of the parlous fiscal situation and the restraints of international organizations such as the IMF, are becoming more and more difficult. The hard choice for most of these leaders is either to support the people or support the IMF. It is a Hobson's choice.

3. To elevate ideology to be a major factor in political affairs outside of Cuba is to fail dismally to perceive that Caribbean peoples are fundamentally democratic, but that democracy as we understand the term is not transferable to the small states of the Caribbean, where the critical mass for complexity and diversity is lacking.

Consider the case of Grenada, which for the past five years has driven two different administrations in Washington bananas. Here is a country which is, in every way, the classical mini-state. It has fewer than 100,000—and was constantly losing population under the Bishop regime. Its capital city had the grand total of 6,000—a few more during carnival. Fifty-two percent of the population is female, rather normal for the Caribbean. Fifty-one percent is under the age of 18 years. There were no more than 27,000 households in the entire state, and just some 24,000 adult males. It is hard to generate the type of political give and take in this society where everyone knows every other person, intimately.

To listen to what has been written about Grenada these past five years, one would almost believe that it was a rival of the Soviet Union! And sometimes the message is that it represents some vital interest of the United States. Even now I have just read that we are opening up a diplomatic office there with a staff of 50—which numerically ranks Grenada high up on the list of foreign posts. Yet, the entire nation of Grenada, based on market survey economics, would not qualify for a franchise for McDonald's, were it in the United States.

Few things are more pathetic than to read the semi-literate material released by the United States government as the minutes of the political elite during the fatal last months of the Bishop government. If ever I felt that a little learning was a dangerous thing, the Grenada politburo confirmed the case.

4. Political mini-states are a reality. They will not fade away. The politicians in these states feel especially vulnerable. They need collective action on any number of issues, not merely on economic ones. And they realize that without appeal to some sort of collective moral force, any few determined individuals can overthrow the state. Bishop did that in Grenada with about a dozen rifles, not all in working order. That was in sharp contrast to the United States invasion. Military force is no guarantee of security—the lessons that the Trujillos and the Batistas and the Somozas of this region learned the hard way.

In the Caribbean, with the exception of Cuba, the military is part of the problem, not part of the solution of domestic strife. The new post-Grenada military buildup is definitely the wrong direction for assuring political stability.

Yet having said that, let me talk a bit about Jamaica, for this was a case where ideology played a role in 1980, and where Seaga called for snap elections last December 15 and, in the light of the ill-advised decision of Manley not to contest them, is now riding a political monster: a Parliament without an opposition. As Mr. Seaga is finding to no small discomfort, democracy does not work well without an opposition—even a token one.

The Jamaica Case: Only in the case of Jamaica in 1980 did ideology seem inordinately important in the electoral process. Edward Seaga's successful campaign against Michael Manley derived considerable support from defectors of the governing party who thought that the party had shifted its ideological sympathies too far to the "left," to the positions of D. K. Duncan and Trevor Munroe. Undoubtedly, some electors felt that the demonstrations of friendship between Manley and the Fidel Castro government were unnecessarily extensive. To those, Seaga's slogan of "deliverance" meant salvation from "democratic socialism," or communism. Nevertheless, the basic reasons for the defeat of the Manley government may be found less in its perceived ideological direction than in the "bread and butter" issues of electoral politics. As the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* saw it, ideology was only one factor in the elections. "The people [of Jamaica]," wrote Lloyd Best in a front-page editorial, "have thrown out an incompetent and discredited government." The ideological extremes of the People's National Party made middle-class Jamaicans uncomfortable; but they rejected it only when they thought that the government was incapable of achieving the things it said it would do. And, of course, Seaga had predicted that Manley and his colleagues would fail.

It must be remembered, too, that Manley won the 1976 elections when economic conditions were deteriorating, and lost the 1980 elections when those conditions, though bad, were better than in 1976–77. Jamaicans who readily accept the charisma of Manley, and whose political sympathies still remain with the People's National Party, felt that under the circumstances only Edward Seaga projected the competence to restore a bankrupt national economy. Seaga's government, then, is on trial. If it succeeds, it will still run the risk of being thrown out; and if it fails, it definitely will be rejected if the opportunity arises at the polls. At the moment the economic situation and political corruption are making Jamaicans restless again.

The essential paradox of the Jamaican political situation is that a large

proportion of the electorate favor the goals of the Manley government, but feel that Manley himself lacks the personal and administrative capacity to achieve them. The readiness to support Seaga indicated a confidence that Seaga offers not a change in direction, but a successful pursuit of commonly accepted goals. They may be right. Jamaicans—and the people of the Caribbean in general—are more sophisticated at separating substance from style than they are credited for. In any case, additional comfort that Seaga is not a fundamental change may have been illustrated in some early actions of the government. While he was ready to dismantle some of the socialist trappings of the former government, Seaga has indicated that the index of government control will be determined by the efficacy of the operation. The government will accept the sole responsibility of deciding what it can do best, and will do so. It is possible that in the next ten years the Jamaican economy will not have changed significantly. That cannot be good news for Mr. Seaga.

In foreign affairs, too, the changes may be more in rhetoric and style than in reality. The expulsion of the Cuban Ambassador, Ulises Estrada, immediately after the elections will not lead to a break in relations with Cuba, or any significant variation in the strong commitment which Jamaica has demonstrated to the Third World and Non-Aligned Movement. Speaking in Brussels at the Meeting of the Ministers and Ambassadors of 59 African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) in early December 1980, Jamaican Foreign Minister, Hugh Shearer, declared:

> Jamaica will remain in the Non-Aligned Movement; Jamaica will be in the front of the struggle for better terms of trade; Jamaica will be in the front line for the reform of the international economic system; Jamaica will remain an active member of the United Nations, of the Commonwealth, of the Group of 77 and of course, of this distinguished group, the ACP. Jamaica will continue to respect the principle of non-interference and of self-determination of all peoples.

This was the type of speech the former Foreign Minister, P. J. Patterson, could have comfortably made.

Nevertheless, the Jamaican elections of 1980 did manifest some of the challenges which will confront all Caribbean politicians during the 1980s. Party politics, as it has been practiced, is entering a new era. Not only will some of the old names pass away, but the basic structure of the parties, their coalitions and their conventional appeal, are undergoing change as well.

In the 1980 Jamaican elections, two surprising factors emerged. The first was

that the People's National Party, a conventionally urban-based party, lost seats in urban areas, such as the East Kingston and Port Royal seat it had never before lost, and in the constituencies with the larger towns such as Port Antonio, Mandeville or Montego Bay. The conventional geographical base of the party has been affected—but not lost. Six of the ten seats won by the party were in the corporate area of Kingston-Saint Andrew. It seems apparent, then, that the new alignments have destroyed much of the conventional geographical base of the parties. Had Manley contested the 1983 elections he most certainly would have picked up some seats.

The second observation concerns the decline of the trade union base of the two major political parties in Jamaica. Until the 1972 elections, the two major parties controlled more than 80 percent of the registered union members, through their affiliate unions, the Bustamante Industrial Trades Union and the National Workers Union. For more than 30 years, an affiliated trades union remained the prescription for a successful political party. But by 1978, the two major unions together represented only 16 percent, or 135,000 of the nearly 850,000 workers in Jamaica, and a number of smaller unions such as the University and Allied Workers Union and the Independent Trade Union Action Council emerged as influential. The erosion of the union base represents a serious problem for any government in the 1980s wishing to impose order and sacrifices on the laboring sector. The degree of collaboration between the major political parties and their affiliated trade union will no longer be an important aspect of management-employee relations, especially where the public sector looms so large in the overall economy.

The rise of the numerous independent trade unions coincided with the emergence of new leadership. The old union leaders were the products of the transition from colonialism to independence. In most cases they had formed these unions, and had a personal following. As long as the unions could keep wages close to the increases in the cost of living, they were able to hold on to their membership, or even expand, as they managed to do between 1950 and 1975. But the economic turmoil of the years after 1975 saw the control of unions slowly fragment as wage claims could no longer keep abreast of cost of living increases. Moreover, with unemployment reaching nearly 30 percent of the labor force, unionization had increasingly less popular appeal. The politicization of workers during the years of "democratic socialism" will make any hope of industrial peace during the 1980s most difficult, and an end to the labor turmoil of the 1970s is an indispensable prerequisite for any increase in the country's production and productivity.

The generation of union and party leaders of the 1950s is surely passing. Both the People's National Party and the Jamaica Labor Party enter the 1980s with significant new blood. The Jamaica Labor Party underwent serious internal restructuring during the 1970s. Edward Seaga emerged as the first leader not related by kinship ties to Sir Alexander Bustamante, the party founder. Michael Manley based his political leadership on his own personal popularity with the masses which his charisma had captivated when he was the leader of the National Worker's Union. He has struggled to control the ideological divergence in his party, and must come to terms with the prospect that, having led the party to defeat in 1980, and having failed to contest the elections in 1983, his party leadership might have run its course. Still, the public opinion polls show him to be the most popular political figure in Jamaica. If in the 1940s the Jamaican masses vowed to follow Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley until they died, no such pledges have been heard from the followers of Edward Seaga and Michael Manley.

Although the parliamentary representation of the People's National Party was lopsided in 1980—9 seats in a 60-member parliament—its popular vote was no worse than the performance of the Jamaica Labor Party in 1976. Both losing parties garnered about 46 percent of the total vote. The abstention in 1983 does not allow for any analysis of voting patterns. It is possible, however, that in analyzing itself, the People's National Party may adopt the suggestion which the Jamaica Labor Party rejected after it lost the election of 1972, and adopt a more radical ideological stand, basing its argument on Seaga's failure to move the economy. Should they do so, and the government of Edward Seaga retains its present central, pragmatic position, it would be the first time Jamaicans would confront a clear ideological choice among its major political parties. The later 1980s are not going to be easy in Jamaica.

The Political Scenario for the 1980s: It is impossible to extract politics, and political decision-making from the economic realities of Caribbean life. If there is one observation that the discussion of the Jamaica case made clear, it was the economic impact of political decision-making at both party and voter levels. Political decisions in the 1980s, then, will reflect the economic changes, and might indicate a continuing pragmatic streak among the leading independent states—a situation not far from that of the 1970s.

In Cuba the leadership of the Revolution has structured itself, and organized its rules of succession. Fidel Castro will still be relatively young in 1990—at 64 years of age—and his brother, Raul, even younger. Basic changes are not expected in the 1980s. The Second Congress of the Cuban Communist Party,

which met in Havana between December 17 and 21, 1980, devoted itself mainly to economic affairs, although it did evaluate the functioning of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. The Congress expanded the party's Central Committee from 112 members to 148. The later concerns in Cuba have been mostly economic.

The political systems of Haiti, Guyana and Suriname will in all likelihood continue to be more restrictive, especially if the foreign policy of the United States follows the position that international terrorism is more important than human rights, and that friendship with the United States is the most important criterion for foreign aid.

The attempts to isolate Cuba and Grenada before the invasion of 1983 have so far not been directed at Guyana, where the political process has been anything but open over the past decade. Guyanese President, Forbes Burnham, has engineered a system which guarantees his re-election—and the system worked predictably on December 15, 1980. The murder of Walter Rodney removed the last hope for responsible political change in Guyana, and the 1980s should see the development of alternate forms of political opposition. The government established its own news service, the Guyana News Agency, on January 7, 1981, to replace the Caribbean News Agency, with which it had a dispute over reporting on the murder of Walter Rodney. With Rodney's death in June of 1980, the Guyanese people are presently without a credible alternative politician to unify the opposition and return the country to the principled politics of the 1950s. For Guyana the 1980s will be tough years. The man in the wings is Hamilton Green.

A credible alternative seems far away in Trinidad and Tobago, too. Like Guyana, Trinidad has all the ingredients in place for a disintegration of the system along ethnic lines. For the first time, the East Indians comprise a clear majority of the population. Although subdivided along religious and cultural lines, the Hindu, Muslim and Christian factions could presumably find ethnic solidarity the best posture to capture the political machine in the post-George Chambers era of the People's National Movement (PNM) party. The decade of the '80s will be a severe challenge to the People's National Movement, the longest-ruling party in the western hemisphere, after Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional, but it has extensive popular support.

The question of PNM leadership will return to be a major issue. Chambers has proved better than expected, and his economic situation, while not as good as it was in 1980, is not at all bad. The problem for Chambers is two-fold: to woo back and keep in the PNM disaffected able politicians like A. N. R.

Robinson and Karl Hudson-Phillips; and to get Trinidadians reconciled to austerity after the gravy days of the late 1970s.

The extremely close elections in Puerto Rico returned Carlos Romero Barcelo and his New Progressive Party to power by the narrowest of margins over Rafael Hernandez Colon and his revitalized Popular Democratic Party in 1980. The Puerto Rican Independence Party and Puerto Rican Socialist Party failed to improve their vote totals in the election. With the virtual stand-off position of the two dominant political parties—Romero Barcelo's winning majority was a scant 3,503 votes over Hernandez Colon—Puerto Rico's political status should remain in limbo during the 1980s. One major casualty of the elections was the indefinite postponement of the planned referendum on the statehood issue. The defeat of President Carter in the United States removed a basic support for statehood, and the pattern of voting in Puerto Rico suggests that, as in the past, islanders remain ambivalently poised between opting for economic welfare, and opting for political change. Most polls favor Hernandez Colon in 1984, not because of the scandal of Cerro Maravilla, and the split in the PNP.

Nevertheless, the Puerto Rican situation could become quite volatile. With none of the three major parties currently in a position to put into operation its plan, the frantic fringe groups could become even more desperate. The pro-independent point of view could be expressed by the violent actions of guerilla bands such as *Fuerzas Armadas para la Liberacion de la Nacion Puertorriquena* (FALN), *Movimiento de Resistencia Armada Puertorriquena,* or the *Ejercito Popular Boricua.* President Reagan's policy to elevate anti-terrorism as a feature of his foreign policy, along with the increased isolation of Cuba, could serve inadvertently to promote the popularity of violent fringe groups.

Economics: Politics and economics comprise a vicious circle. The resolution of the region's economic problems requires some bold, unpleasant and difficult political decisions. But the worst aspect of all is that no Caribbean leader is immune from the broader implications of his action. The region can be no more "neutral" in international affairs than independent. That these problems are emphasized here does not suggest that they are peculiar to the region.

A major problem for all the states will be their balance of payments deficits. As basic agricultural producers, they will get some alleviation from the present trend of increasing commodity prices. But it seems unlikely that this trend will continue long enough to provide a counterweight to the enormous inflation in the cost of petroleum, petroleum products, manufactured goods and foodstuffs imported from abroad.

To a certain extent, Trinidad defies the regional pattern, with a rapid expansion of the petroleum sector throughout the mid-1970s. The petroleum industry supplies almost two-thirds of all government revenues, and facilitated a consistently favorable trade surplus until 1982. But the success of this sector contrasts sharply with other areas of the economy. Inflation rates were nearly 17 percent in 1979, and 10 percent in 1982. The agricultural sector is depressed by low productivity, bottlenecks and an inadequate infrastructure. Still, Trinidad is better off than its neighbors, financially. Compared with the 29.2 percent of export goods and factor services required to service the Jamaica foreign debt in 1982, Trinidad required a mere 3.4 percent.

Conclusion: Not all the problems of the Caribbean are insoluble. Not all the problems of the region trace their origin to the sad and lamentable history of slavery, the plantation economy, or chronic dependency. That much is clear. The most critical problems of the region are of recent development: spiralling birth-rates, high inflation rates, negative overall economic growth performances, intractable foreign indebtedness (which they share with most of the world, and which are certainly dwarfed by their continental neighbors), political corruption, incompetence and lack of skills, and seemingly chronic political and criminal violence.

The permanent resolution of these problems requires more than fleeting initiatives and facile expressions of goodwill. It will require some long, painful and difficult choices on the part of the peoples of the region. In some cases, this is being done. The degree of severity is not everywhere the same—and countries like Cuba and Barbados have shown that one can make significant strides in some areas with a lot of dedication and a lot of effort.

I am confident that the peoples, with a little patience on the part of their larger neighbors and a lot more altruism, can make it. They have to. And they know the worst is behind them. I have painted a bleak picture of the conditions. But I know that the Caribbean peoples are not yet beyond the pale of salvation. Let Martin Carter have the last words:

> I come from the nigger yard of yesterday
> leaping from the oppressors' hate
> and the scorn of myself;
> from the agony of the dark hut in the shadow
> and the hurt of things;
> from the long days of cruelty and the long nights of pain
> down to the wide streets of tomorrow, of the next day
> leaping I come, who cannot see will hear.