

*SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE LEADING  
INTELLECTUAL CURRENTS THAT HAVE  
SHAPED THE CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE  
1950-84*

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Men, everywhere, behave in large part in response to the conceptions that they carry in their minds of the world around them; those conceptions become ideologies, belief systems, as well as the motivating engines of behavior and action. In the Caribbean of the last 25 years or so, it is plausible to identify three such belief systems that have indeed swept over the region with all of the force of a tropical hurricane. In their philosophical foundations, they are distinct from each other; yet each one of them has interpenetrated with the others, forming a general pattern. They are: (1) anti-colonial and post-colonial nationalism, (2) black power and négritude, and (3) Marxism-Leninism. All of them, of course, have appeared in conjunction with certain, identifiable political and social movements: nationalism with the advent, especially in the English-speaking Caribbean, of formal political independence; Black Power-négritude with the impact, particularly, of the US black power and civil rights movements in the region; and Marxism-Leninism with the impact of the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

All of these three intellectual-moral movements have in fact transformed the modern Caribbean. They have altered, irretrievably, what Alfred North Whitehead, speaking in more general terms, has called the 'climate of opinion' that exists at any given moment in any given society. They have created a whole new set of expectations in the Caribbean peoples, and not just simply in the so-called 'intelligentsia' or 'elites' of the region. Today, in the 1980s, they are ideas that are 'in the air'. They are at once the causative motivating factor and the phenomenological expression of all of

the momentous socio-economic-political processes that have taken place in the region as a whole: industrialisation, urbanisation, social-class transformation, political revolution, and the rest.

No one who knew the region then, twenty five years ago, and now, in the 1980s, cannot but have seen and appreciated the changes wrought by these processes. I myself first came to the region in the summer of 1949, when Dr. Pedro Muñoz-Amato, then dean of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, invited me to teach a summer class in Rio Piedras, and then, a little later, as a permanent resident at the same university in 1955. At that time, the Caribbean region had about it a deceptive air of quiet somnolence; there was little to indicate that it was on the eve of deep structural and mental transformations. Puerto Rico was beginning the changes brought about, later, by the Populares of Muñoz-Marín, but was still a decaying 'sugar island.' Cuba was still obsessed, in its peoples, with what Juan Bosch, in his book of 1955 on Cuba, called a headlong rush in the pursuit of tropical hedonism. Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic seemed content and 'stable' under their respective creole dictatorial regimes---duvalerisme and trujillismo. The British West Indies seemed to be what they had always been since Emancipation a century earlier---backwater British colonies trapped in an atmosphere of mental colonial dependency, accepting their traditional role of schoolchildren graduating in the school of British colonial attitudes. This was, all in all, the Caribbean, say, of Patrick Leigh-Fermor's Traveller's Tree, in which a preceptive outside traveller could wander through the region and continue to be astonished at its tropical quietude, not noticing any signs of impending change. On any showing, the transformations wrought during the decades after that have been deep and indeed traumatic.

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All of these changes have been studied and annotated by a veritable avalanche of Caribbean Studies literature in the last thirty years, and especially by the academic empire of the social scientists. If ever there was an overworked social-sciences laboratory, the modern Caribbean has been it. Yet it is open to question as to whether all of that academic literature has answered the crucial question: with all of those changes, are the Caribbean peoples basically any happier today than they were in the immediate post-1945 period? This is a question not of the quantitative measurement of human hopes and aspirations but of the qualitative estimate of the total moral and material nature of modern-day Caribbean life and experience. What we badly need are studies comparable to the seminal books that the English social historians, Barbara and J.I. Hammond, wrote a generation or more ago on the price that the English people had to pay, between 1760 and 1840, for the triumph of the Industrial Revolution. Until we have ~~had~~ <sup>that</sup> work done we shall not be able to determine a credit and debit balance sheet for the transformational changes that have taken place in the Caribbean region in the last thirty years.

Short of that, however, it seems worthwhile to take a close look at the nature of the three major idea systems, noted above, that have helped accelerate those changes; to look, specifically, at their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Anticolonial nationalism

The work of Wendell Bell and his associates has amply shown how the rise of nationalism, accompanied in the rising nationalist elites by considerations of social justice and equity in the distribution of the national wealth, became the major feature of the post-war scene. It was made possible by the decline of the British empire, the advent of universal suffrage, the growing democratisation of political and governmental life, the rise of popular-based political parties, and, therefore, the steady growth of mass participation in the national life. In institutional terms, it brought about formal national independence and the restructuring of national governmental systems in response to the new and pressing needs of nationhood. In ideological terms, it was at once cause and effect of a rising national consciousness, much of which, especially in older states like Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Haiti, had its roots in the earlier nationalist struggles of the 19th century. The emotive power of that nationalism is evident---to take a single example only---in the case of Puerto Rico, where, despite the fact that the struggle has not yet ended in formal national sovereignty, a strong pervasive sense of national identity, of being a separate Puerto Rican family, still prevails.

All this was positive and creative. It recognised the truth of Lenin's dictum that you cannot solve the social question until you have first solved the national question. But, in retrospect, it is easy to see that much of it has been regressive and negative. Nationalism can be conflictive as well as creative. It can encourage a narrow-minded 'my country right or wrong' attitude in both leaders and electorates. Especially in small mini-states, as in the Caribbean it can give rise to an inward-turned, psychologically crippling insularity of temper, mixed with feelings of suspicion and

jealousy for neighboring countries. It can persuade governments, in their national economic policies, to embrace protectionist policies, thus jeopardising regional economic integration. It also burdens them with a whole set of the paraphernalia of sovereignty which is cumbersome and costly.

The history of the failure of the West Indies Federation (1958 -1962) and the current problems of the Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) provide ample evidence of these negative aspects of nationalism as credo.

Even more. As Lenin's dictum implied, national sovereign independence is necessary, if only because it clears the deck, so to speak, for national governments to move forward to planning solutions to the social question--- social equity, full employment, social service needs etc---without being bothered with the old quarrelsome relationship with the 'mother country'. But by no account does all that solve the social question. The work of the anthropologists and sociologists in Caribbean studies in the last twenty five years or so shows the persistent continuation of these societies as class societies, with power flowing to certain dominant groups because of their ownership of the means of production (socialist Cuba excepted). From the Bahamas to the Guianas, indeed, the victory of nationalism, in many ways, has really meant that, in internal domestic social structures, the old white colonial masters have been replaced by a new black-brown oligarchy in these successor states. A whole new state system, reinforced by the new role of independent governments as employer in the enlarged public service sector, emerges, providing employment and status for the new rising black-brown bourgeoisie, whose new consumerist affluence almost begins to match the ostentatious wealth of its predecessors, the old colonial 'free coloreds' or gens de couleur. Nationalism, in brief, serves narrow class interest. Hence the rise of revolutionary groups and parties demanding a second

independence, which will be social instead of merely political. It underlines what Louis Lindsay has called the 'myth of independence.'

Nationalism has also shown its weaknesses at the level of regional considerations. In the Caribbean-Central America area we live in a region in which only the region itself is the sane and sensible unit of planning; just as, on the global scale, we live in a world in which only the world itself is the sane and sensible unit of planning. Nationalism, especially in its political manifestations, stands as an obstacle to the growth of a healthy regionalism. Examples abound to prove the urgent need for the regional approach. It makes little sense, for example, that in the regional tourist industry at any given moment there are too many beds and too few tourists in San Juan and too few beds and too many tourists in St. Maarten. The growth of a fiscally viable regional carrier in the field of civil aviation is seriously hampered by national governments developing their own single national carrier, frequently for non-economic reasons of national pride and preatige (just as in the ancient world the Pharoahs built their pyramids to commemorate ruling class megalomania). Or, again, (speaking of the Caribbean as one of the most heavily-trafficked oil transportation routes in the world), an oil spill along the dimensions of a Torrey Canyon episode can spoil overnight the beaches of half a dozen islands; obviously, only a concerted regional safety and conservation plan can meet such a problem. The same lesson applies to the problem of regional collective security, as the 1983 Grenada episode surely proves. The very issue of war or peace in the region is involved here.

All this, I suggest, leads to <sup>three</sup> ~~two~~ fundamental considerations. First, the planners of the next twenty five years must address themselves to the organisation of what might be called a functional federalism. By that I mean the creative invention of institutional mechanisms for regional cooperation

rooted in basic, limited common purposes in which all participating governments have a ready, practical interest. It means a regional planning of immigration and emigration patterns, so that the idle hands of Barbados can be recruited to develop the idle lands of Dominica. It means a regional food plan based on the principle of the natural division of labor and resources, so that Guyana or Cuba becomes the rice bowl of the region and Santo Domingo or Barbados the sugar bowl of the region. It means intergovernmental cooperation in the field of planned industrial-technological advancement, if only to prevent the growth of white elephants like the steel-natural gas Point Lisas complex in Trinidad. It means a serious regional assault upon the problem of the regional drug traffic, in cooperation with other concerned governments like the US and Colombia, in order to control what is rapidly becoming a situation where too many of the regional societies are becoming, in grim truth, drug cultures. It means sustaining and indeed expanding the role of the already existing regional institutions, in both the private and public sectors: the University of the West Indies, CARICOM, the Caribbean Conference of Churches. Perhaps most important and urgent of all, it means meaningful cooperation in the general field of planned economic growth and development, so that the present practices of 'enforced bilateralism', whereby individual governments compete murderously with each other for the favors of the World Bank, the IMF, the leading industrial nations, and the multinational business corporations, can be slowly replaced by a genuine multilateralism. This sort of functional federalism, it should be stressed, is based on interest, not on any romantic ideas of a united federation or confederation, in political terms (such as argued for, for example, by CLR James in his naive introduction, 'The Birth of a Nation', to Susan Craig's recently published A Sociological Reader). Such grandiose schemes smack of romantic utopia-mongering, for they completely

Overlook the fact that there does not exist at the moment, or indeed for any foreseeable future, any grand overriding community of interests between, say, capitalist Puerto Rico and socialist Cuba, or between authoritarian Haiti and democratic Jamaica. We face a condition, not a theory.

Secondly, there is the general consideration ---in more specific theoretical terms, and which particularly must concern the political scientists--- that it is now abundantly clear that the great age of the modern nation-state, starting with the Reformation and the Renaissance, has come to an end. Its political boundaries are irrational, for all of the problems of this new age transcend those boundaries, most of all, of course, the problem of meeting the threat of the nuclear holocaust. We must, then, recognize the obsolescence of the nation-state, whether it is the United States or St Kitts-Nevis. We must search for new, radical forms of human organisation that separate state from nation.

Third, all of this must be placed within the framework of the more <sup>o</sup> psychological aspects of nationalism. None of the above is meant to overlook the fact that, human nature being what it is, nationalism, as an emotional thing, remains an important factor in human behavior. But it co-exists within concentric circles of other loyalties: to family, to associations, to the region, to the world as a whole. They need not be in conflict with each other; indeed, they complement each other. It is surely not unreasonable to hope that the nationalist spirit will, hopefully, express itself less and less in political and economic terms and more and more in social and cultural terms. We do not have to compete as political actors in the international anarchy; and we should compete more and more, and with more sanity, in, say, the Pan-American Games or the Caribbean Games.

black Power, nègritude etc.

The second driving force in the Caribbean since World War Two has been that of a rising ethnic consciousness, especially in the Caribbean populations of African descent. It goes back to the pre-nègritude writers of Cuba and Haiti in the 19th century, and to movements like that of Garveyism in the English-speaking Caribbean. In part, it has been religious in inspiration: the US civil-rights movement, that has had such an impact in the West Indies, has been led, from Martin Luther King to Jesse Jackson, by the prototype of the black preacher. In part, it has been political, as is evident in Césaire's noirisme and Fanon's anti-colonialism.

Any summing-up of its presence in the contemporary Caribbean must emphasize a number of points. It has been, on any showing, an immensely liberating force. Its slogans---'black is beautiful', pouvoir aux noirs--- have expressed a new pride in being black, a new awareness of the African heritage, a new race consciousness as denial of the old European racial stereotypes, a new interest in black history. Wherever one looks--- the poetry of Paes Matos and Césaire, the essays of Édouard Glissant, the histories of James, Rodney, Williams, Fouchard, the musicology of Trinidad Carnival, the cosmology of Rastafari, the work of Fanon on the Algerian revolution, the reggae of Bob Marley, the emergence of black theater---there is rich evidence of a new Afro-American cultural renaissance. Nor is all this just a revolution in the thinking of the elites, as was, perhaps, the earlier Harlem Renaissance, for it has seeped down into the consciousness of the regional peoples. It is not too much to say that there has taken place a veritable revolution of thought and spirit in which the whole imagery of the world has been changed, redressing the old imbalance between the white race and ~~the black race~~ the non-white races. It was a redressing envisaged by

Edmund Burke in a prophetic passage of his great speech of May 7, 1789, against Warren Hastings: "Today," he said, "the Commons of Great Britain prosecute the delinquents of India. Tomorrow the delinquents of India may be the Commons of Great Britain." It is almost as if we have now witnessed the fulfilment of that prophecy.

The hazards of the race-color issue arising out of these movements have already received attention in the theoretical literature. There is the danger that the emphasis on the race-color concept may overlook its relationships with the other concept of social class, so that class conflict becomes obscured and sometimes mystified by ethnic differentiation. For all Caribbean ethnic groups are socially stratified. Failing to perceive that distinction, 'black power' has only too often become a slogan for the elevation to power of a black bourgeoisie, no more necessarily better masters than the white bourgeoisie they have replaced; indeed, because they understand the psychology of 'their' people better than the whites they may be thereby enabled to turn the screw of classoppression even more tightly. There is the further problem that in the more pluralist of the region's societies appeal to blackness may simply aggravate the social war between blacks and other non-white groups; the Trinidad press, for example, is frequently full of angry letters from East Indian readers denying that they can be classified as 'black.' It might even be argued, going beyond this, that for the lower-class submerged masses the problems of social security and economic survival may be more pressing than that of ethnic identity; and it might perhaps even be suggested that the problem of 'identity' that agitates, say, a poet like Derek Walcott may be a function of a small middle class echelon, might indeed be an invention of the intelligentsia.

The problem has been discussed, with particular reference to

negritude, in a perceptive essay by René Depestre. There are, he argues, different forms of negritude, leftwing, progressive, and rightwing. So, just as Senghor's version is rightwing in its ahistorical view of an immutable Negro essence, that of duvalierisme is an irrational, mystic, and reactionary dogma used to justify a tyrannical regime. It is, in truth, the degradation of the black dogma. It asserts that the biology of a racial group determines its psychology, which in turn determines its collective personality; an ancestral heredity transmits the racial psychology intact from one generation to another. It is the predestined task of the black elite intelligentsia, thus, to guide and nurture the masses, thus creating a marriage between race and culture. Culture, in this sense, becomes the secret weapon that facilitates a mystic fusion of class and race. As Marbon further points out, there are present here not only the usual themes of cultural imperialism but also the themes of German Nazism: race, blood, earth, nation. Fanon's well-known critique of negritude, again, is rooted in his inability to agree with the celebration of Negro primitivism, which leads to a culte du nègre reifying particular cultural traits into a new transcendentalist racism of its own. That criticism, of course, stems from Fanon's Marxist side, although it is worth noting that another side of him allowed him to develop the equally mystic doctrine of 'holy violence.'

Of necessity, then, the negritude and black power themes needed a counterbalancing dialectic which would take note of these deficiencies. Such a dialectic appeared in the form of Marxism-Leninism, immeasurably encouraged by the Cuban Revolution, and, later, the Nicaraguan Revolution. That intellectual current was also accompanied by the other intellectual current coming from the Latin American economic theorists of the dependencia school. The general result of this has been momentous, for

it has meant the gradual breakdown (although the process is still incomplete) of the intellectual fragmentation of the different linguistic groupings of the region. It has been a refreshing process. For anyone who knew the University of Puerto Rico and the University of the West Indies in the 1950s will know that they were insularist in temper, the first seeming to be like a quiet Catholic retreat and the second a little <sup>corner</sup> ~~island~~ in a foreign field that is forever Oxford.

### Marxism-Leninism

As myself a historian and political scientist, as well as being a European socialist trained in the Marxist school, I naturally welcome the advent of Marxism to the Caribbean, both as a proper subject in academic curricula and a tool in political activity. It is, even more, a welcome antidote to a Caribbean area which, since 1945, has witnessed the Americanisation of academic studies dominated, in most of its disciplines, by the peculiarly American doctrine of 'liberalism' and, in structure, by the excessive departmentalisation of thought and research. It is not, I think, unfair to say, as a generalisation, that most American academics are 'liberals' who take American capitalist business society for granted, although they may be 'reformers' who want to modify it. There have been, of course, 'mavericks' in that intellectual tradition---Veblen, Henry and Procks Adams, C. Wright Mills, and others. But they were always outside the mainstream, and are certainly not much read today. Since 1945, in addition, the tradition has become enveloped in what has aptly been termed a new 'academic capitalism' in which the universities, and certainly the leading prestigious universities, have become enmeshed, both structurally and intellectually, with the powerful networks of big government and big business. ~~much of the American sponsored research in the Caribbean over~~

Much of the American-sponsored research and publication on the Caribbean over the last generation or so has reflected that fact, with its characteristic traits: the coma of research, <sup>the manic footnoting,</sup> the artificial separation of 'disciplines', the massive funding, the selection of topics for investigation made increasingly by the philanthropic foundations, the research institutes, the 'think tanks', the jargonistic ponderosity and virtual unreadability of much of what is published, and the rest. Some of these traits have begun to appear also in the European field, especially in sociology, where the American discipline seems to be the role-model. It is rare, then, for the Caribbeanist to develop a general, humanistic vision of the region as a whole. The exceptions prove the rule: MG Smith and Despres in their 'plural society' studies, Mintz in his study of Caribbean peasantries, Hoetink in his work on the race-color-class syndrome, all of them, in varying degree, responding to Mintz's conceptualization of the Caribbean as an over-arching socio-cultural area.

The advent of 'ideological pluralism' in general and of Marxism in particular promises to help change the picture. The very origins of Marxism in the 19th century Ricardian classical tradition of Political Economy, seeing the global system of production and exchange as constituting one single whole, with all experience rooted in the material base of goods and commodities, its primal focus on 'class' offers the one single, permanent dynamic that informs all societies. It sees that every society is a class society, that its education, its justice, its habits, even its modes of thought, are limited by their subordination to the demands of the class that owns the instruments of economic power. It sees that, with industrial capitalism, the world has become one economic unit, for capitalism, in the phrase of the Communist Manifesto, gives 'a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country.' It compels the breakdown

of national isolation; as it builds an independent material universe, so it draws, as a common fund, upon science and learning from every nation; it means the centralisation of government, the supremacy of town over countryside, the dependence of 'backward' peoples upon those with more advanced methods of production at their disposal. Much of the modern scholarship on the Third World has in fact been a more extended elaboration of those insights.

Marx and Engels never presented all this as a dogmatic blueprint. They saw their philosophical structure as a living, dynamic thing, responding itself to the very laws of motion that informed the material world. They never pretended, in the manner of the Utopians, to know what the future communist society would look like. As that structure, therefore, is applied---in our case---to the Caribbean region 150 years later, it is urgent to apply it with flexibility. It is possible that the original Marxism underestimated the emotional appeal of nationalism. It is possible that it underrated the independent force of religious belief. Because it was a European philosophy it had little to say about the problems of 'race' and ethnicity. The famous passage in the Manifesto, which is really a hymn of praise to the marvellous achievements of the European bourgeoisie in science, industry, and technology, suggests that they did not consider that it is possible that it is industrialism per se, and not just capitalist industrialism, that is the problem (a debate that concerns many economists and planners in many of the Third World countries today).

It follows from this that the real danger lies in a rigid and doctrinaire application of Marxism to the Caribbean realities. It is surely clear that Race and Class are the twin lodestars of that reality. Under changing circumstances first one, and then the other, seems to take on a paramount role. It is difficult to perceive any 'rational' explanation for the manner

in which the Caribbean working class allows itself to be divided by intra-racial rivalries, hatreds, and stereotypes. The dogmatic Marxist who sees all that as subterfuge or 'false consciousness' or simply an evil plot on that part of the ruling class to keep itself in power is surely wide of the mark. A case in point---to take one example only---is the pamphlet on noirisme published by the communist Jacqueline Lamartinière. For Lamartinière, noirisme is like negrophobia, anti-semitism, and Zionism, just an evasive and dishonest ideology used by its theorists to at once justify their own claim to power and blind the masses to the real structural causes of their poverty. These people are cacos de salon who only look for a change of government, not a social revolution. Their championship, for example, of the creole language overlooks the fact that the Haitian people need to eat, not

(continued on next page)

to have their patois made official. Their anti-European rage forgets that Europe has given us not just Drake and Cortes but also Copernicus and Darwin. Their defense of vaudou is misplaced, for as a religion vaudou, like all religions, teaches taboos, resignation and obscurantism to its devotees. Any ideology, in any case, that conceives holistically of the ames noires is theoretically unsound, for the ame noire is divided between peasant, proletarian, petit bourgeois, landed proprietor, and comprador bourgeoisie. The real revolutionary avant-garde must concern itself with the objective structure of things, not the subjective superstructure.

There is something in these strictures. But it is difficult not to feel that Depestre, rather than Lamartiniere, has the better of the argument. Lamartiniere assumes Marxism as rigid economic determinism, ignoring Engels' warning that social causation involves <sup>an interdependence</sup> a far more complex between the economic base and the non-economic superstructures: religion, politics, ideology. An epiphenomenon so rich in its theology and worldview as vaudou cannot be simply dismissed as deception, and even Lamartiniere concedes the difference between vaudou as majority faith and as a weapon utilised by the ruling class. Nor is Black Power to be similarly dismissed; for if, as Lamartiniere asserts, <sup>X</sup> Malcolm <sup>^</sup> was assassinated by the American ruling class only when he went beyond an anti-white stance to challenging the capitalist system, that still leaves unexplained the assassination of Martin Luther King. Nor is it true to charge the noiristes with forgetting the larger world revolution, for both Fanon and Césaire never really surrendered their Enlightenment humanism: Fanon could thus write an impassioned chapter in his book on the Algerian Revolution in defense of those Algerian Jews who had sided with the popular cause, while Césaire's castigation of a sort of European Copernican prejudice, of both left and right, that had assumed that it had a divine right to guide the colonies,

as contained in his moving lettre à Maurice Thorez of 1956, in which he announced his resignation from the French Communist Party---must be set side by side with his fine declaration in the Cahier ---

et aucune race ne possède le monopole de la beauté, de l'intelligence, de la force et il est place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquete.

I have cited this example at length because it illustrates the danger of employing any philosophy, not just Marxism, as in this case, in a narrow and dogmatic fashion. It is the kind of polemic that, as in much Communist controversialist literature, is tempted to equate intellectual dissent with moral criminality. To accuse everybody, as does Lamartiniere, from Price-Mars to even Jacques Roumain, of being self-serving opportunists in the Haitian political game is to assume, to say the least, an unattractive self-righteousness.

So far, this is Marxism as philosophy. But Marxism is also tactics and strategy in the service of the proletarian revolution. It is therefore worth looking briefly at the latest example of the application of Marxist teaching on strategy and tactics to a Caribbean situation, namely that of the PRG regime in Grenada, which ended in the holocaust of October 19, 1983. A full analysis of revolution and counter-revolution in Grenada must await another time and another place. What I wish to emphasise here is how Grenada illustrates the point being made here: that is, the limits of the applicability of Marxism-Leninism, as it is called, to the Caribbean condition.

As one reads the history of the event, and, more specifically, the minutes of the PRG Central Committee meetings throughout the summer and fall of 1983, which addressed themselves to the whole problem of the nature of the revolutionary process, the role of the Party in that process, the

nature of the proper relationship between the Party, the state, and the mass constituency, it becomes clear that there is presented here a classic case study of how applicable, or non-applicable, should be the tenets of Marxist-Leninist tactics and **strategy** in a Caribbean small-island environment. Certain things stand out clearly.

(1) The PRG leadership saw the <sup>situation</sup> ~~situation~~ in simple black and white terms.

It was stated, with remarkable candor, by the Central Committee majority in the crucial meeting of September 26<sup>th</sup> <sup>It</sup> was a choice, as they saw it, between the 'petty bourgeois' route or the Communist route. The Communist route, for which they opted, was, as they put it, the route of Leninist standards and functioning, requiring the Leninist qualities of iron discipline, supervision and guidance in all areas of party work, and brilliance in strategy and tactics.

(2) The ultra-Left faction had clearly taken over the Leninist structure of thought and analysis. But this creates a problem: is Leninism the same as Marxism, as the very use of the term 'Marxism-Leninism' implies? Any answer to that question must recognise that, especially in the theory of the role of the party, Lenin departed radically from the position of Marx and Engels. Formulating his theories in a Czarist Russia, not Western Europe, he conceived the Communist party as an elite vanguard party, so that the dictatorship of the proletariat became something more akin to the Jacobin idea of a Committee of Public Safety than to any content that Marx or Engels had given to the term. Marx and Engels never at any time claimed that the Communists should form a separate party, least of all that any such party should become a tightly-knit, iron-disciplined advance

revolutionary elite imposing its ideological pattern upon the rest of the working-class movement, so that, in the Russian case, as Herzen put it, Communism became 'Tsarism turned upside down.'

(3) This is eminently clear from the sharp debate between Lenin himself and Rosa Luxemburg in the early 20th century period. Hers was the most reasoned and systematic criticism of the Leninist model to appear. "On the one hand," she wrote in 1904, "apart from the general principle of the struggle, there is no ready-made, pre-established, detailed set of tactics which a central committee can teach its Social Democratic membership as if they were army recruits. On the other hand, the process of the struggle, which creates the organisation, leads to a continual fluctuation of the sphere of influence of Social Democracy. It follows that the Social Democratic centralisation cannot be based on blind obedience, nor on the mechanical subordination of the party militants to a central power. On the other hand, it follows that an absolute dividing wall cannot be erected between the class-conscious kernel of the proletariat, already organised as party cadre, and the immediate popular environment which is gripped by the class struggle and finds itself in the process of class enlightenment. For this reason, the construction of centralism in Social Democracy, as Lenin desires, on the basis of these two principles, (1) on the blind subordination of all party organisations in the smallest detail of their activity to a central power which alone thinks, plans, and decides for all, (2) the sharp separation of the organised kernel of the party from the surrounding revolutionary milieu, seems to us to be a mechanistic transfer of the organisational principles of the Blanquist movement of conspiratorial groups to the Social Democratic movement of the working masses..."

(4) It was, however, the Leninist model, and not Rosa Luxemburg's more democratic model, that was accepted uncritically by all the national

Communist parties after 1917. Hence the ethical behavior that characterised them until the period of the Second World War: the passion for conspiracy, the need for deception, the centralised and automatic demands, all ultimately based on a slavish acceptance of orders from Moscow, the contempt for fair play, the readiness to denounce all opponents as 'social fascists' or 'petty bourgeois deviationists' or 'rightwing opportunists', and, worst of all, the readiness to purge those opponents once the Communists were in full power, as in Russia itself after 1934 and Czechoslovakia after 1948.

- (5) The irony, for the Caribbean, is that while this Moscow tyranny gave way after 1945 to the liberalising movement of Euro-Communism, especially in France and Italy, it appeared over again in the Caribbean, and notably in Grenada 1979-83. The PFG ultra-left faction repeated all over the gross mistakes of the Leninist model in action. A model originally shaped---and quite properly---for the special conditions of Slavic, Czarist Russia was transferred, ~~un~~<sup>uncritically,</sup> to the quite different conditions of the democratic and western-type Caribbean society. The Central Committee meetings make it clear that everything else---including the final act of assassination of opponents---flowed from that. It has been noted by, among others, the French Antillean socialist Jean Girard. "I find", he writes, "the blindness of dogmatism which transforms reality in the name of the 'scientific approach'. I find the intolerance which eliminates commonsense in the name of so-called 'ideological level'. I find, under a new disguise, the same old contempt of the people, their knowledge and emotions, their talents and their profound aspirations."

- (6) The lesson of all this for the Caribbean progressive movements is clear. It must rediscover its conviction that socialism must go hand in hand with democracy. It must go back to the more civilised and humane Marxism of

Marx and Engels themselves. For although both of them had their own share of fierce controversialism they never pretended that they were entitled to some sort of infallibility so absolute that it is tempted to establish what is virtually an inquisition to enforce their dogma. It must see its Marxism not as a harsh dogma but as a rich and inventive dialectic for understanding reality, even more, be ready to recognise its limitations when it is transferred from its original European habitat and transported to the tropical Third World. It must be able to recognise those, even in its own ranks, for whom Marxism becomes, even with the best of intentions, a vehicle of power and ambition, a lesson summed up, after all, in Cheddi Jagan's warning in his 'critical support' speech of the 1970s, that 'not everyone who cries 'Comrade, Comrade' shall <sup>enter</sup> ~~enter~~ into the kingdom of socialism.'

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### Conclusion

- (1) I have attempted in this brief essay to identify and describe what seems to me to be the three leading thought-systems that have helped shape and direct political activity in the Caribbean region since 1950: nationalism, black power-negritude, and Marxism-Leninism. There are, of course, others. But these seem to be the major and most important. They all have treated, one way another, with the leading features of Caribbean societies: 'race', class, and culture. Too much of Caribbean scholarship, however, has been tempted to treat them separately, almost as if they lived in separate and hermetically sealed compartments. What we need has been emphasised by the young

Puerto Rican scholar Juan Giusti in an unpublished manuscript. "Fragmenting and excessive concern with class or race or culture," he writes, "in their various broadly accepted definitions, oversimplifies or negates important issues of social group, class formation and transformation, above all by way of a failure to consider social problems of social-scientific method. A crisp separation between race, class and culture in social reality---such as would permit subordination of one by the other, or contingentia] interaction---exists only in our minds, or perhaps only in our imagination, unless we are to envisage the making of history by abstract well-bounded ideas rather than by concrete, complex human beings.....The key object of enquiry, it is submitted, ought neither to be configurations indefinitely abstracted from social reality---whether race, class, or culture---nor (its fundamentally identical obverse) a chaotic empirica] social reality, but rather classes in active, intelligent, creative movement, making and being made by material-perceptua] conditions---racia], class, cultura], gender, territoria]-nationa], generationa] etc.,---at once abstract and concrete. It is a movement that is at the same time the materia] history of the classes and of their evolving racia], cultura], class, and nationa] conceptions of their reality."

- (2) In this conceptualization, ideas are not just the 'superstructure'. Rather, they they are the flesh and blood of human experience. They have to be accepted as such, studied as such. That is why, in the complex personality of Marx himself there is Marx the thinker, deeply rooted in the study of Hegel, and Marx the humanist, with his passion for Dickens and Balzac. Caribbean studies, I venture to suggest, need to give ideas

the priority they have not hitherto received. There are two general reasons for that. The first is the empirical, public policy orientation of much of those studies, so that all of the disciplines have tended to look at ideas only marginally. The second is the sad fact that the massive transformation of many Caribbean societies in the postwar period has spawned enlarged middle-class sectors marked, generally, by materialism and cultural philistinism, feverishly pursuing the greatest good of the smallest numbers. All post-war periods are like that: post-1815 Europe, post-1919 America. We have lived in a similar period in the post-1945 Caribbean.

(3) For, at least in modern societies, it is the great thinker who sets the patterns of our thinking. Whether it is Descartes or Rousseau or Hegel or Marx or Freud or Einstein, he creates for us, in his work, a map of the universe which confers meaning, purpose and direction upon what might seem to be the meaningless detail of everyday life and experience. He helps explain the inner laws that govern that experience. He establishes the 'inarticulate major premises' of behavior, so that even ordinary men and women, unbeknown to themselves, respond to his thought in the manner of the view of the world that they carry around in their minds.

(4) We in the Caribbean are under no obligation to feel apologetic or embarrassed as we look at that great intellectual tradition of Western thought. We, too, have our tradition; and it is not ignoble. No one can look at the 20th century Caribbean and fail to be astonished by the contribution of its leading thinkers: Ortiz, Price-Mars, CLR James, Eric Williams, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Pedreira, and others. As we of the older generation of Caribbean investigators prepare to say goodbye (we deserve a rest) it is the business of some younger Caribbeanist-scholar to write the book that will be a critical appreciation of that collective record.