

IMPACT OF SOCIALIST IDEALS
ON NEO-COLONIAL REALITY:
IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF MICHAEL MANLEY'S
PHILOSOPHY AND THE POLICY
PERFORMANCE OF HIS JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT

A Thesis Submitted To
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba
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by

LESLIE J. STEWART

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The shortcomings of this work are my responsibility.

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PREFACE

This is a case study and historical analysis of Jamaica's political, social and economic systems and problems from 1494 to 1978. It attempts to enhance our understanding of politics and political economy, not only of the colonial period but also of the neo-colonial period following "independence."

The study also incorporates traditional socialist views on political, social and economic problems similar to Jamaica's, in conjunction with a similarity of thoughts expressed by Prime Minister Michael Manley in his declared philosophy of democratic socialism for Jamaica.

Manley's policy record, which shows him to be the first leader to take steps to achieve real de-colonization of Jamaica, has been examined. Local conservative capitalists' and foreign investors' negative responses to these measures, resulting in the almost total collapse of the Jamaican economy, are also highlighted.

Data sources for the thesis are substantively documentary. There are, however, some limitations to this method. It deprives the study of the benefit of individualistic accounts or perceptions by the local people of different strata, of the reasons for the economic problems facing Jamaica. Such would aid in the recommendation of policy alternatives that might need mass support to remedy

the situation. Secondly, it does not facilitate a first-hand accounting of what or whose thoughts or actions influenced Michael Manley to adopt the philosophy of democratic socialism. Both objectives could have been achieved through interviews.

However, distance from the scene of action and the lack of money did not facilitate such an alternative.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the time of its "discovery" by Columbus in 1494 to 1978 Jamaica has undergone several phases of social, economic and political development. During the Spanish occupation the native Indian population became almost extinct. Spanish planters supplanted them with slaves from Africa.

Subsequently Britain captured and, for some time, ruled Jamaica by a military government. Then there was the old representative system of overseas control by England, and the few local land owning whites who comprised the electorate. Eventually slavery was abolished. However, conditions for the vast majority of the population did not improve and, in many ways, deteriorated. The occurrence of protest riots forced constitutional changes that gradually gave the black indigenous people increased control over internal affairs. Educational opportunities and economic conditions improved slightly.

From the 1938 riots emerged workers union, a two party system headed at first by late local leaders Alexander Bustamante and his cousin Norman Manley, who piloted Jamaica's march to full constitutional independence in

1962 after Jamaica's forced withdrawal earlier that year from the subsequently defunct West Indies Federation.

Both Bustamante's Jamaica Labour Party and Norman Manley's People's National Party alternatively formed the government of Jamaica. Michael Manley, who succeeded his father, as leader of the opposition in 1969, led the P.N.P. to victory in the 1972 general election and he became Prime Minister. Thereafter he announced democratic socialism to be his party's ideology and it has been endorsed by the people of Jamaica.

It is necessary to trace the development of socialism because Jamaica's political, social and economic conditions are similar to those conditions about which traditional socialists spoke and sought to rectify. Whether they were communists, anarchists, guild socialists, Christian socialists, revolutionaries or democratic socialists, they were all perplexed by the lack of equal opportunity and disparate distribution of wealth among people. Generally they all blamed society's ills on the excessive accumulation of private property, selfishness and greed. A utopian¹ advocated collectivization¹ of supplies for reasonable distribution and use of everyone. Such would ensure a decent, just and prosperous commonwealth of anxiety-free citizens. One² proposed the utilization of

1. Sir Thomas More.

2. Jean Rousseau.

human talents in the services of the general society of small independent communities.

Other socialists³ wanted among other things, free education in a peoples' commonwealth without class distinctions, for everybody had an equal right to enjoy society's goods. Still another⁴ wanted efficient state planning, a mixed economy, the development of science and technology to provide jobs and promote the welfare of the people. There was also the need for co-operative settlements for pleasant and creative work, as well as a high concentration of land cultivation and reward for managerial skills and just interest on capital.⁵ Workers, managers and investors should be partners in business. Individualism with its objective of personal aggrandisement was detrimental to the harmony of society, mischievous, anger-inducing and therefore held responsible for fierce competition and for man's inhumanity to man.⁶

The anarchists⁷ condemned all governments that were tools of the bourgeoisie, for their laws were on the side of property and therefore divisive. Consequently the majority of the people were relegated to a life of poverty

3. "Gracchus" Babeuf, Robert Owen.

4. Henri de Saint Simon.

5. Charles Fournier.

6. Robert Owen.

7. Thomas Hodgskin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

and ignorance. Government should move to end inequality and oppression as their proper role was to legislate and enforce just business relationships. Private property was also desirable so long as social interest in it was paramount.

The communists⁸ envisioned the capture of power by the masses and thereafter the establishment of a just, free and classless socialist society. They charged that relationships in a capitalist system were monetary. However, workers were drastically underpaid, insecure and uncomfortable. The employer consequently made excess profits, accumulated wealth, lived luxuriously, and abused and alienated the workers. Hence communists called on the masses to use their numerical strength to seize the government, and bring an end to capitalism and class divisions.

Democratic socialists⁹ viewed the state as an agent of political and social reform. People should therefore elect a government to alter capitalism and alleviate the social, material and psychological misery of the poor. Vital institutions and transport systems should be nationalized and run by government and the people.

Christian socialists¹⁰ viewed socialism as the fulfillment of christianity which advocated co-operation.

8. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

9. For example, Louis Blanc, the Fabians.

10. F. D. Maurice, E. V. Neal.

among mankind for the attainment not only of spiritual, but also material, well-being on earth. Guild socialism¹¹ wanted capitalism replaced by a system of self-governing national guilds. There should also be nationalization of key industries. An evolutionist¹² expressed belief in the gradual movement of government towards state socialism and political democracy. A national social welfare system and public insurance should be paramount government undertakings.

Another socialist¹³ decried what in his view was the unfair influence that property had on laws under capitalism. The answer was a socialist system that would provide equality of economic and educational opportunities.

A reigning socialist preached "socialism of familyhood."¹⁴ Sharing could be realized if there were a positive relationship between industrial and political power. Such would ensure that wealth of the land is used for the betterment of the people of the land who were the rightful owners of the land. The wealth would also remain home if people produced enough and relied on local production for local needs. That would reduce considerably the importation bill and end imperialist exploitation of the resources of developing countries which traditionally

11. As enunciated by G. D. H. Cole.

12. Eduoard Bernstein.

13. Harold Laski.

14. Julius Nyerere.

hindered development.

According to an anti-colonial revolutionary,¹⁵ a considerable hindrance to development was that the leaders of the recently constitutionally decolonized areas still possessed the colonial mentality which caused them to emphasize individualism rather than co-operation. Therefore, only a violent break from colonialism, a form of capitalism, could instill true awareness in the leaders who would subsequently establish a genuine, independent socialist society.

Certain basic concerns and ideas developed in the socialist tradition seemed to have been influential in Manley's philosophy. He observed that emancipation for Jamaica was only theoretical. Jamaica's political and other affairs remained directed by England, and this continued denial of responsibility and power to the local people conditioned them over time to be almost totally lacking in self-confidence. The laws were biased toward property, and only the privileged few owned landed property.

Education, imported from England, and essentially of a non-technical nature, was inadequate, not having been addressed to Jamaica's needs. Business structure and function established and reinforced a "command-submission" relationship between management and labour. Local entrepreneurs were not confident enough to produce goods for

15. Franz Fanon.

local consumption hence Jamaica imported most of her goods at astronomical prices, whereas what she exported always earned relatively lower prices, both set by the imperial powers.

There was also the problem of job insecurity. Manley therefore advocated the replacement of capitalism by democratic socialism based on Christian principles. Then there would be land reform, economic and social equality, a mixed economy that would provide jobs, popular participation in ownership of the means of production.

As part of the overall development plan for Jamaica Manley's government passed legislation which provided for the compulsory recognition of unions as well as equal pay for equal work done by men and women. The government also provided jobs for thousands of hitherto unemployed people, as well it instituted land reform measures that provided farm land to needy farmers whom government gave financial and technical assistance to launch major farm projects and co-operatives.

Some vital services were nationalized and a majority of shares in foreign owned businesses were bought by the government so that profits from these businesses would remain at home. Small industries received governmental financial assistance.

Educational programmes made thousands literate and provided many with much needed technical skills. Education is free for all.

In addition to launching an island-wide health education programme and comprehensive medicare, the government established a children's nutrition feeding programme, improved mental health, maternal and a child care treatment facilities.

Housing was also improved and made more available to low-income people, while many others were given security of tenure by the government. Social facilities such as beach cottages were improved, developed, expanded and made accessible to all at prices within their reach. Seasonal workers and the aged have been guaranteed incomes. Children, whether born in or out of wedlock, are now all legitimate. The office of the ombudsman has also been established to protect civil rights. Tax revenues and borrowing have been government's main sources of revenue.

Private sector negative reaction to socialism, the 1973 world recession and the oil crisis, have all contributed to Jamaica's chaotic economic situation and the depletion of her foreign reserves. Therefore, in order to survive it has become necessary for her to borrow from the International Monetary Fund, which in turn has imposed very stringent eligibility conditions on the Jamaican government.

The following four chapters are an attempt at an in-depth analysis of the problems and prospects highlighted in this introduction.

Chapter 2 discusses Spanish colonization of Jamaica

into which they introduced black slavery as a source of cheap labour for their plantation economy, and the subsequent armed seizure and continued colonization of the island by the British who, with the blessings of their monarch, engaged in a massive slave trade that brought thousands of African slaves to toil on plantations in Jamaica. Spurred on by black riots against inhuman conditions, Britain moved the island through several constitutional changes to universal adult suffrage and finally political independence in 1962.

Chapters 3 and 4 highlight traditional socialist thoughts on general social, economic and political problems with the latter being those of Michael Manley with specific reference to Jamaica's situation. They are dealt with in such a way as to show a thematic blend of ideals so that one may conclude that the former influenced the latter, which in turn guided the policy measures adopted by Prime Minister Manley to correct the problems. These are propounded in Chapter 5. The period 1972-1978 has been examined simply because it is the Manley epoch. 1494 to 1972 represents Jamaica's long period of colonial and neo-colonial history, 1972 being the year Michael Manley became Prime Minister and began altering Jamaica's economic structure.

CHAPTER 2

JAMAICA: POVERTY AND POLITICS, 1494-1972

Jamaica extends some two hundred miles in length and about four thousand square miles in area. Situated in the Caribbean, it is 90 miles south of Cuba. South America is to its south, Honduras to the west. It stands west of the Dominican Republic. Formerly known as one of the Islands of the Greater Antilles, Jamaica and the others, Cuba, Haiti-Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, "were probably joined in one land mass which may have been continuous with the peninsula of Yucatan on the Central America mainland."¹ Lying within the north tropical belt, it has a marine climate. The trade winds mollify the heat with its on- and off-shore breezes. Mountainous, the rugged topography curtails tremendously the arable space. Cultivable land is, however, very productive of a variety of crops, including sugar cane, peas, beans, yams, potatoes, vegetables, citrus fruits, mangoes and even marijuana. It is serviced by underground water resources and varied rainfall. Cows, goats, hogs, sheep and poultry are raised for meat, eggs

1. Mary Carley, Jamaica: The Old and the New (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), p. 12.

and milk supplies for private and local consumption. The beaches are a tourist attraction. Endearingly beautiful,

the sea laps its shores so gently that in places along the coast scarcely a step divides beach from encroaching waters, and at several points along the railway on the North Coast one can toss a pebble from a car window into the blue Caribbean.²

Throughout its recorded history thus far, Jamaican society has been beset by recurrent economic difficulties such as high fertility rates coupled with high unemployment, unfavourable trade balance due mainly to underproduction, extreme social inequality, closely related to class and colour differences, and widespread poverty among the majority of its people.³ From the time of its first occupation by whites to the early 1960's, its political development went through three significant stages. The Spanish colonial period lasting to 1655 was marked by extermination of the indigenous Indians, introduction of black slavery and establishment of a plantation economy operated for the benefit of a small number of grandes and

2. M. W. Beckwith, Black Roadways (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 1.

3. B. Thomas Walsh in Economic Development and Population Control (London: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 4, held that "economic growth in a developing country can be substantially increased and accelerated by reductions in fertility rates." R. K. Girling in "Technology and Development in Jamaica: A Case Study," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 26 (Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, U.W.I., 1977), p. 169, commented: "By any measure of development, Jamaica is a country underdeveloped and poor. Of the island's two million people nearly 200,000 are permanently unemployed. The

their associates.⁴ The British colonial period followed, and continued almost three hundred years. In its latter phase, the authorities tentatively moved toward constitutional reforms, partly in response to local protest; but when Jamaica became fully independent in 1962, its traditional social and economic structure was still largely intact. During the initial period after independence, from 1962 to 1967, the island was governed by the Jamaica Labour Party, under the direction first of Alexander Bustamante and then of Donald Sangster. Perhaps partly because of the J.L.P.'s cautious conservatism, the basic problems of economic underdevelopment, inequality and poverty, remained relatively intact. There appeared to be little prospect of reform by traditional methods. As a result, the principles of socialism secured increasing support and appeared, to some at least, to offer a better alternative. Among the new leaders who emerged in the late 1960's and expressed this view was Michael Manley.

Jamaica was "discovered" by whites in 1494, when

rate of unemployment stands at 22 per cent, among the highest in the world. The distribution of wealth and income is profoundly unequal . . . In many ways it typifies the paradox of capitalist growth: the juxtaposition of affluence of the wealthy few alongside the poverty of the many.

4. These were sent by the Governor General of Hispaniola in 1509 to colonize Jamaica. In 1536 the Governor General gave the Island to his son and his successors titled Marquis of Jamaica, as their personal estate, although they did not come to Jamaica. They also received small revenues from custom duties.

Columbus landed in St. Ann's Bay on the island's north coast. He too was impressed by the scenic beauty of the native Arawak Indian's homeland as "the fairest island that eyes have beheld."⁵

But while the island itself was beautiful, living conditions for the Arawaks soon became ugly. In 1509 they were recruited by Spanish conquistadores, commanded by Juan Esquivel, in arduous but futile digging for gold, and this labour, combined with the effects of new diseases introduced by whites, rapidly destroyed the native population.⁶ To replace it, the Spanish began large scale importation of African slaves who came in time to comprise a majority of the population. In a relatively short time Jamaica became an agricultural country, in which slave labour supported wealthy Spanish grandees. This colonial pattern continued over a century, until 1655 when a British military expedition captured the island.⁷

After an initial period of ruling by martial law, the British in 1666 established a political structure which lasted until 1865. It consisted of a governor, appointed by the British government, an advisory council or "upper house" appointed by the governor, and an elected assembly

5. Quoted by Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz in Jamaica: A Historical Portrait (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), p. 5.

6. Colin Richards (ed.), The Caribbean Year Book (Toronto: Caribook Limited, 1978), p. 297.

7. Aston W. Gardner, History of Jamaica (London: T.

or "lower house." The relatively small electorate (for example, in 1864, 1,903 out of a population of .5 million) consisted mainly of land owning whites who met the property requirement for voting. Consequently the assembly represented chiefly the planting and land owning interests although some time later "some professional and mercantile interests were represented as well."⁸ As regards the administrative system, it operated according to the general colonial practice whereby salaried positions were given by political patronage to government friends, who usually stayed in Britain and rented their posts to deputies and sub-deputies acting in Jamaica.

The political structure was not representative of the population. Under this system the slave trade and the plantation system flourished. The British monarch and his councillors initiated the recruitment of rich investors and planters to turn Jamaica's lands into agricultural ventures. They invested heavily in sugar farming which had a high yield per acre so "sugar and economic success had become linked together by an unbreakable bond."⁹ Successful sugar cultivation required a "highly organized and

Fisher Unwin, MCMIX), pp. 30-32. Edward Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 6.

8. Wendel Bell, Jamaican Leaders (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 12.

9. Ibid.