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HEAVY MANNERS



"IF ANYBODY ASKS WHAT IS OUR POLICY TOWARDS POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TO THE GUNMEN WHO TERRORIZE OUR PEOPLE, OUR ANSWER IS VERY CLEAR: HEAVY MANNERS." MICHAEL MANLEY

CBS13/237

EDITORIAL

EDWIN MADUNAGU

HEAVY MANNERS

Here, in Britain, there are half a million of us who are of Caribbean origin. More than half this figure comes from Jamaica. We have left our relatives and friends behind. Between 1961 and 1963 we sent some £22 million back to Jamaica. A survey in Nottingham in 1965 showed that 85% of West Indian women were sending money back home.

Though these figures are subject to fluctuations as the years go by, it is clear that we, Caribbeans, here in Britain, are closely linked with the population in those countries from which we have come. And that link is not purely sentimental but material as well.

Any political struggle which explodes in those countries from which we have originated, at once, consumes our interests.

In 1968, when the Rodney Affair brought violent demonstrations to Kingston, Jamaica, West Indians in Britain demonstrated against the brutality of the Shearer regime.

In 1970, the rebellion of Trinidadians and Tobagonians against the Williams regime provoked a sympathetic demonstration in support.

It was equally the case with the struggles waged by Grenadians against their government in 1974 and Dominicans in 1975. And so it is with the recent developments in Jamaica.

We are in no doubt that there are those here who lend their support to those governments and reactionary elements who, in the last 10 years, have faced the wrath and hostility of the masses of West Indians at home. What emerges, though, is that this political sentiment could find little support from the mass of Caribbeans in Britain. On the Jamaica question, the Freedom League, which surfaced after one of Seaga's visits to Britain, attempted to mobilise support for the high-ups. They called a public meeting at the West Indian Students Centre, and an overwhelming majority of the audience opposed their views and put them under 'heavy manners'.

Even this brief and cursory assessment of the political attitudes of West Indians in Britain would indicate that any political movement in Jamaica or elsewhere in the Caribbean could depend on our support for the most far reaching and revolutionary changes they propose for Caribbean society. It could not be otherwise.

Here we are, thousands of miles from home, in an inhospitable land. Our very presence here is a consequence of the failure of political movements in our history to break with the domination which modern capitalism has placed on our lives. Here we are continuing the very struggle, the very tradition of Caribbean militancy, which our brothers and sisters at home are in the process of taking forward. Our support and involvement is assured but we are not going to be uncritical.

In this issue of *Race Today*, we feature a discussion on what is taking place in Jamaica. We do not begin, as many have in the past weeks, with what Michael Manley is doing or will do. We recognise that what he does is, in one sense, central, even of the greatest importance. But we go further. Every radical posture, assumed by Michael Manley in the last two years, has been in response to the militant actions of the working class and peasantry. He has gained strength from them, not them from him.

Manley did not engage in the re-distribution of land in the countryside because it was part of any coherent revolutionary programme and policy. The workers and peasantry had themselves seized the land when Manley intervened. The unemployed had, since 1968, burnt Kingston down before the PNP decided to mobilise a section of them into youth groups.

The Americans and their allies among local capitalists in Jamaica, intervened militarily, not because they feared Manley's militancy, not because they feared Manley's democratic socialism. They are known to have supported like regimes elsewhere in the world. They intervened because they know that what is developing within the Jamaican working class, not even Manley can arrest. They know it because their agents have been monitoring the temper of the West Indian masses in the last 10 years. They know it because the Cuban revolution is an historic example of what Caribbeans on the move are likely to do.

Their attempts to get rid of Manley are based in the fact that to date, he has shown himself powerless to check and destroy the rising tide of militancy that the mass of Jamaicans have been displaying, long before the PNP came to power.

While, on the one hand, Manley and the PNP are powerless to check the tide of militancy, on the other hand he has no intention of equipping the working class and peasantry with the power to take on the might of Yankee imperialism.

The mass movement appears, from here in Britain, frightenely exposed as a result of Manley's policy of halfwayism. He courts imperialism on the one hand and makes radical noises on the other. He appears to be for working class demands today and sets up a gun court and the Industrial Relations Act tomorrow.

We, in Britain, have sufficient experience of democratic socialism. We won't buy it Michael nor would we encourage our kith and kin in JA to do so. Even if it involves putting you under 'heavy manners'.

Race Today Collective

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