

Number 136

PURITANS AND AFRO-SAXONS:
THE UNITED STATES AND THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN
IN THE 1980s

A Rapporteur's Report

Jorge Heine
Inter-American University
San German, Puerto Rico

"We have to learn to live by our wits" was Eric Williams' succinct statement of the challenge facing the people of the Commonwealth Caribbean¹ upon entering the uncharted waters of nation-building. The late Trinidadian leader's dictum remains valid today. Two decades after the emergence of the first independent state in the English-speaking Caribbean, the members of CARICOM find themselves under increasingly difficult economic circumstances, as worldwide inflation and the international recession make themselves felt in a region of mostly small, open, and highly vulnerable economies.

On October 21-23, 1982, a cross-section of opinion leaders from the Commonwealth Caribbean and the United States convened at Sam Lord's Castle, Barbados to discuss United States-Caribbean relations in the 1980s.² After initial presentation on the present political and economic situations in the United States and in the CARICOM nations, the discussion focused on four broad themes: Caribbean economic development; the region and the international system; security issues in United States-Caribbean relations; and Caribbean emigration and population movements.

This report does not provide a comprehensive summary of everything that was said at the conference. This is an effort, rather, to provide a personal and analytical summary of the main topics addressed to the meeting, and to contribute to the continuing discussion of the central themes by drawing together salient points.

I. Introduction

A. The Commonwealth Caribbean

The nine sovereign states and three dependent territories that are members of the Caribbean Community have a combined population of

¹By this we refer to the members of the Caribbean Community, which are Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago. There are some neighboring English-speaking islands in the Atlantic Ocean such as the Bahamas and Bermuda that are sometimes included in surveys of the Commonwealth Caribbean, as are smaller territories such as the Cayman Islands. For the purposes of this report, however, Commonwealth Caribbean is defined as the members of CARICOM.

²A list of participants appears at the end of this report. The Policy Dialogue was the first United States-Commonwealth Caribbean Conference organized by the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. It was sponsored in cooperation with the Institute for Social and Economic Research (I.S.E.R.) of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, and the Charles I. Kettering Foundation.

5.7 million people and a per capita GNP of \$1,650--\$1,100 if oil-rich Trinidad & Tobago is excluded.

The main trend in the region over the past twenty years has been the emergence of independent nation states, starting with Jamaica in 1962 and followed by Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent-Grenadines, Antigua-Barbuda, and most recently, Belize in 1981.³

These nations have all inherited from the British variants of the Westminster parliamentary democratic system. While this system has broken down in some instances--most notably in Grenada and Guyana--its albeit fragile hold on politics has been an important factor in maintaining a respect for human rights, for freedom of the press, and for civil and personal liberties. The fragility and vulnerability of the Caribbean economies is no less striking. Although indicators such as GNP growth during the 1970s or per capita national product may suggest that Commonwealth Caribbean nations do quite well in comparison with other developing nations, the small and open nature of their economies exposes them to the fluctuations in international commodity markets in ways that larger and more diversified economies are not. For example, the "oil shocks" of the the 1970s, which had a strong negative impact in all countries of the region with the exception of Trinidad & Tobago, were a dramatic illustration of this vulnerability, in nations where almost all energy production depends on imported oil. On the export side, the peaks and troughs of international sugar prices in the 1970s made both employment planning and anticipation of revenues highly problematic for many of these economies.

The twin challenges of consolidating and deepening that region's democratic institutions and resuming the push toward economic growth and self-sufficiency that marked the 1960s are thus the main tasks facing Caribbean leaders and peoples today.

B. The United States

The foreign policy of the United States under President Reagan is marked by a strong emphasis on security concerns and East-West issues. To build up defense capabilities and confront challenges to United States influence wherever they may occur, but particularly in the Western Hemisphere, has been a leitmotiv of the Reagan administration. To some extent, this reflects a trend in American foreign policy that goes back to the second half of President Carter's term. But, according to one participant, there are also other areas in which the early eighties are witnessing the effects of more long-term trends in the American body politic:

- The decline of the federal government, under increasing pressures from the sub- and supra-national levels--a trend aggravated by

³"Region" refers to the members of CARICOM. "Area" is used for the Caribbean proper, meaning the islands of the Caribbean Sea plus Belize and the Guyanas.

one-term presidencies, the decline of political parties; and the inability of Congress to deal with pressing issues in an orderly and efficient manner.

- The unreliability of the American policy process, as new arrays of interest groups affect United States policy-making contributing to a stop-go-stop pattern of initiatives; foreign governments thus feel they are unable to rely on Washington to carry out its own apparent commitments.

- The fragmentation of the United States, as single-issue politics, ethnic differences, and regional rivalries reassert themselves.

Heated debates on domestic issues have been paralleled by efforts to sort out the appropriate role of the United States in the world. Whereas from 1945 to 1970 an internationalist consensus predominated, the twin impacts of Vietnam and Watergate tended to strengthen isolationist sentiments and attitudes across the country.

The net result of these many contradictory forces has been to reassert the strong attraction that the center of gravity of American politics exerts on presidents. Whereas Jimmy Carter started with a broad agenda emphasizing North-South issues and human rights, he ended his presidency focusing mostly on security questions and the East-West conflict. In the same vein, it is important to look beyond the Reagan rhetoric to the actual policies toward the developing nations being formulated in Washington today. Many of these--the Caribbean Basin Initiative is a good example--show a remarkable sensitivity to Third World social and economic needs.

C. United States-Caribbean Relations

The United States has traditionally been hegemonic in the Caribbean, although its level of involvement in English-speaking Caribbean affairs has been relatively low. There are, of course, strong economic and social forces--in investment, trade, migration, and tourism--pulling the United States and the CARICOM nations closer together; yet in the mid- and late seventies countries like Jamaica, Guyana, and Grenada became actively involved in the Non-Aligned Movement and distanced themselves from the United States; in the more recent past, however, elections in Dominica, St. Lucia, and Jamaica have returned to power moderate to conservative leaders who strongly identify with the United States.

United States hegemony over the Caribbean, one United States participant argued, should be set in its historical context. Washington has involved itself in the Caribbean not out of totalitarian aspirations, but because of a sense of fear; national insecurity rather than imperialism has been the driving force behind the United States' Caribbean policy. Conversely, an obsessive focus on Washington's influence in the Caribbean on the part of the region's leaders and intellectuals has been a way of diverting attention from the problems of Caribbean identity and intra-Caribbean relations.

The real questions are whether and how--given the dramatic differences in size, power, and perceptions of the international environment--the United States and the Commonwealth Caribbean countries can develop the type of sustained, constructive relationship that departs from the cycles of heavy involvement followed by almost total neglect that characterized United States policy toward the Caribbean in the past. This is particularly important, one Caribbean participant argued, as West Indian governments have to consider the United States and its presence and influence not as a variable but as a parameter, such as Finland does with the Soviet Union.

II. The Challenges of Economic Development: A United States-Caribbean Partnership?

A. Key Economic Problems

The slowing down of economic growth and the balance of payments and budgetary problems faced by Commonwealth Caribbean countries in the early eighties have been the most visible manifestations of the region's economic difficulties. A severe deterioration of the region's terms of trade caused by escalating oil prices, worldwide inflation, and a sharp drop in prices of sugar, bauxite, and bananas has led to the present difficult economic situation. The roots of the region's economic predicament, however, are structural and not cyclical; they go considerably beyond temporary variations of world commodity markets.⁴

The region's natural resource base is not strong. Aside from bauxite in Jamaica and Guyana, oil in Trinidad & Tobago, some agricultural land of varying quality and first-rate beaches, there is not much more. The export component of GDP is concentrated in a few commodities, all subject to wild price fluctuations about which Commonwealth Caribbean countries can do very little.

Since its discovery by Europe the Caribbean has been characterized by extreme economic dependence. Reliance on foreign trade, foreign aid, and foreign technology in all areas of Caribbean life has been standard. In fact, one Caribbean participant argued, the Caribbean is the most externally dependent region in the world.

And it is this condition of dependency that shapes many of the critical problem areas in the region's economies:

- An ailing agriculture. Agricultural production for the region's own consumption has always been insufficient, but this has been aggravated in recent years by declining per capita food production and crop

⁴ For a good statement of some key economic problems of the region, see "The Development Challenges Facing the National Economies in the 1980's," in The Caribbean Community in the 1980's, Report by a Group of Caribbean Experts, pp. 27-43 (Georgetown, Guyana: The Caribbean Community Secretariat, 1981).

yields. Large amounts of land lie idle and are not used appropriately. Traditional export staples like sugar and bananas have also faced serious difficulties.

The only times Caribbean food production has prospered has been in times of war--it happened during the American Revolution, in 1812, and again in World War II. The question is how to establish a greater degree of agricultural self-sufficiency in times of peace.

- An inefficient industrial sector. In most countries of the region the manufacturing share of GDP is very low, generally under 20 percent. Moreover, this share grew more rapidly in the sixties than in the seventies, when severe bottlenecks in the production process brought to a halt much of the import substitution programs' not inconsiderable achievements of earlier periods. High tariffs--particularly for consumer goods--and other protectionist devices fostered inefficient, "finishing touch" industries that add little value to products.

- Widespread unemployment. "The gravity of the unemployment situation, especially as it affects young people, is the most explosive problem facing the region today" concluded a leading group of Caribbean experts in a 1981 report.⁵ On average, open unemployment throughout the region is estimated to be around 25 percent, to which the figures for disguised unemployment and the marginally employed have to be added.

B. Private and Public Sectors

The dearth of managerial talents and resources has been endemic to the region. Many mid- and upper-level Caribbean managers have emigrated to the United States and Canada making it difficult for governments and private firms to replace them. Given this constraint, important differences of opinion emerged as to the proper role of the public sector.

One Caribbean participant argued forcefully that modern technology has changed the nature of the "commanding heights" of the economy. They are no longer to be found in industries and banks but in information centers monitoring the economy, storing and processing data and analyzing social and economic trends, thus allowing a lean, strong government to intervene only when it is actually necessary. Scarce public administrators and managers should be allocated to such tasks rather than to run factories or utilities. Yet, this seems to go against the prevailing attitudes among many Caribbean economists and international civil servants, who favor a very large public sector.

Others pointed out that the relatively large size of the region's public sector was not due to ideological preference. The purchase of a large number of enterprises by the Trinidadian government under Eric Williams was not due to the Prime Minister's "socialist" leanings or even because it was a good investment of the government's surplus, but

⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

simply to secure jobs and patronage for the followers of the People's National Movement. Moreover, the region's private sector has been a risk-avoiding one, forcing governments to step in into many areas where private firms have refused to tread; some even questioned the existence of a true, modern business class in the Caribbean, one able to provide the innovative, Schumpeterian entrepreneur so decisive for sustained economic growth and performance.

C. The Caribbean Basin Initiative

All of the region's economies are very open, with exports and imports each taking over half of GDP. In spite of the considerable efforts to promote intra-CARICOM trade, its share of the region's total trade is still very low, at 7.5 percent. Only two countries have made significant progress in their exports within the region: Barbados--with over 30 percent of its total exports--and Trinidad.⁶ The search for new export markets is thus an integral component of the region's economic development strategy. In this context, the possibilities that are opened up by the Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative were extensively discussed.

Although the CBI is a comprehensive package that includes trade, investment and economic and military aid components, the "heart" of the program is free trade for 12 years for almost all Caribbean Basin products (except textiles and apparel), representing a major departure from the globalist approach to United States foreign economic policy.⁷ Not surprisingly, whereas the aid portion was quickly approved by the Congress, the innovative trade and investment provisos faced strong opposition. One United States participant argued that although the Congress has been very active in searching for a new American foreign policy to meet changing global realities in the 1980s, it is also a place where the insecurities of the nation have manifested themselves; Congressmen have been leery of engaging in radical departures from established trade policies. Stronger leadership on this issue by President Reagan, though, could make a difference. Other participants contended that the real problem was the unwillingness of Congressmen running for reelection to antagonize business or labor interests that might feel threatened by the CBI's one-way free trade measures; accordingly, things might change after the November 1982 congressional elections.

In any case the Reagan administration has stated that the CBI is not merely legislation. It represents a major effort on the part of the United States to direct its attention, resources, and markets to the development and security needs of the Caribbean Basin region. Working

⁶ For an up-to-date evaluation of the Barbadian economy, see DeLisle Worrell (ed.), The Economy of Barbados 1946-1980 (Bridgetown, Barbados: Central Bank of Barbados, 1982).

⁷ Robert Pastor, "Sinking in the Caribbean Basin," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 60, No. 5 (Summer 1982), p. 1044.

through organizations such as Caribbean/Central American Action, efforts have been made to develop links between the United States and the Caribbean private sectors. The Department of Commerce has also set up a CBI information center to match prospective investors with the resources and needs of Caribbean Basin nations.

The need for a favorable investment climate in the region was emphasized. Even in the current recessionary times, investors are looking for good opportunities. The Commonwealth Caribbean offers--in addition to the commonality of the English language--a highly educated workforce, relatively low labor costs, plus proximity and full access to the United States market if the CBI is approved by the Congress. Sporting goods--Haiti already produces a large number of all baseballs sold in the United States--is one of the many areas where considerable investments could take place.

Considerable concern was expressed about the CBI's potentially negative effects on Puerto Rico. The one-way free trade zone provides to the Caribbean Basin nations many of the most significant advantages Puerto Rico has enjoyed. It was stated that this could be a serious threat to the Puerto Rican economy, if rum and tuna industries, among others, decide to move to lower wage environs--such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic, or Jamaica--where they could also ship freely to the United States market. These dangers have been vastly exaggerated, argued other participants, pointing out that the CBI has a special section designed to protect Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. Special tax provisions will continue to make it attractive to invest in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, and the governor of Puerto Rico has fully backed the CBI.

A number of participants criticized the bilateral approach taken by the CBI on a number of issues. Some argued that a general commodities stabilization plan would better serve the CBI's development objectives. Others pointed to what they viewed as the superior qualities of the Lome Treaties which place great reliance on regional institutions. According to several participants efforts should be made to channel some of the CBI aid through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and CARICOM. Also, an integrated investment treaty with CARICOM would seem a better alternative than the individual country treaties the legislation before Congress contemplates. This line of criticism was summarized by a number of participants who suggested that the United States practice of openly limiting help to "friends" and not pursuing development objectives in a broader sense is, in the long run, counterproductive in both regional development and United States interests. Also singled out for criticism was the relative lack of reliance of the Reagan administration on the World Bank consultations group on the Caribbean--through which Canada has channelled so much of her aid.

Although acknowledging some merit to these criticisms, other United States participants underlined the existence of widespread feelings in Washington that the United States needs to get more "bang for its buck" in its foreign aid programs and that bilateralism is much more effective for those purposes. In addition, it was pointed out, several Caribbean leaders have privately expressed their support for more bilateral aid.

One way out of this dilemma might be to look upon United States-CARICOM relations as bilateral rather than multilateral in nature, giving broader fora--such as those where the Nassau Four or the New York Five participate--the character of multilateral instances.

D. Development Strategies

Near consensus was clear among the conferees when it came to analyzing economic problems. When the discussion turned to development strategies, however, major differences emerged.

A fundamental obstacle to the development of the region today is the high cost of capital--much higher today than it was in the nineteenth century when Great Britain and the United States industrialized. The recent drop-off in United States interest rates is therefore important for Caribbean development prospects. An ability to export will continue to be a crucial determinant of economic performance. An active and effective export development program in the region will have to rely not only on the traditional enclave industry approach but also on local subcontracting activities and local or joint venture export operations. For enclave industries requiring low-skill labor the best prospects lie really with the region's LDC's rather than with the MDC's (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad), who have already priced themselves out of that market. For these countries the best bet is with high-tech industries, such as INTEL, a United States semiconductors firm that operates a plant in Barbados.

What is needed, then, according to this approach, is to plan for a dual economy where low- and high-skill labor industries coexist. Excessive wage differentials between the sectors must be avoided, though, as they lead to the abandonment of agriculture and other lower-income areas of the economy, without the modern sector being able to absorb all this surplus labor.

Such an approach would steer a middle course between Cuba's highly centralized economy and Puerto Rico's "industrialization by invitation" model.⁸ It would imply maintaining and shoring up the fairly large public sectors that exist in the Caribbean today and move actively toward

⁸ As was pointed out, Puerto Rico's present economic crisis--unemployment reached 24.6 percent in July of 1982, the highest ever--shows that the "industrialization by invitation" model has run out of steam. Moreover, the precipitous decline of the Island's agriculture in the past three decades has also had a very negative effect on Puerto Rico's balance of payments, which now imports most of its food. There are important lessons to be derived from this by the Commonwealth Caribbean nations, many of which share several of Puerto Rico's demographic and geographic characteristics. Cuba, although it has scored considerable successes in the field of social services, has had a dismal economic performance over the past two decades. Over-centralization of the economy seems to be the chief cause of this.

establishing further joint ventures with foreign investors. In addition to the incomes policy mentioned above, an exchange policy that revises the exchange rate more often--as is done in many Latin American countries--will also have to be implemented.

One objection to the "dual economy" concept was that it does not make sense to plan a low productivity sector of the economy. Quite the contrary, an effort should be made to integrate the economy and to bring to bear modern techniques to all sectors. Thus, a somewhat different development strategy would be predicated on an "opening" of the region's economies. With increased competitiveness and efficiency as a central objective, such an approach would build up the region's capability to adapt to changes in the outside world. It would rest on five pillars:

- Increase manufactured exports to the United States and Europe.
- Augment food production for the domestic market and continue support for export-oriented agribusiness.
- Attract foreign investment by removing price controls, cumbersome regulations, and other obstacles that discourage investment.
- Continue to develop and expand the region's infrastructure in transportation and communications, now particularly weak at the intra-regional level.
- Reduce levels of effective protection of all items, but particularly of consumer goods.

The Jamaican experience under the Seaga government, however, indicates that such an "opening" strategy can only be applied gradually. Local producers there have argued that before they can become exporters they need a strong domestic market to support them; the lack of upper- and middle-level managers as well as foreign exchange shortages have continued to plague Jamaican industrialists, making it very difficult for them to move aggressively into tough export markets. A precipitous lowering of tariffs can lead to the dismantling of local industry.

III. Two Decades of Decolonization: The Caribbean and the International System

Historically and geographically "the Caribbean" has been defined as a sea rather than as an archipelago. It is only very recently that it has come to be seen as a people. With a short history as independent nations, the region's countries continue to be marked by the multiple legacies of colonialism. Caribbeans live on islands but are not an islandic people. Rather than looking toward the sea, Caribbeans generally look inward toward the plantation. For example, instead of having a work schedule adopted to the tropical climate, people work from 9 to 5; similarly the school calendar responds to the needs of the temperate zone rather than to local seasons.

The first decade after independence was characterized by considerable unrest and insecurity. There was a weakening of the sense of the power of traditional elites. But soon the region started to assert its independence, not only vis-a-vis the United Kingdom, but also regarding the United States. When Commonwealth Caribbean nations joined the Organization of American States, they refused to accept as a condition for admission to break or not to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba. They also gained the right of states to join the Inter-American Development Bank even though they are not part of the OAS--as is the case of Guyana and Belize.

A. The Continuing Quest for Regional Integration.

Whatever progress took place in regional integration in the sixties, slowed dramatically in the seventies. In fact, fragmentation now has reached the level of the multi-island state. Tobago has serious differences with Trinidad, Anguilla with St. Kitts, the Grenadines with St. Vincent. This, of course, is by no means confined to the Caribbean: the federations left in place almost everywhere by the British before their departure have failed. It seems that nobody wants to join a larger political or economic union--with the sole exception of the European Economic Community (EEC).

The Federation of the West Indies--which lasted from 1958 to 1962, when Jamaica seceded--failed because it was a political design without any social and economic underpinnings, but things are different now. Although the integration movement seems to have less momentum, social forces are quietly building and developing regional associations of businessmen, trade unionists, journalists, and educators. It was argued by some that the advantages to be derived from regional integration cannot be denied. They alluded to the "Meissner effect" from physics, if all elements of a given unit are rearranged in a coherent manner, the material cannot be destroyed. They state if the Commonwealth Caribbean could achieve general coherence, it would be in a much better position to face present and future challenges. One participant went so far as to argue that there is today a West Indian national which is in many ways, "now closer to general unity than it ever was."

B. The Case of Grenada

The March 1979 uprising in Grenada that deposed Eric Gairy and led to the establishment of the Bishop government was the first unconstitutional transfer of power in the history of the modern Commonwealth Caribbean. Predictably, it evoked considerable international attention, and the radical policies followed by Bishop--and his refusal to hold elections--have become one of the most contentious issues in the Caribbean today.

From the very beginning, Washington took a critical attitude. Under Carter, the United States Ambassador to the Eastern Caribbean Sally Shelton was ordered not to visit Grenada, and the Reagan administration has refused even to meet with representatives of the Grenadian government, on the ground that it came to power illegitimately, is trampling on human rights, and that the United States finds the situation

unacceptably distasteful. Although Grenada is not a priori excluded from the CBI, one of the guiding objectives of United States policy toward the Caribbean is to isolate Grenada as much as possible and to cut off her access to international assistance. Washington has pressed the EEC to discontinue her aid for building Grenada's new international airport--whose large dimensions have led many to speculate that it is being built to meet Cuba's strategic needs rather than Grenada's. The United States has discriminated aid to the CDB until the Bank agrees that no new funds will be made available to Grenada.

A large number of United States and Caribbean participants expressed their concern about the human rights violations in Grenada--freedom of the press has been severely curtailed--and the lack of elections or even a timetable for elections a full 43 months after the establishment of the Bishop government. Given the democratic tradition of the Commonwealth Caribbean, this sets a dangerous precedent. At the same time, there was a widespread sentiment that current United States policy toward Grenada is unbecoming to a great power, and that the single-minded United States effort to ostracize the small island has been counterproductive, with Grenada evoking considerable sympathy in the region.

Even among the leading critics of Prime Minister Bishop in the region, there is consensus that Eric Gairy had to go, and that the revolution has brought considerable progress to the island; in three-and-a-half years more has been accomplished than in all of the Gairy years. Representatives of international organizations said they found it much easier to deal with the current government, which has a more dynamic attitude toward development and has significantly increased Grenada's absorptive capacity.

Grenada's close ties with Cuba, its involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement, and the pro-Soviet stance it has taken on certain international issues--such as the United Nations vote in which Grenada voted against a resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan--have elicited strong criticisms in the United States and elsewhere. Yet, one Caribbean participant argued, these developments must be set in their proper context.

The Bishop government inherited embassies in Washington, D.C., New York, Ottawa, and London. New ones have been opened in Brussels, Caracas, and Havana, in that order. And the next ones contemplated are in Libya and Iraq. This shows a consistent diversification of foreign relations rather than some sort of "alignment."

Much the same can be said about official visits abroad by Prime Minister Bishop. He has visited Ecuador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico, Australia, Zambia, the United Kingdom, the United States for a U.N. General Assembly meeting, and Canada. The first trip to Eastern Europe was undertaken in the summer of 1982. In fact, until the summer of 1982, Grenada had not bought or sold anything from Eastern Europe. Grenada's foreign trade has increased the most with its fellow CARICOM countries and with the United Kingdom, and Grenada benefits from the most diversified foreign aid structure of any Caribbean country.

Grenada favors the reestablishment of normal diplomatic relations with the United States, but is frustrated by Washington's total unwillingness to initiate discussions about issues of common concern. United States government officers attending the conference took note of the sense of the discussion.

C. Which Way the Commonwealth Caribbean?

As the region enters its third decade since the emergence of sovereignty, it is time, one participant argued, to start asking some basic questions. What is the "good life" in the Caribbean all about? How should it be lived?

"Rather than looking at ourselves as people of a small archipelago living in the shadow of a superpower, we should take advantage of what we have and project ourselves accordingly on the world scene" was one answer to those questions. As a Western people with a dynamic attitude toward progress, Caribbeans could organize themselves accordingly and have an impact on the world, rather than resigning themselves to be mere objects of global trends. In Trinidad & Tobago, for example, what is distinctive and unique is the music and the art, carnival and the steelband. If that is a comparative advantage, it should be developed and nurtured. Visitors often say that the Caribbean resembles the old Greek isles. Why not make the region a worldwide center of music and the arts? This would also help to put an end to the Caribbean's historical search for sponsors, placing self-reliance squarely on the agenda.

IV. Beyond Backyards and Third Borders: Security Issues in United States-Caribbean Relations

A. Whose Security?

What security interests does the United States have in the Caribbean? Why should Washington be at all concerned about developments in an area of mostly small islands, with only 30 million people and relatively minor United States investments?

There are a variety of reasons behind the increasing attention being paid to the Caribbean in United States policy circles, argued one United States participant. The United States borders on the Caribbean; developments in the area have therefore an impact on United States security. In addition, the United States is heavily dependent on Caribbean sea lanes for both peacetime commerce and resupply of Europe in event of war. Finally, what happens in the area reflects on United States credibility as a world power. If regimes hostile to the United States proliferate, United States prestige will suffer and the Soviet Union will be emboldened.

In immediate terms, the most significant threat to United States security interests is Cuba; this threat will be compounded if Cuba succeeds in spreading its system elsewhere.

To protect its interests in the area the United States is acting on two fronts: the CBI to aid troubled economies, and through bilateral security assistance programs and related efforts to help countries in the area bolster their own defensive capacity.

An alternative approach to United States interests in the Caribbean was also set forth, based on the following propositions:

- a. The United States focuses on the Caribbean not for reasons of national security but because of its national insecurity.
- b. The principal threats to the Caribbean arise from United States actors and policies, not from other forces.
- c. The principal Caribbean challenge to Washington in the eighties will not come from Cuba or Grenada but from Puerto Rico. As United States citizens, Puerto Ricans can force themselves on Washington's agenda in ways other Caribbeans cannot.
- d. The main issue in United States-Caribbean relations is not military or economic but demographic (migration).

A Caribbean participant formulated the region's security needs from a macro-historical perspective. The uniqueness of the Commonwealth Caribbean lies in that it is the only part of Afro-America--that broad area stretching from the United States-Northeast all the way down to Brazil, comprising some 150 million people--where blacks have gained power. This gives Caribbeans a tremendous opportunity not only to gain security for the region but also to work with the 70 million nonwhite Brazilian and 25 million United States blacks. A key question for the next 75 years is what cultural and political paradigm will activate Caribbeans and lead them to confront, once and for all, the many challenges faced by their societies.

The first step in that direction is to realize the irrelevance to Caribbean needs and realities of the "socialism versus capitalism" debate. The tragedy of the Jamaican situation in the late seventies was that both the People's National Party and the Jamaican Labor Party failed to realize that. Guyana, where the three leading parties proclaim their adherence to Marxism as real political alignments continue to be determined by ethnic cleavages also illustrates how little nineteenth century European ideologies help us to understand twentieth century Caribbean realities.

What Washington has not realized is that Caribbean political parties and leaders adhere to liberalism or Marxism merely for tactical reasons, it may provide them with a ready-made international support system. This tendency, of course, only perpetuates the Caribbean predicament. Rather than try to distill what is important from the people's experience and history, leaders continue to consider the region as somehow inferior--and therefore dependent on the industrialized powers. In fact the Caribbean doesn't need any external aid, according to one participant; if it mobilizes its own resources it can do very well. By

erecting security in the minds of people, security can be made a non-issue in the region.

B. The Role of Cuba

A considerable part of United States security concerns in the Caribbean are linked to the role of Cuba, its ties to the Soviet Union, and the potentially disruptive effect of Cuban actions on the stability of Caribbean governments.

In the traditionally fragmented Caribbean, Cuba has been the first Spanish-speaking nation to develop solid relations with the English- and Dutch-speaking countries. In the seventies, Havana had some significant success in this regard, appearing to be "as influential as the United States among certain English-speaking countries in the Caribbean"⁹ --although subsequent policy reversals have led to Cuba's almost total isolation in the region.

The reasons for Cuba's earlier diplomatic accomplishments in the Caribbean are easy to identify. Ethnically, Cuba is part of Afro-America; historically and geographically it is as much a part of the West Indies as Jamaica and Trinidad. By defying the United States and getting away with it, Cuba has won considerable respect throughout the region. Havana's swiftness in responding to regional emergencies and needs--if a country needs medicines and physicians after a hurricane, the Cubans send a ship full of them right away--is also appreciated.

Although Caribbeans know that the United States can deliver more in the end, they also perceive a much more refined understanding of many regional issues on the part of Cuba. In the case of the Belize-Guatemala conflict, whereas Cuba has indicated it will provide full military support to Belize if there is a Guatemalan invasion; in such an event Cuba would have the full support of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

It is also important to distinguish between Cuba's role in Central America and in the Caribbean. In the latter, it has been much more low-key, working with established governments and focusing on economic assistance and educational exchanges, rather than on fomenting revolution. While this is true, some United States participants argued, there is no reason to think this state of affairs will persist. Cuba has a 20-year history of "fishing in troubled waters" and it may very well start doing it again in the Caribbean in the near future; the containment of Cuba is therefore an important objective of Washington's foreign policy.¹⁰

⁹ Jorge Domínguez, "U.S. Interests and Policies in the Caribbean and Central America" (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1982), p. 9.

¹⁰ For a full statement of this view, see James D. Theberge, "Rediscovering the Caribbean: Toward a U.S. Policy for the 1980's," Commonsense (Spring 1980), pp. 3-20.

V. Going North: The Impact of Caribbean Emigration

"Security means protection of core values," argued one participant, "including identity, self-image and culture." This element of United States security is not going to be threatened from the Caribbean sea lanes, but it will be affected by emigration.

As has recently been pointed out, two out of three Puerto Ricans, one out of every five Jamaicans, one out of every six Barbadians, and one out of every twelve Dominicans lived in the United States in 1980. 17.5 percent of all legal migrants to the United States between 1970 and 1978 came from the Caribbean.¹¹ Moreover, this flow of people, by no means confined to the Haitian "boat-people" and the Cuban refugees that elicited so much media attention, is directed mostly to Florida and the United States Northeast. It has already changed significantly the linguistic and ethnic characteristics of cities like Miami, Boston, New York, and Newark.

The discussion of Caribbean emigration to the United States focused on various themes. One presentation dealt with the findings of an ongoing study of St. Vincentian contract workers in the United States and Canada and the main ways in which the contracting itself and the working conditions in the camps could be improved.¹² Another panelist pointed out that "The main problem with the administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative is that it omits people," and that a linkage has to be sought between the CBI's provisions and those of the Simpson-Mazzoli Immigration Reform and Control Act, also before Congress, "so that they complement rather than undermine each other."¹³

Two key questions are relevant here: (a) What is the impact of emigration on the region's unemployment problem? Counterintuitively, emigration might not always cut unemployment. The loss of skilled workers, managers, and professionals might decrease productivity and output in the sending country, lower the overall standard of living, and lead to the faltering of ongoing enterprises and businesses; (b) How does development affect migration? A higher rate of economic growth does not automatically relieve emigration pressures. In fact, it might increase it, as happened in Puerto Rico in the fifties.

Finally, it was pointed out that the economic recession in the United States has brought to the fore differences of interests among Caribbeans and other minorities that had not been apparent before. The conflict between blacks and Cubans--as evidenced in the 1980

¹¹ Domínguez, op. cit., p. 6.

¹² Returning to contract workers social security payments that are automatically deducted from their pay is one of these recommendations.

¹³ For an elaboration of these views, see Robert Pastor, "Sinking in the Caribbean Basin," pp. 1053-1057.

Liberty City riots in Miami, and between Puerto Ricans and Jamaicans and other guest workers--as shown in the recent Virginia court decision forcing apple growers to hire Puerto Ricans rather than Jamaican workers--are likely to be more prevalent in the 1980s.

VI. United States-Commonwealth Caribbean Relations in the 1980s

No consensus was reached on the best course to follow in United States-Commonwealth Caribbean relations; given the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives of participants, it was deemed more useful that different views be aired.

On the United States side, there are reasons to be optimistic about the present and future state of relations with a community of nations with whom it shares a common language and a strong democratic vocation. Partly as a result of the lack of civil strife in the region, some of the heated policy debates taking place in Washington on Central America have not been mirrored in matters regarding Caribbean affairs. The small size of the nations in the region and their large number also allows Washington to obtain tangible political benefits with the investment of a relatively small amount of resources. All of this should facilitate the development of a steady course in Caribbean policy in the years to come.

In the region, attitudes are mixed. Although some leaders--most prominently Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica--have manifested strong and vocal support for the United States in the current atmosphere of heightened international tensions, others are leery of closer ties with the United States whom some see as a neocolonial power bent on exercising undisputed regional control.

There was full agreement, however, that the key problem in the region is the economic one and that the United States can and should play an important role in helping the region overcome present economic difficulties.

Final congressional approval of the Caribbean Basin Initiative--seen by some participants as a positive and even highly innovative proposal and by others as positive "only" in the absence of a more substantial proposal--is particularly important in this regard. President Reagan has created high expectations in the region through the CBI; congressional rejection of the plan would be seen as a serious breach of commitment.

Over and beyond the CBI, three critical issues have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on United States-Commonwealth Caribbean relations:

- The "Grenadian question."--There was near-consensus that United States efforts to ostracize Grenada have been counterproductive and have undermined basic United States interests. A serious reexamination of this policy is due.

- Caribbean emigration to the United States.--Most significantly, the regional impact of any new immigration law passed by the United States Congress deserves careful consideration.

- United States policy toward Caribbean regional institutions.--While the regional integration movement lost steam in the seventies, many West Indians feel very strongly that regional institutions such as CARICOM, the Caribbean Development Bank and the recently created Organization of East Caribbean States perform a very valuable role, not only in fostering regional integration per se but also in harnessing human, material, and organizational resources for various social and economic development tasks. The bilateralist approach of the CBI was seen by many as an unwelcome departure from earlier United States practice of giving strong support to these regional institutions; Washington's refusal to channel funds to the CDB until the bank stops loaning money to Grenada was singled out for particular criticism.

Other issues that will come to the fore are Cuba's role in the Caribbean, a subject on which serious differences of opinion were expressed. While various United States participants came out strongly for keeping and continuing the "containment of Cuba" policy (and others urged a drastic revision of this approach) most Caribbean participants did not feel the region was really threatened by Cuba's activities.

The Puerto Rican status issue was also singled out as a potentially major issue in United States-Caribbean relations, although not one necessarily affecting relations with the English-speaking nations of the area.

The role of middle-powers such as Mexico, Venezuela, now Colombia and potentially Brazil, was also noted as one that deserves careful monitoring. No specific concern was articulated other than the observation that the growing influence of these nations open new possibilities for international cooperation on a South-South basis.

Whatever the issues, though, as one participant put it, "neighbors rather than 'backyards,' 'borders' or 'lanes' ought to be the guiding word for U.S.-Commonwealth Caribbean relations for the rest of the decade."

APPENDIX

United States Participants
Caribbean-United States Policy Dialogue
October 21-23, 1982

Joseph Becilia
International Security Affairs
Department of Defense

Peter Bell
President
Inter-American Foundation

Virginia Domínguez
Duke University

Ann Hughes
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Western Hemisphere
Department of Commerce

Thomas Hughes
President
Carnegie Endowment for
International Peace

George Jenkins
President
Esso Caribbean and Central
America

Victor Johnson
House Foreign Affairs
Committee

Keneth Kurze
Embassy

Flora Lewis
The New York Times

Winston Lord
President
Council on Foreign Relations

Abraham F. Lowenthal
The Wilson Center

Joyce Miller
Vice President
Amalgamated Clothing &
Textiles Workers Union

Aryeh Neier
Director, Americas Watch

Robert Pastor
School of Public Affairs
University of Maryland

Phillips B. Ruopp
Vice President
Kettering Foundation

Robert Ryan, Ambassador
Department of State

Sally Shelton
Vice President
International Business-
Government Counsellors, Inc.

Staff

Louis W. Goodman
Latin American Programme

Jorge Heine
Rapporteur

Sallie Mitchell
Administrative Assistant

APPENDIX

Caribbean Participants
Caribbean-United States Policy Dialogue
October 21-23, 1982

Lloyd Best Editor, <u>Trinidad and Tobago</u> <u>Review</u>	Sydney Knox Neal & Massy TRINIDAD
Lester Bird Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs ANTIGUA	Vaughan Lewis Organization of East Caribbean States ST. LUCIA
Courtney Blackman President, Central Bank of Barbados	Neville Linton Caribbean Conference of Churches
Burns Bonadie Secretary, Caribbean Congress of Labour	Joycelin Massiah Director, ISER University of the West Indies
Oliver Clarke Managing Director, <u>The Gleaner</u>	Harry Mayers Caribbean News Agency (CANA)
Bernard Coard Minister of Finance, Trade and Planning, GRENADA	Valerie McComie Deputy Secretary General Organization of American States
David Coore Inter-American Development Bank	Philip Nassief Chairman, Industrial Development Corporation, DOMINICA
William Demas President, Caribbean Development Bank	Betty Russell Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce
Patrick Emmanuel ISER, University of the West Indies	P. A. Thompson Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, BARBADOS
Henry Forde Bridgetown, BARBADOS	Louis Tull Attorney General & Minister of External Affairs
Trevor Gordon-Sumers United Nations Development Program	John Wickham Writer
Trever Harker Economic Commission for Latin America	Hubert Williams Caribbean Development Bank
Kurleigh King Secretary General Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARCOM)	