

## Book Reviews

**Dependency under Challenge: The Political Economy of the Commonwealth Caribbean.** Edited by Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton. *Manchester: Manchester University Press*, 1984. Pp. xii + 294. £25. ISBN 0 7190 0970 7.

**The International Crisis in the Caribbean.** By Anthony Payne. *London: Croom Helm*, 1984. Pp. iii + 177. £14.95. ISBN 0 7099 2052 0.

**Grenada: Revolution and Invasion.** By Anthony Payne, Paul Sutton and Tony Thorndike. *London: Croom Helm*, 1984. Pp. x + 233. £17.95. ISBN 0 7099 2080 6.

The three books under review all have as principal authors and editors the dynamic Northern trio of Payne, Sutton and Thorndike (Huddersfield, Hull and North Staffs respectively). Payne and Sutton gained their Caribbean experience in the days when there was a thriving exchange of students and staff between the Departments of Government at Manchester and the University of the West Indies. All three are (by the standards of the sudden emergence of Caribbean Studies in the UK) old Caribbean hands, not given to rash enthusiasms or sudden political conversions. Even though the last book on Grenada is somewhat breathless in tone given its hasty production, the general impression created by all three books is that the political economy of the region will continue to be indelibly marked by the smallness, weakness and limited range of manoeuvre of the Caribbean states within the international polity and economy.

This low-key realism is so pronounced in Payne and Sutton's *Dependency under Challenge* that their publishers feel constrained to apologise for their taking Commonwealth Caribbean as a major site for investigation. The Caribbean is used as 'a forum to explore the prospects of challenging dependence in the Third World' while the book reaches 'general conclusions of some importance about the character of development and underdevelopment'. Such a defensive statement could not be written after the invasion of Grenada propelled the region into political and strategic prominence. Although published in 1984 (and indeed subsequently to *The International Crisis*) it is clear from internal evidence that the Manchester book was the longest in preparation. As a result it has a more scholarly feel to it, but somewhat antedates in tone and substance the exciting debates and events of the last years and months.

In the opening essay, Payne shows how the New World Group, based in the economics departments of the University of the West Indies, had developed by the 1960s a fairly coherent statement of the region's dependence on the core economies for markets and supplies, for transfers of income and capital, for banking, technical, financial and business services and even for 'ideas about themselves' (p. 1). The Group mounted an effective critique directed at Lewis's model of 'industrialisation by invitation', but as Payne argues, they were unable to transform a radical critique into a radical practice. Virtually all the leading personalities were co-opted by state or international agencies, or (in the case of Best) moved into reformist politics. As Payne hints, but does not fully expore, New World or 'pure plantation' theory, like other pristine dependency theories, are at their core radical trade theories, and by

that very fact cannot be extended to a significant analysis of the state or of class politics. Co-optation was thus the only possible political posture for the New World Group if any one subordinate state appeared to be trying to gain a more favoured place in the international market-place. Payne opposes to this form of accommodation with international capitalism, those who sought to contest this external structure by developing the theory and practice of the 'non-capitalist path' (of which more anon).

The remaining ten essays in this book are of mixed quality, but all deserve at least a brief mention. Payne has a substantial essay on the Manley period in Jamaica which argues that 'The pattern was one of endless vacillation in which [Manley] danced uncomfortably in turn with the domestic left and the international right' (p. 37). This is clearly a correct characterisation, but Payne is unwilling to admit a structural logic to Manley's dilemma. The collapse of the regime was attributable in his view to a number of political errors. The alliance with Cuba and Manley's adoption of a 'democratic socialist' label made him appear to be more threatening to the established order than he really was. *Manley* (Payne does not make much reference to the interests, movement or ideas he represented) failed at the end of the day 'because he got himself into a muddle' (p. 40). This rather easy attribution of failure or success to the level of the individual human agent is continued in Sutton's review of the politics of Trinidad. This perhaps has greater justification in view of the effective dominance of the executive by Williams over the period 1955-81, which was such that he reduced his bureaucrats, fellow ministers and opposition politicians to playing the 'politics of a Renaissance court' (p. 57). Yet again one wonders if politics can be reduced to personality in view of the remarkable continuities observable in the post-1981 period under the Prime Ministership of the decidedly less Machiavellian and indeed lacklustre figure of George Chambers.

In Thomas's account of Guyana we begin to get a more definite analysis of the post-colonial state, which he sees as going through a process of fascistisation. This is not an easy word to use in a lecture hall but is meant to signify the increasing use of military power to suppress internal dissent, the movement from politics to bureaucracy and the increasing state control over the ideological apparatus. In showing how 'co-operative socialism' has become a mask for the construction of a deadening state socialism, Thomas produces one telling statistic - one in every 35 Guyanese is a member of one or other branch of the state security services (p. 99). The remaining essay in the national case studies section of the book is one by Thorndike on the first years of the Grenada revolution. Although it contains some useful information, the analysis is superseded in his part-authored book on Grenada, which I will consider later.

Among the regional and international studies in *Dependency Under Challenge* I found little to set the pulse racing. I always thought of Caricom as one of those empty regional organisations that provide employment for international civil servants and a dissertation topic for Ph.D. candidates. There is nothing here to disabuse me of this belief. The provisions for movements of capital, skilled labour-power, management and plant under the Caricom Treaty are so weak that Payne describes them as 'meaningless' (p. 147). Axline is a little more hopeful regarding the Food and Nutrition Strategy (pp. 153-70), but as agricultural production is collapsing all over the Caribbean, this seems a rather limited advance. Ramsaran's essay on US-Commonwealth Caribbean relations is of greater import, but he has a tendency (with the exception of a few passages) to assume a monolithic and unchanging US interest in the area. This is of course a true picture at one level, but there were salient shifts in policy between the early and later Carter periods and between the Carter and Reagan presidencies. These shifts and the rise of the 'new right' in the US had a direct bearing on internal Jamaican politics and on the decision to invade Grenada. If we

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Journal of development studies  
Vol. 21: 3 April 1985

are to understand such effects, the 'US interest' must be more finely differentiated and explored. The remaining essays include Sutton on the EEC, Vaughan Lewis on what he elaborately calls the 'hemispheric middle powers' (Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba) and Benn's appraisal of the New International Economic Order – a display of excessive caution by an international bureaucrat so anxious not to say anything controversial that he ends up saying not very much at all. Although the book is titled *Dependency Under Challenge*, it is clear from the observations of the authors and from Sutton's concluding remarks that 'the most case argument' would lead to a continuation of dependency, not to its alleviation, let alone its challenge. Only in the case of Grenada, as Sutton points out, is (was) there a possibility of 'reversing visions of permanent mendicancy by posing radical solutions to development problems which had hitherto been thought incompatible with the fact of US hegemony in the region' (p. 282).

We all know by now that this glimmer of hope was a chimera. The invasion of Grenada, which is considered in the postscript to Payne's *The International Crisis*, ended all illusions that Reagan and his advisors might tolerate the brave little experiment that Grenada represented. In *The International Crisis* Payne is clearly alert to the new sensitivity of the region. As he argues, in the past 'the rest of the world was indifferent to Caribbean politics, sometimes it was curious, sometimes amused, but hardly ever concerned' (p. ii). Now the instability of the region has forced a recognition that rival ideologies and strategies have found a new battleground. As is its wont, the British government responded with vigour to the changed situation by setting up an enquiry on the Caribbean and Central America under the aegis of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (HMSO, 1982) to which Payne acted as a specialist advisor. The fact that the report was unusually intelligent and well-informed did not of course mean that it was read or acted on. When the Grenada crisis erupted, the characteristic mixture of confusion, double-dealing and ineffectual expressions of goodwill, further eroded Britain's position in the Caribbean.

At least, however, Payne was able to rescue a decent book from his involvement. *The International Crisis* is neither profound nor original, but it does provide a respectable and nearly up-to-date introduction to the politics of the region (it would provide a more accessible one if the publishers could be persuaded to issue a cheaper paperback edition). Payne has ventured outside his traditional area of interest, the Commonwealth Caribbean islands, to include pithy updates on Puerto Rico, Suriname, Haiti, Belize and the Dominican Republic (although the book predates the most recent 'IMF riots' in the DR). His account of US foreign policy in the region amply testifies to the weakness of the parallel chapter in *Dependency Under Challenge*, for it includes a good discussion of the shifts in policy over the Carter and Reagan periods and an account of the purposes of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the so-called mini-Marshall Plan meant to buttress the collapsing economies of the region.

Payne also includes workmanlike discussions of the other international powers active in the Caribbean basin. Cuba, the Old European Powers (Britain, France and the Netherlands) and the New Latin American Powers (Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil) are all in turn allowed to make their entry and rehearse their lines on the Caribbean stage. Of all this material, perhaps the most interesting comments are those on Cuba. Again Payne exhibits his preference for hard-headed realism. The 'bottom-line' of the USSR-Cuba relationship is the military alliance and the exercise of Soviet power in the Western hemisphere (p. 71). But Payne is not so foolish as to believe that Cuban influence in the Caribbean is predicated on the crude exercise of political and military muscle. He is clear that the attractiveness of the Cuban model reflects 'the unquestionable success of the Castro

regime in reducing inequality, eliminating open unemployment, virtually eradicating illiteracy, improving public health and building up the housing stock' (p. 82). The contrast with the decrepit condition of the post-colonial, or metropolitan-ruled, Caribbean, is sufficiently great for Cuba to be 'more wooed than wooing' (p. 82). As to Cuban ambitions in the area, Payne comments thus: 'As in the rest of Latin America, Cuba has lately been much more concerned to establish good relations with the existing governments of the Caribbean than it has been to promote revolutionary change' (p. 79). I shall refer to this statement, with which I concur, a little later. Payne's book concludes with a lugubrious six-page epilogue on the US invasion of Grenada. His views on this are best summarised in the final book I review, but it is worth citing Payne's own overarching resumé of the current crisis in the Caribbean. As he puts it in current newspeak, the crisis 'emerged out of the problem of development and underdevelopment (the North-South dimension) but has been transmuted into a sub-plot of the new cold war (the East-West dimension)' (p. 154).

Such a process was all too evident in the events leading up to the invasion of Grenada in October 1983, described by Payne, Sutton and Thorndike in *Grenada: Revolution and Invasion*. Given the haste of its production, there are bound to be some rather lightweight passages and sections, but the authors' long experience of this area has permitted them to avoid a number of the worst pitfalls of the instant potboiler. In documenting the background to the revolution, they characterise the early New Jewel Movement (which was to form the core of the People's Revolutionary Government) as uneasily combining 'elements of racial and national pride, rastafarianism, "popular power" and participatory democracy with social reformist zeal' (p. 11). They argue that it was only in 1976-77 that any marxist and socialist theory emerged. What appeared, of course, was nothing else but the 'non-capitalist path' to socialism, this time dressed in a Grenadian guise. While giving credit for the regime's economic and social achievements, the authors are clearly concerned that it failed to safeguard liberal democratic rights. 'Power lay unambiguously with the Central Committee. Party policy was at best only marginally amended by [nascent institutions of mass participation] whose main purpose was more to mobilise support for development objectives, educate the masses politically, disseminate information and help defend the revolution' (pp. 38, 39). In short, the participatory structures set in place by the PRG were there to support the regime, not to represent 'the masses'. Those whose criticism went too far were questioned (perhaps 3,000 people), although only one-tenth of that number were imprisoned, normally for hours and days, not for weeks or months (p. 39). The PRG was not running a tea party, but neither was Grenada a large GULAG, as Reagan's propaganda machine suggested.

In addition to some useful chapters on the US, Cuba and the Commonwealth Caribbean's attitude to Grenada, which are unexceptionable, the authors attempt a first reading of the four and a half years of PRG rule. At the core of their assessment they point to a 'paradox' – namely, that the economic and social advances made by the regime were made within a reformist, idealist and social democratic framework. At the same time the New Jewel Movement seemed hell-bent on constructing a strict Marxist-Leninist political organisation (p. 105). Despite sifting through the minutes of the Central Committee (thankfully rescued for analysts by Richard Hart, the former Attorney General), Payne, Thorndike and Sutton never quite seem to explain the roots of the paradox they discern. They are forced back into explaining the internal struggles for power in the immediate period preceding the invasion in terms of personality differences. Fortunately, they reject any crude versions of this and have a much more sympathetic view of Coard's position than surfaced either from the right ('a man who would sell his mother for a nickel and country for a dime of Red money', according to the *New York Post*) or from many sections of the left who needed a convenient scapegoat to demonologise as soon as Bishop entered the

ranks of the martyrs. Payne and his co-authors argue a modified personality thesis – that the internal crisis was ‘a struggle for the control and direction of the revolution in a deteriorating economic situation which, because of the specific circumstances of Grenada, inevitably involved personality clashes’ (p. 143).

But neither the level of economic deterioration nor the perception of economic crisis is convincingly shown. The failure of the regime, as they acknowledge elsewhere, was a political failure (p. 217) and rested ultimately on the inadequacies of the theory that informed the regime’s political practice. I return, then, to the ‘non-capitalist path’. The authors upbraid the present reviewer and his co-author for their ‘familiar’ argument that the theory of the non-capitalist path was hijacked by Stalin in the 1920s. They also criticise our view that the Soviet Union and ‘even’ Cuba acted as a restraining influence on radical developments in the Caribbean (p. 220). This is no place to abuse a reviewer’s privilege, but a brief reply is necessary to advance the argument.

The point about the Comintern’s tactics was made not in pursuit of an old polemic but to show how the theory was twisted for totally instrumental ends so that, then and now, the definition of which states are on a non-capitalist path is determined by foreign policy interests, primarily those of the Soviet Union, rather than any deep appreciation of the balance of class forces within any one state. For Grenada, the result, at the international level, was that an alliance of largely rhetorical supporters of the Grenadian revolution was stitched together from North Korea, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Libya, Iraq, Syria, some Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. These relations triggered the anti-communist reflexes of the Reaganites, but were, in effect, useless to defend the revolution at the moment of its greatest need. The Cuban involvement was of course a different matter, but it is odd to find Payne concurring in the view that our argument regarding Cuba’s restraining role was ‘scarcely credible’ (p. 220) when he himself argued that Cuba’s recent role in the Caribbean has been conciliatory rather than revolutionary (see passage cited earlier). The Cuban airport workers did put a brave and dignified fight against overwhelming odds, but as Castro made clear in his post-invasion statement, Cuba had made a number of friendly gestures to the US, was in no position to defend the Grenadian revolution physically, and had no inclination to do so once Bishop had been killed.

In short, at the external level, all the theory of the non-capitalist path provided was a thin linking skein providing diplomatic and limited economic support, but crucially exposing the regime to the reactionary elements in control of a powerful hegemonic power. At the level of internal politics, the theory masked the inability of the regime to combine economic and social advances with the protection of democratic rights. It also served to subordinate the working class and the peasantry to other sections of the class alliance – in practice, in Grenada, to the leading party officials and ultimately to sections of the military. Thus the so-called ‘paradox’. Both these points have been forcibly addressed by C. Y. Thomas in a passage cited by Payne, Sutton and Thorndike (p. 217). Too little recognition has been given in the theory, he argues, to ‘bourgeois freedoms’ such as ‘freedom of speech, association and publication, the independence of the judiciary and the insistence on the establishment of institutions representative of the popular will’. These rights, he goes on, were won by mass struggle and should be expanded ‘as a pre-condition of socialist construction’ (emphasis added).

Although the PRG did attempt to establish alternative organs of popular will, the mass organisations and village assemblies remained peripheral to the main decision-making organs. Further, the dismantling and derision of bourgeois democratic rights (elections, habeas corpus, etc.) was a costly, and probably unnecessary, error. In the face of such an indictment of the experience and practice of the non-capitalist path, it

is difficult to see quite why Payne and his colleagues still want to cling to the residue of such a discredited notion. They admit the theory needs ‘redevelopment rather than mere reformulation and refinement’ but think it is the bathwater ‘not the baby’ that needs pouring away (p. 220). To change the metaphor, such a baby would be more like the proverbial fish out of water. The ‘water’ surrounding the Grenadian revolution meant that it had to take account of the hegemonic claims of the US and also respect and surpass the legal and bourgeois democratic traditions of the Westminster model (even if these were widely violated under Gairy). Such an agenda implied a necessary parallelism and mutual relationship between socialism and democracy internally, and a subtlety (‘socialism by stealth’) in external relations. Neither of these elements could possibly have been found by running some more bathwater for the same ‘non-capitalist’ baby. Indeed, the pessimists among us might argue that it is impossible to envisage such an alternative theory at this stage of Caribbean development. The strains of an old Caribbean lament still linger. Should the tune composed by the Grenadian revolutionaries be retitled ‘false optimism’ not ‘new dawn’?

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**The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development.** By Peter Worsley. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984. Pp. xiv + 409. £16.95 and £8.95. ISBN 0 297 78346 7 and 78356 4.

The decade of the late 1950s and early 1960s was euphoric as colony after colony threw off the imperialist yoke. Peter Worsley subtitled his book *The Third World* (1964) ‘a vital new force in international affairs’. In the publishers’ dust-cover blurb we read that in ‘the “Third World” the two great world ideologies of today are rejected . . . Their own solutions are unique in world history being based on populism and socialism . . . which . . . is a natural development where class differentiation is still largely undeveloped . . . He [P.W.] sees in the “Third World” attitude of positive neutralism the great hope for the future of the world’. But no sooner had the term Third World gained popular usage than many of its attributes – a powerful force in international affairs – began to look most inappropriate. ‘Dependency’ developed as the dominant theme, as the newly independent countries became increasingly locked into the economies and affairs of capitalist or socialist superpowers; as world recession exacerbated the poverty of most of their people and as weak and unstable governments failed to control the social conflicts thus engendered. In the mid-1980s our view of the Third World fills us with gloom and despondency – not hope.

In his latest book Peter Worsley provides an historical sketch of the development – or underdevelopment – of the Third World with such fluency and erudition that this one will surely become as popular as the first. His opening chapter, ‘Prolegomena’, begins by chronicling the contact with the West, beginning with the great Latin American empires of the Aztecs and Incas, and then shows how the theories dominant in the West – modernisation, take-off stage, etc. – reflected the needs of the capitalist countries in which they were developed. But he directs our attention to the many varieties of Marxist theory in which the dependency theme has developed, concluding that ‘Marxist theories about the Third World have by now become bogged down in a seemingly endless multiplication of exercises in mode-of-productionism and world-systematics in which the distinctive features of each country simply disappear and all become look-alikes . . .’ (p. 41). Missing from the