

ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to show that Garveyism was not a chance occurrence which erupted during the post World War I years in the United States. I have examined its West Indian origins and traced its development through to the nineteen-twenties and thirties when it represented the most advanced praxis of African peoples in their fight against imperialist and colonial domination.

The Garvey movement had roots in the political struggles of all layers of the Jamaican peasantry. It is within this context that the political activities and ideas of J. Albert Thorne and Robert Love, which have much in common with Marcus Garvey's work, are examined. These two men represent the radical peasant middle-sector and were the precursors of the Garvey ideology and the nationalist movement of the thirties which demanded political decolonization.

Chapter 2 discusses Garvey's early activities in trade union organization, the National Club, his years of apprenticeship as a journalist in London and eventually the formation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League in 1914. The organization then reflected the very deep influence of Booker T. Washington, whose work Garvey attempted to duplicate in Jamaica in setting up an industrial institute.

Chapter 3 shows how his journey to the United States in 1916 was the definitive factor in the break he made with the 'Tuskegee' idea. It examines the development of the UNIA as a radical-nationalist international organization and the implications of this for the

movement in Africa and the Caribbean. The UNIA as the most important black anti-colonial force in the nineteen-twenties came to a head-on clash with the European and American imperialists in the Caribbean, Africa and the United States. I have tried to show that the Liberian Programme, crudely referred to by journalists, critics and scholars alike as the 'Back-to-Africa' scheme was not a mass-utopian repatriation effort. This has made it necessary to present the views of the Negro World newspaper (the main organ) and Garvey's analysis of it. This revealed that the organization was intent on getting a firm foothold in Africa to carry out its work more successfully. This would have greatly assisted the growth of the African nationalist struggle, which the Liberty Halls in East, West, Central and South Africa had been geared for. There is much more to this programme that previous analysis has failed to take into account. The Liberian Programme was wrecked by the combined efforts of the governments of Britain, France and the United States for fear of the further impact of the UNIA on the African nationalist movement.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion of Garvey's work during a period which is ignored by most writers. This is unfortunate for imperialist repression continued. Their strategy was to keep Garvey in Jamaica away from his strongest organizational divisions among West Indian migrant workers by banning him from travel to the Central American republics. Where the imperialists failed, the Depression succeeded, for the thirties witnessed the impoverishment and repatriation of thousands of migrants to the West Indies, many of whom had supported Garvey's programme financially. This point must be stressed for it is not sufficient to examine his setbacks only as a result of

mismanagement, the betrayals in the organization, imprisonment or the constant harrassment which burdened his entire life. The Depression made it impossible for the movement to regain the potency of the twenties.

I have looked at Garvey's entry into colonial politics, his agitation for working-class legislation and how this brought the colonial bourgeoisie - though split into two wings, the comprador United Fruit Company supporters and the national-capitalists in the Jamaica Producers Association - to unite in opposition to the People's Political Party. The weaknesses of the party and the petit-bourgeoisie were also pointed out.

Other important aspects of this chapter are the relationship between Garvey and the Communists, the cultural programme, and the UNIA's pan-colonial perspective. The latter demonstrated the principled support of the Garvey movement for the Indian and Irish nationalists against British colonial occupation.

The final chapter is concerned with Garvey's last years in London, his struggle against Italian fascism and attempts to consolidate the American and Canadian divisions of the organization.