

## ABSTRACT

The Political Thought Of C.L.R. James:  
Its Utility And Relevance To The Contemporary  
Anglophone Caribbean. A Contribution To The  
Rethinking of Marxism.

Simeon Tennyson Dunstan Joseph

This thesis seeks to ascertain the extent to which C.L.R. James' political thought can contribute to an understanding of contemporary Caribbean political developments. The emphasis in this work is two-fold. First of all, the thesis seeks to establish the existence of an independent Jamesian thought as opposed to an eclectic amalgamation of various strands of thought which have impacted on James. Secondly, the work seeks to examine the utility of James' thought as an analytical tool in accounting for the major elements and features of contemporary Caribbean political developments, in their relation to the wider global setting. It should be noted that these two areas of focus are not mutually exclusive. They are inextricably intertwined and are treated as such throughout this work.

Most of James' major works (1937, 1980a, 1986b; James, Lee and Chaulieu [1958] 1974), were concerned with transformations occurring in the advanced capitalist countries in the middle of the twentieth century. There is thus a need to test James' applicability to a less developed Caribbean within a different time period, in the face of fundamental global transformations. One of the major conclusions of this work is that whereas the thought of James was expressed at the level of the Idea in the mid-twentieth century, this period represents the stage of Actuality (James 1980a) making an appreciation of his thought extremely critical to the analysis of contemporary Caribbean political developments.

One of the main areas of emphasis in James' thought was on the necessity for the dialectical alteration of analytical categories to correspond to changes in the phenomenon which is being studied (James 1980a). A major premise of this study is that the world is presently experiencing a state of qualitative transformation of quantum leap proportions rendering the old categories of analysis wholly untenable (Toffler 1981, [1970] 1990, 1991; Boggs 1968; Thomas 1989a; Watson 1990a). It is felt that not only the 'what' and 'why' of James, but also his example in transforming analytical categories, both in theory and in practice, serve as a basis for the study of his work in this period of change, where much rethinking needs to be done. James' work can assist tremendously in contributing to this process of rethinking.

This study is not a study of James' life. It is a study of his political ideas, his method of analysis, the manner in which he applied this method, and its applicability to the contemporary period.

In this work, James socialist thought, his views on democracy and his analysis of the 'race question' will be examined in relation to transformations and developments in world and Caribbean politics.