

Postcard paper on Michael Manley

B/N MICHAEL MANLEY

Michael Manley is leader of a small, developing country, a member of the Third World by circumstance but itself typifying many of the concerns and problems faced by countries which belong to this grouping. His struggle to improve conditions for the people of his country has been intimately linked with the wider struggle for improved conditions for the poor of the world for the simple reason that Michael Manley "sees the problems as forming a totality and the solutions as interdependent." (1)

In his book "The Politics of Change", Manley articulated this very clearly when he pointed out that: "Third World economic development cannot be analysed other than in the context of international affairs. Clearly, Third World countries must evolve a strategy in foreign affairs that reflects their common problems and needs. Such a strategy must take into account the terms of trade, the movement of international capital, the applicability of foreign technology, patterns of international trade and the right of self determination. All this must be seen in terms of the search for Third World self reliance based upon a grasp of the similarity of Third World problems." (2)

Jamaica in 1972 when Michael Manley assumed office had all the characteristics of a dependent economy. The island had achieved political independence in 1962, but the real hurdle - that of economic independence - had still to be tackled. Most of the economy was foreign oriented. The country's natural resources were controlled by multi-national corporations. A minority in the country lived in conditions of conspicuous wealth in stark contrast to the "persistent poverty" and degradation which characterised the lives of the vast majority of people. The inherent contradictions in the system are exemplified in the fact that between 1962, when Jamaica became independent, and 1972, when Michael Manley assumed office unemployment doubled from 12 to 24 percent, even as the country recorded an average annual growth rate in GDP of six percent.

Internationally, Jamaica had made little impact. Foreign policy, such as it was, was geared towards "the West". Commitment to the liberation movements in Africa and Asia existed but without much practical support.

Against this background, the charge that had been made to Michael Manley's generation by National Hero, Norman Manley, seemed particularly relevant:

"My generation had a distinct mission to perform. It was to create a national spirit with which we could identify ourselves as a people for the purpose of achieving independence on the political plane. I am convinced, deeply convinced, that the role of this generation is to proceed to the social and economic reform of Jamaica." (3) This charge, then has been the motivating force in Manley's approach to the problems of his own country. But he quickly realised that if real progress was to be made at the national level, there had to be social and economic change in the world at large.

Manley recognised that the existing economic environment internationally militated against any kind of progress by the primary producers of the world. Equally important, he realised that no change would be effected until and unless members of the Third World united to form a common front in pursuit of the common front in pursuit of the common aim.

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Writing in the Foreign Affairs Quarterly in October 1970, Manley set out clearly the philosophy which was to guide him in office:

".....the ability of the Caribbean to achieve progress goes beyond regionalism to the necessity for the developing world as a whole to evolve a common strategy with regard to its economic dealings with the metropolitan nations. The fundamental rationale of third-world politics is economic. The imperative of the future must be the search for a common economic diplomacy in which . . . the Caribbean must be as concerned about the fate of Ghana's cocoa as Ghana should be concerned about the fate of Caribbean's sugar. . . . To the extent that the Caribbean region can proceed more coherently and more cogently in acting not only as a part of the third world, but as a sophisticated leader in the development of relevant third-world policies to that extent can it help to underwrite its own survival." (4)

Manley's public life has therefore been devoted to the achievement of these goals: a change in the international economic system and unity among members of the Third World in order to secure this change.

Accordingly, every single opportunity has been used to focus international attention on the inequities of the free market system, the inadequate measures for the transfer of resources and technology, the need for reform in the international monetary institutions so as to make them more responsive to the needs of the developing world and, finally, the need for guaranteed supplies of energy at reasonable prices.

And Manley has been untiring in his delivery of this message. At all times, he has demonstrated an originality of expression, he has been an inspiration to the fainthearted. In negotiations with the powerful, he has shown a flexibility and creativity of approach, a willingness to be innovative in order to maximise gains and secure his real objective - improved conditions for those he termed "the victims" of the world.

More than anything else, Manley has fought for the creation of a just society - one in which there would be "equal access to jobs, to food, clothing and shelter; to social security; to the decision-making process; to the sense of belonging and being of equal value; to creative leisure; to the processes and remedies of the law, and to education." (5) His struggle for the creation of the new international economic order stemmed from the conviction that this was the only way of freeing his people and those of the Third World from the shackles of domination and oppression which restricted their unfettered growth and development.

Speaking to the World Council of Churches Fifth Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, Manley set out the case simply but effectively:

"The most complete expression of the need for an international strategy in the field of international economic relations which can hold out the promise of development for Third World nations is that body of proposals that seeks to define and establish a new international economic order. These are at once a set of specific prescriptions for the restructuring of the world's economic arrangements and the first major, coherent attempt to create a moral foundation and

and rationale for international economic affairs.....

"Basically, the new international economic order seeks to introduce the notion of justice into international economic relations. To ensure justice, it seeks to replace the present free market forces with a system of international political management. For example, it aims to remove unfair metropolitan advantage from the movement of capital and the transfer of technology. It seeks to ensure that the exports of developing countries will fetch just and realistic prices. It urges that these prices must be related to the ever-increasing cost of imports from metropolitan countries. The equitable prices that will result are aimed to secure the economic stability of Third World countries. More importantly, such arrangement would create, for the first time in Third World experience, the conditions that would enable us to reduce the vast difference in the current living standards of rich and poor nations." (6)

Manley spoke against the background of negotiations going on through the Group of 77 and the work of UNCTAD to achieve the order about which he spoke so eloquently. But progress was slow. The breakdown of the 1977 CIEC conference in Paris was a bitter blow to those who, like Manley, had hoped for a significant change in the attitude of the developed world and in the relations between rich and poor nations.

The Geneva agreement, which came later and provided for the establishment of a Common Fund to regulate the prices of certain commodities was seen as a small step forward. But for Michael Manley this was not enough. There had to be a "structured and managed relationship between all the major elements of world trade," he emphasized.

Faced with the intrasigence of the metropolitan countries, lesser men might have become discouraged. Not so Michael Manley. Undeterred, in December 1977 he convened a mini-summit of world leaders from West Germany, Canada, Norway, Nigeria, Mexico and Venezuela, to again put the case of the developing countries to them, to awaken them to the urgency of the problem as well as to the realisation that self-interest, if nothing else, dictated an immediate response to the problem.

It is obvious that Michael Manley's special pleading has resulted in tangible gains for the development of the Third World. For example, none could deny the tremendous influence which the Jamaican leader's position has had on the terms of reference which have been set out for the Brandt Commission. In fact, the Commission's concerns reflect many of the stands taken by Jamaica over the years.

Manley has also contributed significantly to a spirit of unity in the Third World. From very early he recognised that the greatest drawback was the inability of Third World countries to adopt a common approach to their problems and to the developed world.

Writing in "The Politics of Change", Manley noted that: "It is one of the tragedies of the post-colonial period of all those countries which we now loosely describe as the Third World that they have permitted themselves the luxury of ideological distraction. Quarrelling constantly about political matters, they have been woefully slow to appreciate their own economic dilemma and the importance

that attached to the development of a global Third World economic strategy. Since every Third World country is faced with the same dilemma in its dealings with the metropolitan world, it follows that Third World countries need to develop a unified response to these problems." (8)

Major gains in this regard were made at the 1977 Paris talks. The talks marked the first time that developing countries were meeting to negotiate common problems. And although the results were not encouraging as far as the response of the developed world was concerned, the essential unity among the group remained and was, in fact, strengthened by the talks.

Manley's contribution to Third World development has been evident in other spheres.

First and foremost of the other areas, is the struggle against Apartheid. Manley proposed the original United Nations initiative which led to the Convention which they are now trying to finalise, dealing with Apartheid in Sport. He proposed it in a message to a Special United Nations Meeting on Apartheid, which was held in Havana in 1976. (9) In this connection, it is also important to note that he played a key part in the Glen Eagles Agreement which was worked out in the London Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in 1977 and which was the first major step forward by an international body in applying sanctions in the area of Apartheid in Sport.

With respect to freedom in Zimbabwe, few could deny the critical role Manley played at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in Lusaka where, in consultation with other leaders, he and the distinguished Secretary-General were able to secure an agreement leading to the holding of free elections in Zimbabwe.

It is true to say that he probably did as much as any person in the Third World in the eastern Hemisphere to sensitise and mobilise public opinion over the entire Southern African struggle. In this regard, the following should be of interest:

1. Manley announced the willingness of Jamaica and Guyana to send volunteers to fight with the Liberation Army. (10) Even though the offer was eventually declined, the fact of the offer had quite an electrifying effect in Africa as signifying the depth of commitment towards the struggle. It is also worthy of note that at least a couple hundred people volunteered in Jamaica, but of course, were not used in the end.
2. Jamaica was among the first Third World countries in the Western Hemisphere, along with Guyana and Cuba, to make open contributions to the international funds administered by the Organization of African Unity to support the armed struggle in Zimbabwe. Jamaica also was among the first to take Zimbabwean students for training in preparation for the ultimate victory of the freedom forces.
3. Manley was invited by the United Nations to give the keynote address in Maputo, Mozambique, at the Special United Nations Conference called in support of the struggle in Zimbabwe. (11)

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4. Manley played a leading part in persuading the Commonwealth Prime Minister's conference in London in 1977 to offer economic assistance to all Front Line States on the grounds that, though not at war themselves, they were on the battle front, on behalf of all the decent elements of the world.

5. It was under Manley's chairmanship of the Kingston Meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1975 that the Commonwealth decided to give economic assistance to Mozambique when she closed her border to Rhodesia after winning her own independence. Many people felt that this was a significant diplomatic achievement because Mozambique was not and had never been any part of the British Empire or Commonwealth.

Turning to another area: Manley's speech to the United Nations in 1972 laid great stress on the whole question of Housing and the Human Habitat generally. (12) This speech is said to have stimulated United Nations' attention to this matter and played a part in the increasing attention given by the United Nations to environmental matters through a series of international conferences on the Human Habitat held in recent years.

Turning to the Caribbean: There has been the question of the strong commitment to CARICOM as an instrument of regional integration and strength. It is also true to say that Manley had been a strong advocate in words and I think a pioneer in deeds, in visualising the Caribbean as a wider geo-political entity than its separate cultural parts. Jamaica now consciously works to act as a bridge between the English and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, as witness the growing economic and political relations between Jamaica and Mexico on the one hand, Venezuela and Cuba on the other.

Then again, there was Jamaica's strong advocacy of the rights of the Panamanian people, with respect to their canal. This was recognised by the Torrijos Government when Manley was invited to the famous Bogota Meeting which actually conducted negotiations with President Carter by telephone, with Torrijos and his people at one end, together with Lopez Portillo, Carlos Andres Perez, the Presidents of Colombia and Costa Rica and Manley. Later, he was invited to the special signing ceremony in Panama City where the people at the top table who witnessed the signing between Carter and Torrijos were the same as those who had negotiated along with Torrijos in Bogota.

In this kind of action, there has always been the assistance and strong advocacy in support of Belize and its independence. (13)

Finally, it is felt that Jamaica, under the Manley Government, has made a contribution to the Non-Aligned Movement itself. In both the Algiers Summit of 1973 and the Havana Summit of 1979, Jamaica played a very active part making speeches which were felt to have added to the definition of the Movement and its purposes, while contributing enormously in the Committee work to the development of economic strategies centering around the NIEO. Jamaica has therefore played a real part in helping move the Non-Aligned Movement to a greater and more effectively articulated concern with respect to the world economic problem than had been the case hitherto. Certainly in Havana, Jamaica played a critical part in beginning

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to get the different elements of the Non-Aligned Movement to deal with problems such as energy and to give more cut and bite to the Movement's response to the economic dimension of world problems. (14)

In summary, Michael Manley has made a positive and significant contribution to:

- (1) the whole struggle in Southern Africa;
- (2) the evolution of a new regionalism, both in CARICOM and more widely involving the Caribbean basin;
- (3) the Non-Aligned Movement, as an instrument to be directed towards the world economic struggle.

In addition, there was his work as the leading force in the International Bauxite Association. From every point of view this was Jamaica's creation. Curiously enough, it had its roots not only in the middle of OPEC, but even deeper in Manley's own experience. As a Trade Unionist, he pioneered the formation of the Caribbean Bauxite and Metal Workers Federation, linking together bauxite workers in Guyana, Suriname, Haiti, Jamaica and even Trinidad, where they tranship Guyana's bauxite. This Workers' Federation was his conceptual response to the power of the multinational Corporations who used the workers of one region against the workers of another region whenever there were difficult negotiations. (15)

More than anything else, it was this experience that led him to the determination to form the IBA after 1972. This body has already done a lot to help member states increase their tax revenue from the industry and had a notable achievement when the IBA set the first minimum transfer price of bauxite from its members to the North American market.

It is also worthy of note that Jamaica pioneered the bauxite levy and then sent teams to countries like Suriname, Haiti and Guinea to assist them in their negotiations for increased taxes, by putting at their disposal the enormous research which Jamaica had carried out into the economics of the international aluminium industry.

It is for these reasons that I do not hesitate to say that Michael Manley is highly deserving of the Third World Prize.

More than any other man, he has articulated the fears, concerns and aspirations of the peoples of the Third World. He has been like the conscience of the developed world, calling them to the fact of their own responsibility for the fate of the peoples of the Third World.

But even more than that, Michael Manley has awakened the people of the Third World to a sense of their own worth, their own dignity. And, in so doing, he has set their feet firmly on the path to self-reliant development.

As Jamaica's own Marcus Garvey said:

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"Chance has never yet satisfied the hope of a suffering people. Action, self-reliance, the vision of self and the future have been the only means by which the oppressed have seen and realised the light of their own freedom." (16)

Michael Manley, by his persistent and forceful articulation of the views of the Third World, has given the developing countries that *"vision of self and the future"* and so has contributed immeasurably to their own development preparing them, as he has, for the final stand which must be made as we battle for our own survival.