

REVIEW ARTICLE

JAMAICA UNDER MANLEY: Dilemma of Socialism and Democracy

Kaufman, Michael

Zed Press, 1985. 282pp.

A Review by Nii-K. Plange

This is another fine study of Jamaica. Much has been written on this country, from its days of plantation slavery for sugar production, as a British colony, through its independence and contemporary problems of development, as well as its period of the socialist experiment, 1972-80. These analyses of Jamaica's socio-economic and political changes have naturally had relevance to other Third World or Developing countries.

Kaufman's book reviewed here is no less relevant as it attempts to grasp the conjunctural forces that underlined the fall of Michael Manley's government in 1980 and the 'sad' failure of the attempt to build socialism in one country, Jamaica. This subject has remained alive since 1980 and spawned various and different analyses, interpretations and conclusions with explicit ideological positions. Kaufman's conclusions - belonging to the left - are that the failure resulted from an inconsistency in policy and confusion of the Party leadership as it attempted to straddle all classes, leading to uncertainty in decision-making and the implementation of the Party's economic programme. Additionally there was the absence of involvement of the masses whose support had been gained in the process. Rather, they were alienated as their choices - expressed in a resounding re-election in a worse economic situation - were thwarted by a divided leadership. Other factors like the role of international capital and the IMF, are also considered as external forces. Though Kaufman acknowledges the strength of these external forces his analysis and interpretation shifts more to the crisis within the Peoples Nationalist Party as it was confronted with the praxis of building 'socialism'.

Cast generally in the political economy framework with an underlying theme of "articulation of modes of production", Kaufman wades his way through enormous historical data and interviews of key personalities. He

THE JOURNAL OF PACIFIC STUDIES

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Volume 12 1986, pp. 162-168

then undertakes a diagnosis, simultaneously, of economic change from the colonial period and the ways by which race and ethnicity were articulated with the process of class-formation before and under Manley.

The book is divided into three parts, with chapters within each. These overlap in various aspects of the Jamaican political economy. Chapter 2 of the first part, however, is important as it examines clearly the pattern of Jamaican integration into the World Economy - as a peripheral colony-through bauxite production, sugar, and tourism and their dependence on external international financial capital. Aid, the international finance institutions (the World Bank and the IMF) and their role in the economy are also clearly spelt out. The tourist industry has also remained in the hands of foreign companies with a few local petit-bourgeoisie participating at appropriate levels. Sugar has depended on the world market, with access to EEC preferential prices and markets through the ACP. Internally there are wealthy landlords and capitalists, with roots in the old plantocracy of slave days.

The contemporary post-colonial state structures that emerged from and developed with this socio-economic formation, had their origin in liberal democracy informed by the two-party system including mainstream British social democracy. Chapter 4 deals with the struggles among the domestic bourgeoisie to wrest control of the state during the preparatory stages for the withdrawal of colonial authority. It is out of this that various class alliances emerged leading to the formation of the **Jamaican Labour Party (JLP)** and the **Peoples Nationalist Party (PNP)** with the latter having a mildly socialist or Social Democratic vision. Of analytical interest is Kaufman's recognition of the limits of the Social Democratic vision as the basis of and for a socialist programme. It is a pity Kaufman does not emphasise this, nor return to it later in his analysis. The mainstream social democratic thinking, Kaufman reminds us, "puts its analytical centre on the **mode of distribution** or more precisely, inequalities in wealth" (p.58), and not the Socialist (Marxist) analysis which stresses the **mode of production** and corresponding mode of distribution. The confusion of, and between, the two is implied by the author as haunting the PNP leadership, its programmes, and rhetoric. It later split the Party and was of the large working class following. Much of this is well covered in the book's second section, which examines the years of the Socialist experiment in detail.

The pursuit of dependent capitalist development by the JLP, its class implications with attendant corruption and patronage and the harsh socio-economic effects the policies spawned in the late 60s, led to mass discontent. This provided the conditions for the victory of the PNP in 1972

with almost 57% of the votes and a comfortable majority in Parliament. The elections were fought, as Kaufman indicates, on the "ideological battle ground of Socialism versus free enterprise" (p.71). The PNP "socialist" stand and populist rhetoric notwithstanding, their victory was assured largely by support from the Jamaican middle classes, the labour elite and elements of the local bourgeoisie. The mass support would be gained later. Did this petit bourgeoisie support hamstring the Peoples Nationalist Party? Kaufman does not answer this categorically though an affirmative answer is implied through the analysis and the detailed examination of the years 1972-80.

It is here also that the strength of the book lies as the analysis consistently shows the interplay of external (imperialism through international capital) and internal (crises of the neo-colony and political class struggle) forces to undermine the PNP's socialist program. The external factors like the strength and impact of IMF recovery and adjustment programmes, the hardline taken by bauxite capital and poor media image abroad (US and Canada especially) to undercut tourism receipts are covered in the book. Kaufman nevertheless emphasised the internal contradictions of PNP's leadership, populist rhetoric and practice, as well as Manley's own belief that the transformation of the economy in line with the political philosophy and platform of the Party could be achieved through a marriage of 'enlightened' middle-class interests and working class demands and aspirations. He allows Manley to speak for himself in his election rhetoric "...let us understand that it is not necessary to destroy to make change" (p. 72). But this conception of socio-economic change is far from the Marxist-Leninist view which sees change as involving a destruction of the structures and ideology of the status quo.

In addressing the issue of why the socialist experiment in Jamaica failed, Kaufman's position is slightly different from the one accepted by other left observers and commentators on the Jamaican experiment¹ and radically different from yet another leftist exposition of the failure.² Indeed three strands of arguments have emerged on the failure of Manley's socialist attempt. The first, espoused by conservative economists (the right) of the World Bank and the IMF, conceives the failure as the result of sheer economic mismanagement by a government which over-spent its resources through excessive government intervention in the economy, excessive real wage levels, and excessive money supply. Kaufman does not seem to accept this position. He applauds the social reforms undertaken primarily in favour of the poor and the workers and the gains achieved by Manley with them. These reforms included food subsidies, free uniforms to school children etc. (p. 76). The second and a left position, pegs the failure on

the "IMF as a major contributor - though not of course the sole reasons for the downfall of the Manley government".³ In this it underlines the IMF programme which enforced drastic cuts in real wages, cuts in government social programmes to workers and a shift of the economy into the hands of the private sector. A third and radical leftist position conceives the failure as inherent in the nature of Jamaican neo-colonial political form with its two party system spawned by division in the country's "repressive oligarchy - of which Manley is a part - that has ruled Jamaica since World War II."⁴ Manley in this account could not, in spite of his progressive stance and leftist international political alignment and rhetoric, implement a socialist programme. He belongs, as one of these positions sees him, to the category of the "nationalising bourgeoisie". The role of the IMF and/or the PNP's indecision were marginal to this stand.

Kaufman's analysis contends that the rebuilding of Jamaican society and economy would have been achieved through a consistent policy with a commitment to involve the masses in the towns (whose support had been won through wage increases and job creation programmes) and the peasants in rural areas (who had gained through provision of agricultural infrastructure, literacy programmes, food subsidies, land reforms, etc. that were implemented during the early stages of the government, especially 1972-1974). Chapter 4 covers this extensively as much as it considers the worsening state of the nation's dependent economy within which these reforms were undertaken: increase in price of imported food, manufactured goods, and oil, and a considerable capital flight of almost \$300 million by 1975. Skilled and professional people also began to leave in waves to North America. Nevertheless, 1974 was a turning point for the PNP as it maintained some stability, achieved gains within the working class, including even some middle class support and won an impressive but temporary battle over the Bauxite companies with a popularly supported "Bauxite Productions Levy" which multiplied bauxite earnings sevenfold and boosted the Party image and popularity. Of importance, politically, was the inauguration of a new reform programme, but whose underlying principles were not clearly defined and articulated till 1978. Meanwhile, the PNP in response to popular forces but now alienating the conservative elements in the country, began to adopt a non-western oriented foreign policy and rhetoric which led to good relations with Cuba, an articulate position in the non-aligned movement and other moves to "cut some of the sinewy tissue of dependency" (p.76). Kaufman conceives the impact of this change in the country's foreign relations as negative, as it offended western, especially American positions and provided grounds for increasing attempts to destabilise Jamaica. However, the various destabilising factors, though mentioned, were not examined in detail.

The main philosophy that underlined the Democratic Socialist Programme, as it was announced in 1978, showed a confusion in the leadership, as Kaufman points out. The Programme rejected "capitalism as a system upon which to base the future of Jamaica," because it "involves the exploitation of people and obliges individuals to pursue private gains at the expense of their fellow citizens without regard to any other interest." (p.78) "...yet at the same time the programme "affirm(ed) the right of every Jamaican to own private property....and that Jamaica will flourish best under a mixed economy" (p.78). This is perhaps the dilemma Kaufman intends to demonstrate.

Does this, however, show the other side of Manley's bourgeoisie origin which other critics have realised, or rather the limits of a nationalizing bourgeoisie? Kaufman sees this confusion as demonstrating an attempt by Manley, acting as a referee, to accomodate the split and resolve some of the contradictions in his Party. The political philosophical confusion of Manley himself, if any, is not subjected to criticism even though earlier Kaufman has recognised elements of this in Manley's thinking; the commitment to the two party electoral system, the PNP's own deeply rooted loyalty to the British style of politics (social democracy) (p. 49), the 'brown' middle class origins of the Party (p. 47) and a commitment from the beginning to **reform** (p. 50) **not change**.

Before the inauguration of the reform programme, the economic situation had begun to turn to the government's disadvantage. Foreign exchange earnings dropped as there were deliberate cuts in bauxite production and tourism receipts also fell. The government reacted in various ways to arrest this declining economic situation while still maintaining its support from the working classes. However, increasing deterioration of the economy, alleged patronage of party supporters in the execution of certain programmes, foreign and local attempts to undermine Jamaica, the JLP's increasing challenge of Manley leadership with violence and the increasing polarization of PNP support especially from the middle classes were some of the unfolding contradictions within Jamaican society leading to the 1976 elections. However, to the surprise of international and local capital, the PNP won resoundingly - thanks to its earlier reforms and the example set with the socialization of the sugar industry.

The election victory was a demonstration of support by the working class in the struggle for change. From 1976 onwards, the increasing deterioration of the economy, capital flight, and mass exodus of the middle class and professionals created an economic crisis which challenged the PNP's political philosophy and provided the chance for the real choices for economic alternatives. Chapters 6 and 7 cover these and show the stance

taken by the radical left of the Party with its Emergency Production Plan, and its alternate, the IMF option with its stabilization and recovery programmes (p.146). The PNP leadership it appeared, had **secretly** met with the IMF without the knowledge of its left-group and the masses. In dire economic straits and indecisive on pursuing the programmes offered by the left, based partly on projected foreign economic relations with the Eastern bloc, Manley opted for the IMF path, but failed to meet its economic tests. Meanwhile the contradictions between Party rhetoric and objectives and the IMF programmes as they were implemented became too clear, as the programme failed to **achieve** its goals and also created worse economic conditions in Jamaica. Its harshness on the masses now lost the PNP its support and credibility. Unable to convince the masses at the 1980 elections of the role played by the IMF and international financiers in undermining the economy, unable to convince the sufferers, again, that it had another economic alternative, the PNP lost the 1980 elections to the JLP, bringing an end to one stage of the socialist experiment in Jamaica.

The Jamaican situation as presented by Kaufman raises important questions (for the Third World), the complete analysis of which is beyond a review article. What, one may ask, were the dilemmas which Kaufman contends remain an enduring lesson. Was the dilemma the populist stand and socialist rhetoric combined with moderate policies (including many times secret negotiations and quiet acceptance of the IMF recovery programme⁵) which Third World progressive leaders involve in. Or is the dilemma the aggressive stand of the IMF in "demonstrating to the people of Jamaica (and The Third World) that passive participation in the international capitalist system and acceptance of its rules is the only way for a small dependent country to survive."⁶

Jamaica after the fall of Manley and the PNP opted for the IMF alternative for economic development as its new leader Edward Seaga embraced and praised the free-enterprise system. It has been almost six years now and the Jamaican economy has not shown any positive signs of recovery even after full implementation of the IMF monetarist programmes. Once again the mass of the Jamaican population are taking the brunt of the recovery programme as incomes fall, prices rise and jobs are lost and new ones not created. A little over a year ago the PNP once again has begun to gain ground as it won municipal elections. The chances are it will win the next general elections. Will it have learnt its lessons?

REFERENCES

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2. Lewin, A., "The Fall of Michael Manley: A case study of the failure of reform socialism", **Monthly Review**, Vol. 33, No. 9, Feb. 1982.
- 2b. Ambursley, F., Jamaica: The Demise of 'Democratic Socialism', **New Left Review**, 128, July-August, 76-87, 1981.
3. Girvan and Bernard, *ibid.*
4. Lewin, A., *ibid.*
5. A similar situation has unfolded in Ghana under Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings. Rawlings came to power, through a military coup d'etat supported by the working classes and other progressive forces on the 31st December 1981. It was in the midst of economic deterioration caused by the previous free-enterprise oriented government. A populist socialist programme was articulated and inspite of the remarkable success of self-reliance programmes, the Rawlings government entered into negotiations with the IMF and accepted their recovery programme with slight modifications.
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