

The Influence of Small States on Superpowers: Jamaica and U.S. Foreign Policy, by Richard L. Bernal, London, Lexington Books, 2015, xvi + 439 pp., £80 (hardback), ISBN 9781498508162

Michael Manley and Jamaican Democracy, 1972 – 1980: The Word is Love, by F.S.J. Ledgister, London, Lexington Books, 2014, xii +129 pp., £49.95 (hardback), ISBN 9780739190272

Michael Manley – The Biography, by Godfrey Smith, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2016, vii + 433 pp., \$35 (hardback), ISBN 9789766379223

Former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley was a powerful and influential figure both at home and abroad, first as a trade union leader and parliamentarian and then in the 1970s as prime minister and a vocal supporter of the non-aligned movement. He was determined to improve the position of the Jamaican people by reconfiguring both political and economic orthodoxies, which he and many others felt were still too closely aligned to British colonialism and American imperialism. Manley, along with perhaps Grenada's Maurice Bishop, were the leading proponents in the English-speaking Caribbean of quite radical reform – although often the rhetoric exceeded the reality. Nevertheless, this period of history within the Caribbean is a particularly interesting one because of the charismatic individuals involved, the attempts to implement new approaches to political organisation and economic management, and how despite their focus on national self-worth and unity both men became and remain still extremely polarising figures. So it is within this context that the three books under review are presented. All are useful and welcome contributions to evaluating Manley's ideas and legacy and how they have shaped broader academic debates around how small states can better organise themselves and promote their interests on the international stage. However, there is a nagging feeling particularly in relation to the books by Bernal and Ledgister that their enthusiasm for Manley and confidence in small state activism are not entirely sustained by the evidence.

Although the three books share the common thread of Manley their approaches and broader focus are quite different, and this makes them very interesting as complimentary reads. The volume by Bernal is the most academic with a sizeable theoretical discussion of the role of small developing states in international relations and how global powers, can be influenced via collective action. As the title of the books suggests Bernal considers Jamaica's long-standing relationship with the US, and more particularly how Jamaica lobbied the US on several crucial issues during the 1990s, including in regard to foreign aid, counter narcotics cooperation, and trade enhancement. Manley's role as prime minister both during his radical period (1972-1980) and his more orthodox swansong (1989-1992) is featured heavily. In comparison Ledgister's inspiration is much narrower, focusing primarily as it does on the three books Manley published – *The Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament* (1974); *A Voice in the Workplace* (1975) and *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery* (1982). In essence Ledgister provides an extended review essay of these works and attempts to explain Manley's thinking and approach to democracy and its consolidation. To provide some slightly broader context Ledgister also references the work of D.K. Duncan, briefly minister of national mobilization as well as general secretary of Manley's People's National Party (PNP), and Edward Seaga, former leader of the opposition Jamaica Labour Party and Manley's successor as prime minister. Finally, the volume by Smith lies somewhere in between the other books in terms of design and motivation. He offers a detailed, comprehensive and authorised biography of Manley featuring both his role in politics as well as his private life, which of course clearly shaped his public activism.

Let us now assess each book in turn, starting with Ledgister's evaluation of Manley's writings and thoughts on democracy both during his first term in office and after his 1980 defeat, which offered some reflection on how his reforms were enacted. The backdrop to all of this was the disappointment in the late 1960s that political independence (achieved in 1962) had not brought about real economic improvement and this was clearly apparent in many sectors of society; the most obvious outcome of which was the Kingston riots in 1968. Poverty, growing income inequality,

illiteracy, poor housing and unemployment were prevalent. In an effort to address these problems, Manley promised a different course for Jamaica. The review that Ledgister provides is most successful when he deconstructs Manley's desire to "promote a deeper, and in his eyes more genuine, form of democracy in Jamaica" (p. xi). Ledgister details Manley's key goals of establishing true participatory democracy, achieving radical egalitarianism, and ensuring the state could better control the central tenants of the economy. Within this context he wanted also to redefine racial/cultural identity emphasising more strongly that the "overwhelming majority of Jamaicans were of African heritage and should take pride in their African roots" (p. 10). In short, Manley wanted to create a society that would "replace dependence with self-reliance" (p. 25). This was all encapsulated in the term 'Democratic Socialism', while the phrase "the word is love" was used by Manley "as a summation of his vision of unity, brotherhood and sisterhood, equality, nationhood and democracy" (p. 110).

The irony of course was that this period in post-independence Jamaica was extremely violent and polarised. There were successes, such as the widening of educational opportunities for all, improving the legal position of employees, and enhancing the rights of women, but there were also many failures. Some, like the steep rise in oil prices, were far outside Jamaica's control, but others were not such as Manley's sometimes harsh rhetoric around his reform programme and his very close relations with Fidel Castro. Soon Jamaica was facing a sustained recession, rising unemployment, a widening balance of trade deficit, and rapidly growing debt. As Ledgister recounts, "those of us who lived through the late 1970s also recall the violence, the fear, the shortages", which meant by the 1980 election "what most Jamaicans wanted was calm" (p. 104). He also calls some of Manley's ideas "naïve" (p. 60). It is thus unfortunate that the failures of Manley are often downplayed by Ledgister or explained away sometimes disingenuously. For example, on page 99, he suggests that the reason for the large-scale migration of many Jamaicans during the Manley era was because of their lack of commitment to society, but this oversimplifies and ignores a much more nuanced set of anxieties they had in the country at the time. Also, this reviewer was not convinced by the argument that Manley secured "the long-term stability of democracy in the island state" (p. 3). So Ledgister often over-reaches himself in trying to identify the key legacies of Manley's programme.

A concern of over-reach, although to a lesser extent, is also present in the Bernal volume. He was Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the Organisation of American States in the 1990s, and it is during this period that much of the material is focused. So the book is a combination of autobiography and more detached academic study. As mentioned previously Bernal focuses on several issues, which best illustrates the activism that small states can undertake. The great strength of the book is its insights into how policy is made and how key interlocutors, such as government officials, members of Congress, Jamaican-American immigrants, and think tanks, were engaged and cultivated. However, some of the key accomplishments Bernal identifies were relatively moderate, e.g. halting the decline in foreign aid from the United States; whilst others perhaps over-state the importance of Jamaica's role, e.g. the introduction of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, which included all Caribbean states except Cuba. He also only briefly mentions the instances when Jamaica's lobbying failed. An interesting sub-text though is how Bernal's role coincided with Manley's return to power in 1989, and how that impacted on Jamaica's foreign affairs. From a previously strong focus on the non-aligned movement, Manley was now more accommodating of 'western' and American thinking. Bernal repeats a quote of Manley's from 1991 that: "The world has changed. Jamaica has changed. And I think I have changed" (p. 306). So this is where a useful connection exists between the approaches of Bernal and Ledgister.

Another piece of the jigsaw is provided by Smith in his biography of Manley. It of course does cover some of the same ground as Ledgister and Bernal, but offers a deeper account of Manley the man, while offering greater detail around the key events that defined and perhaps ultimately defeated his programme of reform. The stages of Manley's time as prime minister are well articulated, e.g. his early success in creating "a grand coalition", underpinned by his "own dynamic

personal charismatic image" (p. 114); the fraying of that coalition with the distribution of land and housing along party lines and increasingly heated rhetoric promoting Democratic Socialism; and the high levels of violence leading to the 1976 state of emergency and allegations of JLP "guerrilla operations". However, on occasion the prose could have been presented with a little more restraint, e.g. "Kingston was awash in blood and littered with corpses" (p. 180) when speaking of the violence in early 1976. After the election later in the year, which saw a landslide victory for the PNP, the US Embassy reported that Manley was "undisputed king of the heap" (p. 210). However, as Smith shows the next four years were one of internal party struggle between moderates and more radical elements and economic and social decline, buffeted by the attempts of the government to find agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The 1980 election, which saw 800-deaths in its build up, saw the PNP "annihilated", gaining only nine of the 60 seats (p. 286). As has been noted already in this review Manley had a brief coda as prime minister before ill-health took hold. On 6 March 1997 he died and Smith deals with his final days and the state funeral in an affecting way. Despite the divisions of the past "'labourites' came out to salute their respected, fallen foe" (p. 379); while Sonny Ramphal noted that "among a post-war generation of high-quality political leaders, Michael Manley became *primus inter pares*" (p. 377).

So what can be said in conclusion about these three inter-linked books on Manley and Jamaica more generally? First, they are all welcome additions to the academic literature on Manley, on Jamaica and the role of small states in the international system. They highlight how ideas, energy and effective cooperation can lead to important change. Second, as Bernal argues in his book "the lessons derived from events that took place some time ago does not diminish their contemporary relevance" (p. 9). Indeed it is important to see how the ideas and approaches of the past might be helpful in addressing contemporary challenges. Third, and perhaps most crucially, it is critical to learn the right lessons from the past. All the authors, but especially Ledgister and Bernal, make claims that are not always backed fully by the evidence. It is important when dealing with such crucial and emotive issues that a balanced and proportional assessment is made. Otherwise the wrong lessons from history will be learned.