



EDITORIAL

Editorial

Matthew Louis Bishop
Institute of International Relations
University of the West Indies

Welcome to the first issue of *The Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy* of 2014. After a very successful 2013, we go into a new year amidst a wide range of interesting developments, whether in the Caribbean, the wider hemisphere, or globally. Our agenda for the coming months, moreover, reflects this. Between now and early 2016, we are planning to publish special issues that address, firstly, the changing patterns of regional and hemispheric integration in our part of the world, and, secondly, the growing role and importance of China in both the Caribbean and Latin America more broadly. The first of these special issues is perhaps overdue, given the urgent need to better understand new integrationist developments that are taking place, as represented, for example, in the deepening of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the establishment of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in Latin America, as well as, of course, grappling with the apparent stasis in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The second issue, on China, will be jointly edited with our colleagues at Wuhan University, with whom The University of the West Indies has recently established a joint Caribbean Studies Centre. We will soon be issuing calls for contributions to both.

A MEMORY OF NORMAN GIRVAN

As we went to press in early April 2014, we sadly learned of the passing of Professor Norman Girvan, our esteemed and treasured colleague at the Institute of International Relations (IIR). It is

impossible, in these notes, to even begin to do justice to the remarkable life of a man who appeared to squeeze more into his 72 years than most people could manage in three or four lifetimes. Norman spent many years in London, doing his PhD at the London School of Economics (LSE) and becoming part of the intellectual elite that would later return to the Caribbean and shepherd the young nations through the early years of independence. He was a brilliant, world-renowned development economist. His work shaped critical debates of genuine global import throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and from the 1980s onwards he became a *bona fide* intellectual statesman with a reputation that earned him invites to speak in every corner of the globe. Most academics make one or two authentically original contributions during their careers. Yet Norman arguably extended critical debates in five or six distinct areas during his: mining and commodities, the political economy of development, independent Caribbean thought, regional integration, global trade politics, and I have little doubt that, had he been able to continue his nascent interest in the cultural drivers of West Indianism, a topic which had occupied him for much of the past year, this work would have borne fruit too.

His work was not only theoretical and esoteric. In fact, it was hardly esoteric at all, as Norman had that rare skill which all the great professors share: meaning a marked ability to communicate complex and sophisticated ideas and concepts in plain English (or Spanish), so that anyone could comprehend their meaning and broader significance. But what I really mean to say here is that his work was not simply academic; it also influenced policy. He was a key architect of much early independence policymaking in Jamaica, until the global upheavals of the 1970s unfortunately came to bear harshly on the Manley experiments. Norman then made his mark in diplomacy, as he went on to serve as Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), before returning to academia here at the IIR.¹

I arrived at the institute in 2009, and was staggered to discover that I would be residing in the office next door to such a celebrated and distinguished man whose work I had spent much of my PhD reading, thinking and writing about. I was nervous about meeting him, too. Yet I need not have been. Norman was a humble man, just like all the great intellectuals whose eminence is underpinned by genuine brilliance, and for whom arrogance becomes something of an unwieldy and pointless *accoutrement*. Everyday acts of rebellion against inherited and ossified colonial norms were, moreover, a

feature of his working life in this regard. Norman believed passionately in equality. He did not care for airs and graces, nor was he fussed about being a recipient of excessive and unnecessary deference. He did not need to be addressed as 'Professor' or 'Sir' in order to have his ego massaged. Every email, whether to a colleague, a student or one of our administrators, would simply be signed off 'Norman'. There have already been many eulogies written about him in the days since he passed away. All of them have captured the essence of a man who was inordinately popular amongst an almost unimaginable range of constituencies, not only in the Caribbean, but also across the globe, from Presidents and Prime Ministers – as well as international diplomats like the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon – all the way down to people on the street.

In my personal experience, the five years that I worked with Norman were extremely fulfilling, and will undoubtedly remain with me for the rest of my career. I was fortunate to actually write with him, too, on the major study that we did at the IIR on regional integration in 2011.² Four things always struck me about him during this time, and I hope that you, the reader, do not mind me taking the liberty of sharing them.

First, there was his infectious energy and optimism. Indeed, the most tragic aspect of his passing is that it was so untimely and so sudden. He had so much more to give. One of the last times I saw him was actually in London, in September 2013, where he gave a masterful analysis of Westminster politics in the Caribbean at a seminar at the Institute of the Americas.³ I remember arriving at the event and seeing him clad in four layers of clothes, a large hat, and, so he told me at the time, thermal long johns! Even after many years in London, he had never adjusted to the English weather, and a late summer day in September was as apparently full of terrors for him as deepest, darkest January is for anyone. This was also quite disorientating for me, because not only had I never seen him outside of the tropics – usually sporting a Cuban guayabera, which I always felt was as much a deliberate political statement consistent with Norman's desire for Caribbean decolonization as it was anything else - but just three days earlier we had been standing together chatting outside of our respective offices in Trinidad, in the blazing sun, in sandals and short-sleeves. There were a number of people at the London event who had never met Norman before: all were dazzled by his company, and all were deeply impressed by the freshness of his ideas, and, especially, his continued

engagement with the political, economic and social reality of the Caribbean region. With this in mind, something I asked him once or twice was why, as someone who could have had a career in pretty much any top global university that he chose, why he did not return to the LSE, or perhaps join his friend and comrade in the New World Group, Kari Polanyi Levitt, at McGill. For Norman, the answer was simple: he had made a deliberate choice to stay because he loved the Caribbean; he had made an intellectual, emotional and moral commitment to contribute to ameliorating its development predicament; and he wanted to stay in order to make his contribution from within, not without.

This brings me to a second observation, which is founded on the recognition of his towering intellect, something, again, which the eulogies of recent days have rightly emphasized. However, Norman was not simply an extremely clever and gifted man, but – in my view, at least – he also had other equally important and rare attributes. One of these was a relentless appetite for genuinely critical analysis. It is a well-worn cliché that people are born radical and become more conservative as they grow older (although academics are, for the most part, hopefully bred a little differently in this respect). Nonetheless, Norman was the antithesis of a conservative. His detractors – and, like anyone with a head sticking out so firmly above the parapet on such a wide range of issues, he did have some – sometimes tried to pigeonhole him as an unreconstructed, knee-jerk conservative of the Left. Yet in my experience, and despite an undeniable fondness, say, for the lack of materialism in Fidel Castro's Cuba, or the improvements in just about every measure of poverty in the Venezuela of Hugo Chávez, Norman's views on the Left and its motives were as complex, contradictory and subtle as his views on everything else. To the very end, he approached issues in a critical, thoughtful, and consistently radical way, and he was not satisfied by simplistic, orthodox or glib explanations of issues. He also held views – for example, on gender issues and gay rights – that were refreshingly liberal and far from the casual misogyny and narrow-minded homophobia which unfortunately seems to characterize much mainstream opinion in the Caribbean. Not only did Norman roll such difficult and controversial issues around in his own mind, he actively sought them out and took them on publicly in all their ubiquity. It is not often appreciated just how much energy this kind of profound and searching thought requires of anyone, let alone someone in their early seventies. Even more important – again, at

least in my view – is the fact that he retained an independent and critical, yet also distinctly hopeful, view of the world in a sometimes rather depressing context characterized by a seemingly overwhelming ideological onslaught from neoliberal, technical ways of thinking about the issues with which we work in political economy and international studies in general, and the Caribbean in particular.⁴

Another unique attribute that Norman relentlessly displayed throughout the time I knew him – and which impressed and inspired me in equal measure – was his commitment to combining scholarly work and activism. Indeed, he was genuinely engaged in the travails of the ‘real world’ in a way that few academics, however radical they purport to be, are often not.⁵ He was the archetype of what Jean-Paul Sartre once called the *intellectuel engagé politique*, and he married his original and often radical interpretations of the world around him to serious policy activism. He is perhaps most famous in this regard (in the Caribbean, if not necessarily elsewhere) for his vocal and sustained critique of the failures of, firstly, the regional integration process, and, especially, what he perceived as its subversion by the egotistical national political elites of individual Caribbean countries against the interests of the people of the region, and, secondly, the protracted and painful fallout of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the European Union (EU).⁶ However, his advocacy went well beyond issues of ‘high politics’ such as these, and he was constantly looking for new causes to support. In the days before his accident in January 2014, he was busily bringing together coalitions of activists and intellectuals from across the Caribbean to protest at the scandalous treatment of people of Haitian descent, who had essentially been rendered stateless by a ruling of the Constitutional Court in the Dominican Republic. It was widely believed that Norman’s work in this regard was part of the explanation for why the response of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to the outrage was so unexpectedly forceful.⁷

Finally, Norman was generous to a fault. He treated everyone, whether they were the UN Secretary General or a teenage student (or, indeed, a recently-arrived young foreign academic) who was nervously knocking on his door to seek advice, in exactly the same fashion. He did not suffer fools gladly, but he generously invested his time, energy and intellect in anyone that he felt was sufficiently likeable and industrious to make it worth his while. As long as he saw in you the opportunity of a mutually fulfilling process of

intellectual exchange, he was 'in', one hundred per cent. His PhD students always received penetrating, thorough, extensive and timely – as well as, quite often, alarmingly curt and laconic – written feedback. That was Norman's style: he never sugar coated criticism; he always said exactly what he thought. Yet I like to think that the very fact that he might expend the effort in systematically dismantling your ideas, regardless of how painful it may have seemed at the time, was in itself a compliment and an implicit recognition of their value. I vividly remember presenting him with my finished book manuscript at the end of 2012 and asking him for a blurb for the cover.⁸ I expected him to give it a quick skim-read to get the sense of the argument, nothing more. Yet when I saw him just after that Christmas, in January 2013, he called me into his office for a chat. The 'chat' lasted two hours. Not only had he read the book thoroughly, he had considered the argument in some depth, and he wanted to subject it to serious scrutiny. Afterwards, I remember feeling a deep sense of pride, although this was tempered by the exhaustion of almost having been put through an unanticipated PhD *viva voce* exam all over again!

In sum, there is no doubt that the Caribbean – and, of course, the wider world - has lost a brilliant, engaged and generous man. It goes without saying that our thoughts are with the family that he leaves behind: his wife, Jasmine, and children Ramon, Alex, and Alatashe. It has been impossible to do Norman justice in these few short pages, but these are my recollections all the same. We are all deeply saddened to have lost him, particularly given that, until his accident, he showed no sign whatsoever of slowing down. There could, therefore, be no greater tribute to him than for those of us who are engaged in the study and analysis of Caribbean political economy and development, the making of policy to deal with the challenges that the region faces, or, indeed, the advocacy that underpins the far-reaching social and political change that many of us wish to see, to redouble our efforts and follow the astonishing example set by Norman throughout his career.

One small contribution that the editors here at the *Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy* would like to make in this regard is to publish a special issue dedicated to Norman which looks back retrospectively at, not only his work, but also that of all of his contemporaries in the New World Group and the broader intellectual movement associated with it. Consequently, we are now actively soliciting articles that reflect upon, in some way or another, the contemporary legacy and implications of this

remarkably fertile period of independent Caribbean thought. Please feel free to contact us at cjird@sta.uwi.edu if you would like to propose an article of some kind for the special issue.

THE CURRENT ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL

Perhaps somewhat unusually, the current issue of the journal has a distinctly Latin American flavour. Given the upheaval that has been evident since the turn of the year in Venezuela, characterized by significant protests against the government of Nicolás Maduro, we took a decision to seek out a range of articles for a 'Forum' that addresses this apparent 'crisis' from different sides of the political fence. This in turn built upon an event which took place at the IIR in early 2014, where a number of experts discussed the problems that Venezuela is currently experiencing, along with the prospects for its social, political and economic evolution over the coming months and years. We have supplemented some of the papers given that day with articles that we have deliberately solicited ourselves. All of these are different, not only in tone and ideological commitment, but also in style. For example, the opening paper, by Antonio Rodríguez Iturbe, is a wide-ranging overview of how Venezuela got to where it is today, and it takes the shape almost of an old-fashioned essay. By contrast, the three papers that are particularly critical of the current administration – those by Armando García de la Torre, Juan Cristóbal Nagel, and Armando Avellaneda – are simultaneously more combative and antagonistic in style. All, nonetheless, are full of interesting and insightful detail about the crisis itself.

The post-Chávez era which appears to be unfolding with some degree of instability in Venezuela is not simply an issue of domestic concern. It matters intellectually, and particularly so to those of a leftist persuasion who not only seek to understand and explain the implications of the unique experiment that is the Bolivarian Revolution, but also perhaps wish to see it survive and extend its reach. For others – and especially those of a less sanguine bent, who are suspicious of Chávez, his successors, and the populist political settlement that they have embedded in the country - there is no doubt that Venezuela provides fertile ground to interrogate the received wisdom on a wide variety of intellectual issues relating to gender, representation, democracy, legitimacy, and so on. The paper by Aleah Ranjitsingh echoes both of these imperatives to some degree. On the one hand, her article is a

staunch defence of the Bolivarian Revolution. Yet on the other, her work specifically grapples with the often-overlooked implications of two decades of radical political change for new expressions of citizenship, and, in particular, how these relate to gender and the role of women.

However, the importance of Venezuela also goes far beyond simply academic debates. It carries with it a wide range of practical consequences for the Caribbean, especially, and these also imply both a desperate need for critical analysis, along with some serious thought to be given to the wider policy consequences. There exist three very obvious (and very thorny) examples that immediately spring to mind.

First, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have a large and growing Venezuelan diaspora. Indeed, since January they have been visible on the streets of Port of Spain protesting regularly and in large numbers against developments at home. These people tend to be both instinctively 'anti-Chávez' and also skilled middle-class professionals that have brought valuable expertise and human capital to Trinidad, although they are not exclusively so. Many Venezuelan *émigrés*, regardless of social class or political persuasion, have fled what appears to be a deteriorating economy and a horrifying security situation.⁹ Yet despite these intuitive assumptions, we appear to have little understanding of what motivates them at a deeper level, or whether or not we should be expecting much greater numbers of people to arrive, not to mention what we might do about integrating them if they do. More broadly, the many diasporas that now exist *within* Caribbean countries also place a large question mark over the way that this concept has usually been understood in academic and policy debates in the region (i.e. referring to West Indians themselves who have left to go abroad). It barely needs to be said that there is enormous scope here for much interesting new research, which could well have a significant degree of practical importance too.

Second, there is the vexed question of the future of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and, in particular, the related Petrocaribe programme, which provides subsidized oil (and loans to buy that oil) for like-minded states. As Asa Cusack notes in his excellent contribution to the Forum, many Caribbean countries have become heavily dependent on Petrocaribe in recent years, and they are deeply vulnerable to changes in the terms of engagement between themselves and Caracas. At present, there seems little to suggest that the Maduro government has any

intention of dramatically altering the existing settlement that his predecessor designed, implemented and bequeathed. However, institutions rarely endure into perpetuity, or at least not in exactly the same form, particularly inherently contingent ones, of which Petrocaribe is surely an example. It does not take a great leap of imagination to envisage a situation whereby continued instability in Venezuela produces, say, a change of government, or, perhaps a further slide – and even collapse – of the Bolívar. Such eventualities could have very ominous implications for those small Caribbean countries that have grown used to regular supplies of cheap oil, on credit.

Third, there is the omnipresent – and, from time-to-time, very worrying - conundrum of the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute. A few months ago, the Caribbean security expert Professor Ivelaw Griffith gave a lecture here at the IIR where he pondered the consequences of the death of Hugo Chávez and his succession by Nicolás Maduro specifically for the dispute.¹⁰ His analysis was to some extent a rather troubling one. Griffith noted specifically how Maduro is caught in something of a tight circle that is likely to be very difficult for him to square. He has neither the charisma of his predecessor, nor the unrelenting control that he was able to maintain over both the state and the actors that occupied its key institutions during his decade and a half in office. This, of course, stemmed directly from the widespread and vocal support that Chávez, as a populist president, enjoyed from a large section of the Venezuelan population. However, Maduro does not enjoy similar levels of support. He was only elected in April 2013 on a wafer-thin majority, with 50.6 per cent of the popular vote, compared to the 49.1 per cent enjoyed by the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles. Consequently, it stands to reason that Maduro also does not enjoy quite the same unquestioning acquiescence to his rule that Chávez did from within the governing elite. The worry, as Griffith articulated during his lecture, is that continued instability in the country could easily produce a ‘rally-round-the-flag’ effect and a far more belligerent tone towards Guyana and the dispute.

With this in mind, the research article by Alicia Elias-Roberts, which looks at the more recent maritime controversy between the two countries, is particularly timely, given that it carries some very important legal and political lessons for the broader evolution of the relationship between Guyana and Venezuela. Our final article in this issue is a policy brief by Khellon Roach, and it maintains the focus on the Latin America. Specifically, Khellon asks what the

implications might be for Suriname of both UNASUR and the related initiative, the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA).

We hope, as ever, that you enjoy these articles. And I like to think that, were he still here, Norman Girvan would have done so too. One of his many important and prestigious diplomatic jobs of recent years was, indeed, as United Nations Special Representative in the Guyana/Venezuela Border Controversy, so some of the papers we publish here would have been of particular interest to him. I imagine he would also be very pleased about his subtle influence elsewhere in the journal: Aleah Ranjitsingh was one of Norman's PhD students, and his distinctive voice is quietly and subtly discernible in the tone of her work; and Asa Cusack, who was formerly a PhD student at my *alma mater*, the University of Sheffield, is one of many hundreds of people who have had, over the years and decades, the good fortune and privilege to spend an hour or two picking Norman's brains when he came through the Caribbean a couple of years ago to do his fieldwork on the implications of ALBA for the region. Long may Norman live on in our memory, and also in the consciousness of the region as a whole.

NOTES

- ¹ For a wonderful autobiographical discussion of Norman's own intellectual journey, see Norman Girvan, 'One Thing Led to Another', 18th October 2007: <http://www.normangirvan.info/one-thing-led-to-another-an-autobiographical-note-norman-girvan/>
- ² IIR, *Caribbean Regional Integration*, St Augustine, Institute of International Relations, 2011: <http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/iir-regional-integration-report-final.pdf>
- ³ Fortunately, a video of his keynote address is available on the University College London YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7ItLJHEB90>
- ⁴ For a more detailed discussion of what I mean by this, it is worth reviewing some of the work produced by Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton during the 2000s. In particular, their excellent book, *Charting Caribbean Development* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001) and the monograph *Repositioning the Caribbean Within Globalization* (Waterloo, ON: Centre for International Governance Innovation Caribbean Paper No. 1, 2007): <http://www.cigionline.org/publications/2007/6/repositioning-caribbean-within-globalisation>. For a good introduction to the wider debate about the neoliberalisation of development discourses, see Anthony Payne and Nicola Phillips, *Development* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).
- ⁵ In a heartfelt early eulogy on Norman's life and career, Sunity Maharaj makes a similar point. See Sunity Maharaj, 'The Engaged Academic', *Trinidad Express*, 12th April 2014: <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/The-Engaged-Academic-255046771.html>

- ⁶ As noted, I was fortunate enough to work with him on probably the most thorough recent report on integration in the region, the IIR study noted above. For a detailed review of the fallout of the EPA process, see Matthew Louis Bishop, Tony Heron and Anthony Payne, 'Caribbean Development Alternatives and the CARIFORUM-European Union Economic Partnership Agreement', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 16, 1, 2013, pp.82-110. One of Norman's final academic publications was actually a critical discussion of the role of civil society in the EPA negotiating process, see Norman Girvan, 'Social Movements Confront Neoliberalism: Reflections on a Caribbean Experience', *Globalizations*, 9, 6, 2012, pp.753-766. He also published a chapter shortly before he passed away entitled 'Caribbean integration: can cultural production succeed where politics and economics have failed? (Confessions of a wayward economist)' in W. Andy Knight, Julián Castro-Rea and Hamid Ghany (eds) *Remapping the Americas: Trends in Region-Making* (London: Ashgate, 2014).
- ⁷ See, for example, Peter Richards, 'CARICOM Chastises Dominican Republic over Deportations', *Inter-Press Service News Agency*, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 27th November 2013: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/11/caricom-chastises-dominican-republic-deportations/>
- ⁸ See Matthew Louis Bishop, *The Political Economy of Caribbean Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). See Chapter 3, especially, for my account of Norman's work, and that of the wider New World Group in theorizing Caribbean Development.
- ⁹ This might seem surprising to many readers, particularly if they are used to the horrifying murder statistics in Trinidad. Yet Venezuela is considerably more dangerous. Since Chávez came to power in the late 1990s, the country has recorded approximately 200,000 homicides. In 2013, the homicide rate was around 79 per 100,000, and it was even higher in Caracas, where the majority of Venezuelans living in Trinidad come from. By contrast, the homicide rate in Trinidad and Tobago was less than half that of Venezuela, at around 30 per 100,000.
- ¹⁰ Ivelaw Griffith, 'Security in the Southern Caribbean', lecture given at the Institute of International Relations, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 21st November 2013.