Birte Timm

Nationalists Abroad: The Jamaica Progressive League and the Foundations of Jamaican Independence. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2016. xxxviii + 459 pp. (Paper US\$44.95)

The standard version of modern Jamaican political history begins in 1938, a year that saw both significant labor unrest and the founding of the People's National Party (PNP), headed by Norman Manley. The self-styled hero of the labor movement, Alexander Bustamante, Manley's cousin, started the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) in 1943; since then those two parties have dominated both the Jamaican political scene and its historiography, vying for the credit of having paved the way for the independence achieved in August 1962. Other organizations have to date been scarcely visible in the margins of that standard story, but now Birte Timm's highly impressive recuperation of the history of the Jamaica Progressive League (JPL) effectively derails the oversimplification of cousinly struggle between Manley and Bustamante, placing into the nationalist frame the notable figures of W. Adolphe Roberts, Wilfred A. Domingo, and Ethelred Brown, the three leading figures in the JPL.

The eight chapters of Timm's book trace the history of the JPL from its foundation in Harlem in September 1936 through to its last major fight, which was against the West Indies Federation. This is above all a transnational story in which new ideas are fermented in New York, while the hard graft of political work happens on island ground. The larger context is the history of anticolonial nationalism, in which New York played an important role because of the presence there of Puerto Rican and Irish nationalists, who inspired the Caribbean migrants removed from the insidious influence of the anglophilia that weakened many a political sinew on the islands themselves.

The preamble to the JPL's initial declaration declared: "Firmly believing that any people that has seen its generations come and go on the same soil for centuries is, in fact, a nation, we pledge ourselves to work for the attainment of self-government for Jamaica, so that the country may take its rightful place as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations." That statement provided the touchstone to which Roberts and Domingo adhered for the nearly thirty years that they dedicated to the struggle for Jamaican independence. The long comradeship between these two remarkable men provides one of the most intriguing strands to Timm's story. Domingo had lived in Harlem since 1910, prospering in business as an importer of West Indian foods while working briefly with Marcus Garvey and developing close ties with other black socialists. His 1925 essay, "The Gift of the Black Tropics," is considered one of the founding documents of the Harlem Renaissance. Roberts had lived off and on

in New York even longer but, as the scion of a white if impoverished Jamaican family, his milieu was bohemian Greenwich Village until he ventured north to make contact with other Jamaicans. The friendship and respect between the two men never wavered, and their complementary strengths kept the JPL firmly on track.

The heart of Timm's story concerns the long and fraught relationship between the JPL and the PNP. Roberts and Domingo had taken their radical idea to Jamaica in 1937 to be met with incomprehension. After the unrest of 1938 the picture changed: now the JPL supported the foundation of the PNP and tried to move it toward support for self-government. Manley was initially reluctant—and in later years always recognized that it was Domingo and Roberts who had eventually persuaded him. The war found Domingo and Roberts off the island. Domingo tried to return in June 1941, at Manley's invitation, but was interned by Governor Arthur Richards on spurious grounds. Roberts was refused a visa in 1945, probably at Bustamante's behest. He did return in August 1946, to huge acclaim, and settled in Kingston, though without taking an active part in the political life of the country until his late campaign against Federation, which ironically pitted him against his old friend Norman Manley.

The importance of the JPL to Jamaica's national story was maintained for many years by a few lonely voices, but those with direct memories of the key figures have almost all passed: in recent years, Frank Gordon, Ken Jones, and Richard Hart. Timm's timely analysis of the JPL is likely to be definitive, so thorough is her archival work. Roberts's own papers, in the National Library of Jamaica, are a rich source, as are Manley's in the Jamaica Archives, and the PNP's house journal, *Public Opinion*, in which Domingo wrote scores of closely argued essays; but collections, public and private, in London, New York, and Kingston are also drawn upon here to weave a rich and fascinating tapestry which offers to reshape Jamaican historiography.

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