



**The Prime Minister
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
West Indies**

November 22, 2021

Hon. Mia Mottley
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Government Headquarters
Bay Street
St. Michael
Barbados

My Dear Mia

**LETTER TO MIA FROM RALPH ON THE OCCASION OF BARBADOS BECOMING
A REPUBLIC**

INTRODUCTION

Solidarity greetings to you, the government and people of Barbados from the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines!

I thank you for your kind invitation to attend the formal swearing-in ceremony of the first President of Barbados, Her Excellency Dame Sandra Prunella Mason GCMG, DA, QC, on November 30, 2021.

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend in person due to certain exigent circumstances. I have accordingly deputed, with your permission, my first-born, the Honourable Camillo Michael Gonsalves, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, to represent St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and me, personally. As a dutiful off-spring of our Caribbean civilisation, and as a great admirer of Barbados, of Dame Sandra, and of you, Camillo is most pleased to be in Barbados to celebrate this truly historic achievement of republican status, in friendship, love, and solidarity, and in the splendid company of your government, the Barbadian people, our Caribbean brothers and sisters, and the representatives of the global family of nations.

I am sure that you are aware that Camillo attended elementary school in Barbados when I lectured at University of the West Indies at Cave Hill between 1976 and 1979. He is married to a Barbadian of Jamaican parentage. So, he, too, is Bajan in spirit, and more. I know that you will look after him well while he is in Barbados.

HOME-GROWN HEAD OF STATE

You have led Barbados magnificently through an alive constitutionalism, in the ennobling endeavour of establishing and institutionalising a home-grown Head of State, shaped in your people's own, image, likeness, faith, love, and hope. In so doing, the independent Parliament of Barbados, duly elected by a free people in free and fair elections, and acting in their name, finally exorcised the last formal vestige of the incubus of colonialism.

To be sure, this self-affirming act of institutionalising an autochthonous, Non-Executive Head of State is in no way taken or meant to be taken as any disrespect of, or for, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors. Indeed, Her Majesty has been an exemplary Sovereign Lady; but the simple fact remains that she is British, not Barbadian. This debilitating fiction of a "foreign" sovereign is now at an end. We profusely thank Her Majesty, who remains the titular Head of the Commonwealth of Nations, for her service to Barbados. Clearly, the people of Barbados consider that it is time to move on, with absolutely no rancour, no confrontation, peacefully and smoothly, with God's amazing grace!

One striking fact in the new republican dispensation is that Barbados, as of November 30, 2021, has its first female President alongside its first female Prime Minister. I am sure that your grandfather, the venerable Ernest Deighton Mottley of the city of Bridgetown and thereafter to the legendary Valhalla, the home of Vikings; your devoted father Elliott, distinguished legal luminary; and your dear mother and protector, Santa Amor, and persons of their respective generations, and much younger, and indeed all Barbadians, at home and abroad, wherever they may be, celebrate this day with these two extraordinary Caribbean women at the pinnacle of state and governmental authority — Dame Sandra, and my dear Mia.

The esteemed renaissance man of Barbados, Hilton A. Vaughn, of blessed memory, spoke for us, at a time like this in his celebrated poem, "**Revelation**", in which, by synonym, he justly lauded our Barbadian and Caribbean women as the noblest, most beautiful manifestations of our Caribbean civilisation:

*"Turn sideways now and let them see
What loveliness escapes the school
Then turn again, and smile, and be
The perfect answer to those fools
Who always prate of Greece and Rome
'The face that launched a thousand ships,'
And such like things, but keep tight lips
For burnished beauty nearer home."*

History being made today is undoubtedly HERSTORY!

MAKING HISTORY

From the Black Jacobins, the classic recounting of the Haitian revolution and the role of Toussaint L'Ouverture, by the towering Caribbean intellectual C.L.R. James, we have received the teaching that great men and women make history but only to the extent that the circumstances of history so permit them to make. The fever of history and the extant circumstances in 2021 have conspired, in the immortal words of the Founding Father of an independent Barbados, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, National Hero, to cease the loitering on colonial premises after closing time. Barbados today, led by the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, is completing this vital task of crossing the final threshold towards full nationhood in the strategic quest of uplifting and further ennobling Barbados, and our Caribbean civilisation, in every material particular. I shall return later to C.L.R. James on the making of history and leadership.

Civilised men and women, in our island-civilisation of uniqueness and majesty, do not live by bread alone; they live by, and through, multiple other things, even though "bread" — the material order — is fundamental. As the Mexican Laureate for Literature, Octavio Paz, puts it aptly, in The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings:

"Civilisation is a society's style, its way of living and dying. ----- A civilisation is not only a system of values but a world of forms and codes of behaviour, rules, and exceptions. It is a society's visible side — institutions, monuments, work, things — but it is especially its submerged, invisible side: beliefs, desires, fears, repressions, dreams."

A monarchical system of government headed by a foreign queen, and which has been in place in Barbados since the early years of 17th century, is not merely alien in its definitional essence; it has, evidentially, created ghosts which people, subversively, our dreams. That is why, up to today, there are the political dinosaurs resident in our seascape and landscape, which belong to us, who consider that severance from our Sovereign Lady to be an act most heart-wrenching and unthinkable. Thus, such reactionaries pose absurd queries such as: Why the haste? Why not more discussion? Where is the mandate for this change? I answer each, seriatim, as follows: Haste? After nearly four hundred years? More Discussion? Is every subject on government or the management of public affairs a continuous university seminar to be debated ad nauseam? A Mandate? Has not every single administration in Barbados over the past thirty years or more (Owen Arthur and Mia Mottley of the Barbados Labour Party; David Thompson and Freundel Stuart of the Democratic Labour Party) advocated the imminent arrival of a Parliamentary Republic? The dinosaurs are political humbug! I can hear them screaming irrelevantly: "*What business of this is Ralph's?*" My answer simply is this: As a quintessential Caribbean man, born with a rebel seed, I have a vested interest in this!

The achievement of a Parliamentary Republic with its home-grown Non-Executive President is a great cause. And great causes have never been won by doubtful men and women. The contemporary critics of republicanism in Barbados and other Caribbean countries, who continuously embrace side-shows and ignore main events,

will make their splash on this or that social media platform or seek to delay progress before this or that domestic tribunal, will pass into historical nothingness. No one remembers the names of the puny, noisy critics of John Keats' majestic poem, Endymion of the early 19th century. Keats is however, remembered as a titan of English Literature; and his poem, a masterpiece. Truly, "a thing of beauty is a joy forever": Teachers must teach; prophets must prophesise; and LEADERS MUST LEAD! So, lead Mia, lead! Ignore the side-shows and the pettyfogging critics!

Take heart, too, Mia, from the Prophet-Builder, Nehemiah, who in concert with his people, rebuilt the city walls around Jerusalem. In so doing, he was mocked by Sanballat and Tobiah of the Ammonites; their mockery turned to anger and then to conspiracy. When all that failed, they sent for him to meet them for "discussion" on the plains of Ono, but undoubtedly with the plan to ambush him; Nehemiah wisely stood askance from this gambit; he and his people, united in purpose, completed their task of rebuilding. It's a beautiful story, well-told, in the Book of Nehemiah [Chapters 5 – 7]. It has always accorded me comfort in the face of opposition when I am evidently doing the right thing.

THE MONARCHY

Interestingly, the British have understood well the power and influence of the monarchy. Walter Bagehot, the keen observer of things socio-political and constitutional, was to write in his English Constitution, published in 1867, thus:-

"---We have whole classes unable to comprehend the idea of a constitution — unable to feel the least attachment to impersonal laws. Most do indeed vaguely know that there are some other institutions besides the Queen, and some rules by which she governed. But a vast number like their minds to dwell more upon her than on anything else, and therefore she is inestimable. A Republic has only difficult ideas in government; a Constitutional Monarchy has an easy idea, too; it has a comprehensible element for the vacant many, as well as complex laws and notions for the inquiring few."

A few years before Bagehot wrote insightfully about the English Constitution, the German philosopher and revolutionary, Karl Marx, then permanently resident in Britain, was to unmask the power arrangements thereunder as "an antiquated, obsolete, out-of-date compromise between the bourgeoisie, which rules not officially, but in fact in all spheres of civil society, and the landed aristocracy which governs officially." Marx so wrote of this monarchial arrangement some 170 years ago!

Through all the changing scenes of life in our Caribbean, the monarchy evolved at the apex of a colonial system with an imitative political apparatus of Monarch, Lords, and Commons in various permutations, resting upon plantation slavery, and post-emancipation capitalism (slow emergence to fully-fledged, as time went on). After independence, the monarch, as in Bagehot's earlier telling, came to represent the "dignified" branch of government, and the Parliament, the Cabinet, and the Civil Service, the "efficient" branch. Beneath it all, the capitalist mode of production,

inclusive of its plantation residues, and its external exchange relationships, determined (primarily and ultimately) life, living, production, and the political superstructure within the extant social formation. The monarchy exercised authority and symbolism within that political superstructure. It has taken, among other things, the anti-colonial, and anti-planter/merchant mass uprising of 1937, and the subsequent social democratic advances of popularly-elected governments to move the working people from the metaphoric gates to the centre-stage, in a grand compromise with capitalism and neo-colonialism, partially in the people's interest. And so the struggle continues!

Too many contemporary critics in our Caribbean of a progressive political agenda, appeal in one form or another, to "the vacant many". Unfortunately for these critics, the social democratic advances, inclusive of the Educational Revolution in our Caribbean, have cultivated far more than an "inquiring few", though even among these, cultural and ideational colonialism and neo-colonialism too often hold sway in their cultivated minds. So, the matter becomes complicated, awash with multiple contradictions, yet to be resolved in full satisfaction for the working people.

THE BASICS OF COLONIALISM

In these circumstances, therefore, it is always necessary and desirable to get back to basics; in this case, to drill down on the ABC of colonialism. In 1955, a mere decade or so before Barbados attained its independence, the anti-colonial Martinican poet, philosopher, and politician, Aimé Césaire, published an essay of relevance, entitled Discourse on Colonialism (republished in 2000 by the Monthly Review Press of New York). In this essay, Césaire sagely advises thus:

"No one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a civilisation which justifies colonization — and therefore force — is already a sick civilisation, a civilisation which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another. Colonisation: bridgehead in a campaign to civilise barbarism from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilisation, pure and simple.

"----Colonisation ----dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that the colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is this result, the boomerang effect of colonisation ----."

To be sure in our Caribbean, including our Barbados, British colonialism in concert with our people and their leaderships delivered to us all at the time of independence certain assets in our collective storehouse of social and political capital, namely: The Common Law and constitutional governance; an independent judiciary;

representative government and competitive democracy; a professional and politically non-partisan civil service; the English Language; and Judaeo-Christian socialization.

Still, as Walter Rodney, the brilliant Caribbean historian and esteemed revolutionary, taught us in How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, it is impermissible to draw up a metaphoric accountant's balance sheet itemising assets and liabilities of colonialism's impact upon us. How, for example, can one balance "assets" in the face of brutal conquest and native genocide; enforced transportation to, and enslavement of African bodies in, the Caribbean; the indentureship of Madeirans, Indians, and Chinese; a settlement of exploitation, cultural repression, and undemocratic colonial over-rule; and the remaking in the image of Anglo-Saxons diverse native peoples, for example, as Afro-Saxons and Indo-Saxons. British colonialism under the monarchy, in the Caribbean, forcibly exterminated native populations, forcibly populated our region through slavery and indentureship, and fashioned economies of our underdeveloped hinterland in a nexus with the metropole in the metropole's interest. In the process, colonialism ripped our Caribbean from its own autonomous path of development to an imposed and distorted condition of underdevelopment with debilitating historical legacies and awesome contemporary challenges, inclusive of existential ones not of our own making, but which we are required to face in an increasingly hostile or non-supportive external environment.

Incidentally, it may be interesting for the pollster and political analyst, Peter Wickham, to conduct a survey among teachers and students in Barbados to find out whom they know better, or at all: Walter Rodney of Guyana or Walter Raleigh of Elizabeth Tudor's famed Eldorado. Will Raleigh triumph over Rodney?

GROWING UP UNDER THE UNION JACK

I was born on August 8, 1946; you, Mia, were born a generation or so later on October 1, 1965. You were one-year old when Barbados achieved its independence on November 30, 1966. On October 16, 1968, you had just celebrated your third birthday, the date from which I have marked my serious political activism when as President of the Guild of Undergraduates (the Students' Union) at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, I led a massive, epoch-making protest in Kingston, Jamaica, against the banning of Walter Rodney from returning to Jamaica to his university lectureship and family. Sometime in the first-half of 1979, when you were a 13-year old student at Queen's College and I was a Lecturer at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, I remember delivering an address to a group of students with you in attendance. No sentient person could miss the presence of Mia's leadership then and now! Before we met for the first time I knew, of course, your Dad Elliott and Uncle Elombe, and the historical outlines of the towering Mottley family, with all the benefits and burdens for you as a daughter of so accomplished and well-known a kinship. Later in 1979, the then Prime Minister of Barbados, Tom Adams, revoked my work permit and banned me from returning to work in Barbados on the entirely false ground that I was a security risk, and an agent of Cuban and Soviet communism. You now lead the same Barbados Labour Party (BLP). After one time is another! I do not feel, and have never felt any rancour whatsoever towards

Tom; and, as you know, I hold the BLP in the highest regard, especially under the outstanding leadership of Owen Arthur and you.

On October 16, 1994, at my request, you were invited as the Guest Speaker to the inaugural Convention of the founding of the Unity Labour Party (ULP) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; you were 29 years old and a rising star in the Barbados Labour Party. At that Convention I was elected as the ULP's Deputy Political Leader. On that visit you may recall your groundings with our comrades in my constituency at Byera Hill, and your ecstatic consumption of the offerings of "goat water" and spicy "curry goat" of the highest quality from Papa Toad, who sadly is no longer with us in our Earthly City; you were in your element at this roadside, village gathering; the folks still remember you lovingly; they knew of your intellect, but they loved you for being "rootical"; they usually recognise a genuine article, not one of fakery.

On July 4, 2018, in Montego Bay, Jamaica, you attended your first CARICOM Heads of Government Conference as Prime Minister of Barbados, you having assumed that Office six weeks or so earlier on May 25th. By then I was half-way through my fourth consecutive term (17 ½ years) as Prime Minister, of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Since your election as Prime Minister you have been offering progressive leadership to Barbados, the Caribbean, Small Island Developing States, the Developing World, and humanity. Like Issachar, one of the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel as detailed in the Book of Chronicles, you know the times and you are acting accordingly. I am most pleased! The heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.

I make these prefatory comments to mark certain sign posts in our respective journeys, their intersections, and to highlight their relevance to the issues-at-hand.

Persons of my age, and older, have vivid, unpleasant, and self-alienating experiences of "growing up stupid under the Union Jack", to employ the Barbadian novelist, Austin "Tom" Clarke's, stark description. On the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II, on June 2, 1953, I was two months short of seven years old. I was a student of the Roman Catholic Primary School in my rural village of Colinarie. Coronation Day was accorded the status of a public holiday by the colonial government. Every school was required to have a march and some sort of ceremony. I was one of the two boys "honoured" to have been chosen to carry the banner on a march through the village, commemorating Her Majesty's Coronation. The "chosen two" felt special; we were made to feel special as colonial schoolboys. But it was not a pleasant experience. The noon-day sun was hot in June and the heat on the asphalted road scorched our bare feet; we had no shoes; only the teachers wore shoes at school. Walking barefooted on the hot pitch for a few hours singing praises to the Queen and Britain for their goodness in ruling over us was, in retrospect, child abuse and political folly. After the march, each of the students was treated, courtesy of the colonial government, to a "penny bread" with corned beef, and an Oso soft-drink.

The only challenging anti-colonial rhetoric in my village came from the road-side preachings of the Spiritual Baptists and the populist political and trade union leader, Ebenezer Theodore Joshua, who taught me much in the 1950s, 1960s, and early

1970s, until he turned to unworthy political opportunism in his opposition to independence for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1979 under Robert Milton Cato and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party, the historical sister-party to the BLP. Sir Grantley Adams, the founding father of the BLP, was a personal friend and political colleague of Milton Cato's older brother, Arnott. Dr. Arnott Cato presided over the Senate in Barbados during the Tom Adams' administration. The Unity Labour Party which I have been leading for 23 years is the successor to Cato's Labour Party, by way of a merger with other political forces.

From an early age at school, we had to learn two anthems, among other patriotic songs and poetic verses of colonial Britain: the first, "God Save our Gracious Queen"; and the second, "Rule Britannia". The lyrics of each are instructive:

- (1) *"God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us;
God save the Queen!"*

- (2) *"When Britain first, at heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung this strain:
"Rule, Britannia, Britannia rules the waves;
Britons never will be slaves."*

The so-called "Good old Colonial Days" were truly bad. It matters not how much anyone tries to rewrite history or to gloss it all over through rose-tinted spectacles. When I was born in 1946, the average life span of a Vincentian male was 48 years; it is now 75 years! Pipe-borne water was available to only a tiny section of the population's homes. Electricity was scarce in its supply; lamps, lanterns and flambeaus radiated light in the homely darkness. Housing conditions were deplorably bad; wattle-and-daub houses with thatched roofs were prevalent. Health care was limited. Average wages were below subsistence level. Racial and class prejudices were rampant. In 200 years of British colonialism (1763 to self-government in 1969) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, two secondary schools were built; one for boys and one for girls; one for each 100 years of colonialism! Religious discrimination outside of the Anglicans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics was widespread. Unrepresentative government delivered irresponsible and unresponsive governance. The quality of life and living was, generally, at a low level, even though social solidarity among the poor, the working people, the peasantry, and the vulnerable was robust; and criminal violence was minimal. Patriarchy was enthroned and opportunities for the professional advancement of women were almost non-existent. Nevertheless, women were quite strong in their matrifocal roles in their households.

Undoubtedly, the quality of good governance improved markedly under internal self-government, and subsequently in the independence period. This has been the experience in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, and other Caribbean countries. Why, therefore, this absurd fear of some sections of the populace regarding the abandonment of the monarchy and the establishment of the Office of a home-grown, Non-Executive Head of State? Only the irrational fear of a colonial mind could embrace opposition to this constitutional alteration from monarchical government to parliamentary republicanism.

One of the saddest days of my political life was the rejection on November 25, 2009, by the electorate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the proposed root-and-branch reforms of the 1979 Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, inclusive of replacing the Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) as the final appellate court, and the removal of the British monarch as our Head of State and its replacement by a home-grown, Non-executive President.

The reforms were designed to deepen and broaden democracy, strengthen individual rights and freedoms, enhance accountability and transparency in governance, reduce the powers of the Prime Minister, lift higher the quality and independence of the judiciary, and to reclaim, in every material particular, our nation's sovereignty and independence. My party, the Unity Labour Party, committed nationalists and social democrats from civil society failed to convince the electorate. Opportunistic opposition politics, massive external support from arch-colonialists, a dishonest propaganda barrage, an undeveloped political consciousness by sections of the people, and fear of change, all conspired to defeat an historic venture. Unprincipled opposition forces wanted to give Ralph a metaphoric "political black-eye" and so weaken him and his government in the run-up to the December 2010 general elections.

As fate would have it, Ralph's Unity Labour Party (ULP) won again in 2010, in 2015, and in 2020 for a fifth successive time. Opportunistic politics, in the end, will be defeated, always! Perseverance, strength of character, and high principle will win out! We must never forget all this. I remind you and all other progressives: The struggle continues, as we pledge not to leave behind any unfinished task. Thus, we must never grow weary. And as we have setbacks, we must turn them into advances. I know that you appreciate all of this, and that you take to heart William Ernest Henley's "Invictus", a favorite poem of the heroic Nelson Mandela:

*"It matters not how straight the gate
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

I feel sure that your unconquerable soul will never find you afraid. As an "ancient warrior", I say to you: Never be afraid!

Hopefully, the next generation of leaders in my party will once again put similar governance reforms to a popular referendum as the Constitution of St. Vincent and

the Grenadines demands, and be the victorious. God gave Noah the rainbow sign, it's the fire next time; that is His promise.

The truth is that the alteration of the entrenched provisions of the Constitutions of the countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), including St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is a herculean task. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, such alterations require first a two-thirds majority in the unicameral legislature followed by a two-thirds majority in a popular referendum. The extent of the majority required in this latter regard is surely undemocratic. This follows the constitutional requisite imposed in the 1974 independence Constitution of Grenada by the departing colonial power, Britain. Grenada was the first of the smaller Caribbean countries to accede to independence; it did so under the leadership of Eric Matthew Gairy. There was so much heightened opposition in Grenada to independence under Gairy that the British extracted a high price.

So, the presumed political sins of Gairy have cast a long shadow in the other Windward and Leeward Islands; the ghost of Gairyism on this matter is yet to be exorcised even in post-revolutionary Grenada, as Prime Minister Keith Mitchell found out. Fortunately, Errol Walton Barrow and the other Founding Fathers of an independent Barbados insisted that fundamental constitutional alterations be permissible by an appropriate parliamentary majority, without necessarily holding a popular referendum. Thus, the task of our dear sister Mia and the progressive forces in Barbados has been made much easier in this respect by Barrow's remarkable foresight.

REPUBLICANISM IN CARICOM

In the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) several of its member-states have a republican form of government. Haiti has had an executive Presidency since its founding in 1804; Suriname, a former Dutch colony also has a republican form of government with an Executive President. Guyana and Dominica have been republics since independence respectively in 1966 and 1977 although Guyana has an executive Presidency and Dominica, a Non-Executive President. Trinidad and Tobago which became independent in August 1962 with a constitutional monarchical system with a largely ceremonial Governor General, altered its constitution in 1976 to a republican one with a Non-Executive President. Prior to Mia's successful leadership on this issue, only Dr. Eric Williams, the political titan of Trinidad and Tobago, was able to lead triumphantly on republicanism by way of an alteration to an existing post-independence Constitution. Mia is thus in excellent company!

So, Barbados is not doing anything novel. But what it is doing is of utmost significance, for the better, for its people and our Caribbean civilisation. It is my hope that, in my lifetime, all or most of the independent countries of CARICOM would move from a monarchical system to a republican one.

I earnestly look forward to such a change in Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These eight CARICOM member-states plus six other countries, are

those outside of the United Kingdom, with the British monarch as their Head of State: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.

Of course, in the Caribbean as a whole there are the following five British colonies or overseas territories: Anguilla, Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands. Bermuda located in the Atlantic, but with Caribbean connections, is also under British suzerainty. The wider Caribbean is also awash with colonial territories or departments of colonial powers of the United States of America, France, and Holland. In the case of colonial USA, there are Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands (St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John); in relation to Holland: Sint Maarten, Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba; in the case of France: Saint Martin, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Barthélemy (St. Barts), and French Guiana in neighbouring South America. Hopefully, too, all these colonial territories will push for independence within the comity of nations globally. It would be good to see the end of colonialism in our Caribbean. But that initiative belongs not to me but to the people of these twenty or so colonies or territories and their national leaders.

BARBADOS AND ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the closest country to Barbados; to the east of Barbados lies this archipelagic nation, 100 miles away. We do have a maritime boundary delimitation agreement. We are both at the core of our regional family. Indeed, between us there are strong familial ties.

From as early as the 17th century, natives of Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have bonded in resistance to colonialism, slavery, foreign domination, and human exploitation. Africans who were enslaved in Barbados repeatedly found refuge in St. Vincent and the Grenadines when they escaped the savagery and inhumanity of slavery. The wooded mountains of St. Vincent hid significant numbers of Africans who resisted enslavement but who were unable to hide in Barbados. Over time, those African brothers and sisters built family relations with the indigenous Callinagoes, and Garifuna (the off-spring of the Callinagoes and Africans). Indeed, these African brothers and sisters who escaped slavery in Barbados provided much militancy to the anti-colonial and anti-enslavement struggles in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These African brothers and sisters were determined never to return to slavery; so they fought magnificently in their adopted home of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The British were never able to enslave the Callinago and Garifuna people!

Between 1764 and 1795, during the Callinago and Garifuna resistance to British colonialism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, many fighters in the guerilla army of Paramount Chief Joseph Chatoyer (now National Hero) and his astute lieutenant Duvallé, hailed from Barbados. During, and after, this prolonged war of resistance, the British carried out large scale genocide against our indigenous peoples. After the defeat of the resistance, and Chatoyer's death, in 1795, the British marooned over 5,000 Garifuna and some Callinagoes on the inhospitable island of Balliceaux (part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines); one-half of them died from hunger and disease

over a six-month period. The remainder were forcibly transported to Roatan Island in the Bay of Honduras in 1797. From there our resilient forbears (including undoubtedly some with links to Barbados) settled in communities in Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Their thousands of descendants revere St. Vincent and the Grenadines (“Youreimei”) as their spiritual home.

My personal links with Barbados are deep and wide. At the St. Vincent Boys’ Grammar School, which I attended between January 1959 and June 1965, each of my Headmasters were Barbadians, in succession: Gilbert C. Miller; Ronnie Hughes; Theodore M. Worrell; and Ulric G. Crick. They helped to mould me; they educated me; they trained me; they loved me; and they cared for me. I shall always remember them with love and gratitude.

Between August 1976 and July 1979, I was employed as a Lecturer in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados. I taught large numbers of Barbadian students who have since occupied senior positions, in Barbados, the region, and the world, in academia, business, the professions, politics, the public service. And as I traversed Barbados as an observer of life, living, and production, I learnt so much from Barbadians, especially the working people, the marginalised, and the youths. As a public intellectual I gave of my time freely to communities, secondary school students, the media, including the mid-week Nation newspaper in which I wrote a weekly column under the rubric “Straight Talk”. I hold Barbados and Barbadians in the highest regard. My 2014 essay entitled “***The Idea of Barbados***” tells the story of my attachments to, and my love for, Barbados and Barbadians.

Now, today, I celebrate with you joyously on your severing of the links, institutionally, with the British monarchy and the elevation of our home-grown Head of State. I say “our” because even though I am not a citizen of Barbados, I feel a sense of belonging to the extraordinary landscape and seascape of this blessed land, and to its people, my brothers and sisters in this our Caribbean civilisation.

In April 2021, nature, in the form of a series of volcanic eruptions at La Soufriere, yet again emphasised the joinder between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados. Between April 9th and April 22nd, the mountain of ash emitted from the volcano covered St. Vincent, and travelled substantially to Barbados causing, among other things, a closure for several days of the Grantley Adams International Airport and many businesses. Barbados and our CARICOM family came to our aid quite generously. The hurricanes and storms affect us jointly. So, too, the ill winds of the global political economy; and, together, the COVID pandemic has been ravaging us. The Caribbean Sea separates us but links us inextricably: The inward gaze within our respective countries is accompanied always with an outward look across the Caribbean Sea, and beyond. Geography, history, demography, culture, politics, and economics place us together like peas in a pod. We cannot escape each other. So, the achievement of your removal of certain colonial shackles brings us joy and hopefulness. Congratulations Barbados on your republican status!

BARBADOS AND BRITAIN

The severance of the umbilical cord of monarchy does not in any way pit Barbados against Britain. Indeed, there is no confrontation between them; both countries are strong allies of each other; and they share multi-lateral partnerships through a multiplicity of regional and global institutions touching and concerning issues of import for Barbados, Britain, our Caribbean, and the world. A recent case in point has been their collaboration, with others, at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, within the ambit of the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Importantly, Barbados and Britain are conjoined bilaterally, and multi-laterally through a series of treaties and agreements on a wide range of matters of mutual interest. The economy of Barbados is linked, inextricably, with that of Britain. The history between both countries is deep and wide; the historical nexus predisposes, both of them to be close to each other. The contemporary realities of their national, regional, and global conditions induce them to develop further their mature, many-sided relationships.

Barbados will continue to be a favoured tourism destination for the British; Bajans will still go to London for work and leisure. The British Parliament will continue to be a critical point of reference, if not a model, for the legislature of Barbados. The Anglicanism of Barbados will still link St. Michael's Cathedral to the fountain head of the Archbishopric of Canterbury, though with a Barbadian particularity. Cricket, the "Mecca" of Lords, and Kensington Oval will still engender passion and commitment. The jurisprudence of the English Courts (High Court, Court of Appeal, and Supreme Court), alongside those of other common-law jurisdictions will continue to be persuasive buttresses to the authoritative jurisprudential pronouncements of the superior Courts of Barbados and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council will still be referenced by Barbadian judges, even as they submit to the authority of the CCJ to which Barbados had wisely acceded as the replacement Court of final appellate jurisdiction. Writers of the creative imagination in both Barbados and Britain will always learn from each other their mastery of the English Language.

In short, Barbados and Britain are entering an even more mature relationship. Leaving colonial premises after closing time does not mean an abandonment of close bonds of friendship. Barbados and Britain remain conjoined in mighty ways; moreover, they are neighbours in our global family of nations. But now, Barbados stands independent and free, mature and wise, devoid of any formal vestiges of super-ordination and subordination.

As Barbados goes forth boldly and maturely it drinks not from the fountain of recriminations or lamentations. It reaffirms in joy, faith, love, and hope Jeremiah's declaration, made popular in hymn: "*Morning by morning new mercies we see; all that we need, thy hand has provided; great is thy faithfulness.*"

A FINAL NOTE ON LEADERSHIP

Undoubtedly, the leadership of Mia Amor Mottley has been vital in pulling together the veritable parallelogram of forces to deliver the end of monarchy in Barbados and the raising up of its own home-grown Head of State within a parliamentary republic. But, as I have oft-times repeated, Mia did it not alone; she led in concert with others and in objective circumstances which so permitted this monumental achievement. In that regard, she brought to a conclusion that which former Prime Ministers Errol Barrow, Owen Arthur, David Thompson, and Freundel Stuart had helped to shape, from consciousness to reality.

Karl Marx had long provided us with insights to grasp this process of history-making. In his brilliant text, originally published in 1852 (1869 English edition) and entitled The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Marx explained:

“Men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”

Leaders, great men and women, make history but only to the extent that the circumstances of history permit them so to make. To be sure, there are some leaders, more than others, who push the boundaries of the possibilities, which the circumstances do provide, to the furthest or most extraordinary extent.

But the personality of the leader is vital in this process. An incisive, compelling, and lengthy quotation from Gordon Lewis' book, Slavery, Imperialism and Freedom: Studies in English Radical Thought (published in 1978 by Monthly Review Press) is appropriate:

“The impact of personality on historical development is, of course, undeniable; that both Henry and Elizabeth Tudor were strong-willed monarchs no doubt contributed to the final victory of sixteenth century England against the Catholic reaction. But no less undeniable is the fact that such impact can only occur in certain given historical conditions. It is the total parallelogram of socio-economic-cultural forces which at any given moment explains and conditions the influence any individual person exercises on the historical process. The character of the individual, however outstanding, is a factor in that process only to the degree that those forces permit it to be so. It is true that within the framework, that factor will have enormous influence. Yet before such personal drives can in any measure influence the course of events they must, first, be comfortable to the primary needs of the time, and secondly, fully deployable under the prevailing conditions of the times--- --. It is misleading --- to see the outstanding individual as the prime shaper of events. He is, rather, the product and agent of impersonal forces. He may take the initiative in certain directions of action and

policies; he may see further than others; he may dramatize in his person the requirement of a new class or a new nation. But all along, he is the instrument, albeit unconsciously, of the inherent logic of social and economic structures.”

Ten years earlier, Gordon Lewis in his classic The Growth of the Modern West Indies had critiqued Archibald Singham’s 1967 volume The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity in which Singham had sought, by way of a schematic analysis, to portray Eric Gairy as charismatic leader (a concept articulated by the early 20th century German sociologist, Max Weber) and the government in colonial Grenada as the embodiment of a Weberian “rationalist bureaucracy”. Lewis viewed Singham’s offering as doing nothing more than “*describing the institutional superstructure while ignoring, except for a brief description, the social class struggle out of which Gairyism emerged.*” Lewis insisted that “*Charisma is not a self-generating first cause, it grows out of deep social crisis. It merely provided the crisis with its appropriate leadership.*”

I recall, on one occasion, when my friend Freundel Stuart was Prime Minister of Barbados, he and I had a two-hour discussion on precisely this subject. Freundel, an erudite and reflective scholar schooled in both the Marxist and Pauline traditions, reminded me that the late nineteenth century — early twentieth century Russian Marxist scholar, George Plekhanov, had addressed a similar bundle of issues in his book The Role of the Individual in History, published in 1898. Incidentally, where but in the Caribbean would you have two sitting Prime Ministers engaged in a profound conversation on “leadership” with the aid of, among others, Marx, CLR James, Archie Singham, Max Weber, Gordon Lewis, Plekhanov, Erol Barrow, Eric Williams, the Prophet Nehemiah (he who rebuilt the city walls around Jerusalem after they were broken for 112 years), the Apostle Paul (he who took Christ teachings throughout the Roman Empire and beyond), and Saint Augustine (he who hailed from North Africa, wrote the magisterial theological treatise, The City of God, and influenced immensely the theological and organisational bases of western Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church)?

Dear Mia, C.L.R. James’ celebrated book Beyond a Boundary first published in 1963, which is about cricket but more than cricket, has accorded me insights on leadership which I shall share. James was writing about the leadership of Frank Worrell, the West Indies cricket captain, on the West Indies tour of Australia in 1960 – 1961. Please remember that the West Indies touring team consisted of a disparate group of talented individuals of known quality, some older players of declining, cricketing prowess, and some relative unknowns, with promise. Worrell had to facilitate their moulding into a winning unit. Permit me to quote C.L.R. James at length on the leadership question, and please weigh his sparse language carefully:

“As everyone knows, the tour began badly. But, said Worrell, he lectured a few only of his men on taking courses to bring their general knowledge of the appurtenances of life up to the standard expected from so prominent a personage as a Test cricketer; on cricket he lectured nobody.

*'if something was wrong I told them what was right and left it to them',
[Worrell said].*

*"These words will always ring in my ears. They are something new,
not only in West Indies cricket but in West Indies life. West Indians can
often tell you what is wrong and some even what will make it right, but
they don't leave it to you. Worrell did----.*

*"----The West Indies team in Australia, on the field and off, was playing
above what it knew of itself. If anything went wrong it knew that it would
be instantly told, in unhesitating and precise language, how to repair it,
and that the captain's certainty and confidence extended to his belief that
what he wanted would be done. He did not instill into but drew out of
his players. What they discovered must have been a revelation to a few
more than to the players themselves." [My Emphasis]*

From all this I learn that a leader, including a cricketing or political leader, must know intimately the resources which he possesses at hand; he/she must assess properly the strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and limitations of the persons (and institutions) who are being led; he/she must seek to lift the general knowledge of those whom he/she is leading so as to enable them to make wise decisions in their day-to-day work; the leader must have confidence in the capacity of those who are being led to do the right thing, to do their best; occasionally, in emergencies, the leader may be required to insist on a particular path in the interest not of an "individual qua individual" but of the whole entity or enterprise; the leader must have goals of the collective to achieve within which frame each individual has his/her responsibilities; the leader must guide and point the way forward; the leader must work actively at his/her tasks and not merely talk; the leader must not be overly cautious; he/she must not always play it safe; he/she must not be afraid of making errors but must not be a friend of recklessness; he/she must learn from his/her errors and those of others.

In this regard, the Book of Ecclesiastes offers wise advice:

*"Whoever watches the wind will not plant;
whoever looks at the cloud will not reap.
----Sow your seed in the morning,
and at evening let not your hands be idle,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that,
or whether both will do equally well."*

Above all, I learn from C.L.R. James on this subject that inspiring persons whom you are leading is important but far more important and more challenging, is to draw out of them that which is good, noble, and of high quality in them; even to draw out such goodness, nobility, and quality from them that they do not as yet know that they possess. Leadership thus is a supreme art (not only a science); it is clearly a talent which some people have and others do not.

In politics, as in cricket, leadership is an intellectual, creative, and people-centred activity. Without a compelling narrative about our condition and the way forward for the people, the leader not only marks time, but he/she regresses into a host of “ad hoc” interventions of little or no positive consequence. Inertia inevitably sets in; defensiveness and backwardness prevail. In such circumstances, the leadership invariably looks forward to the past, knowing fully that its future is behind it. Trivia and side-shows preoccupy the leader’s agenda. A debilitating malaise of “learned helplessness” is the order of the day; no fresh initiatives or altered paradigms for the changing times emerge. At the political crease, a leader is expected to score runs, not merely occupy it; the more runs a leader scores, the greater his or her appetite to put more runs on the tins. The mere administration of things becomes, in time, a routinisation of stasis without any developmental thrust; and the very routinisation process itself becomes mired in lethargy, petty corruption, and even malicious compliance. The regime is thus unable to rule in the old way, but is at sea since it knows no other way but the old way which is itself untenable. In short measure, an internal crisis evolves or develops.

This crisis generally, and in leadership, emerges when the principals are innocent of the extent of the challenging, dangerous or unacceptable condition and has no clear idea or frame of reference for the way forward out of the crisis. The leader at such times displays more than ever his/her lack of political courage; he/she puts his/her finger up in the wind to see in which direction it is blowing, and then acts. In an age of opinion-making or governance by social media, the weak leader becomes a prisoner of the political crazies who toss him/her hither or thither through “influencing” on this or that platform on the internet. A strong leader, in communion always with his or her people, fears not the loss of power; indeed, the leader who fears the loss of power tends to lose it swiftly; he/she who fears not, tends to hold it longer. In short, a leader must do the right thing, even if in so doing, temporary unpopularity results. This game is longer than a five-day test; it is decidedly not a T-20.

In our Caribbean community where resides an abiding and deeply-embedded Christian faith, a political leader ought always to be alive to the dangers of opportunistically following, in hope of transient political gain, this or that pastor/preacher/priest with novel theologies and practices. This is an emerging malignancy among some so-called leaders; this is the way of a political Don Quixote chasing imaginary windmills.

Sadly, an industry is growing up whereby almost every Monday morning some charlatan with megalomaniac tendencies declares himself to be a prophet, an apostle, or God’s solely-appointed. Bizarrely, the wife of “the prophet” becomes, through holy matrimony, “a prophetess”; I truly do not understand this. Invariably, such a self-declared religious “jefe” is financed by some minor church or sect from the deep south of those United States with abhorrent political agendas. Often they are host to visiting “missionaries” bearing gifts of some sort or another; and they latch themselves onto some political or other local personality of note.

Within a short time, they are offering ex cathedra advice on practically every public policy; dressed in brief authority, they are ignorant of that which they are most assured. They frequently rummage, superficially, through the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament for justifications of ill-informed political or public policy advice. A favourite of theirs is the invocation of Paul's witness and ministry among the communities of Jews and Gentiles. But it escapes these neophytes of perdition that Paul, servant of the Lord, called to be an Apostle, was required, after his Damascene conversion, to go to Jerusalem for validation from the Disciples of Jesus Christ. In these complex, and extraordinary times, political leaders (and aspirants) are strongly advised to avoid these mis-leaders in religious garb. There are always true and holy men and women of God to offer real spiritual sustenance and guidance — necessary and desirable — to our political leaders. In any event, I commend the advice given by the ancient Prophet Eli to young Samuel and which, upon proper advisement, I have followed: "*Speak Lord, your servant Ralph is listening.*" I have found this approach especially helpful during the time of COVID and the volcanic eruptions. Our faith, and works, will see us through.

Clearly, leadership counts even if transformation or a fundamental alteration (as distinct from the merely transactional) demands a set of objective structural and institutional conditions to be effected and made legitimate. Again, the writings on cricket, that national sport of Barbados, are instructive. This time the reflections of one of Australia's most distinguished captains, Montagu Alfred Noble, who after his first-class career (1893 – 1920), wrote about some salient personal traits required of captaincy and leadership, in his book, The Game's The Thing (published in 1926), thus:

"Many qualifications are necessary adequately to equip the man selected as captain, he may learn just so much as his mentality will allow. There is, however, one attribute that cannot be acquired: it is a gift of the gods, and may be summed up in the phrase 'personal equation'. When he possesses that most valuable trait, it goes without saying that the men under his command have great personal respect for him and faith in his judgement. He becomes a tower of strength, a rock to lean upon in adversity. He inspires such confidence that they will work hard ----. His keenness and enthusiasm are infectious, and is men respond readily and without effort." [My Emphasis].

In twenty-first century Barbados, I await the verdict in these respects from the people, about the men and women under Mia! I reasonably suspect that the judgement is already favourable.

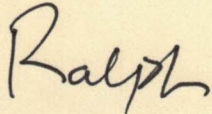
My dear Mia, as you continue to lead the new republic of Barbados, at this time of socio-economic dislocation consequent upon the COVID pandemic, the ravages of climate change, the challenges arising from the contemporary global political economy, the limitations amidst the possibilities of the small size of your country, the slenderness of its material resources, and the legacies of underdevelopment historical, I urge that you take comfort from the words of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah [Chapter 41, verses 9-10]:

*"I said 'you are my servant';
So do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous
right hand."*

And, at the end of the day, what truly is required of us? The wise, profound answer to this, delivered by the Prophet Micah, is simple and direct: Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God!

All the best to you, you family, your government and the people of Barbados. Congratulations again on the achievement of the republican status for Barbados! Love Live Barbados! Love live Our Caribbean Civilisation!

Sincerely yours,



Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves
Prime Minister

/aw-j

PS: This letter us meant to be read in conjunction with my 2014 essay entitled **The Idea of Barbados**, which I enclose herewith for ease of reference.