

State Repression in Barbados: The Barrow government versus the Black Powerities 1968-1970

Repressão estatal em Barbados: o governo de Errol Barrow contra os Black Powerities 1968-1970

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RESUMO

Os movimentos do *Black Power* nos territórios caribenhos de língua inglesa enfrentaram uma tremenda repressão de seus governos durante o final dos anos 1960 e início dos anos 1970. Alguns dos atores principais do Movimento foram banidos de vários países do caribe inglês, alguns foram presos, muitos foram perseguidos e constantemente vigiados pela polícia. Governos aprovaram legislação repressiva para impedir o crescimento do *Black Power*. Esses governos, embora inicialmente declarassem que o *Black Power* não era relevante para seus territórios porque tinham negros no poder (como governadores gerais, primeiros-ministros e outros funcionários estaduais importantes), reconheceram que a ideologia do *Black Power* era potencialmente problemática para a ordem social. Este artigo examina o trânsito de ideologias e estratégias relacionada ao *Black Power* dos Estados Unidos nas ilhas do Caribe inglês logo após a independência, e em especial, a repressão estatal na ilha de Barbados pelo de Errol Barrow contra o Movimento *Black Power* entre 1968 e 1970.

Palavras-chave: Repressão, Barbados, Black Powerities, Errol Barrow, Movimento Estudantil

RESUMEN

Los movimientos del *Black Power* en los territorios del Caribe de habla inglesa enfrentaron una tremenda represión por parte de sus gobiernos a fines de la década de 1960 y principios

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de la de 1970. Algunos de los principales actores del Movimiento fueron expulsados de varios países del Caribe inglés, algunos fueron arrestados, muchos fueron perseguidos y vigilados constantemente por la policía. Los gobiernos aprobaron leyes represivas para detener el crecimiento del *Black Power*. Estos gobiernos, aunque inicialmente declararon que el Black Power no era relevante para sus territorios porque tenían negros en el poder (como gobernadores generales, primeros ministros y otros funcionarios estatales clave), reconocieron que la ideología del *Black Power* era potencialmente problemática para el orden social. Este artículo examina el tránsito de las ideologías y estrategias relacionadas con el *Black Power* de Estados Unidos en las islas del Caribe inglés poco después de la independencia, y en particular la represión estatal en la isla de Barbados por Errol Barrow contra el *Black Power Movement* entre 1968 y 1970.

Palabras clave: Represión, Barbados, Black Powerities, Errol Barrow, Movimiento estudiantil.

ABSTRACT

The Black Power movements in the English-speaking Caribbean territories faced tremendous repression from their governments during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some of the leading figures were banned from various Caribbean territories, a few of them were imprisoned, many were harassed and constantly watched by the police and the governments passed repressive legislation to stymie the growth of Black Power. These governments while initially declaring that Black Power was not relevant to their territories because they had black persons in powerful positions, such as Governor Generals, Prime Ministers and other important state officials, they recognized that the Black Power ideology resonated with sections of their societies, with the potential to trouble the social order. This paper examines state repression on English speaking Caribbean in the years following their independence, in especial the island of Barbados by Errol Barrow government against the Black Power Movement between 1968 and 1970.

Keywords: Repression, Barbados, Black Powerities, Errol Barrow, Students Movement

Carl Lumumba, in his chapter “The West Indies and The Sir George Williams Affair: An Assessment,” claimed that the “repressive measures” enacted by Prime Minister Errol Barrow of Barbados - in response to the Black Power Movement - “was surpassed only by the wave of repression unleashed by Eric Williams, which literally turned Trinidad into a police state.” (Lumumba, 1971, p. 189). Given the repressive nature of the state in Barbados, Lumumba’s conclusion does not appear to be far-fetched. George Belle, reminds us that in 1937 during the labour disturbances when the state was under stress “more people were killed in Barbados, with a smaller population in a shorter time, than in Jamaica,” (Bell, 1986, p.83) referring to the Jamaican labour rebellion that spread between April and June 1938.

The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) was elected to power in 1961 and Errol Barrow became the third Premier of Barbados. Barrow and the DLP won a second term in November 1966 general elections and led Barbados to independent statehood on the

30th of November 1966. Barrow's government implemented an impressive array of social democratic policies including: the national insurance scheme, universal free secondary and university education, and comprehensive health scheme. The fact that that he led the nation to independence and his implementation of the above policies made Barrow extremely popular among a large section of the Barbadian public. On the regional front, Barrow along with Forbes Burnham (Guyana's Prime Minister) and Vere Bird (Antigua's Premier) was instrumental in the formation of the Caribbean Free Trade Area (Carifta) in 1968. Notwithstanding the positive initiatives of Barrow's government locally and regionally, there was a repressive side of the Barrow's government that has been lost in his populism. This paper examines some of the repressive measures used by the Barrow government to intimidate, harass and curtail Black Power activism in Barbados between 1968 and 1970.

The role of the State: A Marxist perspective

For Marxists, the state is the outcome and the manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism. As such, one of the most important preoccupations of the state "is the creation of order which legalises and perpetuates the collisions between the classes." (Lenin, 1943, p. 9). The state is a special coercive force for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie." (Idem, p.17). Within the context of Barbados given that class and race was virtually synonymous from British colonial rule to independence and the immediate post-independence period, it is clear that the state was preoccupied with the establishment of stability between the white and black people on the island. Clive Thomas argued that the most distinguishing feature of the state was "that it was organized along the lines of public power, and it has the capacity to impose sanctions if and when necessary." (Thomas, 1984, p.5). During colonial rule, the state in Barbados emerged to serve the needs of the white ruling class. Throughout this era, the state manifested its repressive propensities by suppressing the black working class in the interest of the white ruling class. In the immediate post-independence period, the state continued to display many of its authoritarian tendencies inherited from colonialism.

Black Power Groups

After 1966, the Peoples Progressive Movement (PPM), a Marxist political party was the leading Black Power grouping on the island. The PPM promoted the Black Power philosophy through its organ, the *Black Star* newspaper which was published fortnightly from 1967-1969. The *Black Star* kept its readers abreast of the Black Power struggles in the United States and the Caribbean and the liberation struggles in Africa. It carried many articles on Black Power written by the leaders of the PPM or authored by many of leading Pan-Africanists and Black Power figures such as H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael (later named Kwame Ture), and

Kwame Nkrumah. The paper published three articles by Walter Rodney on Black Power in the immediate aftermath of his prohibition from Jamaica and the attendant disturbances in October 1968. That allowed readers to get to know Rodney thoughts on Black Power and freedom for his people and to clear up some of the many misconceptions held in reactionary circles about the young Caribbean intellectual.² A few issues of the paper also carried a column entitled “Black Power for Barbadian Teenagers.”

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which was keeping a close watch on the activities of the PPM/*Black Star* confirmed that the *Black Star* devoted much of its space to the Black Power theme.³ The PPM also called for Black Power through its public meetings held throughout the island by demanding the liquidation of the plantation system and giving land to the landless, an end to white exploitation and the control of big banks and business conglomerates.

Black Power was also advocated by Black Night, a loose cultural nationalist formation that consisted of some of the more radical actors, musicians, and writers on the island. Black Night issued a 26-point proposal for achieving Black Power including some of the following:

- i. New lands of ownership must be established.
- ii. A national cooperative bank must be established.
- iii. The sugar industry must be owned and controlled by the people.
- iv. Streets, squares, and so-called monuments must be re-named and replaced by the names of persons who are truly representative of the people.
- v. August 1st must be designated as Freedom Day. (Worrell, 2013, p. 225-226).

Attempts to Discredit Black Power Philosophy

By November 1968, the debate on Black Power became very intense on the island following ongoing developments in the Black Power struggles in the United States in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.; the trial of Huey Newton, the leader of the Black Panther Party; the issue of Tommy Smith and John Carlos taking the Black Power salute while receiving their medals at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico; and the banning of Walter Rodney from Jamaica.

Of the above events, the prohibition of Walter Rodney, the leading Black Power intellectual in Jamaica, had the greatest resonance with Barbadians as students at the Cave Hill campus in solidarity with fellow students at the University of the West Indies Mona, suspended classes for a week, barricaded the entrance to the campus and dispatched a protest letter to the Minister of Home Affairs, Roy McNeil demanding that the ban on Rodney should be revoked. A twelve-member delegation of the University of the West Indies Student Action Front (USAF), a Black Power student formation carried a protest note to Government Headquarters to be given to Prime Minister Barrow. The note condemned the presence of

² “Introduction to the Walter Rodney articles,” *Black Star*, November 4, 1968.

³ US National Archives, Central Intelligence Agency, “Black Radicalism in the Caribbean – Another Look,” June 12, 1970, 2008: CIA-RDP85T00875R000900030-9.

soldiers and policemen at the Mona campus. The students displayed a few placards: “Shearer Walks in CIA Darkness;” “Mona no Concentration Camp;” “Remove the Troops,” “Heads of State Note – Silence Means Consent.”⁴

Cameron Tudor, the vice president of the ruling DLP and Deputy Prime Minister entered the discussion at a public meeting and emphatically stated there was no “room in Barbados for Black Power” because it originated in the deep south of the United States where “the blacks were not allowed to be seen with the whites.”⁵ A similar position was also taken by Frank Walcott, the General Secretary of the Barbados Workers Union, the largest trade union on the island and a member of the DLP who stated that “Barbados already had Black Power since all the government members were black.”⁶

Adding to this controversy, Rodney reminded us that “a black man ruling a dependent state within the imperialist system has no power. He is simply an agent of the whites in the metropolis, with an army and a police force designed to maintain the imperialist way of things in that particular colonial area.” (Rodney, 1980, p. 18). Tudor and Walcott believed that by denying the relevance of Black Power they would be able to discredit the calls for Black Power and curb the potential impact of the Black Power activists.

Leroy Harewood, the editor of the *Black Star* newspaper, was extremely critical of the above-mentioned positions taken by these two influential politicians. In a small pamphlet entitled “*Black Powerlessness in Barbados*” Harewood sought to expose the falsehood that blacks in Barbados had power because the island was independent and had a black Prime Minister and Governor General and demonstrated that the more things appeared to change in Barbados, the more they remained constant. Rodney explained that the “continuities between pre-independence and post-independence West Indian society have been so striking that some observers have discounted the need for the neologism, neo-colonialism, to describe and analyse the contemporary scene.” (Rodney, 1975, 15). Harewood argued that during the period of slavery the white man was in charge of the island politically and economically. In the post-emancipation period, the white man continued to rule Barbados politically and economically. Harewood acknowledged that although Barbados was now an independent nation the whites still controlled the economy, while a group of Black men appeared to be in charge of the political administration. He opined that “these men were nothing more than the ugly caricatures of the white colonialists.” (Harewood, 1968, p. 5).

Carl Stokes incident

In February 1969, Carl Stokes, the Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio delivered a lecture at Centre for Multi-Racial Studies, at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, entitled: “The Problem of the Black Man in the Cities of the United States.” Stokes was elected as the first African-American Mayor of a major city in November 1967. Many African-Americans were soon disappointed with Stokes and felt a sense of betrayal with his selection

4 “Students Hand in Protest,” *Advocate*, October 22, 1968.

5 “No Room for Black Power,” *Advocate*, November 17, 1968.

6 “Walcott Strive for National Unity,” *Advocate*, November 17, 1968.

of a white right wing police chief and the role he played in repressing the Black Nationalists New Libya movement in the events that led up to and the repercussions of the Glenville Shootout. (Sustar, 2013). This negative baggage followed Stokes to Barbados where he was heckled by a section of the USAF who viewed Mayor Stokes as an “uncle Tom.”⁷ It was claimed that Stokes was booed because he arrived late and he refused to apologize for his late arrival. An anonymous writer in the *Black Star* argued that instead of Stokes addressing “The Black Man in the Cities of the USA” he opted “to put the case for US imperialism and to apologise for racism.”⁸

The next morning the police visited the campus to carry out an investigation to identify the students that heckled Mayor Stokes. This led the police to intensify their level of surveillance of some of the students who refused “to give up the struggle for Black Liberation.”⁹

A few weeks before the Stokes’ incident, John Connell, the public relations officer of the PPM complained that while Barbados had not been as repressive as some of the other Caribbean territories in regards to restricting the freedom of the press, the government demanded that all newspapers large and small must pay the same registration fee of \$100.00 – the members of the PPM were convinced that this fee which was announced in the April 1968 Budget Speech was directly targeted against the *Black Star* newspaper in an attempt to suppress the paper.¹⁰ Connell stressed that “in all of the territories including Barbados there is the increasing unsavoury tendency for the Police to breathe down the necks of persons who dare to express views that the establishment does not like.” He added that “public meetings are tape recorded. Persons selling and buying progressive journals and literature are constantly questioned and harassed.”¹¹

Stokes’s trip coincided with the growing student militancy and radicalization a small section of the populace brought about by the Sir George Williams’ student unrests in Canada in January 1969, where a few Caribbean students including two Barbadians were arrested. The Canadian Governor General visited the island on a goodwill tour of the Caribbean in the aftermath of the Sir George Williams incident, around the time Stokes delivered his lecture. On his tour of the Cave Hill Campus the Governor General was met by a student protest.¹² In addition, the USAF presented the Canadian High Commissioner J.R. McKinney with a letter that condemned the racism at Sir George Williams University and expressed solidarity with the West Indian students who were arrested.¹³

The actions of USAF heightened concerns about growth of Black Power on the campus and Barbados in general. A few days later Prime Minister Barrow appeared on a Radio programme with a couple of students from the USAF to let the students and the wider population hear his position on Black Power. According to the CIA report Barrow “was especially caustic in deriding black power slogans calling for the overthrow of West Indian

7 Patricia Anderson, “Manners and the University,” *Advocate*, February 24, 1969. and Tyrone Eveyln, Campus Students Disappointing Behaviour, *Advocate*, February 19, 1969.

8 “Uproar at Cave Hill,” *Black Star*, February 22, 1969.

9 Ibid.

10 John Connell, “The Drift to the Right,” *Black Star*, February 8, 1969.

11 Ibid.

12 “Alister Green, G.G. Turns Tables’ on Demonstrations,” *Advocate*, February 26, 1969.

13 “Letter presented to High Commissioner,” *Advocate*, February 26, 1969.

society as it now exists.” The same report labelled the movement “as highly subversive and advised the students to tend to their studies rather than destroying society.” The CIA felt that “the radio discussion accomplished the prime minister’s purpose of exposing the movement as a nebulous and disruptive force and letting the population know exactly where the government stands on the issue.”¹⁴ Barrow’s action was commended by the Central Intelligence Agency. It was also applauded by the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and a large section of the Barbadian population.¹⁵ This intervention by Barrow was viewed as the official declaration of war on the Black Power activism on the island.

The Banning of Geddes Granger (Makandal Daaga) and Clive Nunez

In April 1970, Eric Sealy, a well-known Barbadian political activist invited Geddes Granger (Makandal Daaga) and Clive Nunez of the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) to come to Barbados and address a public meeting on Black Power developments in Trinidad and Tobago. NJAC had played a leading role in the Black Power protest that rocked the twin island state between February and April 1970.

The *Advocate* newspaper provided wide coverage of Black Power struggles as they unfolded in Trinidad and Tobago, but it was felt that Barbadians should be informed of the happenings by these leading participants in the Black Power struggle. However, the government banned Daaga and Nunez from visiting the island. According to a government release: “After very mature consideration, the Government decided at a meeting this morning to withdraw permission for Mr. Geddes Granger [Makandal Daaga] and Mr. Clive Nunez to enter and land in Barbados.”¹⁶ Edwy Talma, the acting Prime Minister of Barbados indicated that the reason for this drastic action was because “it was not in the interest of the Barbados Public and the economy of the island as a whole.”¹⁷ Prime Minister Barrow who was attending a Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in Jamaica confessed that when he heard the decision taken by his cabinet that he was embarrassed. However, it seemed unbelievable that a decision of this enormity would be taken without any consultation with the Prime Minister, who admitted that he had been in contact with Phillip Greaves, the Minister of Home Affairs who had agreed with him that no West Indian should be prevented from entering Barbados as a visitor.

Barrow posited that the members of Cabinet might have misunderstood the agreed policy “that the right to enter Barbados does not automatically confer rights to speak at public meetings and that such freedom of speech and assembly are guaranteed only to citizens of Barbados.” Barrow acknowledged that he was ashamed because he had managed to persuade his colleagues that “rational protest is part of the democratic way of life, and even in dealing

14 US National Archives, Central Intelligence Agency, “Black Radicalism in the Caribbean – Another Look,” June 12, 1970, 2008: CIA-RDP85T00875R000900030-9, 10.

15 “Colour Balance,” *The Journal of the Barbados Chamber of Commerce* (July, 1970): 1.

16 “Barbados Bars T’dad Black Powerist,” *Advocate*, April 17, 1970.

17 Ibid.

firmly with irrational protest great tolerance should always be exercised.”¹⁸ The banning of Daaga and Nunez from addressing the Barbadian public was part of the repressive stratagems that the Barrow government used in their war on the Black Powerites. It is important to note that there was no political fallout from this decision as no one resigned from the Cabinet, there was no Cabinet reshuffle, and no one was fired from the Cabinet because of this issue.

The banning of Daaga and Nunez provoked a lot of debate in Barbados and across the Caribbean. A section of Barbadians felt that they should not be allowed to enter Barbados because: i) they were on a quest to organise revolutionary change throughout the West Indies; ii) it was rumoured that Granger had advised the Barbadian Black Powerites to instigate an economic squeeze on big business – by not paying their telephone and electricity bills or hire purchased goods - and to defy the government if a state of emergency was declared; iii) it was felt that Granger had the reputation of being a spell-binding, crowd-moving speaker, and Nunez was said to be one of the best organizers of mass-demonstrations in Trinidad; iv) the memory of the 1937 labour rebellion was brought up because Clement Payne, the labour leader came from Trinidad to organize workers and when he was deported this resulted in the explosion of 1937.¹⁹ Another section of the populace felt that they should have been allowed to enter the island and address the meeting because: i) Barbadians are known for their level-headedness and not easily swayed by words and ii) it was also felt that by prohibiting the proposed visit would only boost it with an appearance of significance.²⁰

At a mass meeting which was attended by a massive crowd, Sealy registered his disapproval of the decision to ban Daaga and Nunez. Prior to the start of that meeting Sealy and some of the people marched down Broad Street as a form of protest where they were accompanied by several police officers. This massive show of force by the police was evident throughout the meeting.²¹ Clarke, the leading proponent of Black Power within the PPM at this time, criticized the action of the government and contended that a decision of this magnitude should not have been made when the Prime Minister and other senior officials were out of the island. He warned that “if Caribbean political leaders thought that they could stem the tide of Black Power, they were opening up themselves to all the consequences which might follow from their attitudes.”²² The members of NJAC, in response to the actions of the Barrow government against Daaga and Nunez declared that Barrow was banned from landing in Trinidad and Tobago. Nunez stressed that any time they heard that Barrow was coming to Trinidad and Tobago on government business they were going up to Piarco Airport to stop him.²³ Ratoon, one of the main Black Power groups in Guyana, condemned the ban as “the most recent sanction by a West Indian Government against West Indians.” They viewed it as an additional attempt “to close the net on militant and progressive activities in the Caribbean.”²⁴ The Guyana Association of Cultural Activities with Independent Africa (ASCRIA) regretted

18 “Ban Amazing to Barrow: Decision embarrassing,” *Advocate*, April 18, 1970. Editorial, “Cabinet Mistake is a serious matter,” *Advocate*, April 14, 1970.

19 Editorial, “The Wisest Decision?” I, April 19, 1970

20 “Crowd hears views on Black Powerists’ Ban” *Advocate*, 1970.

21 “Ban Amazing to Barrow.”

22 “Guyana Organizations attack B’dos decision,” April 18, 1970.

23 *Ibid*

24 *Ibid*.

the decision taken by the Barbadian government “not to allow Granger and Nunez to enter that country.”²⁵

Minor Black Power skirmishes

The violence that occurred in Jamaica after Walter Rodney was banned from that island in October 1968 and the Black Power upheaval in Trinidad and Tobago made the authorities and a section of Barbadian population jittery. A few minor protests on the island added to the nervousness about the prospect of violence on the island. There was a small “Black Power protest” at Codrington College, on the theological college of the Anglican Church, on the 13 March 1970. The demonstration came after a black student was allegedly pushed by a white member of staff. The demonstrators carried placards that stated, “Black God for a Black Priest,” “We Demand True Justice Now – Beware,” “Do Not Turn the Other Cheek.”²⁶ Also, the Guild of Undergraduates of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, staged a blockade of the administrative offices in solidarity with their colleagues at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, in March 1970. This action was viewed by some sections of the society as a Black Power protest, although the Guild strenuously denied it was a Black Power protest. The Guild noted that “while some of the students were attracted to the philosophy of Black Power there was no formal Black Power movement at Cave Hill.”²⁷ From the comments of the Guild, it seems like the USAF was no longer active. These minor incidents added to the fear and apprehension that the Black Power protests that were seen elsewhere, were not far away from Barbadian shores and there were calls for the political authorities to put measures in place to stave off any likely widespread protests.

Concerns of the White Corporate Elite to Black Power

Black Power activism was causing tremendous concern to the white corporate elite. It was reported that at one of the PPM meetings a crowd of over 500 persons applauded energetically when Alleyne and Clarke called for “the nationalization of the Anglican Church, the telephone company, and Barbados Light and Power under the first revolutionary law.” (Drayton, 2014, p. 129). Tom Adams, the General Secretary of the Barbados Labour Party Labour (BLP) and Member of Parliament for St. Thomas, posited that businessmen were worried because of the Black Power “meetings being held by the PPM and Eric Sealy.”²⁸ The Barbados Chamber of Commerce acknowledged that never before in the history of Barbados had the white corporate community been “subjected to such heavy, clever and well thought out pressures motivated from outside designed to destroy our society and that of the other

25 Ibid.

26 “Black Power Protest at Codrington College,” *Advocate*, March 14, 1970.

27 Bert Darcy, “There’s No Formal Black Power Movement at Cave Hill,” *Advocate*, March 20, 1970 and “Blockade Show of Support,” *Advocate*, March 20, 1970.

28 The House of Assembly Debates (12 May, 1970).

territories of the Caribbean.”²⁹ David McKenzie, the president of the Barbados Chamber of Commerce called “for unity among the members of the Chamber of Commerce to withstand the pressures” coming from the Black Power Movement.³⁰

Public Order Act

Prime Minister Barrow at a massive public meeting in May 1970 declared that he was going to introduce a Public Order Act in Barbados which would require anyone desirous of “holding a meeting must state what the meeting was being held for, who was going to speak and the duration and content of the meeting.” He stressed that “it will be a criminal offence punishable with a fine, or imprisonment, or both, to preach violence, the overthrow of government by force or racial hatred.”³¹ According to Peter Morgan, a former Minister of Tourism, and a longstanding friend and confidant of Barrow, “there was considerable disquiet in Barbados and the government was urged to act to prevent the spread of this movement into Barbados.”(Morgan, 1994, p. 98). Hilbourne Watson argued that Barrow “understood the capital accumulation strategy on which he had built broad support, white corporate business cooperation, foreign investor confidence, and American tolerance, if not indulgence, could not tolerate a black radical upsurge.”(Watson, 2001, p. 50). Under the Public Order Act any person who desired to organize a march should apply to the Commissioner of Police for a permit at least three days before the march. The application for the permit should include: i) the name of the person organizing the march; ii) the purpose or purposes of the march; iii) the point of departure; iv) route and point of termination of the march; v) the hours between when the march will take place; vi) an estimate of the number of people who are expected to take part in the march.³²

Barrow who felt that Black Power was irrelevant to Barbados because blacks had political power which will ultimately lead to economic power told his audience that he had never heard any of the Black Power advocates “saying anything other than they were going to burn down, destroy and kill.”³³ Barrow appeared to be conflating what he read about the Black Power movement in the United States and throughout the region and ascribing it to the local Black Power activists. Ridley Greene, a journalist at the *Advocate* newspaper who had covered many of the meetings of the Barbadian Black Power movement, was disappointed that Barrow had accused the Black Powerites of preaching violence, because from attending their meetings he had never heard them advocate violence as their mantra, therefore he felt that Barrow should be more circumspect in his assessment of the local Black Power Movement.³⁴ Barrow described the Black Powerites as the “biggest collection of misfits and drop-outs from society he had ever seen.” He opined that the Black Power activists give the impression

29 “Never Before Such Pressures on Society,” *Advocate*, May 29, 1970.

30 Ibid.

31 “Barrow Criticises Black Powerists, Public Order Act for Barbados,” *Advocate*, May 3, 1970.

32 “Public Order Bill Comes Tomorrow,” *Advocate*, May 20, 1970.

33 “Barrow Criticises Black Powerists Public Order Act for Barbados,” *Advocate*, May 3, 1970.

34 Ibid.

that they are hostile to “politicians whether they were members of the government or the opposition and businessmen who struggle to have a niche for themselves in the economic life of the community.” Barrow stressed that Barbados “had fought too long and too hard to allow good order and government to be disrupted in this society the same way the Black Power advocates tried to destroy the society in Trinidad and Tobago.”³⁵

Reaction to Public Order Act

The reaction to Barrow’s call for the introduction of the Public Order Act was mixed. Calvin Alleyne, the general secretary of the PPM viewed the Public Order Act as a “ruse to stifle opposition.” He felt that it would only drive dissenters or “revolutionary elements underground and when the blow comes it will be more crushing because it will be unsuspected.”³⁶ Tom Adams, a member of the opposition BLP acknowledged that the DLP government was “using Black Power as a means of passing legislation to suppress their political opponents.”³⁷ Elliot Mottley, another member of the BLP viewed the Public Order Act as an attempt to prevent the criticism of big business in Barbados.³⁸ Keith Hunte, in a letter to the *Advocate* newspaper contended that “the decision to impose additional restrictions on citizens and residents who may desire to address public meetings was a dangerous “threat to civil liberty.” He felt that the attempt to control public meetings was contrary with a person’s right to address fellow-citizens in a public space on any topic on which he/she feels is knowledgeable. Hunte strongly believed that constraining the “right of the freedom of speech even to the point of insisting that public speakers confine their remarks to the items on an approved agenda is unnecessarily restrictive.”³⁹

On a radio programme discussing the proposed Act, Lester Whitehead, a lawyer, argued that the proposed Act was repugnant to the Constitution. He felt that the Act was making the Commissioner of Police “a political pawn because while he might refuse to allow an opposition group to hold a meeting, he might under similar circumstances grant permission to the governing party.”⁴⁰ Douglas Lynch, a lawyer with close ties to the DLP, believed that some sections of the Bill were “offensive and if not unconstitutional.”⁴¹

Some sections of the Barbadian population however supported the introduction of the Public Order Act. The *Advocate* newspaper editorialized that a Public Order Act was “long overdue and if we have any regrets it is that the matter has had to be expedited at a time where there is so much anxiety after developments in Trinidad.”⁴² The Barbados Workers Union supported the Public Order Act although Frank Walcott, the general secretary described it as

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 “Opposition sees Dangers in Proposed Bill,” *Advocate*, May 3, 1970.

38 Ibid.

39 Keith Hunte, “Restriction of Speech Quite Unnecessary,” *Advocate*, 6, May 1970.

40 “Proposed Act will Give Govt Great Advantages,” *Advocate*, May 25, 1970.

41 Ibid.

42 Editorial, “Public Order Can Help,” *Advocate*, May 3, 1970.

a drastic measure.⁴³ One should note that the trade union was exempted from the provisions of the Bill, “in furtherance of the lawful industrial objects of a trade union.”⁴⁴ It must be noted that the leadership of the Barbados Workers Union was closely allied to the ruling DLP government; therefore this was one of reasons why the union supported this repressive measure. Also, the Barbados Workers Union had been attacked constantly by the PPM because it was felt that it was not giving the working class the kind of militant representation that was required, and the Union saw this as one way to silence the PPM.

During the debate on the Public Order Bill, Tudor noted that it “sought to give adequate powers to those responsible to deal with the enemies of democracy.” He warned those who “would not hesitate to abuse the very democratic rights guaranteed by the constitution in order to stir up race hatred, those who would incite unthinking and unsuspecting persons to violence and generally create anarchy and chaos to destroy those rights.”⁴⁵ Bernard St. John, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition BLP, stated that “the sole purpose of bringing this Bill before the chamber is purely to prevent and stop the spread of Black Power in the West Indies.”⁴⁶ Eyre Hoppin a member of the DLP reminded the House that “If Trinidad had a Public Order Act, I am of the opinion that they would not have been in the plight that they are in today.”⁴⁷ L.E. Smith an independent member of House felt that the Bill should have been introduced at least five years ago.⁴⁸

Clarke was the first individual charged under s34 of the Public Order Act 1970. He was alleged to have made a statement capable of inducing one person to kill another at a public meeting in June 1970. Clarke was fined \$240 payable in three months with the alternative of three months’ imprisonment.⁴⁹

Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) Under House Arrest

In May 1970, Kwame Ture was invited by the PPM to come to Barbados to address a mass meeting in Independence Square. Ture, who was born in Trinidad and Tobago and who migrated to the United States at the age of ten, was a former chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and former Prime Minister of the Black Panther party, was the leading ideologue of the Black Power philosophy. In 1968, he left the United States to live in Guinea, where he became connected to Sekou Touré the Guinean leader and Kwame Nkrumah, the deposed leader of Ghana. During his visit to the island, he was expected to meet with the leading members of the PPM and the other Black Power activists to discuss his trip to Guyana, as well as to deliberate and clarify the objectives and methods of the Black Power struggle in the Caribbean and speak about the liberation struggles taking place on the African

43 “Union supports Government moves,” *Advocate*, May 8, 1970.

44 “Public Order Bill Comes Tomorrow,” *Advocate*, May 20, 1970.

45 “House Passes the Public Order Bill,” *Advocate*, May 30, 1970.

46 The House of Assembly Debates (May 12, 1970).

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 High Court of Barbados, J. Williams 4 June 1971.

continent and the anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World. At this time Ture was banned from Antigua, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Montserrat and Trinidad and Tobago - the land of his birth. Before his Barbados trip Carmichael was invited by Ratoon to visit Guyana during the first week of May 1970. On his way to Guyana, he passed through Barbados and had commented that Barrow was “a man of high integrity who was not afraid to speak the truth.”⁵⁰

Before Ture returned to Barbados from his controversial visit to Guyana, public opinion was mobilized against his visit, an editorial appeared in the *Advocate* under the caption “Stokely’s [Ture’s] Talk not in Island’s Best Interest.” The writer noted that we “must make it clear that it is not in the best interests of Barbadians that Mr. Carmichael [Ture] should be allowed to come to Barbados and sound off in a manner which would give little comfort but great embarrassment to our people.”⁵¹ A letter writer to the same newspaper stated “that it was incredible to think that our government which is now in the process of legislating against local Black Power followers, should allow Carmichael [Ture] to come to Barbados.” The writer added that we “do not want him here under any circumstances and the government would be failing in its responsibility to the people of Barbados if they allow him to come here and preach his hatred which is no good for anyone.”⁵² Phillip Greaves, the Minister of Home Affairs made it clear that no non-Barbadians would “be permitted to participate in any political activity in Barbados nor address any public meeting;” therefore precluding Ture from speaking at the mass meeting in Independence Square.⁵³

When Ture landed in Barbados, he did not have a return ticket and he was only permitted to overnight in Barbados on the condition that “he would not speak at any public meeting, address schools, colleges or universities or make any recorded interviews.”⁵⁴ Ture was escorted from the airport to his accommodation at Brighton, St Michael by fifty policemen. Although Ture was prevented from speaking at the public meeting, it still went ahead as planned. Tyrone Evelyn, a journalist with the *Advocate* newspaper noted that the atmosphere at the meeting was “highly charged.”⁵⁵ The police sent three riot squads to the meeting to conduct mass arrests if Ture spoke at meeting. (Drayton, 2014, p.129). At the meeting, Alleyne made the point that Black Power was a “force which could not be ignored” and he warned that if anyone was nervous about the situation in the Caribbean, “such people should not allay their fears by what he described as the empty boast of a Government Minister, and that the Government would ensure that the majority protected the minority.” He said that such people should see the writing on the wall and seek to attend to the grievance of the masses. Alleyne contended that far from having Black Power in Barbados successive Governments were no more than a go-between for the neo-colonialist.⁵⁶

The time Ture spent in Barbados “were probably the tensest in Barbados since the 1937 upheavals” according to Evelyn. He mentioned that prior to Ture’s arrival in Barbados, the

50 “Carmichael Sees Black Power Chain Reaction,” *Advocate*, May 3, 1970.

51 Editorial, “Stokely’s talk not in Island’s Best Interests,” *Advocate*, May 7, 1970.

52 “We Don’t Want Stokely,” *Advocate*, May 11, 1970.

53 “No Barbados Meeting for Carmichael,” *Advocate*, May 11, 1970.

54 “Stokely Escorted to Airport by Police,” *Advocate*, May 12, 1970.

55 Tyrone Evelyn, “Re-assesses W.I. Black Power,” *Advocate*, May 17, 1970.

56 “Black Power Cannot be Ignored,” *Advocate*, May 12, 1970.

fire service had broadcast several times: “Attention all firemen, Operation Catastrophe, 1600 hours.” Moreover, there were visible signs of increased riot squad manoeuvres by the police who were heavily armed as they patrolled the streets.⁵⁷ The residence where Ture was staying was surrounded by a large number of policemen. It was alleged that when Ture went for a swim in the sea many policemen were on the shore as well as in the water. Early next day he was accompanied by the police to the airport where he was held in the VIP section until all the other passengers had boarded the aircraft then he was escorted right to the airplane.⁵⁸

Banning of Rosie Douglas

A few days after Ture’s visit, Rosie Douglas, the Black Power leader from Dominica and the Chairman of the Montreal February 11 Defence Committee, was allowed to stay on the island for twenty-four hours but barred from speaking at any public event. Douglas was one of the West Indians arrested in connection with the protest at the Sir George Washington University in February 1969 and was also a close comrade of Ture. Before Douglas came to Barbados, he was imprisoned by the Trinidadian authorities and as soon as he arrived on the island, he was taken to Central Police Station where he was questioned by the Criminal Investigation Department. The action taken by the Barrow government against Douglas was another attack on the Black Power movement since it deprived the Barbadian Black Powerites and the general populace of hearing Douglas speak to the above issues.

Prohibition of the Second Regional Black Power Conference

The Barrow government banned the second regional Black Power conference from taking place in Barbados. This conference was expected to be held from July 8 to 12, 1970. The main organizers of the conference, Roosevelt Brown (Pauulu Kamarakefego) of Bermuda and Clarke of the PPM, were led to believe that permission would have been granted for this meeting. Kamarakefego discussed the idea of holding the conference in Barbados with Prime Minister Barrow when Barrow visited Bermuda in October 1969, to address the Progressive Labour Party. Barrow told Brown that “If you can organise a Black Power Conference in Bermuda and you are a colony, surely we can have one in Barbados because we are independent.” (Kamarakafego, 2002, p. 166). The first regional Black Power conference was held in Bermuda, from 10 to 13 of July 1969, and the Barbadian conference was expected to be a follow-up to the Bermudian conference.

In April 1970, Barrow contacted Kamarakafego and informed him that the conference would no longer take place on Barbadian soil. Quito Swan noted that

57 Tyrone Evelyn, “Re-assesses W.I. Black Power,” *Advocate*, May 17, 1970.

58 “Stokely Escorted to Airport by Police,” *Advocate*, May 12, 1970.

Kamarakafego met Barrow at Government Headquarters where they had a very heated meeting which resulted in Kamarakafego being “thrown out of the island and banned from Barbados.” (Swan, 2009, p. 78). The decision taken by the Barrow government was a major disappointment to the organizers and numerous persons in Barbados, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and Africa. Kamarakafego stated that Barrow told him that the “Dutch, British, USA and French authorities had communicated to him that if he allowed me to hold the Black Power Conference in Barbados, they would stop the tourists from coming to this country.” (Swan, 2009, p. 166). At that time tourism employed about 12,000 persons out of a working population of 85,000 and tourism earned about \$63.500,000. (Henriques; Manyonic, 1987). However, the decision to prohibit the conference was part of Barrows’ attack on Black Power. After all, how could Barrow excoriate and intimidate the local and regional and international Black Powerities but allow a regional Black Power Conference to take place on Barbadian soil?

The Barbadian government place onerous demands which the organizers could not agree. Many feared that the conference would advocate the overthrow by violent means of this or any friendly democratic Government in the region; that the Conference would incite racial hatred or discrimination against any group or group within our societies; and that people should be excluded on the basis of race or colour from attending any workshops or meetings held by or under the aegis of the conference.

A spokesman for the Barbados government stated that the conference organizers could not give the assurance that they would be no race hatred speeches in the deliberations. Therefore, “in the absence of these assurances and in light of the obvious collusion existing between the organizers of the conference and local persons of doubtful character, the Government had withheld its permission.”⁵⁹

This development was a major setback for the PPM, and Black Power movement on the island since a conference of this nature would have provided a forum for sharing information about the struggles being faced by black people worldwide, and it would have discussed ideas on strategies and tactics to utilize. It could also have served to build solidarity between the various Black Power organizations and energise the Black Powerities in Barbados at this critical moment when they were under immense stress occasioned by the Public Order discourse. Kamarakafego was also hoping to use this conference to advanced discussions on the convening of the 6th Pan-African Congress.

Conclusion

The repressive measures undertaken by the Barrow government on the Black Power movement had a major impact on curtailing the spread of Black Power on the island. It was said that a special branch of the Barbados police force kept close tabs on the PPM, while the Public Order Act kept us on a leash. Linden Lewis, argues that the passage of the Public Order Act “prohibited individuals from engaging in any serious discourse on race

⁵⁹ “Barrow Bars Black Power talks,” *Advocate*, 25 May 1970.

for fear of being construed as inciting racial conflict and tension, or of being arrested for making inflammatory speeches.” (Lewis, 2001, p. 158). Incessant harassment, intrusive surveillance, the prohibition of non-Barbadians Black Power activists from speaking and offensive Public Order Act instituted by the Barrow government between 1968 and 1970 had a devastating impact on the Barbadian Black Power Movement, to the extent that the movement was only a shadow of itself in the early 1970s.

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