REPORT ON THE PROJECT
"SOCIAL STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE CARIBBEAN"
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The project "Social Structural Changes in the Caribbean" is being pursued in fulfilment of the mandates given by the CDCC member governments at the Second Session in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. It attempts to analyze available historical data in search of the peculiar styles of social development in the Caribbean. It is expected to offer, in the long run, the pattern of social structural changes peculiar to the sub-region and to identify the substantive elements which account for Caribbean identity. Social policies to foster and develop the communalities so identified could then be formulated on a larger number of issues.

The studies were initiated on the smaller and less developed countries, the characteristics of which are not sufficiently known even in Caribbean milieux and which tend to hamper the processes of mutual collaboration and cooperation. In spite of the severe lack of resources at the Secretariat's disposal, the report on Dominica is underway and the one on St. Lucia is completed as far as bibliographical data are concerned. Published materials nonetheless do not offer a sufficient coverage of social developments in the last decades, and field research has to be intensified. A preliminary visit was made to St. Lucia in February this year to explore with key personalities, knowledgeable about the recent social movements, the characteristics of social development in agriculture, entrepreneurial endeavours, urban employment and labour organizations. Further investigations will also embrace archives and local press reports. This research strategy will be applied in the case of Dominica and of Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines which have been programmed.

The slow rate of progress in the completion of the studies is due to a lack of human resources and funds. We are happy to inform that the United Nations University, acknowledging the relevance of this effort, not only for Caribbean social development but for the understanding of popular creativity in the world, granted for 1980 a sum of US$5,000.00 within its current project, "Socio-cultural Development in a Changing World" to assist in carrying out field
research and convening seminars of regional scholars to assess the final reports.

The study of St. Lucia has attempted to unravel the structure of social groups and classes and identify the mechanisms of collective practices which resulted in the emergence of innovative local institutions. Whereas available historical data usually stresses the role of the elites in society, which is rarely suitable to former colonial countries in search of their national identity, the reading of St. Lucia's evolution from the point of view proposed by the Secretariat has led to the preliminary conclusions summarized hereunder.

The strategic position of the island bore heavily upon its early development, as it is known it changed hands fourteen times. The settlers therefore, lacking constant and clear metropolitan patronage, had to rely, more than in other plantation societies, on their own resources. On the one hand, planters establishing themselves there during the XVIII Century constituted small entrepreneurs in conflict with the establishment of neighbouring islands and prone to endorse, as they did, metropolitan revolutionary movements. On the other hand, and as a consequence, St. Lucie la Fidèle, as it was nicknamed by the revolutionaries, was endowed with a group of enslaved with more leeway to organize themselves according to their own interest. This fact is the point of departure in the process of nation-building in St. Lucia.

Continuous administrative control passed to the British at the beginning of the XIX Century and they could only cope with the prevalent precarious social equilibrium through a series of concessions to the creole society. Imprisoned between the British Empire striving for full control of internal government - which was only achieved at the end of the XIX Century - and a "restless" population, the French creoles, as a dominant strata, stagnated and declined both in numbers and social and economic significance. Meanwhile, the St. Lucian labour force facing tremendous constraints in view of the lack of institutionalized channels to air, peacefully, their grievances and the impossibility of challenging the military predominance of the colonizers, was forced to find avenues for establishing itself outside of the situation of wage labour on the plantation or reluctantly
accepted wage labour or a system of compromise, which was adopted in the mid-XIX Century.

From the XIX Century onwards, a peculiar kind of peasant society took shape in the country, which must be termed a counter-plantation system, since its shortcomings derive from areas where the impact of plantation economy could not be bypassed. The Community Property system ensured not only the inalienable rights of the population over the property acquired in most strenuous conditions, it further kept in check the laws of market economy and made re-possession by the planters totally impossible. On the other hand, St. Lucians preserved their own distinctive cultural identity by adhering to their own language and forcing imported norms and values into the screening of the basic philosophical and moral values embodied in the referred language.

This retreat of the core of a small population in constant intercourse with one of the most powerful empires ever known gave way to severe urban-rural dichotomies. Urban economic activities developed initially as a result of St. Lucia's strategic position and the requirements of public administration. Modern agriculture evolved under the aegis of transnational corporations but had to search for a compromise with traditional peasant sectors.

There emerges then from the analysis of what is available on St. Lucian history a novel concept of development and social relations expressed through the numerous movements staged by the population. At the centre of this St. Lucian formula, one finds a stubborn effort to protect and salvage a legacy of independence and distinctiveness. Difficulties to bring into reality the various norms and values embodied in the local ethos have cornered the bulk of St. Lucians to isolation and retreat. As a preliminary conclusion, one foresees then that modernization and development will be viable only if it does not oppose such legacy. It would appear that innovations called for by the need to accelerate the process of modernization and development will have to be submitted to a patient dissemination and discussion with and by the population, which in turn will most certainly reformulate them to suit its standpoints. It seems that previous cleavages between the
population and the former colonizers, whose most apparent and outstanding manifestation - bilingualism - survived nearly two centuries, must be reversed in the near future, to abate traditional resistance to induced changes.