

## MAROONED IN GUYANA

*THE PLANTATION ECONOMY: POPULATION AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN GUYANA, 1838–1960.* By JAY R. MANDLE. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973. Pp. 170. \$10.00.)

*THE GUIANA MAROONS: A HISTORICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.* By RICHARD PRICE. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. Pp. 184. \$18.50.)

Jay Mandle has produced a sober and prudent economic history of former British Guiana (today's Guyana), from the emancipation of the slaves in 1838 until the eve of independence (which was achieved in 1966). His major thesis is that British rule consistently favored plantation enterprise based on sugar-cane cultivation and enslaved or contracted labor; and that such favoritism, in spite of certain economic inconsistencies to which it gave rise, repeatedly throttled promising alternative opportunities for development. The heritage of such favoritism has persisted since independence, in spite of efforts to effect structural change. Mandle believes that plantations as an economic, political, and sociological "type" or "class" share enough to justify the postulation of a general "plantation economy." Such an economy takes its characteristic shape not only from the way it produces and the markets in which it participates, as others have argued, but also from "the distinctive mechanisms of labor-force control which emerge from it" (p. 10).

In asserting as much, Mandle seems to be reducing emphasis on the differences among different forms of labor-force control, and on their possible (and significant) interdependence at particular points in the history of one or another region or colony. Thus, he writes: "Slavery, indentured immigration, sharecropping, and the artificial maintenance of monocultural plantation production can all serve to guarantee the labor-force requirements of the plantation system, and all do so in the absence of a viable labor-market mechanism, an essential aspect of a functioning capitalist economy" (pp. 11–12). The disposition to treat these different "solutions" as a single class, in the absence of a labor-market mechanism, so that they can be contraposed holistically to labor-market mechanisms in a "functioning capitalist economy," is convenient and, perhaps on one level of generalization, useful. On yet another, however, it means putting together things that are quite different from each other and alike only in the analogous (but *not* homologous) services they may perform in supplying labor power. Such usages highlight the special (and implicitly undifferentiated) nature of "functioning capitalist economy," but manage to leave everything else in a rather fuzzy residual category.

Except for this conceptual problem—which Mandle should not be expected to solve by himself—and a minor difficulty with other people's names (Wolfe for Wolf, Rawley for Rawle, DesVeoux for Des Voeux, etc.), this work is a useful addition to the literature on nineteenth- and twentieth-century British

Guiana, and a handy supplement to Adamson's *Sugar without Slaves*. Like Adamson's book, it is particularly helpful in revealing how the production of food for either subsistence or market has regularly been discouraged in Caribbean colonies, unless it revealed itself to be of direct benefit to the plantations. In the British Guiana case, estate land as well as small holdings were allowed to move toward rice cultivation at those times when benefits to the sugar industry were clear—and only then. Mandle notes that the planters did not seek to impede the spread of rice cultivation in the nonplantation villages, in "the belief that the marginal increase in wages necessary to dissuade the Indians from working on their rice plots, without causing dissatisfaction, would have been greater than the marginal cost to the planters as a result of the loss of labor associated with the work the Indians performed on their rice farms" (p. 43). To what extent this may have been the result of conscious decisions on the part of the planters is, of course, not clear. But it provides what might be an illuminating parallel inference to what we know of the disposition of slave owners in earlier centuries, first to coerce their slaves into producing part of their own food, only thereupon to encourage such cultivation in every way, without coercion or the need for it, once the pattern had become congenial to the slaves themselves.

Richard Price has produced a bibliographic introduction to the study of the Guiana Maroons, which eventuates in being far more than a bibliography. Having read and criticized (and admired) the original manuscript, I agreed to review it only at the Associate Editor's urging. Having agreed to review it, I wish to mention some of the wider questions with which it deals—questions foretokened by the book's title. In the past fifteen years or so, interest in the responsive, creative ways in which enslaved Africans and their descendants dealt with their oppression has grown noticeably among United States scholars. Special attention has come to be paid to those slaves who successfully escaped from slavery, who established viable communities outside its ambit, and who often challenged with force the regime that had enslaved them. A persisting difficulty in analyzing adequately the character of Maroon communities has been our ignorance of the critical early period following enslavement, during which Afro-American cultures must have assumed their initial forms. In part 1 of Price's book, he provides a concise (39 pp.) introduction to the history of the Guiana Maroons, which is also the best available synthesis of what we know about "the first Afro-American century" there. That a good deal remains to be learned, that there is ample room for different interpretations are, I am sure, assertions with which Price would be in full agreement. In part 2 of the book, to follow a historical synthesis endowed with anthropological insight, we are provided with a very useful guide to sources, one in which access to the written corpus for different periods and topics is evaluated for us. Finally, part 3 provides us with 1,330 references on the Guiana Maroons—easily the most complete such guide ever assembled—which helps to make a little more understandable why the Maroons had to be "rediscovered" in the last decade or so.

These two volumes on the Guianas cast additional light upon those curious anomalies of Latin America—at once continental in geography and Antillean in history—of which so little, comparatively, is known by the Latin Americanist.

Though enormous in size when compared to the islands, the Guianas are marked by low absolute population densities and heavy coastal concentrations, mostly in the traditional areas of European agricultural enterprise. Ethnically very diverse and politically complex—a complexity in no way reduced by perceived ethnic differences—two of the Guianas are now sovereign polities. Sovereignty has inevitably meant changes in the relationships among component populations, and the emergence of ideological variants on preindependence themes. One sees here the constant revision of national and group images, and of the public projection of such images, as different segments of national population reshuffle their political opportunities by recasting their criteria of group membership.

What unites the books by Mandle and Price, different though they are in specific subject matters, is their concern with the peoples of the Guianas—peoples in each instance thrust forcibly into the world of the West, still subject in significant ways to that world, and still, on their own terms, resistant to it.

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