

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HUGH FOOT, GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA, AT THE CEREMONIES COMMEMORATING THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO, JULY 25, 1956



Your Excellency and People of Puerto Rico:

I come to bring respectful and affectionate greetings from the Island of Jamaica to the Island of Puerto Rico.

The two islands are six hundred and fifty miles apart. They are separated by sea and Hispaniola - and they are also separated by a surprising ignorance of one another. They have a different language and a different tradition and a different history.

But Puerto Rico and Jamaica have much in common. They share the same latitude. They have the common enemy of poverty and the common aim of freedom. They are the third and fourth islands of the Caribbean in population and size, but may I be permitted respectfully to claim that in economic and political achievement they are both well in the lead? In this generation the two most important developments in all the countries which lie scattered between North and South America are surely the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the building of a new Dominion in the British countries of the Caribbean.

How fortunate we are to live and work in the Caribbean! The beautiful islands discovered by Christopher Columbus, the islands which were once included in the Spanish Main, were in past centuries the scene of confusion and conflict. They were once the bloody playground of the buccaneers and the cock-pit of colonialism. What a transformation has been achieved! Islands like

Puerto Rico and Jamaica have become pioneers in the campaign against poverty. They have become crucibles of new constitutions. Born centuries ago in greed and violence they now give larger and richer nations an example and a lesson in planned economic endeavor and orderly political progress and constructive racial harmony.

Puerto Ricans and Jamaicans do not need to copy or to envy each other. But we should surely seek to span the sea of ignorance and surmount the mountains of indifference which have separated us in the past.

The Caribbean Sea is the meeting place of many gulf streams. Here in Puerto Rico the streams which meet are the streams which came from Spain and America. We in Jamaica are also at the merging-point of two different main streams. They are the streams which came from England and from Africa. In our Jamaican religious and cultural and political life we inherit the proud traditions of England - in our Churches and schools and in our University College and our Courts and in our Parliament. With that stream from England there is merged in the river of our Jamaican life a great stream which had its source in Africa, bringing with it the strength, the resource, the adaptability, the humour and the vitality of the African peoples.

You who know North American history must, I am sure, be excited when you read of the steps now being taken with increasing pace and growing confidence to bring, for a second time in the history of the world, thirteen English colonies together in a free federation. This is what a very distinguished American said the

other day in Kingston, Jamaica:-

"We rejoice with you in this age and day that the difficult transition from colony to self-government can be accomplished in the great British Commonwealth not violently but peacefully, not with obstruction but with encouragement, preserving with it the priceless blessings of British justice, education and public responsibility."

I am sure that you in Puerto Rico will follow our progress in the next few years towards the establishment of the second self-governing British Dominion of the Western Hemisphere with a special sympathy and understanding and encouragement.

While we in the British islands believe that we have a distinctive destiny to follow in the Caribbean we look with admiration on the achievements of Puerto Rico, and one of the happiest opportunities of my life is that I can express that admiration here today as you celebrate your Commonwealth Day.

We have so much to admire. We learn from your industries and your agriculture and your education and your social services and your skilled planning and your cooperative action. Of all the things we have to learn from you let me refer to two which are, I believe, the most important of all.

First you teach us that freedom is not a negative thing of narrowness or isolation, but a freedom to associate with others, a freedom of "genuine brotherhood with free men everywhere". You

teach us to search for freedom from cant and freedom from labels, and freedom from the prison of the closed mind. Through our perplexities and hesitations the new thinking of Puerto Rico blows like a fresh wind.

Secondly you teach us to welcome and rejoice in change and experiment - in the need to find and test new solutions for old problems, in the need to be "constantly creative"; you give us confidence that "the human spirit can find a way even in dead ends".

England discovered and taught the world parliamentary government. The United States discovered and taught the world the principles of federation. Today in the Caribbean we accept the political discoveries of the past and search for new solutions to the old problem of relationships between large states and smaller ones. They must be new to be good. Puerto Rico has found an answer which is original and indeed unique. It is a fine thing that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been created; it is equally important to recognize that nothing like it has even been seen before in the history of the world. It is a solution gloriously new for a problem which at one time (again in your Governor's words) seemed to be a choice "between the impossible and the intolerable".

Finally let me say a personal word of gratitude. Never have my wife and I accepted an invitation more happily than we accepted the invitation so kindly extended to us by your Governor to come to Puerto Rico. We come in a spirit of hero worship. We

humbly pay our personal tribute to your Governor. We know that he is one of the greatest men of his generation in the Caribbean and beyond. His life and his work and his character and his leadership have brought hope and faith to countless people beyond the shores of this island. We see the generosity of his sympathy and the searching originality of his mind and the devoted humility of his service to his people. Many leaders whose names are better known in the world - who exercise greater power in larger countries - are pigmies beside him. He is indeed a giant, and a giant who makes us all not fear him but love him.

Today my wife and I count ourselves most fortunate. We have had many privileges in our lives. But amongst the greatest of them we shall specially treasure the recollection of visiting the island of Puerto Rico and paying our respects to its courageous people in the days of Governor Muñoz Marin.