CHAPTER 10

Ethnicity, nationalism and the exodus: the Dutch Caribbean predicament

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In his seminal writings on 'race' in the Americas, Harry Hoetink opened new horizons for the understanding of how ideas about race, color and ethnicity are constituted and then become self-evident elements of the frame of reference of particular groups and cultures.¹ Even if there are evidently political dimensions to these processes of establishing ethnic boundaries around and between peoples, his explicit perspective was more of a social-psychological nature. In this contribution, while subscribing to most of Hoetink's ideas on the subject, I attempt to give the discussion a twist by directing it towards the ways in which young and ethnically heterogeneous nations have used race and ethnicity in the process of nation-building.

While taking all of the Caribbean as a frame of reference, I specifically discuss 'Dutch' Caribbean experiences. This geographical focus aims to correct the cursory neglect of this part of the region in writings on the Caribbean. More importantly, it should underline the theoretical relevance of including these cases in comparative studies. In Hoetink's writings, comparisons of Curaçao and Suriname provided additional credibility to his approach of disentangling metropolitan backgrounds and systems of slavery, and of severing the erstwhile seemingly self-evident link between the specific nature of slavery in a given colony and its subsequent record of race relations. The following analysis, through its focus on Dutch Caribbean experiences, ultimately addresses wider dimensions of ethnicity, nation-building, and the frustrated experiences of decolonization in the region.²

Post-World War II decolonizations

The contemporary Caribbean differs in a myriad of ways from the region it was in the early 1960s, when Harry Hoetink started to develop his theories on race relations in the Americas. An increasing economic and hence political marginalization has negatively affected most of the region. Stand-

ards of living, the functioning of democracy, and guarantees of civil rights may still be relatively high in the Caribbean, especially if one were to take the so-called Third World as a frame of reference. However, in much of the region, the relevant comparison is not the one with the 'Mother Continents' of Africa or Asia, or with geographically and historically nearby Latin America, but rather with the old metropolises in Europe, and the dominant new one, the United States. From that perspective, the economic and political development of the last decades has been disappointing. The high hopes of decolonization that were once nurtured contrast sharply with the present sense of uncertainty and conservatism – sometimes bordering on despair – in the smaller countries of the region.

Caribbean decolonization obviously dates back way beyond the post-war period. In a sense, the Maroon communities established in most of the larger colonies during the early eighteenth century prefigured the establishment of independent states. Maroons in Suriname, once a Dutch colony whose authorities had found no other recourse than to pacify the Maroons by way of granting them autonomy, have indeed claimed that their independence dates back to these peace treaties of the 1760s rather than to 1975, when all of the country became a republic. The more conventional approach, however, dates the beginning of Caribbean decolonization to the slave revolution of Saint-Domingue, leading to the proclamation of the Republic of Haiti in 1804. The emergence of this second independent nation of the Americas – the first black state, and the first one to abolish slavery – triggered the hesitant Dominican secession from the Spanish state, started in the 1820s but only fully accomplished in 1865. The remnants of Spanish empire in the Americas dissolved at the turn of the century with the independence of Cuba and the renewed colonization of Puerto Rico, this time by the US.

Formal decolonization in the region stagnated for the next six decades. After World War II, the constitutional status of the French and the Dutch colonies as well as Puerto Rico was brought up to date in a liberalizing move which at the same time consolidated and even strengthened these territories' links to their metropolis. Yet around 1960, two major developments seemed to open up new perspectives for the region. The Cuban Revolution promised finally to fulfil the promises of independence frustrated during the US-dominated period of what would soon be termed the *pseudorreública*. At the same time, the British West Indies embarked on a route to full decolonization which, after the collapse of the West Indian Federation, resulted in the individual independence of most territories between 1962 and 1983.

In the early 1960s, nationalist avant-gardes in the non-independent Caribbean nurtured high hopes of the benefits of independence. Not only would full decolonization restore dignity to peoples colonized for centuries

in an imperialist framework, but there would be more tangible results too. Once in control of their own destiny, the new Caribbean states would be in a better position to ensure sustained economic growth, fuller political participation of the masses, and the development towards a more equitable society. Somewhat ironically in view of its previous role in the region, Western Europe provided a highly influential model of social democracy. There was an awareness of the disadvantages of scale and the limited scope for independent action in a region where few former colonies could ever hope to be more than micro-states. Yet, according to nationalist rhetoric, this should not keep Caribbean populations from accepting the challenge. In the words of the influential British Caribbean scholar and activist, Lloyd Best (1967:28): 'what I am arguing is that social change in the Caribbean has to and can only begin in the minds of Caribbean men'.

Three decades on, one cannot escape the conclusion that expectations at the time regarding the economic potential of the region were inflated, whereas the process of marginalization in the world economy was underestimated. The days when, to take the most obvious case, the British West Indies could generate the wealth which made them 'darlings of empire' are long gone. Of course, economic growth was achieved. In many parts of the region, per capita incomes improved considerably between 1960 and 1990, as did standards of education and health. Only notorious exceptions such as Haiti and Guyana remained among the poorest countries of the hemisphere. Moreover, most Caribbean economies made the transition from primary to secondary and particularly tertiary sector producers. Yet the industrial and service sectors have remained volatile. The high unemployment and emigration figures suggest that the economic transition has been partially successful at best, as have been development strategies based on external financing and aid. Radical new strategies such as the Cuban model have proved to be even less rewarding. Many Caribbean policy-makers must have sympathized with Michael Manley's desperate characterization of the development process as a struggle 'Up the Down Escalator' (1987). The limitations of scale already apparent in the 1960s have continued to haunt planners. Moreover, the ongoing restructuring of the world economy left the entire Caribbean in an ever more marginal position within an Atlantic economy itself struggling to retain some of the gravity which had seemed unbeatable decades ago.

In this perspective, it is hard not to characterize the postwar economic development as disillusioning. Moreover, an intra-regional comparison suggests that the very process of decolonization has been a crucial factor. Just over 85 per cent of the Caribbean's 33 million people live in independent states. The remaining 14 per cent live in what are sometimes thought of as 'not yet fully decolonized' territories. Standards of living in this last group of countries are significantly higher than in the independent states. This

comparison yields only marginally more positive results if the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Haiti are excluded. On average, living standards in the independent Commonwealth Caribbean, and in Suriname too, range below the averages in the 'not yet fully decolonized' territories. Jamaica's real income diminished between 1960 and 1989, and is now below the Latin American average. This is not the case in the French *Départements d'Outre-Mer*, nor in Puerto Rico. The contrasting economic profiles in the relatively affluent Netherlands Antilles and impoverished Suriname are another dramatic case in point.

There is an equally disturbing political dimension to this equation. The group of non-independent countries is characterized not only by higher standards of living, but also by a better functioning of their democracies, and more guarantees of fundamental civil rights. Again, the oldest independent states (Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba) are the most striking cases in point. In most of the former British West Indies, the Westminster-style democracy functioned remarkably well in spite of many odds. However, this part of the region has had its notorious exceptions too, in terms of both totalitarianism and corrupt regimes. In Suriname, independence in 1975 provided the conditions not only for economic collapse, but also for hitherto unthinkable political malaise: a military regime, internal warfare, and widespread corruption of the civil state. In comparison, and in spite of serious conflicts enacted in virtually all of these places, postwar politics in the non-independent nations has been characterized by more moderation and compromise, and certainly by very little violence.

In sum, in a world in which the significance of the Caribbean diminished and in which the individual countries' economic and political viability became ever more dubious, independence proved to be a worrisome accomplishment. It is therefore not surprising that the populations of Puerto Rico, the French *Départements d'Outre-Mer*, the British dependencies, and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba demonstrate no inclination to take the final – once 'logical' – step to full independence. Moreover, as their respective metropolises do not urge them to do so, the status of 'not yet fully decolonized' may best be understood as one devoid of an expiration date. By the early 1990s, opting for the prolongation of a post-colonial liaison had become a thoroughly respectable means of exercising the right to self-determination.³ In the Puerto Rican and Netherlands Antillean plebiscites on these islands' constitutional futures, the case for independence won less support than ever before.⁴ In the French *Départements d'Outre-Mer*, the ever stronger encapsulation in metropolitan France has been translated into the virtual disappearance of *indépendistes*. Intellectual responses range from former *négritude* protagonist (now Martinican mayor) Aimé Césaire's claim to be fully French by culture, to the younger generation's praise of a cultural *créolité* (Burton, 1993). In the few remaining British territories,

an increased metropolitan presence at the expense of the local political elites has produced anything but a renewed interest in independence. These are evidently worrying parameters for projects of Caribbean nation-building, as is well illustrated by the case of the former Dutch colonies in the region.

The divergent paths of Dutch Caribbean decolonization

With the loss in the immediate postwar years of its one major possession, Indonesia, the Dutch colonial empire was reduced to Suriname and the six islands of the Netherlands Antilles. Whereas the Dutch had only given up Indonesia after bitter fighting and under strong international pressure, there was not yet a significant political will on either side of the Atlantic to dismantle the remaining 'empire'. There was an awareness, though, of the need to bring relations at least somewhat up to date with the prevailing trends in a decolonizing world. In 1954, after due consultations and without serious objections in either of the three countries involved, the *Statuut* or Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was proclaimed. The *Statuut* served as a constitution for the three member states: the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname. In the newly styled transatlantic Kingdom, the three partners would each be autonomous in domestic administration. All parties agreed to the principle of mutual assistance, should the need arise. Only foreign affairs, defense and the guarantee of 'good governance' – including the functioning of parliamentary democracies – would remain Kingdom matters, and for all purposes would continue to be managed by the Dutch.

In comparison to the previous periods of colonial rule, the *Statuut* was certainly a progressive move. In the decolonizing mood of the day, it was certainly more so than the French solution of 1946, which had made the former French colonies overseas departments. The *Statuut* provided an acceptable arrangement for the political elites of the three countries involved, even if there was no consensus, not even an open debate, as to its status in view of a possible 'fuller' decolonization in the future. The proclamation of the *Statuut* therefore did raise doubts about the continuing asymmetry in transatlantic relations. It took some years of discrete lobbying before the United Nations consented to drop Suriname and the Antilles from its chapter on decolonization. The historical asymmetry in power relations was compounded by the weight of population figures. In the late 1950s, the Netherlands had 11 million inhabitants, as against 190,000 in the Netherlands Antilles and 250,000 in Suriname. The huge differences in

demographic and economic potential implied that the principle of mutual assistance would in practice be unilateral only.

In the first fifteen years of its existence, the new-style Kingdom functioned relatively smoothly. Particularly in Suriname, nationalists urged full independence, but this minority could easily be ignored by the leading political elites. Nor did Dutch politicians think of Caribbean independence as more than a distant horizon. Yet all this changed rapidly since the late 1960s – a period of widespread racial contentions in the Americas, from Black Power in the US to disturbances in Caribbean states such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. In 1969, riots in Curaçao made the Antillean government request Dutch troops to restore order. According to the *Statuut*, the Dutch had to comply with the request, and marines were indeed sent in. The year after, political turmoil in Suriname threatened to provoke another Dutch intervention. Even if a second intervention was averted, these incidents did create an uneasy awareness that under the *Statuut*, the Dutch could virtually be obliged to engage in ‘neocolonial’ interventions. The fact that such interventions could well be triggered by local conflicts over which the Dutch – abiding by the principle of its partners’ administrative autonomy – had no prior influence, underlined this uneasiness. The Dutch political left first urged ‘full’ decolonization, soon followed by the center and conservative parties. In the process, two additional motives assumed increasing significance. There was a mounting irritation over the considerable amount of development aid spent yearly without much benefit to the Dutch and without any clear sign that this money actually enhanced the economic viability of the former colonies. Moreover, Dutch policy-makers worried over the increasing number of Suriname migrants settling in the Netherlands.

The Kingdom’s political agenda of the 1970s and 1980s was therefore dominated by the debate over ‘full decolonization’, understood as the attainment of independence in the Dutch Caribbean and consequently the shrinking of the Kingdom to its European domain.⁵ This debate departed from what has long been thought of as the logical model of decolonization. Whereas the former metropolis persistently recommended independence, the erstwhile colonized West Indians were reluctant to accept the ‘offer’. In 1975, Suriname did become a republic, but only half-heartedly and, as would soon become clear, at a high cost for all parties involved. There had been no referendum; the majority required in the Suriname parliament was absolutely minimal and perhaps even bribed; and in spite of the extensive development aid which formed part of the independence deal, one third of the Surinamers left for the Netherlands. Not only has the subsequent history of the country been bleak, but despite its independence, Suriname has continued to perceive the Netherlands as its most likely, if not only, partner in efforts to overcome its crises. Dutch efforts to channel the bilateral

relations through international institutions such as the European Community, the World Bank, and the IMF have so far run up against the stubborn resistance of its Caribbean counterpart. Likewise, on an individual level, Surinamers have continued to emigrate, legally or not, to the Netherlands. The level of migration has been dramatic enough to evoke the perspective of a population actually disappearing.

The Netherlands Antilles, in contrast, consistently and successfully refused to consider full independence at any stage. The second largest member of the six-island state, Aruba, negotiated its secession from the Antilles as of 1986, and ably managed to win the concession of being a separate entity without complying with the Dutch request to pay the price of independence in return. In the early 1990s, the Dutch grudgingly acknowledged the impossibility of imposing independence on the islands. However, this change of policy has implied a reclaiming of metropolitan influence in Antillean affairs. The new Dutch policy is defended by reference to budgetary problems and evidence of mismanagement, narco-trafficking, and money laundering overseas, as well as to problems related to the rapid rise of migration to the Netherlands. The formerly uncontested autonomy of the islands has now become both a negotiable issue and, so it seems, a receding horizon. The Caribbean partners in the Kingdom in turn have felt unduly overruled. Indeed, the Dutch position has undermined their post-1954 situation which combined the best of two worlds: autonomy at home, combined with Dutch protection, financial and logistic support, and unrestrained access for all Caribbean citizens of the Kingdom to the metropolis. Increasingly, therefore, the agenda for the 1990s has become dominated by the delicate negotiation of a new balance between the unequal partners in the Kingdom, possibly to be institutionalized in a slightly modernized *Statuut*.

The exodus and its implications on both sides

This disillusioning trajectory of decolonization did not fail to mark the rhetoric of nationalism in the former Dutch colonies, as will be demonstrated below. Yet in this context, it is useful to discuss first the extraordinary phenomenon of the exodus in more detail. One of the most conspicuous characteristics of virtually all modern Caribbean countries – remarkably, irrespective of constitutional status and economic conditions – has been the unprecedented level of emigration. The swelling stream of migrants has dramatically underlined the region's viability crisis, but at the same time confirmed the 'modernity' of the Caribbean and its people's outward-looking frames of reference (Mintz, 1989:37, 328). The exodus served to alleviate population pressure in densely populated islands. At the

same time, however, both the brain drain and the institutionalization of migration as an economic strategy and a psychological norm have negatively affected the region's potential for development.

A cursory classification of Caribbean emigration patterns by destination would put the French and Dutch Caribbean in one category, with the British West Indies in a second, followed by Haiti and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in a third. Both French and Dutch Caribbean migrations have been marked by a near exclusive orientation towards the European metropolis. British West Indian migration has been distinctly bifurcated, with both the New World (the United States and Canada) and the Old (Britain) attracting significant numbers of immigrants. However, immigrants of British West Indian origin in the US and Canada far outnumber those in England. Finally, migration from Haiti and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean to France and Spain respectively has been limited, focusing on the US mainly. Caribbean populations from various locales have significantly altered the face of major American cities such as New York and Miami.

The number of people of Caribbean origin in the Netherlands exceeds 350,000.⁶ The sending communities are relatively small; therefore, over one third of the Dutch Caribbean populations now live in the metropolis. Ironically, one reads more about the effects of this migration to the host country than about the consequences for the sending countries, even if the share of these Dutch Caribbean immigrants in the Netherlands only slightly exceeds 2 per cent of the total Dutch population. The watershed in these migratory moves may be located in the past two decades.⁷ The estimated population in Suriname was 350,000 in 1975, and it probably amounts to some 380,000 today. In the same period, the Suriname community in the metropolis increased from 120,000 to over 275,000. Most of the demographic growth was therefore concentrated in the Netherlands. Should this trend continue, the population in Suriname and the population of Suriname origin living in the Netherlands would be of roughly the same magnitude by the first decade of the next century, both totalling around 375,000. The growth of the Curaçaoan community was less dramatic in absolute numbers, but proportionally of nearly the same magnitude. Today, an estimated 80,000 Curaçaoans live in the metropolis, as against some 150,000 on the island.

The explanatory factors for this dramatic increase are manifold. In general terms, globalization and an increasing sense of relative deprivation made the Netherlands seem a more attractive place. Both economic and educational motives and an awareness of the social and psychological drawbacks of small scale induced many to leave. As mentioned above, the Suriname exodus was also linked to the attainment of independence in 1975, which implied the termination of free migration by 1980. Strong doubts – in a sad way, a self-fulfilling hysteria – about the economic and

political viability of the new republic inspired many to leave before the expiration of the final deadline. Since then, legal and particularly illegal migration from the young republic have continued apace. The country's deep crisis makes people move, not just because of relative deprivation, but out of sheer poverty and despair.

The more recent, marked increase in Antillean migration, mainly from Curaçao, seems more puzzling. As both the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are still part of the Kingdom and will continue to be so, political motivations are less relevant. Uncertainty over the outcome of the debate on independence, which was only recently settled, may have stimulated migration during the 1980s. Otherwise, the motivations of Antillean migrants seem to duplicate those of Suriname immigrants: a longing to get away from small scale, and economic and educational pull factors. Even if the standards of living and education in the Antilles compare favorably to much of the region, Dutch standards are rightly perceived by potential migrants to be even higher. In this context, an additional factor is of crucial importance. Caribbean migrations within the region and to the US, as well as the initial postwar migration to Britain, were and are primarily labor migrations. In contrast, Caribbean migration to the Netherlands may partly be explained by the pull factor of an elaborate metropolitan welfare system. The parallels with migration from the *Départements d'Outre-Mer* to France, and to some extent even with the Puerto Rican exodus to the US, are evident.

Postwar immigration has changed Dutch society. Apart from the Caribbean, the former colony Indonesia and the Mediterranean have been major senders of migrants. With some 7 per cent of its population comprising so-called ethnic minorities, the Netherlands – in spite of an endemic uneasiness about facing the fact – is definitely becoming a multi-ethnic society. As migration continues in spite of restrictive government policies, this trend will become more pronounced. In 2010, some 15 per cent of the total population will be of relatively recent foreign descent.⁸

The general situation of the ethnic minorities in the Netherlands inspires pessimism, and the specific data on Surinamers, Antilleans and Arubans seem to allow for only a slightly more optimistic assessment. The differences within the migrant population suggest that the theoretically relevant assets of Dutch Caribbean immigrants over those from the Mediterranean – a better command of the Dutch language, a somewhat closer affinity with Dutch culture – have indeed been advantageous. All the same, it is not evident whether this relative advantage will be consolidated.⁹

Researchers and politicians have increasingly argued that the Netherlands is witnessing the emergence of an ethnic underclass much along the lines of other European countries, and partly echoing the US experience. Owing to the Dutch welfare system, this ethnic polarization has so far not become as acutely noticeable as it has elsewhere. Relatively adequate

housing, health care, education, and social security ensure that unemployment and low educational qualifications are not necessarily translated into substandard living conditions. Unfortunately, these benefits resulting from a long process of 'socializing' capitalism in the Netherlands have also served to conceal the ongoing marginalization of the ethnic minorities. The recent – and ongoing – major cuts in the Dutch welfare system have dramatically exposed the ethnic minorities' heavy dependence on a hand that 'gives', but may well stop doing so.

The growing presence of nonwhite migrants, many practising what the Jamaican poet, Louise Bennett, aptly dubbed a 'colonization in reverse', soon challenged Dutch self-representation as a progressive and tolerant society. The Netherlands may be a country where nationalism is hardly seen as a virtue, but intellectuals used to include specifically a tradition of hospitality among the few identifiable characteristics of the nation. This image is certainly damaged now that Dutch ethnic minorities find themselves exposed to more xenophobia and racism than the country's reputation of tolerance towards newcomers might have led one to expect.

The breakdown of the supposedly ingrained Dutch tolerance towards newcomers, especially hitting nonwhites, has inspired a host of studies reinterpreting past and present Dutch encounters with 'Others' in a grimmer perspective (for example, Blakely, 1993). The revisionist literature has its salutary function, but at the same time struggles with the explanation of the phenomenon of what is easily targeted as racism. What if we were to transplant Harry Hoetink's thinking on race relations and ethnicity, and particularly the concepts of the somatic norm and somatic distance – ideas which at the time of their conception still seemed comfortably distant from the Dutch reality – to contemporary Dutch society?

Most scholars today would concur that ethnic boundaries and ethnicity itself are constructs, shaped in specific historical processes. 'Frozen' in time, such constructs assume a self-evident quality, as if they had an imminent, unchanging quality. Thus, as Hoetink demonstrated, the emergence of different variants of race relations in Afro-America depended on a series of variables connected to metropolitan cultures, the specific sequence and character of colonization and colonial exploitation, and the resulting numerical proportions of various ethnic groups in any given locale. The resultant variants differ, not only in the way various 'races' and color groups interact, but equally in their flexibility to adjust to new developments. In Hoetink's concepts: somatic norms differ, as does the somatic distance between such norms; as does the ability to adjust these psychologically deeply ingrained social constructions to new experiences.

Historical specificity indeed seems to be the key to understanding the contrasting cases of the Netherlands and the (Dutch) Caribbean. There is no shortage of studies demonstrating the importance of ethnic boundaries and

somatic norms in the Dutch Caribbean; yet the attempt to transplant such views to the metropolitan *mentalité* is complicated. Racism was part of any colonial enterprise, and the Dutch were no exception. Yet in the Netherlands itself, the small number of nonwhites and the Dutch population's general ignorance of the colonial world seem at first to have fostered no less curiosity than racist prejudice. Certainly, early and mid-twentieth century black migrants encountered an array of ignorant and arrogant reactions to their physical appearance. Yet, as many later recalled nostalgically, there was a sense of 'benevolent curiosity' which could make life rather easier.¹⁰ There is little doubt that over the past decades, with the rapidly increasing numbers of migrants, far more tension has arisen in day-to-day interracial contacts. Yet at the same time, one cannot fail to notice the relatively easy interracial contacts, particularly between the Dutch and the Caribbean migrant population. Impressionistic though the evidence may seem, the significance of interracial mixing and miscegenation is certainly far more important in the Netherlands than in the US in particular.

One might hypothesize that initially, Dutch society did not incorporate blacks at all in its hierarchies of physical attractiveness. If there was a generalized Dutch somatic norm, it had been formulated without much serious thought on nonwhites. Once the migration processes gained momentum and contacts with nonwhites increased, there was no tradition of considerable somatic distance to fall back on. What has developed since is another assortment of evaluations and prejudice regarding ethnic minorities in which class and culture, rather than physical appearance, dominate. In contemporary Dutch society, migrants from the Southern Mediterranean seem more isolated and less appreciated than those from the Caribbean.¹¹ Somatic distance cannot account for the emergence of such hierarchy, whereas a stronger affinity with Dutch culture can.

Interestingly, a recent French survey disclosed a similar autochthonous appreciation of black migrants from the *Départements d'Outre-Mer* over those from the Maghreb. As in the Dutch case, affinity with the national culture is rated above somatic characteristics. Had French culture developed ideas of somatic norm and somatic distance similar to those that emerged in the Americas in a history of slavery and racial strife spanning five centuries, one could have expected a different outcome. That neither France nor the Netherlands did so underscores the historical specificity of ideas about ethnicity and race. Considerations of somatic distance may not be among the most pressing concerns of these societies – but ethnicity as defined through adhering to the right norms of behavior and taste certainly is.¹²

From another perspective, what was the significance of the exodus for nationalism and nation-building in the Dutch Caribbean? From the 1930s

up to the early 1970s, migrants in the metropolis were crucial to the formulation of Dutch Caribbean nationalism, particularly in the case of Suriname.¹³ There is little reason to think of today's metropolitan Caribbean communities as a continuation of this tradition. The exodus has seriously undermined the contemporary articulation of nationalism. The very existence of a large and growing expatriate community belies the belief in the former colonies' viability as independent states which underscored earlier Dutch Caribbean nationalisms. Of course, the migrant communities have remained in close contact with the Caribbean. Suriname opinion-makers and organizations in the Netherlands have influenced Dutch policies during the periods of military rule and the subsequent redemocratization in Suriname. The vital remittances in money and kind to Suriname testify to the ongoing individual engagement with the Caribbean, as do the fully booked planes to the Antilles. All the same, the focus has shifted to the metropolis.

The Suriname community in particular has gradually relinquished the myth of return. There is a sad paradox here. The contemporary presence of Suriname in Dutch society is stronger than ever, yet whereas this may be a psychological asset to the 'expatriate' community, it is of little avail 'back home'. Instead of being a source of pride and support to the agonizing process of nation-building, the stronger Caribbean visibility strengthens both the magnetizing force of the metropolis and the shock of deprivation among those who stayed behind. At the same time, the diaspora's replication of Suriname's ethnic pluralism has contributed little to a project of nation-building centered around the concept of unity irrespective of ethnicity.¹⁴

If one were to take the success of the annual Antillean carnival in Rotterdam as a metaphor of real life, the Antillean experience of recreating and refashioning home culture in a circular fashion seems slightly more encouraging. Precisely the non-independent status of the Antilles – and Aruba – enables both residents and migrants to engage in a personal and cultural circularity which is denied, or no longer attractive respectively, to their Suriname homologues. Circumstantial evidence indeed suggests that in the Antillean case, the cleavage between the communities on both sides of the Atlantic is not as wide, and that there is a feeling of common purpose. The absence of the deep ethnic divisions characterizing Suriname provides an evident first explanation. Most Antillean migrants come from Curaçao, are Afro-Caribbean, and speak Papiamentu as their first language. This congruence makes it much easier to identify both with the rest of the expatriate community and with the sending island. Yet as will be discussed below, the odds are that the significance of Papiamentu in the diaspora will diminish. In that case, the vital link between both communities would be seriously undermined.

Two final observations should be made. The exposure to racism experienced by the Caribbean communities in the Netherlands, coupled to the waning of the 'ideology of return', has further stimulated the ongoing reorientation from lobbying for Caribbean issues to negotiating metropolitan positions. Moreover, time works against the consolidation of Caribbean cultures in the diaspora. Music and lifestyle are cases in point. Research among younger generations of Dutch Surinamers suggests that they place higher value on the international styles of the global village than on 'traditional' Caribbean culture, and that metropolitan revivals of elements of Afro-Suriname culture are mainly enacted among the older generations. Again, this shift of focus confirms the disarticulation of discourse in the various locales, leaving Dutch Caribbean projects of nation-building ever more isolated from the diaspora.

The fading rhetoric of nationalism in Suriname

If indeed the project of nation-building in the Caribbean is frustrated by doubts about the viability of most independent states and by the extraordinary phenomenon of the exodus, the Dutch Caribbean provides telling illustrations. In the remainder of this essay, I discuss the trajectory of nationalism in both parts of the former Dutch West Indies, with a particular view as to how the divergent paths of decolonization have been translated rather paradoxically into the rhetoric of nation-building.

The present situation of the Dutch Caribbean and its diaspora provides no set of factors conducive to the formulation of an assertive nationalism. The failure of Suriname's independence project; the painful trade-off between less autonomy and continued metropolitan assistance imposed on the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba; the irreversible trend of settlement in the metropolis, in spite of – to cite George Lamming (1984) – the lesser 'Pleasures of Exile': these sobering facts have frustrated once-formulated aims of nationalism, and undermined the project of nation-building. In this ideological malaise, the crisis of the Republic of Suriname continues to be a dominant factor. The philosophy leading to the country's full decolonization had been shared by Suriname nationalists, progressive Dutch politicians, and a handful of Antillean nationalists alike. It implied that political independence was a necessary precondition for economic and cultural development. Breaking with Dutch paternalism, or neocolonialism, would provide the necessary impetus for the country finally to take its future into its own hands. Moreover, in the effort towards becoming a nation, the deep divisions of a thoroughly pluralist society nurtured by colonialism would be overcome by a stronger sense of belonging. Indeed, independence would enhance the former colony's viability.

Now that this philosophy has effectively been falsified by Suriname's

trajectory since 1975, other perspectives impose themselves. First, there is the question of ethnicity. Pre-independence Suriname provided a classroom example of what was then described as a plural society. The ethnic composition of the population reflected a colonial history in which descendants of plantation labor recruits from Africa, India and to a lesser extent Java formed the backbone of society, supplemented with smaller groups – of Chinese, Middle Eastern, and European origin. Subdivisions mainly based on religion further complicated the picture, also in the political arena. Yet the political system as such faithfully reflected the model of a society in which ethnicity dictates political affiliation. Furnivall (1945:163–4) once stated that a ‘plural society is in fact held together only by pressure exerted from outside by the colonial power; it has no common will’. Suriname nationalists set out to prove the opposite; those objecting to independence used the argument of ethnic division at least as subtext in their reasoning.

Ominously, the positions in this debate faithfully reflected Suriname’s ethnic plurality. The nationalist rhetoric in the 1950s, the call for independence in the 1960s, and its translation into politics in the early 1970s had all been Afro-Suriname projects, nurtured by a small group of intellectuals and only in the last instance embraced by the leading politicians from this group.¹⁵ On the grounds of a lack of confidence in the country’s viability and concerns about ethnic relations – the post-independence experiences of neighboring Guyana were all too well-known – the Hindustani leadership strongly opposed independence. This opposition was only symbolically withdrawn, at the point of no return, when the governing coalition dominated by Surinamers of African descent had struck its final deals with their eager Dutch partners. Resentment did not wither, and the subsequent failure of independence has confirmed the earlier, bitter criticism by the Hindustani leadership and its grassroots support regarding what was perceived as irresponsible radicalism.

Since independence and particularly since the mid-1980s, the economy has collapsed. The standard of living had been relatively high at independence. The Dutch investment – a ‘golden handshake’ of \$6000 (US) per capita – should have resulted in diversifying and strengthening the economy, but instead stimulated mismanagement and corruption. Contemporary Suriname has fallen into the category of the poorest Caribbean countries; most Surinamers live below the official subsistence minimum. Little optimism is voiced today regarding the country’s economic viability. At the same time, political history since 1975 has done little to inspire the population’s confidence in its leadership. The period up to 1980 left a memory of increasing political incompetence, ethnic competition, and corruption, which initially provided the military coup with a measure of sympathy. The years of military rule and internal warfare (1980–87) not only demonstrated the military’s incompetence and unreliability as leaders of the nation, but at the

same time cast doubt on the traditional political parties' leadership in the return to democracy. The post-1987 period of democratic rule has not put an end to economic decline, whereas the evidence of illegally won wealth amidst growing poverty continues to undermine the legitimacy of the political system. The present political leadership may well nurture resentment against the continued dependence on Dutch support. Yet, as this dependence remains in place, the electorate seems to evaluate its leadership's success mainly in terms of its ability to get the support going again.

There is a tragic ethnic dimension to the crisis of Suriname. In spite of its initial rhetoric, the military regime aggravated extant ethnic divisions. The civil war against specific groups of Maroons soon turned into derisory propaganda, confirming the worst of stereotypes. Whereas initially the military had propagated the heroic struggles of the first Maroons against colonialism as a shining example, now there was a return to tales of primitivity and brutality. As another dimension to the civil war – and perhaps partly engineered by the military – Amerindian ethnic demands have become more outspoken, confronting both the civil government and the Maroons, their competitors in the tropical forest. The transition to democracy in 1987 may have been guided by an interethnic coalition of the pre-military political parties, each with its own following. Yet underneath this veneer, ethnic affiliation and competition have remained prevalent.

Moreover, ethnic division was underlined through the workings of an economy increasingly dominated by the growth sectors of black marketing, narcotrafficking, and money laundering. Set in motion in the period of military rule, this powerful underside economy continued to prosper during the subsequent period. Not only did the military leadership enrich itself considerably in the process, further undermining its credibility, but the wealth generated through networking with successive governments – both military and civil – has particularly benefited a group of Hindustani businessmen, causing 'ethnic' resentment among the hard-hit Afro-Suriname population.

Thus, while nationalism was initiated with a nationalist rhetoric of ethnic harmony, in practice little was achieved. Perhaps the most telling case of cynical manipulation of ethnicity by the self-proclaimed nationalist military dates from the 1991 elections. The political party connected to the military faced a coalition of the major ethnically-based traditional parties headed by the Afro-Surinamer *Venetiaan*. In a cynical effort to win support among the Hindustani and Javanese population, the military – themselves predominantly of African origin – added their own rhyming comment to posters of *Venetiaan*: 'Stemt u op deze *baviaan*?' (Do you vote for this baboon?).

The exodus, finally, with its obvious economic and psychological consequences, has included a disproportionate share of the country's intel-

lectual cadres. Its consequences for nationalist rhetoric are no less evident. It is more than just a passing comment on the sense of distress and lack of confidence in the country's future that the remaining intellectual and political leadership continues to send its children abroad, mainly to the former metropolis.

Not surprisingly then, the debate on the future of Suriname is cast in bleak terms, and has increasingly been influenced by the diaspora. In 1993, a group of authoritative and mainly expatriate Surinamers published a manifesto urging a referendum in Suriname on a possible revision of the relationship with the Netherlands – generally understood as a half-way or full return to pre-1975 Kingdom relations. There is as yet little reason to think that such a plebiscite will materialize, if only because most Dutch policy-makers are in doubt about the benefits of what would certainly be interpreted as 'recolonization'. Yet the manifesto itself is a telling articulation of the profound crisis of Suriname nationalism.¹⁶ Oblique incantations of national unity and working for progress notwithstanding, the nation seems irredeemably caught in the drama of its disastrous decline and its ethnic and spatial segmentation.

The Antilles: ethnicity, race, language

In the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, the case of Suriname strengthened the extant awareness of the perils of independence. This sensibility had of course previously inspired the politicians' successful resistance to the 'gift' of full decolonization, and had kept the Antillean electorate from pushing its leaders beyond the line, but the fate of Suriname has made the prospect of future independence even more unattractive. The absence of a serious alternative to the present status precludes a radical nationalist discourse, and leaves the Antilleans and Arubans without much room for maneuver vis à vis the Dutch. Even if the recent Dutch reinvolverment in the Caribbean is not adequately defined as recolonization, many Antilleans are apprehensive about exactly this.

In Curaçao, the main Antillean island, the political response to the renewed Dutch presence was initially characterized by indignation and a defensive attitude. Yet the political elites' attempt to play out the argument of neocolonialism stood little chance of being fully heeded in a post-Cold War international context. Curaçaoan politicians realized that the new Dutch policy, itself a devastating comment on local politics in the preceding four decades of virtually autonomous rule, left them little margin. The political parties' position was further weakened when the November 1993 plebiscite – organized by the major Curaçaoan political parties with a view to providing the final argument for breaking up the five-island state and to ensuring

a separate status for their island – revealed an overwhelming majority in favor of prolongation of a federal Netherlands Antilles instead. This outcome was widely interpreted as an expression of the electorate's dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in the political system. The subsequent elections in early 1994 confirmed the debacle of the traditional political parties by putting in power a brand new party, capitalizing on its success in confronting the political establishment in the foregoing plebiscite.

Again, the conditions for nation-building and for formulating a rhetoric of political nationalism are problematic. The lack of an alternative to the present status within the Kingdom is not the only frustration. The crisis of 'traditional' politics was by definition a comment on the failures of autonomous rule. The tendency among the former Curaçaoan leadership to counter Dutch comments on what was perceived as mismanagement by referring to differences in cultural style lost further credibility when its own electorate voted for a new party generally appraised as 'clean'. Yet beyond this, there is a deeper frustration. The May 1969 rebellion has routinely been interpreted as the watershed in post-*Statuut* Curaçao. Before that date, politics was an affair of a small, predominantly non-black local elite. May 1969, in so far as it can be seen as a racial conflict, presumably set the conditions for the emancipation of the black majority, both in politics and beyond. One may well question the extent of this Afro-Curaçaoan emancipation, particularly in the economy and in private relations – in this respect too, the Curaçao experience parallels the unfinished emancipations elsewhere in the Caribbean. But indeed, since 1969, politics in Curaçao have been dominated by local black leaders, and at the same time the dividing line between the administration and its citizenry became increasingly thin – most probably, too thin. As the balance is made up, many feel that the 'new politics' have added to corruption and *clientelismo* rather than to good governance and the fair distribution of opportunities. By mid-1994, the recently elected administration seems to have firmly established the equation of the previous decades of Antillean politics with an increasing lack of morality and common purpose.¹⁷ The record of autonomous rule apparently does not provide the strongest impetus to a sense of national pride.

Obviously, there are other and in some cases perhaps more significant markers of nationhood and ethnicity than the political ones just mentioned. 'Race' and language seem to have been such crucial markers of ethnicity in Curaçao. Yet there is a crucial difference between the two. Its unique language, Papiamentu, functions as the one element of ethnicity shared by all Curaçaoans. Race or color, in contrast, provide openings for disconcerting negotiations over who belongs to the nation. Crudely, there are two principal ways of defining who belongs to the Curaçaoan nation, both linked in different ways to history. As Römer indicated two decades ago, the local population tended to distance itself from 'newcomers'. Those

groups who came to the island in the wake of its industrial modernization, that is, after 1915, were generally not taken to be *Yu di Korsow* (Children of Curaçao). Race as such was no major criterion in this categorization: Afro-Suriname immigrants were considered outsiders just as much as Lebanese, Dutch, or Poles. Yet a second, more recent, and more exclusive definition existed too. Römer reported that some Afro-Curaçaoans preferred the term *Nos bon Yu di Korsow* (We, good Children of Curaçao), relating to the black population only. The exclusion of the local whites and those of lighter complexion may be interpreted not as a denial of a common history, but certainly as a *post hoc* castigation for past centuries of slavery, and as a self-confident (post-1969!) claim to belong to a specific Afro-Curaçao culture.

Interestingly, Römer wrote that the establishing of this ethnic boundary was partly inspired by 'a poor acquaintance with the history of our island. . . . They departed from the erroneous assumption that the blacks had come earlier than the whites'.¹⁸ Probably correct, this observation is at the same time somewhat beside the point. An ethnic group is usefully defined by a combination of three elements: a shared history (real or supposed); socially relevant cultural or physical characteristics; and shared attitudes or behavior.¹⁹ The indistinct aspect of 'a shared history', *real or supposed*, is a clue of crucial importance, and may help to take the Afro-Curaçaoan claim more seriously. In fact, the subsequent development of a particularly Afro-Curaçaoan rhetoric of nation further underlined the specificity of the 'real thing'. Nor has this rhetoric been dropped since. As Broek (1994:23–6) argues, the concept of *Di-nos-e-ta* (This is ours) nurtured since the 1970s aggressively asserts this claim of a unique Afro-Curaçaoan cultural heritage which should be valued as the essence of the island's culture – a claim, incidentally, made earlier in virtually the same phrase by Afro-Suriname nationalists.²⁰ In the 1990s, Curaçaoan intellectuals would still debate the same issue in deciding whether the island's history should be written as the past of all of its inhabitants, or of the Afro-Curaçaoan majority (Huender, 1993). Yet there seems to be less inclination to emphasize 'race' openly, precisely because of its potential damage to the idea of one nation. Finally, in relations with the Netherlands, 'race' or color are not on the open agenda, even if always present psychologically.

In contrast to 'race', language has continued to function as the one element of ethnicity shared by every *Yu di Korsow*. As Anderson (1983) has demonstrated, definable unique languages can serve as a potent factor in the creation of the 'imagined community' of the national state, and of ethnic awareness. Both the Curaçaoan *Papiamentu* and the *Sranan Tongo* of Suriname emerged in a process in which simultaneously these very peoples, respectively one segment of them, developed. As the languages became institutionalized, they increasingly served as a vehicle for differentiation

between insiders and outsiders. Yet in practice and even more so psychologically, Sranan Tongo continued to be primarily the language of the Afro-Surinamers, less so of the Hindustani and Javanese population groups. Moreover, it did not shed its image of a lower-class language. Therefore, Sranan Tongo has not reached the status of the national language for all classes and ethnic groups. Dutch continues to be the country's official vernacular, and two decades after independence there are even indications of its increasing usage in Suriname (De Bruijne and Schalkwijk, 1994: 232–3).

Papiamentu, in contrast, emerged from a history in which the language was adopted by all ethnic groups and classes, and in which it served as the central vehicle not only of communication, but also of affirming a unique identity in counterpoint to the Dutch culture introduced primarily through the educational system. The language therefore serves as the most obvious source of nationalist discourse; without even aiming to be, it implicitly serves as such as it is spoken. However, in a new social and economic context, this anthropological marker of nationality and ethnic uniqueness evokes awkward problems of social policy and individual orientation. For most Curaçaoans, their apparent bilinguality is only an appearance, masking a poor mastery of the Dutch language. One, by now classic, dilemma has emerged as Dutch continues to be the vernacular in education and a requirement for upward social mobility in local society. The dilemma is underlined by the recent upgrading of the Dutch profile in the local scene, and has acquired a new dimension as a result of the increasing migration to the Netherlands. The language deficiency in Dutch of the Antillean population in the metropolis is serious – clearly more so than was the case with the Suriname population – and provides an enormous obstacle to social mobility.

This context confronts the Curaçaoan policy-makers with a formidable dilemma. The political program of a full emancipation of Papiamentu was formulated some decades ago in the heyday of nationalism, and long before migration to the Netherlands had taken its present course. A more extensive use of Papiamentu still ranks high on the agenda of politicians and intellectuals of different backgrounds, and is certainly an obvious issue in the field of nationalist rhetoric. Yet an increased use of Papiamentu in the educational system may lead to a further deterioration of the general mastery of the Dutch language – though in all fairness it should be pointed out that not all experts agree. This policy could therefore harm chances for social mobility on the island, and certainly among the migrant population – today, one out of every three Curaçaoans. The stalemate is evident. Promoting the local vernacular is attractive, perhaps even imperative from a nationalist point of view; after all, the dictum that language is the soul of a nation certainly applies to the Leeward Antilles. Yet doing so may seriously

damage the social and economic position of the individuals supposedly served by this nationalist stance.

Such dilemmas remind one of similar debates in Puerto Rico. One crucial difference is that, even if for Puerto Ricans, and certainly the expatriate communities, a deficient mastery of English may negatively effect their social and economic position, at least their own Spanish is a major language too, and has increasingly become institutionalized as such in the US. By definition, Papiamentu will never have that significance outside its natural locale. The implications should be worrying for Antillean nationalists. The Jamaican author Rex Nettleford (1990:250; 1989:22), has pointed to the social acceptance of Papiamentu as an inspiring example for the future of English creole languages. Yet one may well wonder whether it is not precisely the post-colonial status quo, with its inherent economic and educational benefits, which has so far enabled local politicians to sidestep the dilemma of either emphasizing local specificity, or preparing for optimal insertion in an ever more penetrating global economy and culture. Precisely from a nationalist perspective, the dilemma must be haunting. As Curaçao, a 'not yet independent' territory, discusses the possibility of upgrading the official use of a language spoken by less than 200,000 people, independent islands such as Dominica and St Lucia, similar in terms of scale and language situation, and equally aware of the cultural heritage embodied in the local vernacular, would not dream of taking such steps at the expense of the English language – 'Konpyouta pa ka palé Kwéyol'.²¹

These dilemmas seem to have been less prominent for Aruba, the second largest of the Antilleans, with its 65,000 inhabitants. The island negotiated its own separate status as of 1986, and has recently been accorded full country status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. All through this process, which started half a century ago, Aruba's significant Other was Curaçao rather than the Netherlands. With their more pronounced *latino* roots and their tradition of self-representation as ethnically different from Afro-Curaçao, Aruban nationalists had an obvious case for nationalist discourse (Alofs and Merckies, 1990). Principles of ethnic differentiation actually underlie the discrepancy between the advancement of the Aruban Papiamentu against the Curaçaoan Papiamentu, as these had earlier on informed the segregation of the light-skinned autochthonous and the black migrant segments of the population.

Now that separate status has been achieved and the Arubans too have been confronted with a stronger Dutch presence, one wonders whether this will spark off a new, anti-metropolitan dimension in local self-definition. So far, there seem to be no clear indications that such a shift will occur. Beyond the political sphere, Aruban relations with the Netherlands remain comparatively weak. The Aruban community in the metropolis is small in

numbers, and the major economic partner has traditionally been the US rather than the official metropolis. As long as these parameters do not change, Aruban politicians may have to struggle with Dutch policy-makers, but will more likely use the rhetoric of other spheres of contention to mobilize their electorate.

The latter observation holds true even more for the English-speaking Dutch Windwards, whose colonial history and postwar economic development have inserted them primarily in the Anglo-American world. As with Aruba, the renewed Dutch involvement could spark off a new and not necessarily positive awareness of the metropolis. Before his detention on a charge of corruption, the long-term and fraudulent *caudillo* of St Maarten, Claude Wathey, indeed mobilized his following on a convenient anti-Dutch masquerade of nationalism. Yet in daily life, the context in which insular ethnicity is elaborated is far more complicated, involving concomitant encounters with the local and metropolitan inhabitants of the island's French half, a by now overwhelming number of Curaçaoan 'compatriots', immigrants from various Caribbean islands, and American and European tourists. Again, this presents a problematic context of national or ethnic self-definition.²²

The most important challenge of nation-building affecting both the three Windward islands and Curaçao and Bonaire follows from the recently formulated policy of keeping the five Antilles together. The return to this policy responded to the outcome of the November 1993 plebiscite on Curaçao which was, among other factors, related to an awareness of the importance of interinsular kinship bonds. Whereas during the earlier oil boom Windwarders had flocked to Curaçao and Aruba, now Curaçaoan migrants form a sizeable group on St Maarten with its dazzling tourist business. The October 1994 plebiscites in the smaller islands have confirmed the will to keep the federal Netherlands Antilles afloat. It is not evident that the new policy will be translated into the fostering of a truly supra-insular Netherlands-Antillean nationalism. Yet the same migration phenomenon which has so seriously undermined nation-building in other respects may help to create a certain common inter-island purpose here.

Conclusion

Few would deny the continuing significance of 'race' among all sectors of the present populations of the Caribbean. Even so, the Caribbean contribution to 'cultures of resistance' against colonialism and racism has rightly been applauded for its – in view of the region's small size – amazing impact. From the Haitian Revolution through José Martí, Marcus Garvey and *négritude* to Fanon and Rasta, the Caribbean has had a resounding

voice in the chapters of writing and fighting back to empire. Today Caribbean creole culture is welcomed by some observers as another demonstration of the region's capacity to innovate and to contribute to the global culture of the post-modern world.²³ However, it is difficult not to remark the increased fragility of these local cultures, undermined as they are by the bitter fruits of independence and the terrifying demonstration effect of the satellite age, tourism, and the nearby migration outlets. In this context, nation-building continues to be a major predicament, as is the search for a wider Caribbean identity.

Caribbean nationalisms have been characterized both by an awareness of shared Caribbean identities and by a parallel or subsequent practice of particularism and insularism. A history of divergent colonial experiences and resulting cultural differences has been of major importance here; but so have – and probably more so – the contemporary realities of differences in scale and economic potential. In spite of earlier optimism, hesitant subregional schemes, and continuing contemporary efforts such as the recent establishment of the Association of Caribbean States, the postwar period has not witnessed a decisive regional integration. The rhetoric of a pan-Caribbean identity has foundered on the sad realities of competing islands marketing the same products and services to the same clientele in a situation of cut-throat competition rather than concerted effort. The growing awareness of the volatility of the individual countries' viability has strengthened the trend to value particularistic lifelines over the insecure prospects of regional integration.

In this context, the absence of a strong pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico and the French overseas departments is hardly surprising: nor is the similar overwhelming desire of the Antillean and Aruban population to remain within the legal orbit of the former colonial power. Ever since Suriname assumed the agonizing position of providing the counterpoint to the conservative choice, the credibility of a nationalist rhetoric speaking out for full independence has dramatically diminished. The exodus to the Netherlands has only confirmed this predicament.

Dutch Caribbean nationalism today faces the exceedingly difficult task of contesting for a niche in a world increasingly dictated by a US-dominated 'global' culture, struggling on its way with an older metropolitan culture which, contrary to earlier expectations, is as strongly present as ever. The crucial difference with the earlier period of colonialism is that now the link with the Netherlands is sought after in the former colonies. This explains the agonizingly narrow limits to nationalist rhetoric and practice. Earlier nationalist rhetoric in today's context borders painfully on the obsolete. Both within the Dutch Caribbean and its metropolitan society, the future seems to lie in the eclectic retention and further articulation of cultural specificities, rather than in a wider politics of opposition to empire. This

situation, which is certainly not unique in the contemporary Caribbean, will no doubt continue to inspire debates in which the older language of nationalism and its illusions of national independence and sovereignty will linger beyond its true lifetime.

Notes

1. Particularly Hoetink 1967, 1973, 1985.
2. I previously communicated some of the ideas expressed in this essay in my inaugural address as Professor of Caribbean Studies at Utrecht University (Oostindie, 1994).
3. Cf. Maingot (1994:228–49). Among the good recent overviews of Caribbean development issues and politics, suffice it to mention Clarke (1991), Domínguez, Pastor and Worrell (1993), Knight (1990), and Payne and Sutton (1993).
4. The November 1993 plebiscites in Puerto Rico and Curaçao disclosed small minorities of only 4 per cent of the Puerto Rican electorate and 0.5 per cent of the Curaçaoans voting for independence. The October 1994 plebiscites in the remaining Netherlands Antillean islands of Bonaire, St Maarten, St Eustatius and Saba confirmed the virtually complete disinterest in independence.
5. For a discussion of the changing relations within the Kingdom up to the early 1990s, see Hoefte and Oostindie, 1991. Meel (1990a, 1993) succinctly summarizes developments in Suriname since 1975. For the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, see Reinders (1993), van Aller (1994:363–565). I discussed the specter of ‘recolonization’ for both parts of the Dutch Caribbean in Oostindie, 1992.
6. The statistics generally used in estimating the magnitude of the immigrant population are tellingly biased though. Anybody born in the Netherlands from at least one non-Dutch parent (in some of the calculations, restricted to a non-Dutch *mother*) is counted among this immigrant population. Therefore, a child born in Amsterdam from a Bonairean mother and a Dutch father and growing up in that city will remain an immigrant for statistical purposes. Figures used in this essay are based on Oostindie, 1988 and 1995, and Tas, 1993.
7. In the early 1960s, the total Suriname population in the Netherlands was only 13,000. The same figure applied to the Antillean and Aruban community a decade later. Whereas Suriname and Curaçaoan migration accelerated afterwards, the number of migrants from Aruba, Bonaire and the three Dutch Windward Antilles has remained modest.
8. The influx of immigrants is most clearly visible in the major cities. By 1990, the proportion of first or second generation legal immigrants stood at nearly 25 per cent in Amsterdam, 20 per cent in Rotterdam and the Hague, and 15 per cent in Utrecht. As this proportion is more pronounced in the younger age brackets, these proportions are rapidly rising.
9. In the late 1980s, the unemployment figure for Dutch labor stood at 13 per cent, but at 27 per cent for Surinamers and 23 per cent for Antilleans and Arubans. The figures for the Mediterranean groups were even more startling: 44 per cent for Turks, and 42 per cent for Moroccans. Caribbean migrants are also better represented in the middle classes. For the younger Caribbean generation, educational participation is below the Dutch average, while figures for school drop-out, unemployment and deviance are particularly high.
10. I fully concur here with the ideas developed by Hoetink on ‘exotic minorities’ in his *Slavery and Race Relations in the Americas* (Hoetink, 1973:177–9, 191).
11. Obviously, there is no need to think of this relative isolation as encompassing all of the

Mediterranean migrant community. Nor do we need to think of this isolation as only imposed. At least initially, Mediterranean communities have indeed been less inclined to assimilation, as is witnessed by the low degree of interethnic mixing.

12. Dutch society may be somewhat more receptive to Caribbean migrants because of an anticipation of more common ground. Yet the slow incorporation of Caribbean culture in this commonalty does underline the difficulty of expanding domestic cultural parameters. As in France and the UK, Dutch Caribbean migrants have been disproportionately successful and therefore conspicuous in one sphere of public life, that is, professional sports. But obviously, while the players may be Caribbean, the sports and the business are not. Indications of Dutch society's willingness and capacity to absorb elements of Caribbean culture proper are meagre. On the French survey, see *NRC Handelsblad*, 22 March, 1991.
13. Oostindie, 1990. This observation obviously applies as well to French Caribbean nationalism, and even, if to a lesser extent, to the British West Indian case.
14. In the Netherlands, the two major ethnic groups of Suriname (those of African and those of Indian descent) are geographically divided among distinct cities, and have tended to organize on an ethnic rather than a national basis. This applies equally to the third largest ethnic group, those of Javanese descent. On ethnic plurality in Suriname, see van Lier (1971) and Dew (1978).
15. Naipaul, in *The Middle Passage*, offers striking observations on the – with the benefit of hindsight – heroically naive ideas of the early 1960s Suriname nationalists (Naipaul, 1981:165). See also Dew (1978), Meel (1990b) and Oostindie (1990).
16. *De Volkskrant*, 29 September 1993. See also the writings of the young Suriname-born Dutch author, Anil Ramdas (1992, 1994).
17. For example, the interview with the new coalition's prime minister, Miguel Pourier, in *NRC Handelsblad*, 9 September 1994.
18. Römer 1974:53; my translation.
19. For example, *Social Science Encyclopedia*, 1985:267–9.
20. The name of the Dutch-based Afro-Suriname nationalist organization was *Wie Egie Sanie*, Sranan Tongo for Our Own Things. As these 'things' were all derived from (reconstructions of) an Afro-Suriname past, *Wie Egie Sanie*'s program failed to appeal to other ethnic groups (Oostindie, 1990:245–50).
21. 'Computers do not speak Creole.' St Lucian Prime Minister John Compton, quoted in Frank (1993:46). Cf. Frank (1993) on St Lucia, Stuart (1993) on Dominica. Alongside its tributes to local Creoles and dialects, the recent report of the West Indian Commission, *Time For Action*, equally emphasizes the imperative of continuing and even expanding the use of English in the curriculum of Commonwealth Caribbean education (West Indian Commission, 1993:269–71, 306).
22. Rummens (1991) provides an interesting exploration of cultural identity in St Maarten/Saint Martin.
23. For example, the broad coverage of Caribbean authors in the third chapter of Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); see also Clifford 1988:175–81. For eulogies of contemporary Caribbean creole culture, see, for example, Benítez Rojo (1989), Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant (1989), Nettleford (1988) and West India Commission (1993:265–8).

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