



THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR

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The West India Committee Circular



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Leading articles

Cuban trafficking ring supplying soldiers for Russia's war in Ukraine.

It has been reported that the authorities in Cuba are working to break up a human trafficking ring that is recruiting Cubans in Russia, as well as Cubans in Cuba itself, to fight for the Russian military in the War in Ukraine. Several groups on social media have been reported as offering to help recruit Cubans into the Russian Army or sign up as mercenaries. Mercenarism is prohibited under Cuban law.

One woman was reported by the *Moscow Times* as facilitating Cubans to sign one year contracts with the Army, with a monthly income of 204,000 roubles, equivalent to 51,359 Cuban Pesos (over \$2,100 USD), over thirteen times the average Cuban salary. The recruits also received a one-off payment of 195,000 roubles as well as a variety of other benefits, including tax breaks and subsidised studies for recruits' children at universities.

It has also been reported that several Cubans have also joined the Russian military in return

for Russian citizenship.

Ukrainian Hactivist Collective, the Cyber Resistance team, have discovered and released information about whole units of Cuban fighters, totalling some 199 fighters, a number large enough to provide two whole companies. It has been further reported that these Cuban fighters are receiving training in Belarus.

Lured by the offer of more money than they can possibly hope to earn in Cuba, it appears that many of these recruits, some still in their late teens, have not known what they are signing up for, being unable to read their Russian contracts. Their Cuban passports also appear to have been confiscated.

Some appear to have been told that their roles would be strictly non-combatant, digging trenches and building work, only for them to end up being trained for combat. Some Cuban families also report that their loved ones have been killed in action.

Although the exact figure is unknown, it is clear that the Russian military has taken heavy casualties in Ukraine and has been working to boost the number of recruits, with the aim of 1.5 million combat personnel, an increase of more than 30 percent.

The one year contracts that many Cubans have been reported as signing are the result of Russian President Vladimir Putin signing an order reducing the minimum term of service for international recruits to one year, down from five.

Several arrests have been made in Cuba over people related to the trafficking ring.

The Russian Government has yet to respond to

the rare criticism from the Cuban Government. Cuba has been a close ally of Russia for decades, dating from the Soviet Union's support of the Communist island during the Cold War. Cuba has criticised other nations for their support of Ukraine.

Notes of Interest

On 10th July, Supermodel Gigi Hadid was detained in the Cayman Islands for attempting to bring Cannabis into the British Overseas Territory, when the illegal substance and accompanying paraphernalia was discovered by Customs at Owen Roberts International Airport. She and her companion were initially arrested and released on bail, before being fined \$1,000 on 12th July.

Keisha Schahaff (46) of Antigua won two tickets in the Virgin Galactic Sweepstakes, thus providing her and her daughter, Anastasia Mayers (18), with the opportunity to go into space aboard Virgin Galactic's 'Galactic 02' mission on 10th August, its second commercial space flight. Mother and daughter had to undergo training and pass physical tests to ensure their fitness for the journey.

Launching from a site in New Mexico, the flight aboard the VSS Unity lasted 90 minutes, reaching speeds of 2,500mph. 285,146 feet high at the very edge of space, the passengers were treated to 5 minutes of weightlessness out of their seats. They are the first people from the Caribbean to go into space. Mayers is also the second youngest person to go into space.

It has been reported that a diplomatic row has been developing between the USA and Jamaica concerning the Jamaican refusal to accredit the spouse of an American Diplomat, on the basis that Jamaica does not recognise same-sex marriage. It has also been reported that

three Jamaican diplomats in the USA have had their visa renewals refused by the American Government.

In hopes of replicating the crackdown on gang violence adopted by El Salvadore, Honduras has begun building a penal colony on the Islas de Cisne archipelago. Island prisons were once common in Latin America, but the last one, in Mexico, closed in 2019. Critics say that building this new prison will do nothing to tackle the root causes of gang violence.

Visitors to the UK from St. Vincent and the Grenadines still do not require a visa, despite expectations that the nation would be removed from the list of countries from which visa-free travel is permitted.

Cuba is undergoing an economic crisis, said to be the worst since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cuba, traditionally one of the largest exporters of sugar, is now having to import sugar. The island is projected to produce 350,000 tons of sugar this year. Other agricultural production, including livestock and fishing, are said to have fallen by 35% this year, on top of falls since the crisis began in 2019. The Cuban peso has also significantly decreased in value, making purchases significantly more expensive for Cubans.

In light of the continuing security situation, both Jamaica and the Bahamas have pledged to send troops to Haiti once such an action had been authorised by the UN Security Council. Other nations prepared to send personnel include Kenya, which is prepared to send 1,000 police officers to help tackle the escalating violence of armed gangs.

The island of Redonda, part of Antigua & Barbuda, has been declared a Protected area.

The new Redonda Ecosystem Reserve covers 30,000 hectares, which includes the entire island and the surrounding sea, with 180km² of Coral Reef as well as Seagrass meadows. The creation of the Reserve marks the end of the project to restore the Redondan ecosystem.

Since the removal of the invasive species of rats and goats in 2017, the Redondan environment has made remarkable strides to restore its natural state. Helena Jeffery Brown of the Department of the Environment said *“Now with the creation of the Redonda Ecosystem Reserve, we have made a great stride towards fulfilling our government’s commitment to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted at the COP 15 of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity in December 2022.”*

An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter Scale struck Trinidad and Tobago on 11th September. Fortunately no damage or injuries were recorded.

In mid-October, a Canadian-Caribbean summit was hosted in Ottawa, with many different leaders from around the Caribbean meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Treaudeau to discuss matters ranging from climate change to the gang crisis in Haiti, as well as means to increase trade and Canadian investment in the Caribbean.

The West India Committee Report

Mr. Charles Wheeler has left the West India Committee after nine years. In recent years, Mr. Wheeler has been Managing Director of the charity. We wish him well in his future endeavours and thank him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the committee over the last nine years.

WIC CEO Mrs. Blondel Cluff CBE gave a talk at the Old Bailey on 11th September on the mutual history of the Caribbean and the City of London, and the role of the West India Committee. The talk was very well received and led to Mrs. Cluff being invited to give another talk on 17th October to the staff of CWC Markets as part of their Black History Month events.

On Wednesday 11th October, the West India Committee, with the support of Professor Geoff Thompson, gave a session on Caribbean heritage and Genealogy to a group from OSCARBirmingham at the Soho House Museum. Professor Thompson gave a talk on his own heritage and upbringing and how the West India Committee collection helped in that understanding.



Mr. Wells explained the history of the Committee and what resources that the Committee’s library and archive holds that could help the participants explore their own family history, as well as records held by other institutions. Participants were also provided with small fact files about their own family names to serve as a starting point for their own research.

On 16th October, Mr. Wells, the Committee’s Director of Research and Heritage, gave a well-received talk at the Chiltern Open Air Museum



on the Committee's recent work surrounding the punch ladle of Joseph Chatoyer in the West India Committee Collection. Mr. Wells has volunteered at the Chiltern Open Air Museum for many years and was asked to give a talk for visitors, staff and volunteers, having previously given a talk on the Thames River Police. Mr. Wells spoke about the history of the island of St. Vincent and the Garinagu people and the artefact itself.

Caribbean Cookery

Jamaican Cornmeal Pudding



Ingredients

500g Yellow Cornmeal
 100g SR Flour
 2 teaspoons Ground Cinnamon
 2 teaspoons Ground Nutmeg
 ¾ Litre Coconut Milk (approx two tins)

300ml Water
 100g butter
 1 tablespoon Vanilla Extract
 200g Brown Sugar
 100g raisins or sultanas – soaked in 2 tablespoons of Rum

Topping

150 ml Coconut milk
 50g Brown Sugar
 1 teaspoon Ground Cinnamon

Method

First preheat the oven to 180C and grease a 9 inch springform pan. Then soak raisins/sultanas in the Rum. Use a large mixing bowl to combine the cornmeal, flour, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Whisk the Coconut Milk, Water, Butter and Brown Sugar in a saucepan over a low heat until the butter and sugar have melted. Add the contents of the saucepan to the mixing bowl and continue to whisk until the mixture is smooth. Pour the mixture into the greased tin, place the tin in the oven and bake for about 30 mins.

Mix together the ingredients for the topping in a bowl and pour over the semi-baked mixture. Continue baking for a further 40 – 50 minutes until the pudding is set. Test with a skewer and if it comes out clean, the pudding is ready.

It can be served with cream or ice-cream, or even a dash of rum.

100 Years ago

A new motor fuel was introduced to Guadeloupe by Mr. E.H.S. Sinclair. Called P & S motor fuel, it was based on alcohol. It was made in various locales around the world, including Jamaica and Cuba, and normally distilled from molasses. Due to the economic state of the French Caribbean, it was proposed to produce it

out of sweet potatoes; a company was founded, which aimed to produce 5,000 litres a day.

The Board of Agriculture of Trinidad and Tobago decided to not relax its prohibition of importing cotton seeds for either local use or re-exportation. This was to protect against a possible infestation of pink bollworm, which had badly infested the cotton industries of the USA and Brazil. The Cotton industries of several islands had also been badly affected by drought.

A new Parliamentary Group was formed in Westminster on 18th July, to watch the interests of the British West Indies. The new group was formed largely thanks to the efforts of the Jamaican Imperial Association. The creation of the new group was supported by the West India Committee, who offered to assist its work. Of pressing interest for the new group was the stabilisation of the sugar preference, steamship connections, the expansion of all-British telegraph connections and the development of wireless telegraphy between the West Indies and Britain.

Haiti exported 100 tons of Mangrove Bark to Puerto Rico, the first time in three years that any such bark had been exported. The bark was used during the tanning of leather, and was a major export for Haiti during the First World War. The stoppage in 1920 was due to a collapse in the price of the material.

The West Indian Colonies and British Guiana approved the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's tender for a Canada-West Indies service, to begin after 31st March 1924. The West Indian colonies would contribute \$584,000 in a subsidy per year, in return for a fortnightly service over a period of ten years. However, certain conditions were attached

to this acceptance, which required further negotiation.

First World War veteran, Captain O.L. Hancock, was appointed Commissioner of the British Virgin Islands. He had previously been Staff Officer of the Barbados local forces, Adjutant of the Volunteers and Governor of Barbados's prison.

The West Indies Cricket Team's tour of England came to an end on 5th September, after an excellent display of fielding and bowling against an all-England eleven, captained by H.D.G. Leveson-Gower at Scarborough. The team had secured thirteen victories during the tour, including not only the match at Scarborough, but also defeating Surrey at the Oval. Of note was the masterful batting skills of George Challenor. The team was treated to a farewell banquet at the West Indian Club on 7th September.

A visit of Members of the British Parliament to the West Indies was proposed to take place in Winter. The tour would take in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados and British Guiana. The West India Committee also wished for the visit to include the Leeward and Windward Islands, the Bahamas and British Honduras, but it was not practicable for this tour.

Major R.W. Sutherland was appointed Resident Surgeon at the Colony Hospital, Grenada.

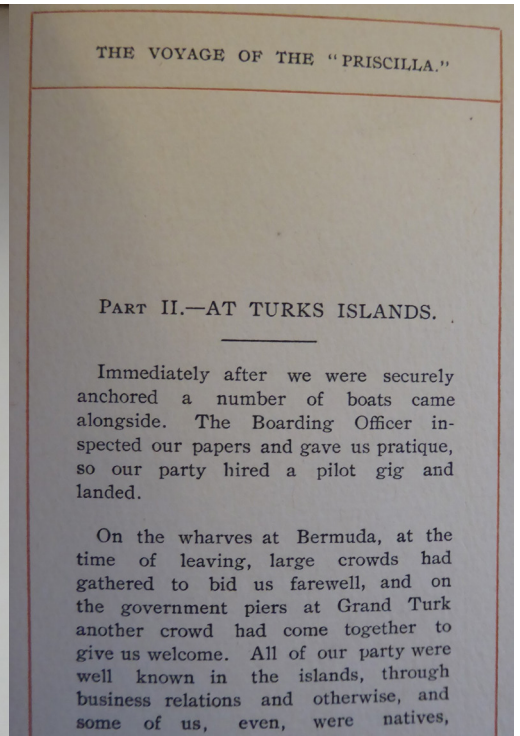
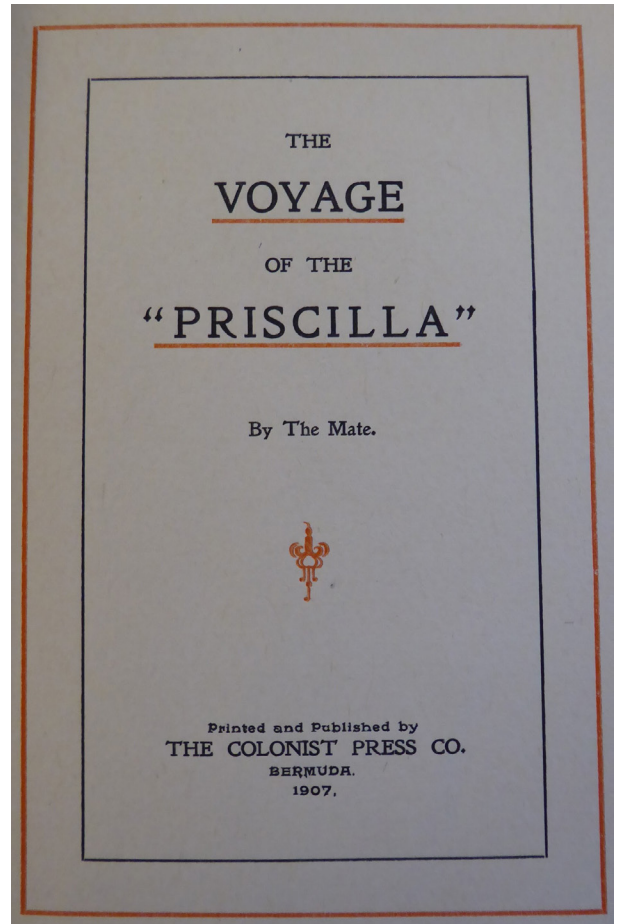
At a meeting of the Imperial Economic Conference on 9th October, the Government's proposals for an extension of Imperial Preference were outlined. The preference for sugar would not be reduced for a ten year period. There were two proposals for Tobacco, either to not reduce it for a term of years as with sugar or to increase the preference to a fourth of the duty.

From the Library

The Voyage of the *Priscilla*

Written by J.C. Crisson, the mate of the *Priscilla*, and published in Nassau in the Bahamas in 1907. This particular item in the library was brought to our attention by a research enquiry. The *Priscilla* was an American Schooner that carried lumber to the Turks and Caicos Islands. Crisson also provides an insight into the Turks and Caicos islands, describing their geography, produce and economies.

On its return voyage, it carried a cargo of salt from East Caicos. The *Priscilla* was eventually shipwrecked off the coast of Bermuda on a later expedition that the one recounted in this book. The family of the gentleman who made the enquiry used to own the *Priscilla* and had been searching for a copy of the book for some time, so we are pleased to have made it available to read through our heritage portal [here](#). To date, our book is still the only known copy held in a library or collection.



THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE

The West India Committee is a UK registered charity that works to improve the welfare of the people of the Caribbean and the societies in which they live and work, both domestically and globally. Please complete this form by hand and post it to The West India Committee, Suite 53, 4 Whitehall Court, Westminster, London, SW1A 2EL.

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Please only give us your telephone number/e-mail address if you are happy for us to contact you this way with updates about how your gifts are helping and how you can donate and help in other ways.

I enclose a cheque made payable to 'The West India Committee' of £



Gift Aid allows us to claim back 25p of tax for every £1 you give

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