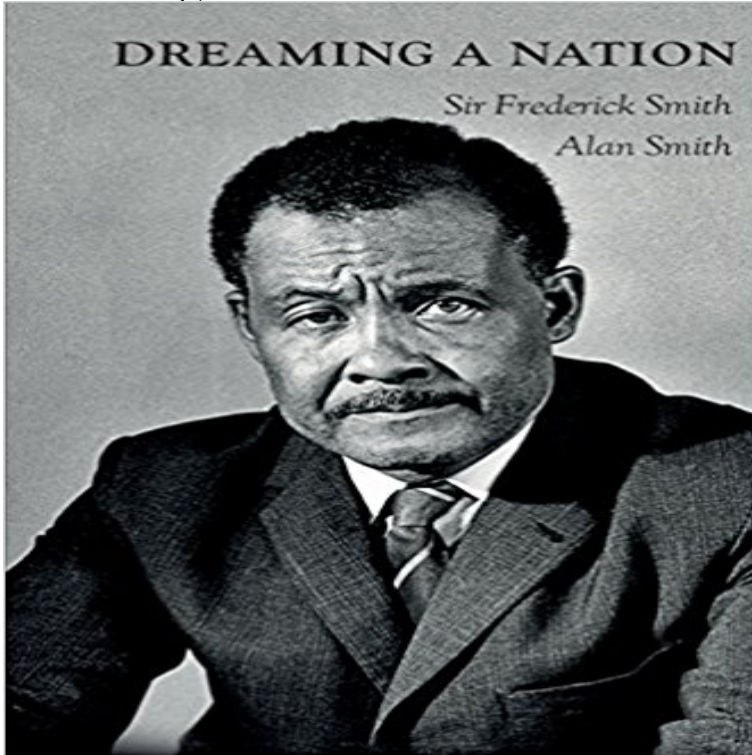


## Dreaming A Nation: Sir Frederick Smith and the Barbados Journey



Few nation builders, men that craft countries at their outset, live long enough to write their own story. Sir Frederick Sleepy Smith is one. In the award winning *Dreaming a Nation*, Sir Frederick, now 91, and co-author Alan Smith, reflect on the journey to nationhood of Barbados, a Caribbean and Commonwealth country which consistently ranks as one of the highest rated developing countries in the United Nations Global Human Development Index - all through Sir Frederick's remarkable personal story. Importantly, as Richard Drayton, the Rhodes Professor of Imperial History, Kings College London notes in the foreword, these memoirs, brimming with Sleepy Smith's wit and humour, provide glimpses of aspects of 20th century Barbadian private and public life which neither historians nor novelists have yet recorded.

Sir Frederick, whose great-great-grandfather was a slave, was born in Barbados in 1924 into a family of eleven children. After a rural childhood, he went on to serve in the British Army in World War 2 and to teach classics. After studying law in England, he threw himself into trade union and national politics, and in 1955, became one of the founders and first president of Barbados's Democratic Labour Party (DLP) which led Barbados to independence. Sleepy was falsely branded a communist at that time, when the Caribbean was a hot cauldron of Cold War politics. He was Barbados's first Attorney General and then the Leader of the Opposition after the first post-Independence change of government. Sir Frederick reflects on the nature of politics and decision making in a small country. He also takes us behind the scenes to periods of national life which, according to Richard Drayton, are almost invisible in ...published history. In particular, he reveals the support which the Government of Barbados gave to Cuba in

1975 in allowing them to use the Barbados airport to transport troops to Angola to fight forces backed by the South African Apartheid regime. He tells of his time as Queens Counsel when he was involved in several important cases and as a judge on the Grenada Court of Appeal presiding over the case of the 1983 Grenada Revolution. Over his multi-faceted career, Sir Frederick interacted with many interesting, famous (and infamous) people: Barbados National Heroes Sir Grantley Adams and Errol Barrow, with whom he worked closely; prime ministers and presidents - Sir Alec Douglas Home, Indira Ghandi, Chiang Kai-Shek, John Diefenbaker; fellow law officers US Chief Justice Earl Warren and US Attorney General Eric Holder; famous cricketers with whom he grew up - the three Ws of Frank Worrell, Clyde Walcott and Everton Weekes; and even the notorious train robber Ronnie Biggs whom he successfully defended in an extradition case (but was never paid!). Importantly, *Dreaming a Nation* provides unique insights into the extraordinarily rigid constraints of race and class which characterised colonial Barbados and how, within a relatively short period of time, the arrival of popular democracy transformed the life chances of ordinary Barbadians. Richard Drayton reminds us, That winning the vote in Barbados led to such dramatic improvements in health, education, and welfare, and a society founded on the rule of law, rather than civil war and Swiss bank accounts, was not inevitable. It had to do with the values and vision of Sleepy and his generation in both political parties, who sought for Barbados the kind of welfare democracy built in Britain after 1945. That is why *Dreaming a Nation* is not only a valuable contribution to Barbados civic memory, it provides important lessons for nation builders of small countries everywhere. These unique glimpses into the public and private worlds of Sir Frederick as a soldier, teacher, legal scholar, politician, nation builder, thinker and family man are indeed a gift to future

generations in Barbados, the Caribbean and the wider world.

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