

## Showdown in Jamaica

BY S. CURTIS ILLOWAY

International politics is looking increasingly like what Alice found when she stepped through the looking-glass: a chessboard of oddly assorted flamingos and dodo birds being moved about as pawns; of Red Bishops shouting "Off with his head!"; of walruses who weep false tears as they gobble up oysters; of Cheshire Cats with all-knowing smiles and nothing to say.

Take the chandeliered luncheon I attended recently at Manhattan's Waldorf-Astoria. There, earnestly dedicated to the plight of the poor and seated around tables covered in lovely white linen, were thousands of individuals representing groups that are loosely joined under the umbrella title "Organization of Non-Governmental Agencies of the United Nations." While waiting for the speeches to begin, they made good work of their \$15-a-plate lasagna, watercress salad, and ice cream.

Outside, in the corridor, a group of Jamaicans who could not afford the ticket price stood and waited. This was somewhat unfortunate, since the main speaker was himself from Jamaica, and his own people would seem those most eager to hear what he had to say.

Mr. Michael Manley, prime minister of Jamaica, spoke in rolling and resonant phrases of the "North/South" division in the world, about the vast needs of the poor in underdeveloped nations, about the nefarious activities of international corporations—and said nothing about Jamaica.

The interesting encounter came later, when the prime minister left the applause of the dining room and crossed the corridor to the elevators. There he had to face his own people. The black Jamaicans in the corridor may not have had \$15 in their pockets, but they did have placards and a lot of anger and some not-so-nice things to say about their prime minister. Manley's face stiffened. That lovely public smile vanished. It seemed he might actually snarl. But instead he clenched his fist, held it up threateningly at the Jamaicans, and stepped into the elevator, hustled off by his aides.

True, this is not the Manley most Americans see or hear about, but it is the Manley I saw—with the same clenched fist—back in 1977 at a large People's National party (PNP) rally in Kingston. At that rally John Hearne, Manley's former information officer turned critic, was attacked and beaten.

Now even Jamaicans who once voted for Manley pray that he will be defeated on October 30 by opposition leader Edward Seaga of the Jamaica Labour party (JLP)—a man who uses reason instead of rhetoric in his appraisals of the island's needs. Since a much-debated reelection in 1976, top advisors have left Manley's party in droves, and more than thirty ministers and junior ministers of government have resigned.

Growing dismay over Manley's direction began in early '77, when he announced the state takeover of Radio Jamaica. "What him taking over RJR for?" demanded one quite ordinary country girl. "Him past mad now. Cha! Him crazy!" Kingston graffiti read, "SAVE RJR! Manley, yu sure are heavy, Yu a BURDEN!" Then phones started to be tapped and, by 1979, high-spirited conversations over a beer would cease as a newcomer entered the bar. "Shhh. Him PNP. Na talk now," people said, smiling artificially at the new man.

Manley may not have set out to use tactics of fear and control; he may have begun with a genuine desire to redistribute wealth more equitably in Jamaica, as he showed with his fight with the bauxite companies to leave more money in the country. New pro-tenant laws, a higher minimum wage (now \$30 a week), and repeated pleas for Jamaicans to become more "self-sufficient" marked his time in office—before the repression. Then, exasperated when many measures failed, he tried to *force* people to respect him, to applaud his efforts to make Jamaica independent of the large, wealthy nations. The onion fiasco is one example of a mismanaged attempt to rearrange the economy.

Onions are a staple in Jamaica, as much as rice and peas for Sunday dinner. In 1977, Manley suddenly declared that all onion imports (primarily from Canada) would cease. Shoppers soon faced \$3-a-pound onions—and were furious. Whole suitcases filled with onions, onion salt, onion powder started coming through customs on trips back from Miami. Ray McKinley, then director of the Agricultural Marketing Corporation, told me that he understood Manley's desire to cut down on imported products. But, he added, enough time had not been given to switch to local crops. When McKinley's criticism was made public, he became the object of continual government harassment until, like many others, joined the exodus abroad. The country lost its top agricultural expert when he did.

It is not just the middle class that has been leaving Jamaica over the last four years but lower-class families

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as well—tired of dwindling jobs, dwindling food, and a television station that delivers nightly pro-Soviet, pro-Cuban programs. At least six hundred people a day line up at the American embassy in Kingston in hope of a visa—laundry women and market women, old men and toddlers—remaining overnight on the sidewalk to keep their place in line.

No one queues up at the Cuban embassy. Jamaicans have had enough of Cuba over the last four years to suit them for a century. "Are you from Cuba?" one country woman asked a Spanish-speaking visitor she saw in a luncheonette. "What you coming *here* for?" she demanded. "This is *my* island, *my* home. And no one is going to take it away from me. And them not going to take this bench I'm sitting on, either!" Only upon learning that the visitor was from Peru did she relax, and laugh, then join in an animated conversation.

Michael Manley may have underestimated this "feisty" streak in the Jamaican people when he began taking advice and personnel from Cuba. In his mind, apparently, this was the way to be "nonaligned," to escape dependence on either superpower. But to the ordinary Jamaicans it was plain old butting in—worse, it was taking jobs away from them. It was, further, infuriating to country Jamaicans to have to try to explain their fevers or boils to doctors who, as one woman told me, "caan' even speak a word of English."

Jamaicans are not a naive people. Their heritage includes stories of Anancy, the Spider-Man, who wins through wily wit, is sharp as a tack and very suspicious of high-sounding motives like "altruism." Up in the hills, therefore, the arrival of hordes of "medical" men chatting in a foreign tongue is viewed with deep suspicion. Eyebrows raise questioningly over why Señor Fidel is so interested in Jamaica. Reports from relatives in Cuba are not glowing.

"The medical personnel they send here are very poorly trained," said one Jamaican. "A lot of people have reported serious cases of malpractice to writers for the *Daily Gleaner* [Jamaica's only nongovernment news organ of any importance]. Sometimes it just looks like experimentation on people—the care is so shoddy. So, as a result, many people privately surmise these men—like some of the school construction workers—are just another version of the *brigadistas*."

Why, Jamaicans ask, are truckloads of goods constantly arriving in the dead of night at a Cuban school construction site in Westmoreland, a site surrounded by a high fence? "They've been 'building' that school for three years, and not one building has even been started," said a neighbor. The suspicion, fueled by the arrival last spring of 200,000 rounds of ammunition earmarked for Moonex, a Cuban-owned firm in Kingston, is that the school site is really an arms depot.

## THE RIVALS

Today it is Edward P.G. Seaga who is seen as the nationalist, the spokesman for independence from foreign control. Islanders also know that he and his deputies, Senator Winston Spaulding and Dr. Percival Broderick, have been warned they will be shot or their families hurt if they continue opposing Manley. Seaga, his wife, and their three children had to move to a new apart-

ment in Kingston last year after a series of grim phone calls warned that young Christopher was being followed to school, and Mrs. Seaga was being followed even when she went to the market. Three other candidates were shot this summer. Glenmore Webley, running against PNP Finance Minister Hugh Small, was struck in the arm in August as he worked on hurricane recovery plans; Everald Warmington was shot after a JLP meeting in September. But it was the assassination attempt against former Prime Minister Hugh Shearer that most horrified Jamaicans.

The near-fatal attack on Shearer occurred on July 25, two days before a large PNP rally in Montego Bay. Manley was the featured speaker. With him, arriving after a top-security flight into the MoBay airport, were sixteen of Castro's senior advisors. *Numero tres* in Havana, Juan Almeida Bosque, vice-president of Castro's Council of State, had arrived on July 23. His high-powered, later-arriving entourage included Brigadier General Lino Carreras Rodriguez, who is "in charge of the Special Forces under the command of the Chief Commander [Castro]." Informants tell me that another of those flanking Manley at the rally was Osvaldo Cardenas Junquera, chief of the Caribbean section of the Cuban intelligence service (DGI) Central America department.

"CUBAN-JAMAICAN SOLIDARITY AGAINST THE U.S.A.!" proclaimed the banners on the speaker's stage. Youths in the crowd strolled about wearing shirts with the Cyrillic letters for USSR. Scarlet bunting and clenched fists completed the picture.

When writer Saul Landau airily dismisses "the Cuba thing" in Jamaica, as he does in a recent *Mother Jones* article, he is, to say the least, misinformed. It is Landau who, with another American, Dr. Philip Landis (a research assistant for a Washington congressional committee), talks loudest about "outside interference" in Jamaica. Yet it was he who went to Jamaica in 1976 to film a pro-Manley movie for the election campaign and has just completed another for Manley's '80 campaign.

"The film we did in Jamaica is finished," Landau wrote on September 13, 1976, in a letter to Pablo Armando Fernández in Havana. "Michael Manley has begun to use it in his campaign for re-election. So I feel useful...lots of reggae music, and pretty colors. I hope you'll get a chance to see it." The letter, discovered by columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, but not included in Landau's recent book, goes on to say: "I plan to phase myself out of the Jamaica work and get back to the U.S....We cannot any longer just help out third world movements and revolutions."

Manley complains constantly about his lack of money, yet he manages to pay men like Landau for sophisticated public relations films, and also finds enough to pay Peter Martin Associates, a New York P.R. firm, \$400,000 to \$600,000 every six months (figures that may be read in foreign agent reports listed with the U.S. Justice Department). Another several million has gone to the Jamaica Progressive League in New York, an arm of the PNP.

Manley took over a government that had assets of \$179 million in foreign exchange. He has received \$300 million from the IMF over the last three years and has

raised a levy on bauxite that is two-thirds as large as the oil price hike to which he is always pointing. Yet the Manley government now faces a foreign exchange deficit of \$600 million. With the people's desperate need for essentials, one wonders how Manley can divert funds to a well-financed public relations program, to press junkets to Jamaica, and to a recent delegation of U.S. university professors and leading blacks whom he is trying to woo.

### "WHERE IT'S ALL HAPPENING!!"

That's what the travel posters for Jamaica say now. And it's true—but not in the sense of rum and cokes, reggae, and seven-mile stretches of white sand. The capital of Jamaica over the last few years has been the center of an extraordinary convergence of people from abroad.

- Bernardo Benisch, for one, the Miami banker who flew to Kingston in 1977 for a series of meetings to inaugurate President Carter's plan to "open up Cuba." The meetings were arranged with the blessings of both Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Benisch told an investigative reporter. Apparently, this was a way for the U.S. administration to begin reaching its goal of "full accord with Cuba," as Carter put it.

- Cuban DGI operatives, with goals of their own, who gradually built up what Manuel Espinoza has described as a major center for operations. "All DGI operations in the Caribbean, and even in the U.S., are run out of Kingston," said Espinoza, who headed the Cuban Committee for Reconciliation between the exiles and Havana.

- The long-armed PLO, which had trained Ulysses Estrada in Iraq before he was sent on a mission to Angola, and then to Kingston as Havana's ambassador. Estrada also flew in and out of the capital during the 1976 Manley election campaign.

- Not to mention *Izvestia* correspondent V. Vernikov, whose presence on election eve 1976 was only a first, small sign of Soviet interest in Jamaica that would burgeon over the years. Manley may speak "North/South" when he is at the Waldorf, but he speaks "East/West" when he is in Moscow. "Comrades!" he toasted Kosygin in the Grand Kremlin Palace, "To the glorious memory of Lenin! To the Soviet Union, which has freed the souls of men everywhere!" He then sealed a pact for alumina trade through 1984.

This month the Soviets are sending twenty thousand cases of sardines to Jamaica to help stock the normally empty shelves—the first delivery in their second trade agreement with Manley. Cuba, which just extended a one-year \$5 million (Canadian) line of credit, is delivering a hundred metric tons of fish. Jamaicans flatly call this sudden influx "Vote Me Food"—despite Commerce Minister Derrick Haven's repeated assertions that it has "nothing to do with nearing elections."

Firms registered as far away as Monaco and Switzerland are also impinging on the island. It is now known that the 200,000 rounds of .38 ammunition sent to Moonex in Kingston were provided by a highly sophisticated overseas network. Ruperto Smith Hart, the Cuban manager of Moonex, testified in Jamaica last summer that a firm called "Cimex runs all the Moonex-type operations in Central America, Latin America,

and the Caribbean." Cimex, a chemical export company, according to the Swiss consulate in New York, is headquartered at 30 Stoeckackerster, Muenchenstein, Switzerland—with one Werner Nordemann named as president and Werner Mueller as director.

*Tango Express*—the ship that carried the ammunition to Kingston—is owned by "Maritime Management" or "Intercon Overseas," with headquarters in Monte Carlo. Directors are not traceable through Lloyd's Registry of Shipping. The Monacan consulate in New York advised me that the 57 Rue Grimaldi address shows an "Alpaca" shipping firm. The *Mardi Gras*, under Carnival Cruise Lines in Miami, is also owned by "Maritime Management." Federal Arms and Tobacco Control agents would, one believes, be interested in illegal shipments of arms from Miami to Kingston. Carnival, a subsidiary, should be able to help them contact the mysterious company with three different names that owns the ammunition-running ship.

### WHY THE INTEREST?

Why are so many overseas firms and political groups interested in Jamaica? Why the sudden interest in this vacation island known by most people as a nice place "to get away from it all"?

Former Venezuelan Prime Minister Betancourt gave a clue when he said, as far back as 1956, that the Caribbean is a strategic center of interest for international oil. (Most Americans do not realize that over 50 per cent of our oil refineries are located in the Caribbean. Also, Alaskan oil is shipped down the West Coast and through the Caribbean to the Gulf.) And there is enough assurance of new island oil finds for Allied Chemical and the Italian firm AGIP to sign a twenty-five-year deal for exploration rights in Jamaica.

There are by now two international triangles operating through Kingston. One involves Cuba, the U.S., and Jamaica—with the current U.S. administration using Jamaica in high-risk diplomatic maneuvering to open up Cuba. The second triangle involves Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the PLO—which want, jointly, to control oil supplies from the Mideast through the Caribbean to the U.S. "If the pump is in the Middle East," observes Professor Lewis Toombs of Arizona State University, "the nozzle is in the Caribbean."

With the new elections, Jamaica itself faces a way out of this deadly business. For opposition candidate Seaga is not a pawn of either triangle. He is concerned about Jamaica. All polls, including Manley's own, show that Seaga's party should win a decisive 38-40 Parliamentary seats. As this goes to press there is an alarming report from a Jamaican "Deep Throat" that rigged ballot boxes are being prepared in Havana that will award Manley 38 seats and Seaga 18 (with 8 going to the Workers [Marxist] party, which recently polled a mere .2 per cent of the vote).

If subversion or terrorism rules the day, the island famous for welcoming smiles and laughter, for rum and reggae, and for a religious faith deeper than any I have ever encountered, faces twenty years like those Cuba has just gone through: with newspapers closed, "trials" for critics, and thousands imprisoned for "incorrect thinking." **WV**