

Around The World ELECTION RESULTS MAKE JAMAICAN HOPES RISE

By Lawrence Muhammad

Signs of a Jamaican economic resurgence are developing now after the landslide victory October 30 of Prime Minister Edward P.G. Seaga, who led the country's Labor Party to the capture of 51 of the sixty seats in Parliament.

Tourism, the country's second largest foreign exchange industry which earns \$200 million a year, is up twenty per cent after a deep slump during the year because of political violence that left 655 dead.

American banks have restored lines of credit snipped abruptly after former socialist Prime Minister Michael Manley abruptly broke off negotiations with the International Monetary Fund on terms of government austerity tied to loans.

And American industrialists, including representatives of the Reynolds Metal Corporation which has aluminum operations on the island, have met with Jamaican businessmen and been impressed with the prospect for lucrative ventures.

This was the very response Seaga, a proponent of free-enterprise, hoped for when he took over the government for the island's two million people, whose country was \$1 billion in debt and whose national bank was completely out of reserves.

This was the result of seven years of negative economic growth under the regime of Manley, a severe decline that set in bold relief the choices between more Democratic Socialism or a turn to pro-Western capitalism in the most important election in the country's history.

U.S. officials hailed Seaga's victory as a defeat for revolutionary politics and a continuation of the moderate political impulse in the Caribbean reflected in the elections this year in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica, and St. Kitts-Nevis. Foreign policy analysts

saw the Jamaican development as an opportunity worthy of government support and foreign investment.

Multinational companies, as well as Jamaica's own middle class, which had skills and hundreds of millions of dollars, were frightened off by the Manley regime's leftist rhetoric and buddy relationship with Cuba.

After the flight of merchants and professionals, Jamaica also suffered thirty per cent unemployment, shortages of food staples like rice and fish and commodities like detergent. The oil bill became more of a burden, the deficit in foreign exchange grew, and productivity declined.

All the blame of course cannot fall on Manley, who was the darling of radical chic after his landslide win in 1972. The charismatic and handsome 56-year-old international socialist is a stirring orator who the people likened to Joshua, the Biblical figure who led his followers to the promised land. His father, Norman Manley, founded the Peoples National Party, and the former prime minister who since 1967 has represented the black district of East Central Kingston is heir to a name that conjures the magic of Kennedy in America. And after he first took the helm of government, he instituted free education at all levels, women's work rights, a minimum wage, and built some 40,000 new housing units, all of which were fueled by a free-

enterprise economy which exported large amounts of aluminum to industrial nations.

But in many parts of Jamaica desperation and poverty went untouched, a carryover from the plantation economy that existed when the country became independent of Britain in 1962. The light-skinned gentry lived good on vast land holdings worked by cheap labor. They spurned their own culture, sent their children abroad for schooling, and imported vital commodities from colonial manufacturers.

Soon the country was importing more than it exported and its foreign debt skyrocketed. Right after Manley was elected, oil prices rose, and in 1974 he imposed a levy on bauxite to pay the bill. But by the time of his re-election in 1976, the desperate poor, lacking hope or incentive, were mired in crime, and Manley's visionary rhetoric sparked a further exodus of the bourgeoisie, so that today, half Jamaica's native population lives abroad.

In 1978 the government appealed to the International Monetary Fund, which in exchange for help, forced devaluation of the Jamaican dollar. Meant to entice foreign capital, this move helped keep it at bay. And by the time of the elections this year, Jamaica's economy rested on the largesse of countries such as Venezuela, the island's chief oil supplier, which agreed to credits of

thirty per cent on the oil bill, and on the lucrative Reefer trade.

During the campaign, Seaga, a forty-year-old sociologist of Lebanese, Scottish and Jamaican parents who was born in Boston and graduated from Harvard, harped on economic woes. Married to a former Miss Jamaica, Seaga at 29 became the youngest member of Parliament in the country's history after attracting the attention of Alexander Bustamante, founder of the Jamaican Labor Party.

Since independence, Seaga has represented the poor black section of Western Kingston and is a student of African religions and culture. He brought back the remains of Marcus Garvey to the country and established the National Heroes Award which lauds Black Moses as founder of the Back-To-Africa movement.

Seaga's admonition of a return to the free-enterprise system that produced prosperity in the 1960's, and his charges that the Cubans were meddling in Jamaican affairs, heated up the campaign and there was constant violence.

For nearly six months the country was under the Suppression of Crime Act, which gave authorities broad police powers and bestowed a wartime atmosphere on Jamaica at night.

The Manley government, in its turn, sponsored a visit by Lewis Wolf, co-editor of the leftist counter-intelligence journal *Covert Action*, to charge that CIA operatives were trying to "destabilize" Jamaica.

But the country's economic plight, producing hunger for the impoverished, was linked strongly to Manley, and produced a landslide for Seaga.

One of the new Prime Minister's first acts was a request for food grants for soybeans, rice, chicken and other staples from the United States.

Africa News

(Continued from Page 13)

between students and the police. Angered by the government's unwillingness to meet lecturers' demands for pay raises to end a strike at Fourah

Bay, students organized a peaceful march to the State House November 6. Police broke up the rally with teargas and batons — and the mistakenly bea

up Vice Chancellor Arthur Porter.

Some seventeen of the protesters who tried to press on to State House were arrested and later allegedly flogged at Pademba Road Prison. They were to face trial on a variety of charges (including marijuana possession), but Stevens ordered their immediate release, sparing them from prosecution.

The still-unsettled teacher strike comes as the latest in a series of student protests over the past year. Early in 1980, Njala University College was up in arms about "appalling and degrading conditions" at the campus, including shortages of water and power. Later, students throughout the country took to the streets

in rebellion against increases in the price of gasoline and the resulting higher taxi fares.

Next came a wave of demonstrations over extravagant government expenditures on the Organization of African Unity Summit, held in Freetown in July.

Although the OAU meeting went smoothly for Stevens, the atmosphere remains highly charged. In mid-October, for example, protesters burned two Mercedes limousines and one police car in a caravan taking the Mayor of Freetown and other VIPs on a tour of the Fourah Bay campus.

Ever since then, police have maintained a small encampment at the foot of Mount Aureol, on which the college is located.

This ongoing dispute partly concerns academic life at the national university. One campus, Fourah Bay College, has long been regarded as one of the continent's great universities — the "Athens of West Africa" by reputation. The government, however, has cut the school's budget in recent years, causing an exodus of faculty, a decline in the quality of research facilities, and deteriorating living conditions for students.

The cutbacks have a political dimension as well. Critics see in government policy a long-term plan to neutralize Fourah Bay as a center for political discussion. Some of the most influential professors have been wisked off to their diplomatic

or other higher-paying government posts, and a reduction in financing for graduate studies in the social sciences has reportedly further diminished the school's importance as a center of critical thought. As a symbol of these tight government reins, President Stevens himself holds the office of University chancellor.

The backlash against these policies should at this point be clear to the Sierra Leone leadership, which only two years ago abolished the opposition party and created a single-party state. That move was followed by the passing of the Press Bill which, if enforced, could lead to the suppression of the one unabashed dissident newspaper left in the

country, *The Tablet*.

President Stevens is now faced with tough decisions about how to handle the dissenters in Sierra Leone society.

Stevens has shown himself to be an astute political operator, but the current turbulence, as *New African* commented, may be his "supreme test."

Letter to the Editor

To develop a positive attitude in our neighborhood, we must come together and discuss the problems that exist in our community. Some of us were born here, others migrated from different sections of the country. Regardless of where we are from, it's where we decide to make our home. I find that Durham is a very nice city, and those of us who live on the East side think it's a good section in which to live and do business.

Our aim is to work harmoniously with other groups of dedicated people, from a cross-section of the area who are definitely dedicated to the continued health and security and growth of the entire community.

We believe that you are as equally interested in improving the conditions in the area in as many ways as we possibly can, both in beauty and civically.

We, too long, have lived next door to each other, yet, in reality the distance between some of our homes is measureless.

May I quote my favorite Bible verse: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

If you won't join us, we welcome your prayers.

—George White

Fear Reagan Shift

(Continued from Page 14)

support was justified only through a vague concept of out-manoeuvring the Soviets.

Sadly, this approach may become standard now through sympathy from President Reagan, and many policymakers fear that U.S. interests on the continent will be jeopardized. It is conventional wisdom in foreign policy circles that Reagan will only hazily grasp America's legitimate interests in supporting African liberation movements, because he views political events on the continent through the prism of a global test of wills with the Russians.

This doctrinaire outlook could be softened somewhat since the President-elect is expected to rely heavily on advisors, some of whom have shown a sophisticated understanding of African events.

George Bush, the Vice President-elect and former UN Ambassador, told *Africa Report* magazine during the campaign that U.S. indifference to Zambia and other front line states opposing South Africa leaves them little alternative but to seek Soviet assistance.

And Chester Crocker, who enjoys a leading role among Reagan foreign policy advisers as head of the African Studies at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), shows an equal sensitivity for the subtleties of African politics. CSIS's 1979 study, *Implications of Soviet and Cuban Activities in Africa* warned, "To eschew dealings with important political actors in Africa because of presumed hostility toward the U.S. may be shortsighted. Even African states that profess Marxism-Leninism may have certain foreign policy and security needs compatible with U.S. interests."

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