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The Problematics of Independence: Radicalism and the Crisis of Political Leadership in

Jamaica, 1962-91

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A Thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of History

Graduate Program in History

Written under the direction of

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and approved by

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Newark, New Jersey

May, 2012

Abstract of the Masters Thesis

The Problematics of Independence: Radicalism and the Crisis of Political Leadership in

Jamaica, 1962-91

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Since Independence in 1962, Jamaican society has witnessed a substantial ebb and flow of dominating political ideologies. At the center of this political friction are the Premierships of Michael Manley and Edward Seaga. The former representing a turn to “democratic socialism” and the latter an alignment with neoliberalism, this dichotomy, I argue, segmented broad layers of the working class and radical political elements from galvanizing a movement that would have had a profoundly transformative effect on Jamaican society. This is particularly salient in examining Manley’s second stint as Prime Minister in which the neoliberal policies instituted by the government of Edward Seaga were generally continued. This paper argues that due to the process of constitutional decolonization, radical portions of the labor movement and radical political parties were unable to bring to fruition a society far removed from the status quo. Decolonization through the legitimizing legal processes of the British Empire rather than through violence hampered the development of radicalism in Jamaica that could challenge the ruling layers both in a domestic and international context.

The fact that there was not a violent uprising against British rule (as seen in Kenya, Malay or Guyana) left little political space for radicals to participate in Jamaican civil society. Within the confines of Jamaican parliamentarianism, the Jamaican Labour Party and the

People's National Party had a veritable monopoly on political power, resulting in limited space for radical labor or political organizations. This paper examines the consequences of this lack of political maneuverability in the context of the Cold War

For Monica and Ferdie,  
For their legacy as Jamaicans in the United States

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## Introduction

In the run up to Jamaican celebrations of the island's fiftieth year of independence, former Prime Minister Edward Seaga gave a speech entitled "*Fifty Years: Backward and Forward?*" at the prestigious Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in Kingston. The title of his talk tacitly pointed to the political oscillations that defined Jamaica during the Cold War epoch. Seaga articulated that a singular vision of Jamaican socio-economic development was a dream borne out of independence, but stymied by "nightmares" resulting from fifty years of fragmented political leadership.<sup>1</sup> The former Prime Minister theorized that if Jamaica was to "climb the ladder of success" over the next fifty years, a new model of economic development must be undertaken, one that did not rely upon tourism and athletics, but rather on agriculture and education.<sup>2</sup> Seaga's attempt to envision an edenic future for Jamaica was nothing particularly new or profound in Jamaican politics. Since independence on August 6<sup>th</sup> of 1962, the two leading Jamaican political organizations the Jamaican Labour Party (Seaga's party until his retirement from party politics in 2005) and the People's National Party, have offered ostensibly divergent models for national socio-economic success.

The JLP embodied the philosophies of laissez-faire economic modalities and whilst Seaga was Prime Minister from 1980 until 1989, introduced various elements of neo-liberal reforms, with a particular importance placed upon foreign direct investment, structural adjustment and reliance on IMF and World Bank

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<sup>1</sup> Seaga, "*Fifty Years: Backward or Forward?*"

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

loans.<sup>3</sup> The PNP on the other hand, sought to bridge the gap in social and economic inequality between the elite on the island and the working-class and lumpenproletariat. This was attempted through Michael Manley's model of democratic socialism, which hinged upon a dedication to social justice vis-à-vis attempts to develop and maintain equal access to employment, food, housing, social security and the broader political apparatus in the country.<sup>4</sup>

The dichotomy represented between the divergent political trajectories of the JLP and PNP in the Cold War era is a popular topic in Jamaican historiography. Extant historiography on Jamaica during the Cold War, however, has focused almost exclusively on the mainstream political currents of the PNP and JLP as well as the individuals that lead these organizations, notably the seemingly diametrically opposed Prime Ministers of Seaga and Manley. Smaller political currents both on the Left and on the Right have largely been omitted from Jamaican history. This thesis is an attempt to develop a social and political history of the former between independence in 1962 and the collapse of world communism in 1991. Existing works that do deal with radicalism in Jamaica tend to do so prior to independence, or examine the phenomenon through the veil of Manley's rhetoric of democratic socialism. The most complete scholarly analysis of radicalism in Jamaica is Obika Gray's work, which deals solely with the first decade after Jamaican independence, not affording the opportunity to delve

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<sup>3</sup> Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, Vol. 1: Clash of Ideologies*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Manley, *The Politics of Change*, 64.



deeper into the history of radicalism that coincided with and often opposed the Jamaican model of democratic socialism.<sup>5</sup>

An examination of Jamaican radicalism is imperative in understanding the ongoing political maneuverings of the JLP and PNP during the Cold War, as radical political traditions in Jamaica, whilst boasting few in terms of membership, were not benign factors in the history of Jamaican political thought and development. On the contrary, despite their numerical minority, radical political organizations in Jamaica were fundamental actors that shaped the socio-economic landscape of the island.

The thematic point of departure for this thesis is the resounding failure of Jamaican radicalism to foment revolutionary changes on the island that would have drastically altered the status of social relations. Unlike other states in the Caribbean during the Cold War, most notably Cuba and Grenada, Jamaican radicals were never able to seize state power, despite being a serious political force and maintaining a level of activity and activism within the broader labor movement on the island.

Frantz Fanon argues that the process of decolonization is an “encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces.”<sup>6</sup> The lack of violence as a cathartic process in Jamaican independence, I argue, directly influenced the political status of radicalism after 1962. Utilizing Fanon’s framework, this paper argues that while the colonialist bourgeoisie aligned with the colonized elite in an effort to maintain a semblance of power and control, decolonization in Jamaica

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<sup>5</sup> See: Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*.

<sup>6</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2.

did not experience Fanon's removal of heterogeneity in regards to "nation and race."<sup>7</sup> This paper also argues that the idea that the colonized intellectual joined forces with the masses only to the extent that it was necessary and did not suffer what Fanon called an "auto-de-fe."<sup>8</sup> Because the intellectuals that were highly influential in radical political movements did not experience this auto-de-fe (i.e. a destruction of their morality and philosophy based upon predicated notions of colonial racism and classism), the severe dislocations amongst classes persisted in Jamaica after independence. Further utilizing Fanon's theoretical framework, I argue that in the case of Jamaica, the apotheosis of independence did indeed become a curse<sup>9</sup>, but in a dual fashion as both the United States and Great Britain economically exploited and castigated the new state, particularly when Manley was Prime Minister.

The lack of traction between the leadership (most of whom emanated from the intelligentsia) of radical political organizations in Jamaica and the masses severely stymied the ability for radical traditions to become mainstream and thus unable to replace the status quo. Through the narrative in this paper, I seek to demonstrate that this segmentation between leadership and the rank and file, in conjunction with the legacy of constitutional decolonization served to maintain existent social relations on the island from the era of British colonial domination.

Thus, on a theoretical level, this work seeks to negotiate between the actions, ideas and influence of the rank and file in Jamaican society and the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

bigwigs in government and society. Why, with the upheaval in other British colonies did Jamaica not take a more violent route to its colonial catharsis? This question is particularly relevant when looking at Cuba and Grenada as potential revolutionary examples that Jamaicans could have emulated. Why has Jamaican political radicalization in the framework of the Cold War been unsuccessful in galvanizing a fully transformative societal process as in as other Caribbean or colonial contexts? In examining why radical Jamaican political movements in the context of the Cold War were unable to bring to fruition a drastic socio-economic transformation, it will become clearer as to why successive Jamaican governments of both the center-right and center-left never truly veered away from the status quo of laissez-faire economic principles. In situating the narrative against the theorizations of Fanon, it will be possible to demonstrate not only the process of constitutional decolonization as integral to the failure of radicalism, but to also exhibit, how in fact the ruling classes in Jamaica were able to transmute their given ideology so that it would be internalized by the broader populace.<sup>10</sup>

## *Organization*

This work is organized into five distinct sections congruent with a linear timeline of Jamaican history from independence in 1962 until the final year of Michael Manley's second stint as prime minister. Beginning with the struggle for decolonization in the wake of the Second World War, the first chapter seeks to

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<sup>10</sup> For an explanation on how the governing body in a colonial situation imposes ideology on the colonized see: Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 88.

examine the processes by which radical political movements in Jamaica as well as the intellectuals at their helm sought to negotiate the terms of British rule.

Against the backdrop of the centrist politics of the PNP and JLP, the thoughts and subsequent actions of lay people will be included in the grand narrative of Jamaican constitutional decolonization. The second chapter focuses upon the first ten years of Jamaican sovereignty and the veritable monopoly on high politics maintained by the JLP. Led by Alexander Bustamante, Donald Sangster and Hugh Shearer up until defeat at the hands of the PNP and Michael Manley in 1972, the party was at the center of creating a “new” Jamaica.

The Center-Right political trajectory of the JLP and the party’s unique influence over the Jamaican political landscape will be discussed alongside the nascent radicalism that was developing in the society, both within the PNP and independently. An analysis of this period, during the apogee of the Cold War, will help to elucidate the growth of radical political traditions in Jamaica while the stewardship of Jamaican politics and policy was helmed by a center-right political organization. Chapter three explores the phenomenon of democratic socialism in Jamaica under the first Michael Manley government. It seeks to demonstrate the linkages between the years of radical political growth between 1962 and 1972 through the first two terms of Manley’s role as Prime Minister. From 1972 until 1980, the PNP government led by Manley aligned more closely with revolutionary and radical movements both domestically and internationally, most notably with economic and political ties developing with the Cuban state.

The convergence of Jamaican politics with the Soviet Union, Cuba and domestic communists represented a fundamental shift in Jamaican politics that would have substantial ramifications for civil society and socio-economic activities through the present. The next chapter discusses the defeat of democratic socialism in Jamaica and the turn towards neo-liberal reforms as well as the highly contentious state of Jamaican politics under a reinvigorated JLP headed by Edward Seaga and the transitional period prior to his election. This chapter will chronicle the reaction to resurgent conservatism on the island. The sixth chapter examines the re-installment of the PNP as the leading political faction on the island and what the second tenure of Michael Manley as Prime Minister meant to radical political movements.

The continuation of neoliberal and overtly pro-capitalist policies will be examined as they were ostensibly implemented under the guise of a socialist leadership. The retreat and subsequent defeat of the radical left will be examined in this section as well. This chapter concludes with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effects on Jamaican radicalism. The final chapter of this work seeks to demonstrate the connections between the birth of the Jamaican state vis-à-vis the processes involved with constitutional decolonization and the oscillating radicalism of later years. It also seeks to develop the narrative of Jamaican radical history within the context of the cessation of the Cold War.

### *The Problematics of Independence*

While the broad organizational overview above offers a rather cut and dry categorization of this work, delving into some more concrete issues may help to consolidate the thematic nature of this thesis. It is important to understand that I am not writing a history of the JLP and PNP dichotomy, but rather how radical political movements fit into this historical contest for power. Also, resulting from the framing of this paper within the framework of Fanon's theorizations around colonialism and the process of decolonization, this paper will stress the failure of the "auto-de-fe" as central to the segmentation between the leadership of radical political movements and the base, compounding the problematics of independence on the island and resulting in the crisis of political leadership. The separation from radical leadership from the masses that were purported to benefit from radical politics is evidenced throughout Jamaican history, but is particularly salient when looking at the *Abeng* newspaper movement.

On February 1<sup>st</sup> 1969, *Abeng*<sup>11</sup>, a new newspaper declared that its goal was to offer a forum for the examination and scrutinization of Jamaican society, politics and economic practices, all from an unbiased political base of readership contributions.<sup>12</sup> Despite the call for non-partisanship on behalf of the newspapers editors, the paper quickly became a tool for the radical left. The "conversation" that *Abeng* was attempting to facilitate between various social groups in Jamaica summarily failed. This failure was a result of the middle class social mores held

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<sup>11</sup> *Abeng* was developed as a non-sectarian newspaper, yet quickly became a popular form of print media for the urban underclasses, particularly the lumpenproletariat, solidarizing with left leaning labor movements and Jamaican radicalism. Its name was derived from an instrument fashioned out of a cow horn utilized by maroons to communicate over substantial distances.

<sup>12</sup> *Abeng*, 1 Feb. 1969

by the editorship and the largely working class and lumpenproletariat readership.<sup>13</sup> The newspapers intended origins as a non-confrontational and non-controversial forum was short lived, as the organ became a fundamental tool in extolling the fortitude of the black “sufferer” whilst condemning Jamaican political leadership.<sup>14</sup>

By the time of papers final trip to the printing presses, fissures between the readership and the editorship had become so apparent that it was proposed the editorship be reorganized.<sup>15</sup> In less than a year at print prior to its implosion, *Abeng* went from a simplistic social and political forum for all Jamaicans to being a critical device of contemporary Jamaican society for the Left. Along the lines of left wing radicalism and at times, demagogic calls for black nationalist consciousness, the paper’s changing social perspective was indicative of greater processes at work in Jamaica. The failure of the *Abeng* newspaper movement was representative of the grand socio-political oscillations in Jamaica throughout much of the post-World War Two period.

The attempted leadership of the masses by “progressive” intellectuals led only to further social segmentation, as the urban poor and working classes could not truly have the social exchange that *Abeng* was endeavoring to enable.<sup>16</sup> Distinct class divisions in Jamaica, often related not only to social status but to skin color as well, prompted a contentious political milieu on the island. From the process of constitutional decolonization that saw Jamaica granted its

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<sup>13</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 174-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>15</sup> *Abeng*, 27 Sept. 1969.

<sup>16</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 182.

independence in August of 1962, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Jamaican populace was involved in political maneuvering that effected not only domestic social relations, but also socio-economic relations in the Greater Antilles and the Americas in general.<sup>17</sup>

What this anecdote about the *Abeng* newspaper movement represents is characteristic of broader Jamaican politics, specifically when concerning a radical outlook. The middle class cultural mores and ideals of radical leadership could never bridge the class stratification that was endemic to Jamaican society before as well as after independence. As a microcosm of the social relations at play in Jamaica during the Cold War era, the *Abeng* newspaper movement helps to expound the wider reality of social relations on the island and how they informed the development and consequent demise of radicalism.

As will be shown in the proceeding chapters, the development and political maneuvering of Jamaican radicals in the post-independence era was nuanced and not a homogenous amalgamation of communists or socialists. Varied radical traditions developed, some as broad offshoots of the democratic socialism of the PNP, and others informed by Stalinism, Marxist-Leninism and myriad other formulations of communism and socialistic ideology. All however, consumed in the parliamentary politics of decolonization could not muster the numbers or political clout to wrest social and economic power from the hands of the ruling elite. As an independent Jamaica entered into a tense new world, fractured by the dogmatism of the capitalist and communist blocs during the Cold War, the

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<sup>17</sup> For an explanation on Jamaica's strategic importance in the Caribbean and broader influence on the Americas see: Harsch, *U.S. Intervention in Jamaica*.



crisis of political leadership, both within the upper echelons of established political parties, as well as with the smaller radicalized political organizations, the problematics of independence were burgeoning. Confounding social relations, intense economic fluctuations and competing ideologies across the political spectrum would lead to three decades of jockeying for power, political violence, and the ebb and flow of radical tides.

## Jamaican Radicalism During Constitutional Decolonization

Radical political traditions in Jamaica did not reach a head until the Cold War era. Despite this, radicalism as a formation of social and political expression existed prior to independence. The left wing radicalism of the Cold War epoch ostensibly manifested in disparate ways throughout the colonized world. In Jamaica, the democratic and parliamentary processes were the only means in which governmental changes took place since independence in 1962.<sup>1</sup> The actual development of the independence movement, while at times informed by radical political movements and parties, was taken up by the mainstream political currents in the JLP and PNP through the auspices of colonial parliamentarianism.

Radicals, representing a somewhat marginalized group within the broader political community on the island were nevertheless involved in the process of constitutional decolonization. Had by some anomaly of history, independence come a decade earlier, radicals would have found themselves on the frontlines of the debate surrounding desires for independence.<sup>2</sup> While the decolonization process on the island hinged on a litany of varied social and economic issues, the debate that radicals as well as conventional politicians engaged with was

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<sup>1</sup> Ledgister, *Class Allies and the Liberal Authoritarian State*, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Radicals who identified as communist or more likely as socialist, often found themselves joining the PNP and occupying the left wing of the party. In 1952, however, the PNP purged left wing elements from its party in efforts to pander to a growing middle class sentimentality in Jamaica. In addition to syphoning off the organizational and educational capacity represented in this wing of the party, the PNP sought to fill this political vacuum with more centrist individuals. See: Munroe, Trevor and Arnold Bertram, *Adult Suffrage and Political Administrations in Jamaica, 1944-2002*.

around the question of federation (with other British islands in the Caribbean) versus independence and the inherent importance of the future of the bauxite industry that was tied to this problem.

### *The Politics of Bauxite*

Bauxite, an aluminum ore, integral in the production of alumina was discovered in Jamaica in St. Ann in 1942 during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> Bauxite and its semi-finished product, alumina, had a wide variety of industrial and everyday usages. As a filler for cosmetic concoctions, dehydration of alcohols into alkenes, natural gas purification, as a pigment for industrial products as well as being an inexpensive substitute for industrial cutting implements, namely diamonds, bauxite inevitably grew in importance as a commodity once it was discovered in Jamaica.

As sugar, banana and coconut production lost economic influence after the end of chattel slavery; other industries came to be an necessity for a Jamaica in an increasingly economically intertwined world. In the wake of emancipation in 1838, slowly but surely the manumitted men and women of Jamaica began a proletarian transformation, venturing from the agricultural sector of the economy to the industrial.<sup>4</sup> This process of proletarianization galvanized the early formation of radicals, generally within the trade union movements. And with the discovery of bauxite in the mid 1940's radicals found new inroads into

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<sup>3</sup> Augier et. al., *The Making of the West Indies*, 291. See also: Munroe, Trevor and Arnold Bertram, *Adult Suffrage and Political Administrations in Jamaica, 1944-2002*, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 347.

mainstream political discourse as the JLP and PNP vociferously debated the course that the bauxite industry, fast becoming a pillar of Jamaican economic prowess, and the implications that an Anglo-Caribbean federation versus Jamaican independence would have on the industry and broader socio-economical issues.

While the bauxite did not provide employment for the majority of Jamaican laborers, it did however, allow the government to reap massive profits from the taxation schemes implemented on the mining companies.<sup>5</sup> The revenues from taxes levied on the mining companies generated wealth for the island although only in certain enclaves as the mining companies themselves were foreign owned and operated, primarily from Canada and the United States. The fact that the majority of wealth generated from bauxite exploitation and subsequent alumina production was being funneled to the U.S. and Canada prompted both the PNP as well as the smaller radical political parties on the island to advocate a program of nationalization or at the least a reparation of the profits to the general populace of Jamaica.

With bauxite mining and exportation an integral part of the Jamaican political economy in the decade prior to independence, the Left sought to demonstrate how both the PNP as well as the JLP had in their opinion abandoned the Jamaican people. Hugh Buchanan, President of the Convention Independence Party (a nominally left wing organization that traced its roots to the Peoples Freedom Movement), opined that in that in the general elections of 1955

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<sup>5</sup> Mandle, *British Caribbean Economic History in The Modern Caribbean*, 246-7.

the PNP propagandized against the incumbent Chief Minister, Alexander Bustamante, that he had “given away Jamaica’s bauxite to foreign capitalists”, yet once in office on the back of this rhetoric, did little to ameliorate the problem of foreign domination.<sup>6</sup> The left viewed the bauxite industry as an economic base through which Jamaica could achieve more autonomy in economic and social spheres.<sup>7</sup> Clamoring for a sort of joint-venture relationship with the largest bauxite mining companies (Alumina Jamaica and Reynolds Jamaica Mines) Buchanan, along with many on the left argued that the Jamaican state should get fifty percent of the profits via tax revenues. In 1958, three years after the PNP took power from Bustamante and the JLP, Norman Manley (then the Chief Minister, and Michael Manley’s father) was maintaining the same deal with the U.S. and Canadian mining companies, with bauxite revenues being 4.5 million pounds. The average annual profit for bauxite and alumina in Jamaica in the decade prior to independence was 162 million pounds.<sup>8</sup> At less than three percent return on profits from mineral exploitation, the Left in Jamaica became increasingly disenchanted with the PNP as a progressive political organization, and this perception was only exacerbated with the expulsion of radicals from the party in the early 1950’s.

The politics of bauxite in pre-independent Jamaica was a contentious topic as it signaled the trajectory that Jamaica would take in the future in dealing with foreign states. The fact that the new PNP government in power after the 1955

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<sup>6</sup> Buchanan, *Forward to Freedom*, 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

general election maintained the policies of Bustamante and the JLP where concerned to bauxite, the new lifeblood of the Jamaican economy, infuriated many on the Left and many posited that there were “secret” negotiations between the bauxite companies and the new PNP leadership.<sup>9</sup> The emergent left on the island saw that Norman Manley’s “Bauxite-Price-Formula”, the deal with foreign companies that only garnered a paltry 2.7% of the profits from bauxite and alumina production, was supported by the JLP in addition to Manley’s PNP. The growing disenchantment on the Left with both of the centrist parties would manifest itself in the broader question of independence.

### *Federation Versus Independence*

Buchanan argued that the collusion between the PNP and JLP over the bauxite problem was pushing Jamaica into the West Indies Federation. Bustamante, who was a vocal opponent of Federation, ran federal candidates that won many of Jamaica’s available seats, while Norman Manley oscillated between the “big boat” of Federation and the “canoe” of Jamaican self-governance.<sup>10</sup> The West Indies Federation was a short-lived political amalgamation of the Anglophone islands of the Caribbean with Port of Spain, Trinidad as the seat of government. The leading advocates of Federation were found on the larger islands (Trinidad, Jamaica and Barbados) and organized under the banner of the West Indies Federal Labour Party, headed by Norman

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10

Manley.<sup>11</sup> Bustamante, seeing an opportunity for an electoral victory, utilized demagogic language to persuade voters to vote for the JLP in federal elections as the WIFLP, as he argued would relegate Jamaica to the lesser islands in the English speaking Antilles.<sup>12</sup>

Radicals, who were opposed to federation, but not as an issue of political power, offered vocal resistance to both Manley and Bustamante and the political trajectories they represented. The most prominent of these radical groups was the Peoples Freedom Movement (the precursor to the Socialist Party of Jamaica). While PNP and JLP leadership viewed Federation as something of a necessity to negotiate the political space of semi-autonomous British possessions, the PFM called for federation only in the event that the British government was removed from the process.<sup>13</sup> The PFM argued that the British government did not view Federation objectively in the wake of the Caribbean Labour Congresses in the late 1940's.<sup>14</sup> The heavy influence of Britain's colonial office, the PFM argued compromised the validity of Federation for Jamaica, and even when the British government conceded to allow independence similar to the status of Canada or Australia, there was a dearth of economic advantage for Jamaica.<sup>15</sup> The fears of Jamaica becoming linked with much weaker economies in the eastern Caribbean, in particular the fear of losing out on potential bauxite

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<sup>11</sup> Eaton, *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica*, 169.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 169

<sup>13</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Oct.-Nov. 1960.

<sup>14</sup> The C.L.C. recognized three conditions, that Federation should have full political independence, that Federation include mainland territories (Guyana and British Honduras) and that a proposed federal government have strong centralized power.

<sup>15</sup> Peoples Freedom Movement, *Draft Statement on Federation Referendum*, 3.

windfalls, was as palpable to radical organizations as it was to the PNP and JLP. The latter organizations were willing to work under the auspices of the British government, most radical organizations were not. In addition to rallying against Federation, the PFM pointed out that the PNP government under Norman Manley was becoming increasingly subservient to the direct investment of foreign capital, as had the Bustamante administration before.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of Federation in Jamaica was tenuous to begin with. Lasting from only 1957 until 1961 (when Jamaica opted out) the West Indies Federation, and Jamaica in particular often saw limited participation of mainstream political leaders.<sup>17</sup> When Norman Manley called for a referendum as to the status of Jamaica in the Federation, over half (54%) of the Jamaican electorate voted to withdraw and implicitly for independence from Great Britain in September of 1961.<sup>18</sup> Although the voter turnout had been the lowest since suffrage had been achieved on the island, the PNP government began the work to request independence from the British Empire. What resulted from the referendum was the increased jockeying for power between the JLP and PNP. In the waning years of Jamaican involvement in the West Indian Federation and the year and one odd month prior to independence, Left wing radicals began to ramp up efforts to persuade the masses away from the two capitalist political parties and into a framework that strove for socialism, communism or one of their myriad variations.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5

<sup>17</sup> Knight and Palmer, *The Caribbean in The Modern Caribbean*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 15



## *Radical Movements Prior to Independence*

Prior to the referendum and in the run up to independence, radical political organizations were generally centered in the PFM and later the Socialist Party of Jamaica. Organization in the unions was also common and the BITU (Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, affiliated with the JLP), NWU (National Workers Union) and the TUC (Trade Union Congress, affiliated with the PNP) were primary targets for political agitation and propagandizing. The Left in pre-independent Jamaica originated from the “lower middle strata” of the society.<sup>19</sup> Orthodox Marxists in Jamaica did not coalesce around a single party or organization and were often found throughout various radical groups with overlap often common. Richard Ansell Hart, for example, a preeminent Jamaican communist, was originally in the left wing of the PNP and after his expulsion involved with various groups, the PFM the SPJ and the Peoples Educational Organization (an explicitly pro-Soviet, pro-Stalin political education group). Jamaican radicals, particularly those sympathetic to the international communist movement, revered the typical Marxist “heroes” of the day, but also strived to incorporate Jamaican revolutionaries into their rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> The legacy of individuals such as Samuel Sharpe, Nanny of the Maroons and Marcus Garvey were invoked by the leaders of radical organizations to demonstrate a revolutionary tradition in Jamaican history.

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<sup>19</sup> Munroe, *The Marxist 'Left' in Jamaica, 1940-1950*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Munroe, *The Cold War and the Jamaican Left*, 25-6.

Whether or not a revolutionary tradition in Jamaica existed as Marxists or socialist wanted to posit was not really relevant. These radical organizations were laying the foundation for the turbulent political era of post-colonial Jamaica. As independence grew closer, radicals in Jamaica attempted to distance themselves from the JLP and PNP and provide a political alternative to the popular classes. The weakness of the radical Left that coincided with the expulsion of radicals from the PNP in 1952, allowed for a reconciliation between world imperialism and wholesale capitalist economic policy and the nationalist principles of the PNP.<sup>21</sup> With this reconciliation, and after a relative hiatus from challenging the status quo, Jamaican radicals on the precipice of independence began to re-emerge and regroup.

The primary targets of the radical Left on the island were the PNP and JLP, both of which were deemed unfit due to their collusion with foreign interests on the bauxite question and due to their lack of definitiveness in the debate over Federation. Dubbed “Tweedledum” and “Tweedledee” respectively, the PFM press attempted to demonstrate the similar paths for Jamaican development that Bustamante and Norman Manley envisioned.<sup>22</sup> The radical press also often pointed out that Manley and Bustamante were in fact cousins and keeping the political operations of the island “in the family”.<sup>23</sup> The PFM having urged people to vote against Federation, thus causing a contradiction of political stance in the

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<sup>21</sup> Munroe, *The Marxist 'Left' in Jamaica, 1940-1950*, 70.

<sup>22</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Feb.-Mar. 1962.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

nationalist camp, sought to drive home the political victory with a more concrete electoral one.<sup>24</sup>

The only instance of the PFM, or any radical party for that matter, winning a contested election in Jamaica was in 1960. Herbert Sinclair won a local election in Clarendon on the Parish Council with 676 votes; the JLP and PNP candidates gathered 606 and 133 votes respectively.<sup>25</sup> With this small victory in electoral politics, the PFM attempted to gain national electoral prowess during the 1962 General Elections that would determine the future Prime Minister of an independent Jamaica. The PFM, under the slogan of “Vote Against the Alternating Cousins!” decided to contest the elections, which many radicals not affiliated with the PFM were urging people to boycott.<sup>26</sup> The PFM did run candidates in some constituencies during the General Election, but overall pushed people to vote for the “most popular” third candidate or independent as the JLP and PNP were both equally beholden to capitalism.<sup>27</sup> This presented a political blind ally for the PFM, as they were opposed to both the JLP and PNP but offered little concrete options for a way forward in spite of these forces. This was not due to the fact that the PFM did not have a vested interest in the outcome of the election, on the contrary they did, but superseding the importance of the Jamaican general election, the PFM tended to focus upon international and regional political situations as well as situations within the Jamaican trade

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<sup>24</sup> The PNP, representing the majority of nationalist on the island had been integral to the creation of the West Indies Federation, and as they called the referendum and the populace voted against Federation

<sup>25</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, March. 1960.

<sup>26</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Feb.-Mar. 1962.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

union movement. The lack of cohesion between the electoral struggle and the tasks of propagandizing in the unions lead to the PFM having a stifled voice in the run up to the General Elections. Ostensibly, this was due to the nature of the PFM's broader attacks on Federation and the willingness to cooperate with minority political parties that did not align politically with the PFM.<sup>28</sup> The PFM, while failing to gather the type of support the organization desired around the referendum campaign, looked elsewhere to reinforce the prospects of a socialist Jamaica.

### *The PFM Looks to the Unions and Abroad*

Even before the PFM endeavored to achieve political victory via the ballot box, the organization attempted a two-pronged attack to gain membership and increase its political capital. The two facets of this political maneuver were work within the union movement, both domestically and internationally, and building fraternal ties with likeminded radical organizations abroad. An additional component to the latter part of this strategy was to bring awareness of international social and political struggles to the people of Jamaica.

Ferdinand Smith, an outspoken communist and critic of Western imperialism was a forbearer of the internationalism that would one day embody the organizational methods of Jamaican radicals. Smith, a leader in the PFM and the National Maritime Union (a CIO affiliate) as well as a member of the Communist Party in the U.S., travelled between Jamaica and the United States

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<sup>28</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Dec.-Jan. 1961.

agitating and organizing in the union movement.<sup>29</sup> While not explicitly representing the PFM while in the United States, Smith's work was part of a larger body of educational and political action that the PFM sought to carry out. When he died in August 1961 a year prior to independence, he had laid the groundwork for a model of proletarian internationalism for a future generation of Jamaican radicals and revolutionaries.<sup>30</sup> Like Smith, many of the PFM cadres travelled abroad in the pre-independence years in efforts to forge ties with international trade unions and on fact-finding missions to socialist states. The Jamaican Federation of Trade Unions, in which the PFM was highly involved, and Smith its president while he was living on the island, forged ties with Soviet cultural and political organizations, most notably Radio Moscow, and utilized the PFM as an intermediate between Jamaican and Soviet workers.<sup>31</sup> The PFM also publicized international union meetings and news, especially when it concerned Africa or the ongoing national liberation struggles on the continent.<sup>32</sup>

The PFM, while not stating an explicitly racist orientation to their politics, took increasing interest in African political developments and endeavored to educate their members as to the situation of national liberation struggles, and colonial as well as neo-colonial issues involving African territories and states. The PFM went as far as to send a correspondent to cover the Congo Crisis and

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<sup>29</sup> See: Horne, *Red Seas*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 283-4. Smith died from complications due to a stroke, and was denied exit documents from Jamaica to travel to Eastern Europe to receive medical care under the pretext that he had attempted to travel to Communist China the year prior. This denial was part of the Norman Manley campaign to tacitly silence communism in the wake of the expulsion of the left wing of the PNP ten years prior.

<sup>31</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, March. 1960.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

agitated within the JFTU for support against any foreign intervention.<sup>33</sup> PFM members in the JFTU, and also within the World Federation of Trade Unions utilized the unions as a fundamental bully pulpit to espouse the organization's ideas and goals on a broader, international scale. The PFM exploited the ability to use the unions as a political tool for socialism and often had members within the unions building factions to win worker support. Unlike the lackluster attacks against Federation and the dual problem of capitalism under PNP or JLP national stewardship, the PFM saw the unions as an explicitly political tool to advocate the idea of socialism and bolster the ideological prospects of it on the island. The PFM told workers that only a socialist society and political structure could lift the masses out of destitution that the party saw as endemic to capitalism.<sup>34</sup>

The internationalism of the PFM was transmitted through its affiliations with the JFTU and WFTU. When the PFM declared a socialist character in February of 1960, JFTU members of the PFM were invited to Cuba for a celebration of José Martí.<sup>35</sup> While not explicitly communist or socialist in its character, this invitation opened the door for Jamaican radicals to initiate a political exchange with the fledgling revolutionary government in Cuba. These linkages between radicals in Jamaica and revolutionaries in Cuba would endure through the founding Jamaica as an independent state lasting well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>33</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Aug.-Sept. 1960.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *An Open Letter to Jamaican Workers*, 20 Jan. 1961.

<sup>35</sup> *Freedom Newsletter*, Feb. 1960.

As independence approached, Jamaican radicals, particularly the PFM and its affiliates in the trade union movement experimented with various tactics to win popular support. It would not be until the 1970's, at the height of the Cold War, that Jamaican radicalism was truly a political force to be reckoned with. During the first decade of independence Jamaican radicals would continually reorganize, introducing new strategies to encourage expanding and continued support of alternative models of socio-economic development. The PFM's metamorphosis into the Socialist Party of Jamaica would begin the decade of radicalism under ten years of a JLP regime firmly situated with Western interests. The rise and fall of the *Abeng* newspaper movement would herald the end of a strictly pro-capitalist bias in Jamaica, complicating the various questions surrounding Jamaican social, economic and political issues and leading towards the political ferment of the 1970's.

## “We Are With The West”: The First Decade of Independence

On August 8<sup>th</sup> 1962, Princess Margaret of the United Kingdom opened up the first session of Parliament in an independent Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> The fact that a representative of the British Empire, no less from the royal family, evidenced a continued paradigm in which Jamaican sovereignty and governmental procedure laid in the vested colonial, and soon to be neo-colonial, power of the British. The first session of Jamaican parliament took up issues of tax reform with the first Prime Minister, Alexander Bustamante declaring “Those who have will pay more”, yet only the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance (Edward Seaga) were aware of its concrete application as a policy.<sup>2</sup> The session also saw the swearing in of Kenneth Blackborne as the islands Governor-General. This position was (and still is) the representative of the British crown on the island. The fact that this position remained after the receipt of independence and apparent national autonomy allowed for a certain level of influence of the old colonial regime.

With all the pomp and circumstance that coincided with independence in Jamaica, overt forces of imperialism were prevalent throughout the island. The week before formal independence Commonwealth and U.S. naval ships arrived to assist in the celebrations and “support independence”.<sup>3</sup> Jamaican independence was certainly influenced by the people of Jamaica, but the power of the colonizer over the colonist persisted in the realm of politics. Coming out of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 8 Aug. 1962.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 2 Aug. 1962.



independence, two distinct sections formed amongst the ruling layers on the island. The first elite groups were those individuals whose lifestyle, social mores and political orientation maintained the vestiges of the recent colonial past.<sup>4</sup> The second elite group, with visions of a somewhat more egalitarian future would provide the intellectual and social basis for the burgeoning radicalism within the upper and middle classes. The dichotomy displayed amongst the elites would trickle down the stratified society as effective political battle lines were drawn in the wake of Jamaican independence. The division in Jamaican society at the time of independence would open up the door for an increased presence and influence of foreign capitalist monies, politics and power injected into the Jamaican societal and political structures.<sup>5</sup>

Radicalism in Jamaica during the first ten years of independence found itself under a JLP regime unfettered in its political attacks against the Left. Successive Prime Ministers, Alexander Bustamante, Donald Sangster and Hugh Shearer ensured that the quixotic struggle for the hearts and minds of the masses would be continually tested. In Bustamante's second day in office as Prime Minister of the newly sovereign island, he declared concretely and unequivocally that the island, and he personally was with the West.<sup>6</sup> Bustamante and the JLP were largely situated as members of the first elite group chronicled above while members of the PNP were found on either side of this dichotomy. Prior to independence the political leadership in Jamaica was making

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<sup>4</sup> Barke, "First Attempt at Localising Imperial Accountancy". *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*. Vol. 16, 2005. 999.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1000.

<sup>6</sup> Eaton, *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica*, 202.

rapprochements with the U.S. and British governments, as these powers were to be important allies to an independent Jamaica. Alexander Bustamante and other government dignitaries travelled to the U.S. two months prior to independence to discuss a partnership between the two states with particular importance put upon sugar and bauxite exports.<sup>7</sup> This approach to Western powers by Jamaican politicians developed various ties, primarily in agriculture and business ventures on the island, but also in terms of military cooperation as Bustamante declared that a U.S. military installation would be accepted on the island.<sup>8</sup>

Thinking of Cold War geo-politics, this move (which never actually came to fruition) was provocative to the radical left both within Jamaica and internationally as Cuba, only some odd ninety miles from Jamaica, had was developing its revolution against the Batista regime towards a communist trajectory. Left wing radicals faced daunting tasks for propagating their ideologies under the JLP during the first decade of independence that saw a continued subjugation of the island under the umbrella of the British government (if not on paper then in name) and a sustained exploitation of Jamaican resources at the behest of the U.S. with profits more often travelling north than remaining within the Jamaican economy.<sup>9</sup> As the Cold War polarizations of world politics began to climax, Jamaican radicals, under the yolk of a staunchly anti-communist, pro-capitalist

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry Paper no. 33, *Report of the Jamaica Mission to Washington and London*.

<sup>8</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 9 Aug. 1962.

<sup>9</sup> For British influence on the decolonization process and Britain's legal influence after independence see: Ministry Paper no. 7, *Jamaica Independence Conference* and for the continual lopsided resource exploitation of Jamaica, particularly in regards to bauxite, see: Ministry Paper no. 8, *Alcoa Minerals of Jamaica Inc.*

regime began to reorganize, beginning a political shift on the island that would eventually see the Radical left as “critical allies” of the PNP in the next decade.<sup>10</sup>

### *The PFM: Rebirth and Decline*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the People’s Freedom Movement was the most viable left wing organization in Jamaica prior to independence. With its work within the unions and organized media in the form of the monthly (and sometime bi-monthly) *Freedom Newsletter*, the PFM was, as far as the radical left is concerned, the most qualified to take on the challenges of a JLP regime whose leadership was “willing to lock up communists”.<sup>11</sup> On September 30<sup>th</sup>, fifty-five days after independence, the PFM reorganized into the Socialist Party of Jamaica. The foundation for creating a new party came when Herbert Sinclair (the PFM member who had won a Parish Council seat) made a public statement in the press and on the radio in late July of 1962. The PFM would bring together disparate groups vying for a socialist future in Jamaica under one party.<sup>12</sup> The PFM was being abandoned for broader gains (as independence had been achieved) particularly the reorganization of Jamaican society into a socialistic one, and the defeat of “capitalist exploitation, especially in its imperialist form”.<sup>13</sup> The framework for the SPJ’s political action was a three-

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase “critical allies” was utilized by Trevor Munroe and the Workers Liberation League (Later the Workers Party of Jamaica) to characterize the tenuous working relationship, that developed out of the first decade of independence, between the radical Left and certain sympathetic elements within the PNP.

<sup>11</sup> Eaton, *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica*, 202.

<sup>12</sup> Peoples Freedom Movement, *Peoples Socialist Party Formed*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

pronged approach to achieving socialism. The primary end of the newly created party was to “introduce socialism by peaceful means” explicitly through the electoral process.<sup>14</sup> The second goal of the party was to maintain and preserve religious freedom, while the tertiary objective was to sustain fraternal relations with other political organizations with similar social objectives.<sup>15</sup>

The SPJ’s initial points were fairly opaque as to how socialism would come to Jamaica, and the lack of strict ideological direction, inherited from a wavering PFM only served to undermine the party in the end. This is not to say, however that the SPJ did not advance upon the gains (mainly independence over federation) that its predecessor had helped to achieve. The SPJ provided an ideological basis for which future radical movements in Jamaica would pull from, making them stronger, both politically and intellectually in the process. With the PFM defunct and the SPJ with only person in a government (Sinclair, who had won on the PFM ticket) position, and a minor one at that, the radical left failed to drive home its fundamental goal of achieving socialism through bourgeois electoral processes. It did not help that the PNP seeking to exploit growing anti-JLP sentiment developed quasi-socialistic agendas, even christening a new internal group within the party, the Young Socialist League.<sup>16</sup> The YSL’s formation coincided with that of the SPJ, thus creating a schism with both groups contending for members, and although the SPJ was willing to work with “like minded” political organizations, the PNP and consequently the YSL was not

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 87.

explicitly against capitalism, and overtly distanced itself from communistic ideologies such as ideas surrounding the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>17</sup> The failure to work with the burgeoning left wing elements in the YSL due to a position that both the PNP as well as the JLP supported imperialism segmented the SPJ from achieving broader support for its electoral aims.<sup>18</sup>

The SPJ pursued a working class base rather than a nationalist one, as had its PFM predecessor. At the first party conference, held on March 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of 1963, the SPJ boasted a concentration of membership within the working classes.<sup>19</sup> While its membership was undoubtedly rooted in the working class, its leadership had a dearth of working people, leaving middle class intellectuals to lead the party, particularly Richard Ansell Hart, Herbert Sinclair and the party president P.V. Lawson. The division between the leadership of radical political organizations and its base would be a persistent feature of the Left in Cold War Jamaica. Since the SPJ was becoming increasingly removed from achievable electoral victories since the PFM's amalgamation with other organizations, the party opted for continued grassroots organizing (although not focusing on the unions as the PFM had) and allegiances and support with foreign socialist and communist parties. The SPJ was not under the illusion that the USSR would

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>18</sup> For the SPJ's analysis of PNP and JLP relationship to world imperialism see: Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Constitution and Rules*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference*, 38.

support them material, although moral and ideological support was expected and received.<sup>20</sup>

The SPJ attempted, with its broader organizational character, to develop a program of internationalism, coalescing with radical organizations abroad, and hotly contested domestic issues, with a particular importance put upon on the ostracization of agricultural laborers, land reform and the control of Jamaican industries by foreign interests.<sup>21</sup> To raise awareness on these issues, the SPJ launched a campaign to distribute pamphlets and leaflets popularizing the party in attempts for a larger base of support.<sup>22</sup> The most important of these documents was Richard Hart's *What is Socialism?* In which a leading figure in the party developed a manifesto for the party and offered further insight into the theoretical goals of the party. The SPJ proposed a utopian vision of a socialist future in Jamaica, where by the party would, through electoral victories, bring an end to capitalism, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and the general woes of the economic system implemented in Jamaica.<sup>23</sup> The panacea that the SPJ proposed was thwarted due to the abandonment of scientific socialism in lieu of utopianism, as well as the divide between leadership and the broader organization and the focus upon victory solely through electoral means.

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<sup>20</sup> Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Constitution and Rules*, 13. The reason the SPJ did not expect material assistance from the USSR is due to the policy of "Socialism in One Country" instituted by Joseph Stalin, for an explanation of this policy and how it effected third world socialist and communist movements see: Trotsky, *The Third International after Lenin*.

<sup>21</sup> Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Constitution and Rules*, 8, 10-1.

<sup>22</sup> Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Richard Hart's pamphlet attempted to gain notoriety for the SPJ by explaining the problems of everyday life in Jamaica, criticizing the JLP, PNP and "left wing" members of the PNP that had opted to join the JLP in efforts to secure political power, inherently turning their backs on the radical movement. More importantly, Hart's work sought to demonstrate what Jamaican socialism would look like under SPJ stewardship, and drew parallels to the USSR, and to a lesser extent Cuba and the People's Republic of China.<sup>24</sup> Hart's focus on international communism and socialism echoed the importance put upon an internationalist framework during the functioning of the PFM. The SPJ was no different in this regard and constantly expanded its international affiliations, particularly with the closest revolutionary state, Cuba.

The General Secretary of the SPJ, Curtis Payman Johnston, moved to Cuba in March of 1963 to attend the University of Havana as an engineering student. As an Afro-Jamaican, Johnston brought to life the racial status of blacks in Cuba, and how the Cuban Revolution was seeking to ameliorate the historic social and economic disparities experienced by people of African descent.<sup>25</sup> The SPJ had only paid lip service to the problems of race on the island, with the party's constitution devoid of any overt racialized politics, and only two points dealing with this question within the party's national program adopted at the first annual conference. The SPJ decried the status of the Afro-Jamaican populace as "subjects" under the Commonwealth after independence of what to them was the inherently racist institution of British Monarchy and in general opposed "all forms

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<sup>24</sup> Hart, *What is Socialism?*, 9-13.

<sup>25</sup> Johnston, *A Letter Home from a Jamaican in Cuba*, June, 1963.

of racialism and racist discrimination” with particular focus on Jim Crow in the United States and the Apartheid regime in South Africa.<sup>26</sup> The race question in Jamaica would never be tackled head on by the SPJ even though the pro-capitalist press made clear that racial disparities persisted with independence, particularly at the highest levels of the JLP government.<sup>27</sup> Johnston’s racial awareness was not translated into the general programmatic foundations of the SPJ, likely due to the party’s rather apolitical positions on the race question in Jamaica. Johnston also wrote home about the rising class-consciousness of Cubans, black and otherwise, which was of great interest to the SPJ. His chronicling of workers moving from squalid hovels into homes that were once “forbidden” to working people helped the SPJ leadership continue to solidarize with the revolution.<sup>28</sup> His explanations of the social advances made by Cubans in the areas of medicine and education in particular were of prime importance to the SPJ cadres.<sup>29</sup> Johnston, and other Jamaican radicals in Cuba helped the SPJ continue their path of strengthening ties with organizations oriented towards the radical left abroad. The comradeship and fraternal relations, however, would do little to stem the problems the SPJ and wider Jamaican working classes were facing under the JLP regime.

The SPJ’s predecessor, the People’s Freedom Movement, had previously developed ties with Cuban radicals in the early 1960’s. The primary group with

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<sup>26</sup> See: Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Constitution and Rules* and Socialist Party of Jamaica, *Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference*, 33, 37.

<sup>27</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 9 Aug. 1962.

<sup>28</sup> Johnston, *A Letter Home from a Jamaican in Cuba*, June, 1963.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



which the PFM, and consequently the SPJ, had relationships with was the People's Socialist Party. The PFM published the PSP's Draft Programme in English for its membership and sought to emulate certain points of the party's directives that could be applied to Jamaican socio-economic conditions.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the PFM, and later the SPJ tended to work with the PSP rather than the Communist Party of Cuba, the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement or the March 13<sup>th</sup> Directorate, possibly opened the door for center-left politicians such as Michael Manley to approach the Castro government in later years, as the radical Left had not tarnished any sort of potential cooperation with the primary movers and shakers of the Cuban Revolution.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1960's the PNP was experiencing severe dislocations in party leadership.<sup>32</sup> This was due to myriad factors, a major one being the turn to "Democratic Socialism" within the party that would become its rallying cry in the coming decades. The SPJ was unable to exploit the internal weakness of their political rival, as the organization had experienced its own internal discord that resulted in further alienation from concrete Jamaican problems. With focus out of the unions and on propagandizing and Cuban solidarity work, membership of the SPJ began to dwindle, and leading party members resigned and the functionality of the Party's Central Committee was in constant flux. When Rupert Ahwee,

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<sup>30</sup> Letter from Winston Munroe to Anibal Escalante, 25 June, 1960.

<sup>31</sup> For the role of the PSP in the Cuban Revolution versus the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement and March 13<sup>th</sup> Directorate see: Dreke, *From the Escambray to the Congo*. The PFM/SPJ relationship with the PSP was problematic as the PSP was not as involved as were other revolutionary elements in Cuba in attacking the Batista regime. Like the SPJ, they generally shunned political violence in favor of piecemeal electoral reform.

<sup>32</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 10 Jan, 1965.

resigned his post as party secretary, the SPJ leadership saw this as a “blessing in disguise”.<sup>33</sup> This disguised blessing was attributed to the bellicose nature of Ahwee, yet after his resignation the SPJ continued to decline as the leadership was in constant turmoil. The problem of leadership in the SPJ was not an anomaly, nor did it occur in a void. Even prior to the SPJ's founding, the PFM had suspended and expelled members for a lack of discipline, most notably the PFM Chairman Winston Munroe in 1960.<sup>34</sup> The unstable nature of party leadership during the SPJ's height of influence within the radical Left on the island contributed to its eventual demise, this in conjunction with a shying away from the union activism that had been ever present during the PFM's existence, and a focus on electoral processes alongside propaganda allowed the SPJ to fall into obscurity.

The weak theoretical underpinnings of the party made it a short-lived venture in Jamaican politics, and the lack of racialized politics that focused on Jamaica rather than foreign issues (South Africa and the U.S.) also served to alienate the black working class base of the organization from its cosmopolitan leadership. When Robert Kirkwood, head of the Jamaica Sugar Manufacturers Association declared there would be no wage increase for workers after an apparent drop in production and subsequently profits, the radical Left in Jamaica had little response for this attack against workers, and others like it.<sup>35</sup> It would not be until the late 1960's that the radical Left would again reorganize and redouble

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<sup>33</sup> Lawson, Letter to SPJ Comrades, 24 June, 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, Letter to PFM Members, 15 Nov. 1960.

<sup>35</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 5 Jan, 1965.

efforts to ameliorate the social and economic conditions in Jamaica, leaving a framework for the radicalism of the 1970's to incorporate concrete racialized notions into national politics.

### *1968: Walter Rodney and a Newfound Resistance*

In the final years of the first decade of independence, the radical Left's influence over domestic politics on the island was given a rebirth by two specific events. The first was the spontaneity and political implications of the Walter Rodney Riots in 1968 and the second the short-lived yet politically influential *Abeng* newspaper movement in the final year of the 1960's. It is interesting to note that these two pivotal events occurred in the wake of a proclamation by JLP Prime Minister Hugh Shearer as "Human Rights Year".<sup>36</sup> In celebrating the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Prime Minister implored the entirety of the Jamaican polity to engage in self-examination and to bring about greater understanding between various social, economic and political groups on the island.<sup>37</sup> The call by the bigwigs in Jamaican government would boil over into various forms of resistance in the final years of the sixties as the Rodney Riots demonstrated the frustration of the popular classes with the status-quo in politics and the short lived *Abeng* newspaper providing a rebirth of racial awareness since the era of chattel slavery.

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<sup>36</sup> Ministry Paper no. 5, *Proclamation by Jamaica of 1968 as Human Rights Year*. It should be noted that this document maintains the seal of Queen Elizabeth II and contains the "God Save the Queen" epithet. While not all documents have overt British influence

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Walter Rodney, Guyanese citizen educated at the University of the West Indies (the Mona Campus in Kingston) and later a lecturer there, was a contentious figure in the Caribbean and wider world with a Cold War context. His magnum opus, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, would provide a contextualization for Afro-European relations, colonialism and decolonization and broader radical as well as racial politics throughout the 1970's and 80's. Rodney's radicalism introduced a confluence of black power ideology that was inextricably linked with political liberation.<sup>38</sup> Rodney's contentious nature to the status quo in Jamaica troubled the JLP establishment and he was likened to a demonized representation of the Black Panther Party in the U.S.<sup>39</sup> The political Right in Jamaica attempted to force a wedge between people on the fence over what Rodney represented, calling for racially conscious and politically aware individuals to emulate Martin Luther King Jr., whom they likened to National Hero and Africanist, Marcus Garvey.<sup>40</sup> Rodney's acerbic attacks against world capitalism, and what he saw as evidence of imperialist hegemony in the broader Anglophone Caribbean, gained him wide notoriety amongst radicals in Jamaica, although internationally he was discredited academically until after his death.<sup>41</sup> His call for the Caribbean subaltern to wrest political, social and economic control out of the hands of the oppressive upper echelons of Caribbean society was dangerous rhetoric to a declining JLP that was fast losing its popularity amongst lower class constituents.

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<sup>38</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 152.

<sup>39</sup> Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, Vol. 1: Clash of Ideologies*, 201.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-2

<sup>41</sup> Meeks, *Narrative of Resistance*, 22-3.

In August of 1968, the leadership of the University of the West Indies and the Minister of Home Affairs met in an effort to undermine Rodney's growing ideological strength within the student body at the university and more broadly, his influence over extensive swaths of the Jamaican population.<sup>42</sup> On October 15<sup>th</sup> of that year, Rodney's political opponents at the University and in the government declared him a "*personal non grata*" and consequently barred his reentry onto the island.<sup>43</sup> Under the guise that he was a threat to the tourist industry, as well as his previous trips to Cuba and the USSR, the JLP government, utilizing the power of the Jamaican Intelligence Services, as well as clandestine U.S. and British agents on the island, were determined to stem Rodney's growing influence on the island.<sup>44</sup>

The students at UWI opted to stage a peaceable demonstration in opposition to Rodney's expulsion from the island and his place at the university. The students enlisted the support of various disenfranchised groups throughout Kingston. When the legality of the demonstration came into question (buses that were to take students to predestinated protest spaces failed to show, so the students decided to march illegally from the Mona campus into the heart of Kingston) the Jamaican state apparatus demonstrated its force.<sup>45</sup> Police armed with riot gear, as well as automatic weapons attempted to block the students' path into central Kingston, this show of force in conjunction with provocative

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<sup>42</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 157.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 157. Rodney had been attending the Black Writers Conference in Montreal, Canada when the decision was made to revoke his reentry visa.

<sup>44</sup> West, "Walter Rodney and Black Power". *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Nov. 2005, 2-4.

<sup>45</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 158-9.

physical attacks on the demonstrators by members of the BITU (the JLP's primary trade union) created a situation in which the students and other working class and lumpenproletariat demonstrators responded with violence in kind.<sup>46</sup>

The reactionary violence of the JLP supporters and police prompted the supporters of Rodney to quickly develop beyond its basis as an action in support of Rodney, but into potent forms of class and racial violence. The demonstrators attacked the symbols of Jamaican and foreign capital (banking, insurance and oil companies as well as petty-bourgeois merchants), in addition to individuals on the street that were not phenotypically Afro-Jamaican.<sup>47</sup> Although the riot was quickly quelled by the JLP, it was a pyrrhic victory for a party with decreasing political influence. The Rodney Riots demonstrated an increasing discontent with the class stratification in Jamaican society and a burgeoning awareness of the racial implications of these divisions on the island. The PNP would utilize the inability of the JLP to approach the demonstrators in regards to the desires of the Jamaican subaltern to achieve national power in the 1970's.<sup>48</sup> The polarization of Jamaican politics carried by the Walter Rodney affair lead to a divide amongst the ruling layers of Jamaican society. The apparent "un-Jamaican" or "anti-Jamaican" sentiment of Rodney and his allies and supporters represented a palpable level of national chauvinism on the island in which the national motto

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<sup>46</sup> See: Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 159 and West, "Walter Rodney and Black Power". *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Nov. 2005, 31.

<sup>47</sup> West, "Walter Rodney and Black Power". *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Nov. 2005, 32-3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

was “Out of Many, One People”.<sup>49</sup> The racialized politics of this event, alongside the ever-present class discord flew in the face of a Jamaica painted as a singular homogenous polity. Racialism and incipient forms of class warfare represented a shift in Jamaican politics where in certain sections of the population began moving towards radical political leanings, albeit not wholesale communism or sustained black power militancy.<sup>50</sup> The race question would become an even more vivacious topic of political discourse in the following year as the *Abeng* newspaper movement cropped up. In doing so, it attempted to fill the political void that the unorganized and riotous orgasm of the Rodney affair had paved the way for.

### *1969: Abeng and Black Power*

When the National Volunteers Organization was developed in June of 1965 by the Ministry of Youth and Culture, the racial awakening that coincided with the Rodney Riots had yet to take place. The NVO was slated with the task of organizing Jamaicans, laypersons and professionals alike, to assist in Jamaica’s national development.<sup>51</sup> The NVO’s charter put forth a social benefits program that would be staffed by volunteer labor.<sup>52</sup> The problem here was that the JLP leadership that instituted this program and created the organization, shunned the issue of race, not mentioning how, and to what groups material resources and volunteer labor would be allocated. Presumably, the largest group that would

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<sup>49</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 163.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry Paper no. 52, *National Volunteers Organisation*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

benefit from this social program would have been Jamaicans of African descent, yet the welfare agenda of the NVO did not deem it necessary to identify the recipients of food programs, subsidized transport, and other forms of social security for the ostracized in Jamaican society. It should come as no surprise that the NVO was organized in such a way to avoid confronting the Jamaican specter of racism. Since independence, and prior to the resurgence of radicalism in the late 1960's, race in Jamaica while openly talked about was sidelined as a tool for political maneuvering. The national motto was intended to hold its weight, and various cultural programs idealized "brown" or "darker-skinned" individuals, but there was always the problem of blackness.<sup>53</sup>

As the Walter Rodney Riots had opened up new avenues for the politics of race on the island, the idea of a racially neutral Jamaica came under increasing scrutinization. By 1969, the *Abeng* newspaper movement was leading a headstrong ideologically and culturally powerful surge of black consciousness. The *Abeng* movement was a direct result of the experience of the Rodney Riots, and under this umbrella, the Left wing intelligentsia, students and large portions of the working and agricultural classes came to embody peculiar form of Black Nationalism. This burgeoning Black Power ideology allowed for a rebirth of proposed socialist solutions to the problems of Jamaican government and society.<sup>54</sup> While *Abeng* lasted for a mere eight months, it left an indelible mark on

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<sup>53</sup> For the problems revolving around conceptualizations surrounding "blackness" and the attempt to avoid explicitly Afrocentric viewpoints in popular social discourses, see: Rowe, "Glorifying the Jamaican Girl". *Radical History Review*, Iss. 103, Winter 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, 76.



the radical Left in Jamaica, and on the wider body politic of the island. Unlike previous radical papers that gained a sustained readership (*Abeng* acquired upwards of 15,000 subscribers), *Abeng* focused upon racial politics in addition to the principles of socialism and the problems of class stratification.<sup>55</sup> The paper's leadership was largely Left leaning members of the intellectual classes, whilst the readership varied, but was concentrated in the working class and the lumpenproletariat, who more often than not adhered to Rastafari tenants. Thus, a dichotomy developed between the readership and editorial staff.<sup>56</sup> Trevor Munroe (who would later found the WLL/WPJ) was integral in instilling a radical middle class perspective in the paper, causing contention amongst *Abeng's* audience and the its organizational team.<sup>57</sup>

The paper struggled to stay afloat, advertising requests from readers to maintain its political validity.<sup>58</sup> The crisis in the *Abeng* newspaper movement should not overshadow its influence for the radical Left in Jamaica. The paper attempted to appropriate the image of Afro-Jamaican's as the strength of the Jamaican society. Employing the slogan from Marcus Garvey (a National Hero often utilized in JLP and PNP propaganda), "We Want Our People To Think For Themselves", the paper attempted, as the PFM and SPJ did in earlier years to sway readership away from a simple political binary of the PNP and JLP. *Abeng* was an equally antagonistic form of news media as had been the radical media prior, with there being evidence that workers had been fired or laid-off for

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<sup>55</sup> Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica*, 172.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>58</sup> *Abeng*, 9 Aug. 1969.

supporting the paper.<sup>59</sup> Although *Abeng* was not a political party as the PFM or SPJ had been, it still provided the basic tools for a radical analysis of Jamaican society, and posited various questions that complicated the austere logic of the status quo. And while it focused upon racial questions that had been largely moot to the PFM and SPJ, it also engaged in criticisms of the economic and social policies of the government. The fact that the paper called for a reorganization of the economy, along socialist lines is clearly important in the overarching legacy of radicalism in Jamaica. The fundamental desire for the workers (and in *Abeng's* case black workers) to control the means of production, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing and bauxite exploitation, is a testament to what was *Abeng's* increasing approach to socialism.<sup>60</sup>

The paper's combination of Black Nationalism and socialistic musings helped to make its fleeting existence in Jamaica rather important. It pandered to the internationalist sense that had been present in SPJ and PFM news media as well, chronicling and reporting various international events, and even declaring (illegitimately) the slain Patrice Lumumba's birthday as "Black Brotherhood Day".<sup>61</sup> Like the *Freedom Newsletter* that continually attacked the prospects of Federation as an imperialist tool, *Abeng* took up the task of explaining the geopolitical implications of intra-Caribbean relationships. This is particularly true of the Jamaican government's application to the Organization of American States,

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<sup>59</sup> *Abeng*, 10 May 1969.

<sup>60</sup> *Abeng*, 15 Feb. 1969.

<sup>61</sup> *Abeng* 19 July 1969.

of which *Abeng* dubbed as a deal for foreign “funds and guns”.<sup>62</sup> The Jamaican government, still under the guidance of the JLP and Hugh Shearer at the time sought to increase foreign direct investment by joining the OAS, bolstering existing high capital loans from the U.S., Germany, Britain and Canada.<sup>63</sup> *Abeng’s* existence, like the radical newspapers before it was an ideological tool that attempted to make world politics less opaque by avoiding the bias of either JLP or PNP favored media. The conflation of racial awareness and thinly veiled socialism would translate into more concrete political formations in the coming decades, as the *Abeng* newspaper was not a bonafide political party.

The paper’s eventual demise at the hands of a leadership requesting funds to maintain publication from the poorest sectors of Jamaican society represented a microcosm of broader Jamaican politics. The radical Left in Jamaica up until this point, and after it, had been made up of proletarian and peasant bases, yet all under the tutelage of an often removed middle class leadership. The idealism radiating from middle class radicals is what was able to get these organizations started; yet it acted as a double-edged sword as the middle class social mores and values maintained a rift, at time overt and at times very subtle, that lead to dislocations. Radicalism in Jamaica had survived its first decade of independence, although not unscathed. In the coming years Left wing radicals would again reorganize and regroup, learning from their failures. The next decade of Jamaican independence, however, was to be rather

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<sup>62</sup> *Abeng*, 21 June 1969.

<sup>63</sup> Ministry Paper no. 60, *A Proposal That Jamaica Should Become a Member of The Organization of American States*.

transformative as a glib politician in the PNP utilized the rhetoric of “democratic socialism” to win a smashing victory over the JLP in 1972. For many moderates, and some radicals as well, this signaled the end of an aphotic era, as a charismatic talisman of the people took to the national stage forcing the radical Left on the island into a nuanced relationship with a revitalized PNP party rallying around Michal Manley and the slogan “40 Milestones on the road to Socialism”.

## Flirting With Socialism: The Manley Years

The PNP's first electoral victory in independent Jamaica came on the back of the turmoil and social upheaval in the closing years of the 1960's. Michael Manley, the son of the recently deceased Norman Manley, was sworn in as Prime Minister on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1972. Manley was able to bring together large portions of the population that had grown discontent with the JLP stewardship of Jamaica and was an adept enough politician to attract certain members of the radical Left to his campaign.<sup>1</sup> Manley is a one of the most complicated figures in the history of Jamaican politics, as he was a self-avowed anti-communist, and was judicious in his usage of "socialist" rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> Prior to his tenure as Prime Minister and during the early years of his political leadership, Manley was even seen as an ally to Western, specifically U.S. interests in the region.<sup>3</sup> By the time of the 1972 election, the radical Left in Jamaica had reorganized around five distinct organizations, the New World group (the organization of individuals that had instigated *Abeng* in the wake of the Rodney Affair) was disbanded when Lloyd Best, resigned. The Left, if not within the PNP camp coalesced around either the Marxist-Leninist Socialism! Group, the Youth Forces for National Liberation, a Maoist tendency, the Trotskyist Revolutionary Marxist League or the Black Nationalist People's Party.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the election, none of these

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<sup>1</sup> Meeks, *Narratives of Resistance*, 121.

<sup>2</sup> West, "Walter Rodney and Black Power". *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 1:2 Nov. 2005, 47-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Munroe and Bertram, *Adult Suffrage and Political Administrations in Jamaica, 1944-2002*, 373.

groups were truly influential enough to effect politics on a national stage as the PNP pandered to the discontent and radical nature of the political ferment on the island.

Michael Manley's electoral victory came to fruition through a coalition of forces as the PNP tapped into the growing racialization of politics on the island and proposed a vision of national development based upon a unique stylization of socialism.<sup>5</sup> Manley and the PNP put forward four basic principles under which democratic socialism in Jamaica was to survive. The first two linked socialism as part and parcel to a commitment to the democratic process and to the Christian belief structure.<sup>6</sup> The PNP's commitment to bourgeois democracy allowed for a less dogmatic approach to the education of its cadres and to potential voters. Avoiding the vein of liberation theology, the linkage of Judeo-Christian orthodoxy and socialism was a tacit move to incorporate conservatized elements of the Jamaican population towards the broad campaign base that Manley and the PNP were attempting to build. The second part of the PNP's four basic principles consisted of an aggressive anti-exploitation campaign, in which capitalism as a system was to be rejected, and also a call for individual business initiatives with the incentive being national development.<sup>7</sup>

Michael Manley's first stint as Prime Minister from 1972 until 1980 was a period that saw massive social upheaval and a drastic reorganization of Jamaican society. The PNP's brand of socialism allowed the Jamaican state

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<sup>5</sup> People's Nationalist Party, *Democratic Socialism for Jamaica*, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

apparatus to approach the revolutionary communist government of Fidel Castro, and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada. Manley eschewed any notions that he was a communist, but was willing to work with the radical Left on a number of socio-economic policies, both in national as well as international theatres. The Left in Jamaica had to jostle with the idea of a social democrat, who, at his core a non-revolutionary, forming a coalition that included a wide variety of leftists. During the apex of Manley's first tenure as Prime Minister, Trevor Munroe, black middle class intellectual, formed the Workers Liberation League. This organization and the party that it spawned, the Workers Party of Jamaica, would lead Jamaica into a new era of radical political solutions to what many radicals saw as the pervasive crisis of world capitalism and imperialism.

### *The Manley Phenomenon*

Manley's political trajectory must have seemed confusing to many with radical leanings. On one hand, he proposed a vague notion of national development through socialism, yet affirmed the basic bourgeois principle of private property ownership and production.<sup>8</sup> Manley desired to end issues that Radicals saw as stemming from the capitalist model of economic liberalism and free markets, most notably, unemployment, racism and the imperative need for land reform for the benefit of small farmers.<sup>9</sup> The Manley government boldly proclaimed a socialist character that harkened back to the early days of the PNP

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<sup>8</sup> Kaufman, *Jamaica Under Manley*, 78-9.

<sup>9</sup> Girvan, Norman, *Michael Manley in Caribbean Labor and Politics*, 6.

prior to the party expelling its Left wing in an attempt to bring about a more moderate leadership.

Looking at PNP propaganda prior to the 1952 expulsion of alleged socialist and communist elements, it is clear that the party favored an abstraction of socialism in favor of the extant capitalist system.<sup>10</sup> The Party then, as it did while Manley was at its helm, proclaimed to be the only political party in Jamaica that promulgated the interest of common workers and fought for the lower classes.<sup>11</sup> Manley represented this as well as his upper class moorings by developing a populist political trajectory for his and the PNP's vision of development under socialism.<sup>12</sup> Manley attempted to position himself between what he viewed as the two competing ideological camps in world politics. The forces of conservatism on the one hand, and idealism on the other, bluntly put the antagonism between capitalist and communist societies allowed for this dichotomy according to Manley.<sup>13</sup> By juxtaposing his own social and economic opinions against those of both the forces of conservatism as well as the forces of idealism, Manley created a political space in which he and the PNP offered a unique matrix, under which the ills of Jamaican society could readily be solved.

Manley's status as a champion of the Left was often in question amongst Jamaican radicals, but his friendship with various Left leaning and revolutionary personalities during the 1970's produced an international image of Manley as a

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<sup>10</sup> People's National Party, *New Jamaica, Series no. 1.*

<sup>11</sup> People's National Party, *New Jamaica, Series no. 4.*

<sup>12</sup> Levi, *Michael Manley*, 128-9.

<sup>13</sup> Manley, *The Politics of Change*, 6-7.



bonafide socialist.<sup>14</sup> Some of his policies as well assisted to solidify this image, particularly his reintroduction of the PNP program for farmers in which land redistribution and reform was a focal point.<sup>15</sup> Manley while excoriating the leadership of the “global North” and the problems of globalization maintained an ideal that he hoped would see Jamaica thrive within a capitalist world.<sup>16</sup> Ever the adroit politician, Manley was able to negotiate Jamaican political space offering a new future of development for elites, and all the while ostensibly providing more opportunities to various subaltern communities on the island.

By 1975, the consensus on the Jamaican model of democratic socialism had given way to a drastic polarization of civil society on the island.<sup>17</sup> Manley’s reformism, in particular the imposition of the National Minimum Wage, was successful to some extent in ameliorating the problems of poverty on the island.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, the right, most notably JLP strong man Edward Seaga articulated that the reformist nature of the PNP’s democratic socialism was upheld under the mantra of “pulling down the top to lift up the bottom”.<sup>19</sup> This polarization in Jamaican politics was compounded by the preceding world oil crisis and what some Jamaicans viewed as an increasingly dogmatic and authoritarian PNP. This view was somewhat validated when during a state of

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<sup>14</sup> Manley, *The Manley Memoirs*, 197.

<sup>15</sup> See: People’s National Party, *Action Programme for Farmers*.

<sup>16</sup> Manley, *The Poverty of Nations*, 110-3.

<sup>17</sup> Kaufman, *Jamaica Under Manley*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> See: Seaga, *Fifty Years Backward and Forward?*

emergency due to increasing political violence, certain anti-PNP individuals were detained, often under harsh circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, for all of the backlash that Manley and the PNP received, be it the failed attempt to restore the Jamaican economy to previous heights, support of Cuba (primarily the internationalist mission to Angola and Namibia) and other radical and communist states and organizations, or the chaotic state of increasing politicized violence, the Manley government won reelection in 1976.<sup>21</sup> At this juncture in history the PNP moved away from a pro-Western model of social democracy, and soon developed a policy of increased government intervention into the economy, especially in regards to foreign owned bauxite companies.<sup>22</sup> The interventionist nature of the PNP further exacerbated the polarizations on the island.

Manley's ebb and flow of political rhetoric at times incorporating quasi-Marxian jargon and on other occasions, seemingly pro-Western sentiment. This confounded the radical Left in Jamaica as they too wove in and out of supporting Manley and the PNP. The most influential of these organizations would be Trevor Munroe's WLL, which published scathing indictments of the Manley regime, but still at points in time it deemed politically fragile, the WLL offered support to the PNP government. Other radical organizations in Jamaica, most notably the RML and the fledgling Communist Party, had little input into to social formations resulting from the Manley phenomenon. The RML was extremely isolated from its

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<sup>20</sup> See: Charles, *Detained*.

<sup>21</sup> Munroe and Bertram, *Adult Suffrage and Political Administrations in Jamaica, 1944-2002*, 421-6. See also: Kaufman *Jamaica Under Manley*, 178.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

origins in 1970's and did not become involved in the electoral process until the 1980's, and only as a critic then. The RML was not affiliated with the Fourth International (Leon Trotsky's response to the Stalinist hijacking to Lenin's Third International) and maintained minor connections with the Revolutionary Socialist League in the United States.<sup>23</sup> The Communist Party of Jamaica was also rather insular in it's application of political analysis, focusing comprehensively on the campaign prospects of the Communist Party of the United States of America.<sup>24</sup> Thus radicalism in Jamaica during the Manley years was ultimately defined under the WLL and later the Workers Party of Jamaica.

### *The WLL, Struggle and Socialism!*

Coming out of the tumult of the late 1960's with *Abeng*, popular notions of Black Power and the New World group, a radical tradition was beginning to crystalize in the early 1970's. The spearhead of this crystallization would prove to be the formation of the Workers Liberation League in 1974. Still embryonic in its organizational and agitational capacity when it was formed, the WLL began a four year long journey of propagandizing. The revolutionary propaganda was explicitly communist, pro-Soviet and demanded much more concrete objectives than previous organizations (the PFM, SPJ, *Abeng*, etc.) to bring a socialist society to fruition. The WLL employed two forms of social criticism, the first being it's newspaper *Struggle* and the other, a periodical entitled *Socialism!*. The

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985*, 598.

<sup>24</sup> *Solidarity*, 28 Aug. 1976.

former was a bi-weekly popular press newspaper while the latter operated as the theoretical organ for the WLL.

The WLL continued the tradition started by the PFM and SPJ of internationalist solidarity with Left wing radicals, and joined the World Federation of Democratic Youth (under the name of the Young communist League). The difference between the internationalism of the WLL and the PFM/SPJ was that the WLL was aggressive in its indictment of capitalism and imperialism, particularly in regards to alleged clandestine activity by U.S. agents in Jamaica. While the PFM and SPJ would have railed against this with equal fervor, the WLL did so in international forums, not simply through its own press or internal documents.<sup>25</sup>

The publication of *Socialism!* was a new step forward for the radical Left in Jamaica, as previous organizations generally offered a few books on the theory and application of radical politics, not a serialized work that was available to those outside the movement. The WLL was the first in this regard. The general principles of the journal were to examine and discuss Marxist-Leninist theory and how it could be applied to Jamaican political realities.<sup>26</sup> The organ's first issue in July of 1974 provided a seething denunciation of the PNP's bauxite policy, and how it was engineered under the guise of "democratic socialism" yet engendered capitalist principles in maintaining high profits for a domestic as well as international oligarchy.<sup>27</sup> The WLL also argued that far afield from socialism, the

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<sup>25</sup> *Struggle*, 14 Sept. 1978.

<sup>26</sup> *Socialism!* July 1974.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Manley government was entrenched within the confines of capitalist development models and beholden to an archaic colonial economic structure.<sup>28</sup> Munroe and his compatriots in the early years of the WLL found Manley's rhetoric to be laden with pro-bourgeois sentiment and a dangerous form of national chauvinism that only served to confuse the masses.<sup>29</sup> The WLL, despite its criticisms of Manley and the PNP, viewed the Prime Minister as a leader of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, which the WLL as a vanguard party would ideally lead the masses towards communist revolution.<sup>30</sup>

Like the radical political organizations that preceded it, the WLL attempted to demonstrate a peculiar similarity between the JLP and the PNP. Arguing that the JLP was certainly openly "pro-oligarchy" and that the PNP, with its agenda of "socialism" was not as demagogic, but still propping up a "big capitalist road", the WLL initially insisted on a distancing from both parties.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the WLL often viewed the PNP in a harsher light than the JLP as the sloganeering of democratic socialism often wooed individuals that would otherwise be inclined towards WLL and Marxist ideological underpinnings.<sup>32</sup> The WLL incorporated some of the original leaders of radical political currents in Jamaica into their ranks. Most notable of these individuals was Richard Hart, a leader of both the PFM and SPJ, and originally from the left wing of the PNP.<sup>33</sup> In doing so, the WLL attempted to provide a certain modicum of revolutionary continuity to their organization, and

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<sup>28</sup> *Socialism!* Aug. 1974.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Socialism!* Sept. 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Robotham, *Our Struggle*, 106.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>33</sup> *Socialism!* Oct. 1974.

the broader Jamaican polity, despite the continual weal and woe of revolutionary and radical politics on the island.

In the second year of the WLL's existence, the organization began an attempt to incorporate the peasant class of Jamaica as an important social force in its theory on Marxism in Jamaica.<sup>34</sup> Doing so was an attempt to broaden the organizations agitational prospects amongst subjugated layers in Jamaican society, bridging the gap between proletarians and peasants. The buttressing of city politics with country politics served to give the WLL increasing credibility across a wide variety of people composing the lower and working classes. The WLL was also beginning to increasingly discuss race as a focal point of the class struggle in Jamaica, and pointed to absurdity of the "21 families". The "21 families", according to the WLL provided the bulwark for capitalism on the island, and the primary social support for imperialism. Thus they were painted as a ruling group in Jamaican society. The "21 families" were either "white, Jewish, Syrian or Chinese". The WLL, recalling the racial awakening in the previous decade pointed out that this ruling layer owned forty of the largest companies in Jamaica and not one of them was of noticeable African decent. The WLL declared that this was a fact of life, rather than an incipient form of racial hatred.<sup>35</sup> The "21 families" instigated a "policy of crumbs", decried the WLL and utilized both the PNP and JLP to carry this out.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Socialism!* July 1975.

<sup>35</sup> *Socialism!* June 1975.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

It is easy to construe the WLL stance as racist, but the organization made sure to safeguard against any accusations by working with non-black revolutionaries domestically and abroad. The WLL would not become a raced based movement, as had the unorganized Black Power ferment a decade prior.

In addition to attacking the PNP and JLP for their pro-capitalist politics, the WLL also engage in heated political fighting with other radical groups on the island. Most notable of these political attacks came against the Movement for Social and Political Consciousness. The MSPC was a leftist organization heavily influenced by Maoism. Claiming that the MSPC maintained a petty-bourgeois mentality, and that it was attempting to merge the working class with the lower strata of the middle class, the WLL charged that it this move was a deliberate attempt to derail a revolutionary prospective for Jamaica.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note the vociferous and consistent ideological attacks against statements made in the *Proletarian Spark* (the MSPC's paper), was a response to criticisms of the WLL by the MSPC. The debate primarily arouse out of three distinct issues, the class-political character of revolutionary struggle, the class structure of Jamaican society, and finally the correct application of a Marxist-Leninist program.<sup>38</sup> At the core of the disagreement was that argument made by the MSPC that Jamaican political realities had opened the door for a proletarian-socialist revolution, while the WLL viewed contemporary conditions as fertile ground for a bourgeois-democratic revolution.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Socialism!* Oct. 1975.

<sup>38</sup> *Socialism!* Sept. 1975.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

The WLL also developed ideological spats with the RML. The RML argued, similarly to the WLL, that both the PNP and JLP represented the political leadership of the ruling capitalist class in Jamaica. Unlike the RML, however, Trevor Munroe and the WLL argued that a more nuanced view be taken of the PNP government and Michael Manley. The WLL argued that the PNP was split between the national bourgeois and a smaller yet influential petty-bourgeois democratic trend, the latter of which could ally with revolutionary communists.<sup>40</sup> The RML's idea centered on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution that abjured alliances between proletarian organizations and any middle class elements within a society. Therefore, the RML viewed an alliance of Jamaican workers and peasants as the only viable path towards national socio-economic liberation and subsequent communist revolution.<sup>41</sup> The WLL took exception to this interpretation and application of theory. No doubt the stigma placed upon the RML for endorsing Trotsky in a world communist movement that often characterized him as an anti-revolutionary played an important role in this political fracas. The WLL would, in retaining elements of its middle class leadership, maintain its course for nominal and critical support of the PNP.

Although the MSPC and RML were fairly small and insignificant organizations, their theoretic and political confrontation with the WLL reveals how the WLL was able to rationalize working within the confines of the Manley phenomenon, even while they continued to chastise him alongside the broader PNP leadership. The strict application of Marxist-Leninist historical development

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<sup>40</sup> *Socialism!* Dec. 1975.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



and theories around dialectical materialism prompted the middle class leadership of the WLL to hold steadfastly to conceptualizations that did not necessarily have Jamaica at the center, but rather the orthodoxy of Soviet Marxism.<sup>42</sup>

The WLL viewed their position in Jamaican society as a vanguard organization that would assist in the tasks of the social-democratic revolution, and inevitably lead the communist one they envisioned in the future. Most likely, the WLL had aligned ideologically with certain sectors of the Soviet bureaucracy and intelligentsia in seeing that the national bourgeoisie (Manley and the PNP) were beginning to supplant imperialism. Rapidly developing capitalism as a “progressive” force, the PNP with its program of democratic socialism could open the door for collaboration between the working classes and the elements of the national bourgeoisie.<sup>43</sup> This conflation of forces would allow the WLL to insert itself into a role with the objective of eventually seizing state power. Supporting the PNP to an extent, in the manner of coalition partners, could evidently allow for communist revolution sooner rather than later, dependent of course upon the reaction of Western imperialism.<sup>44</sup>

### *The WLL Metamorphosis*

After four years of existence as a radical, pro-Soviet and explicitly Marxist-Leninist Party, the WLL began to reexamine itself. The organizations leadership came to the conclusion that the WLL had made two serious mistakes. The

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<sup>42</sup> Scott, “Political Rationalities of the Jamaican Modern”. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 14:14 Sept. 2003, 13-4.

<sup>43</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 203.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

mistakes chronicled by the WLL leadership were a lack of foundation amongst the people and the impatience of party cadres for full-scale communist revolution to come to realization.<sup>45</sup> The leadership also pointed out errors made over the formative years of the WLL through three distinct stages in Jamaica's political development. The errors that compounded the first two mistakes resulted from an over-estimation of the openness of the class struggle on the island, a failure to recognize the PNP's viability in combating escalating right-wing thuggery, and an over concentration of criticisms towards the PNP rather than the JLP.<sup>46</sup> The WLL was also rather infirm over its position on the state of emergency in 1976. They applauded the "class warfare" that developed because of it but were disgruntled with the "fascistic" nature of the state police apparatus.<sup>47</sup>

The political and strategic mistakes prompted a change in the WLL. The organizations leadership began the groundwork for creating a new organization, the Workers Party of Jamaica, talking about it with those on the island and internationally when possible.<sup>48</sup> By December of 1978, the WPJ was launched and the party prepared for the continuing battle over a Jamaican government

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<sup>45</sup> *Socialism!* Mar.-Apr. 1978.

<sup>46</sup> *Socialism!* Oct. 1976. The three stages that the WLL identified were as follows: 1972-1974 as a period of PNP reformism, populism and JLP discrediting amongst the populace; 1974-1975 as a period of democratic socialism and increased PNP radicalization (in certain sectors of the party) and bolstered relations with Cuba resulting in a renewed popular interest in Marxism; 1975-8 as the period of imperialist intervention, JLP instigated violence and economic sabotage by foreign and domestic agents.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* Manley declared a state of emergency to stem growing tides of political violence that targeted PNP supporters as well as Left leaning radicals. The police forces and Jamaican Defense Force, however, were arbitrary in reacting to violence between the various forces on the Left and Right.

<sup>48</sup> *Struggle*, 31 August, 1978.

increasingly coming to odds with rising JLP support and Western powers. Munroe believed at this pivotal moment in the WLL's existence that the working people of Jamaica were ready for a more intense rendering of Marxian thought.<sup>49</sup>

The metamorphosis of the WLL into the WPJ carried with it organizational changes and slight ideological shifts. The party declared that only disciplined and organized individuals would be admitted due to the errors of the past and sought to contest elections not to see "how many seats it could win" but to continually raise the level of class consciousness amongst workers.<sup>50</sup> The WPJ also advocated increased presence amongst the masses on the shop floor and cooperation, rather than competition with the PNP.<sup>51</sup>

These shifts represented a changing communist movement in Jamaica, most importantly of which was the "critical support" for Michael Manley who had in years prior bore the brunt of WLL political attacks. The newfound ideology of the WPJ advocated increased cooperation with Manley and the PNP due to the principle nature that both were presumably anti-imperialist at the time.<sup>52</sup> The WPJ also attempted to broaden its already impressive international relationships, developing fraternal ties with communist and workers parties throughout the Antilles and as far away as Eastern Europe and South-East Asia.<sup>53</sup> The party also increased ties with Cuban revolutionaries, particularly internationalist

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<sup>49</sup> Munroe, *The Workers Party*, 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-12

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-21.

<sup>52</sup> Munroe, *Unite Against Imperialism*, 36-7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-1

doctors and soldiers whom they had offered frequent and vocal support prior to the formation of the WPJ.<sup>54</sup>

The abandonment of the sectarianism that at times consumed the WLL in its relationships with other radical and revolutionary organizations was abandoned with this reformation. The WPJ's initial program proclaimed the necessity of building an anti-imperialist coalition.<sup>55</sup> Hence, the rationalizations for increased support of middle class political leadership embodied by the PNP. The WPJ's new rhetoric did carry the same tone as the WLL's though. Essentially, the middle class leadership maintained its vanguard role in leading the workers, but rather than "go faster than the working people" to achieve socialism, as the WLL indicated it had done, the communists of the WPJ would win over the proletariat through a scientific understanding of capitalism and the prospects of communism.<sup>56</sup> Developing a revolutionary legacy tracing back to Cudjoe, Cuffee, Nanny and Sam Sharpe, the WPJ did what the WLL had in regards to the PFM and SPJ.<sup>57</sup> The party had created linkages to a revolutionary past. Fictitious or not, the revolutionary continuity that the WPJ claimed had the potential to afford the party increased political space, and consequent improved maneuverability. The WPJ saw the decreased antagonisms between the PNP and itself, due to a

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<sup>54</sup> *Struggle*, 5 Jan. 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Workers Party of Jamaica, *First Programme of the Workers Party of Jamaica*, 75.

<sup>56</sup> Munroe, *The Workers Party*, 23-5.

<sup>57</sup> Workers Party of Jamaica, *First Programme of the Workers Party of Jamaica*, 16. The four individuals that the WPJ referenced as their forerunners were maroons that had struggled against the system of chattel slavery imposed upon Afro-Jamaicans during the colonial epoch.

rising resurgence of a “left-democratic” tendency as the foundations of a glorious new era in the struggle for socialism and eventually communism in Jamaica.<sup>58</sup>

This shift during the WLL/WPJ transition contained a peculiar silver lining for anti-communists as well as moderates opposed to seemingly radical PNP public policy. The WPJ support of Manley and the PNP is often considered to be an integral factor in Manley’s defeat to the JLP’s Edward Seaga in the 1980 general election. The adverse publicity that Manley received for being associated with avowed communists was one of the larger nails in his coffin.<sup>59</sup> Manley would recover from this defeat, politically at least, and become Jamaica’s Prime Minister again. The WPJ, however, was thrown into a world on fire as a reinvigorated JLP under Edward Seaga pulled back the reins on what they saw as a Jamaican economy running rampant.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 61

<sup>59</sup> Alexander and Parker, *A History of Organized Labor in the English-Speaking West Indies*, 56.

## The JLP Reinvigorated: Radicals and the Seaga Regime

Edward Seaga, a U.S. born Jamaican of Lebanese and Scottish decent became Jamaica's fifth Prime Minister, the fourth from the JLP, on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1980. His victory came alongside a sweeping JLP victory in Parliament as domestic politics seemingly shifted to the right overnight with the JLP having 51 seats compared to the PNP's nine.<sup>1</sup> The coalition that the WPJ had so valorized had failed, and miserably so. The PNP's campaign, similarly to those in previous years, focused on the "democratic socialism" developed within the party. Quasi-socialistic sentiment was of course evident in their campaigning propaganda, as was the support of private, albeit "responsible" enterprise.<sup>2</sup> The PNP attempted to explain why their party was still more viable than the JLP.<sup>3</sup> This was to no avail as the JLP was once again at the helm of political leadership on the island.

Seaga, an unwavering anti-communist, to the point that he would have considered Manley to be a communist at times, began programs to restructure the Jamaican economy with the assistance of a daunting majority in parliament. Seaga, like many in the JLP, were pro-Western (to the extent that their often ultra-nationalist tendencies would allow) and began reversing some of the PNP's legislation enacted under the era of democratic socialism. Seaga and the JLP began on a path of structural adjustment of the Jamaican economy as the JLP

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<sup>1</sup> Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, Vol. 1: Clash of Ideologies*, 339.

<sup>2</sup> People's National Party, *Principles and Objectives* 29-33.

<sup>3</sup> See: People's National Party, *1980 Election Manifesto of the PNP: Foundations for the Future*.

became gripped with the evolving experiment of neoliberal national development models. Through the Structural Adjustment Program supported by the World Bank, Jamaica received loans at \$76.2 million, \$60.2 million and \$55 million in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.<sup>4</sup> While Seaga was generally critical of the IMF, the neoliberal experiment in Jamaica still persisted in efforts to make Jamaica, particularly its bauxite and tourism industries increasingly competitive.<sup>5</sup> Seaga also opened up the ability for foreign capitalists to invest private capital in Jamaican industries, with myriad programs designed to reduce tariffs and increase profits.<sup>6</sup>

The failure of socialist governance to maintain its dominance in Jamaica allowed for a “hegemonic technocentrism and managerialism” of discourses on development. The liberalization of Jamaican markets, particularly the bauxite industry, allowed for a rehashing of the neo-colonial relationship between Jamaica and the West.<sup>7</sup> For radicals in Jamaica, the period was one of confusion and desperation as the Left attempted to salvage what they had created during the previous decade. Some radicals, however, were undaunted and continued propagandizing, most notably the RML. The RML had opposed the elections altogether with the slogan “No to the PNP! No to the JLP! Don’t Vote! Build the

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<sup>4</sup> Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, Vol. 2: Hard Road to Travel*, 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-1.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan, *Edward Seaga*, 217.

<sup>7</sup> Mistry, Jayalaxshmi et. al. “Natural Resource Management and Development Discourses in the Caribbean: Reflections on the Guyanese and Jamaican Experience”. *Third World Quarterly*, 30:5 (2009), 979. For a broader picture of the effects of neoliberalism in Jamaica under Seaga, see: Handa, Sudhanshu and Damien King. “Structural Adjustment Policies, Income Distribution and Poverty: A Review of the Jamaican Experience”. *World Development* 25:6 (1997).

RML, Build the Revolutionary party!”<sup>8</sup> The RML, being such a diminutive force compared to the likes of the WPJ, did not seem as perturbed as other radical organizations towards the JLP victory. The RML simply put forward a rather loose three point program for the 1980’s that advocated the creation of an international revolutionary workers party, the overthrow of capitalism in Jamaica as well as globally and the establishment of dictatorship of the proletariat leading ultimately to communism.<sup>9</sup> The myopia of the RML leadership was evident, due to their non-existent political influence on the island and their eventual amalgamation with the Revolutionary Socialist League in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Many radical and revolutionary organizations in Jamaica suffered demoralization with the JLP victory in 1980. The WPJ being the largest and most influential organization on the radically Left wing of the political spectrum had the most to lose.

The WPJ had not operated under a regime that was overtly hostile towards radicals, but they were familiar with Seaga and the broader JLP leadership. Even preceding the materialization of the WPJ, the WLL produced a plethora of polemical attacks against him and the JLP. The excoriated Seaga for particularly opposing a PNP land reform act that saw the government buy land from landlords and rent it to peasants with subsidization.<sup>11</sup> Seaga wanted to sell it to the highest bidder. The WLL also saw Seaga as one of the primary forces of reaction on the island, and posited that the CIA involvement on the island was a

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<sup>8</sup> *Forward*, 27 Sept. – 26 Oct. 1980.

<sup>9</sup> *Forward*, 27 Sept. – 26 Oct. 1982.

<sup>10</sup> *Forward*, 27 Oct. – 26 Nov. 1983.

<sup>11</sup> Workers Liberation League, *Trevor Munroe’s Radio Broadcast*, 31 Oct. 1976.



result of his influence in government.<sup>12</sup> The election of Edward Seaga signified a declining era for the WPJ. The party felt as though the PNP had retreated from the advances made in the late 1970's and had reoriented away from a lower class base.<sup>13</sup> The WPJ's isolation was met with an initial push in the early 1980's as a reaction to conservatism and neoliberalism gripping the island, but would taper off in the mid-1980's as the JLP won elections in 1983 and 1986.<sup>14</sup>

### *The WPJ Fight Back and Decline*

The WPJ's isolation after the defeat of Manley and the PNP prompted aggressive political campaigns in which the WPJ sought to clear its tarnished name due to the propaganda against it in the 1980 election. The WPJ did have the support of communist parties abroad in this trying time, most notably in Havana and Moscow. Soviet policy was to engage with one party worked in the favor of Munroe and the WPJ, as the Communist Party, headed by Christopher Lawrence, was often rebuffed by Soviet officials on the island.<sup>15</sup> This support though was moral, not material. Thus the WPJ hardened its political stance and attempted to maintain a semblance of order as structural adjustment and neoliberal programs began eating away at the social gains of prior years.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Munroe, *Jamaican Politics*, 247.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander and Parker, *A History of Organized Labor in the English-Speaking West Indies*, 56-7.

<sup>15</sup> Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, Vol. 2: Hard Road to Travel*, 132-4

Initially, the party was fairly optimistic that it would be able to recoup what the people of Jamaica had lost.<sup>16</sup> The Party also reverted to overt criticisms of the PNP, although not as hostile as it had been when the WLL was in existence, citing them as failing to stem the political violence enacted by the Right upon the Left in the run up to Seaga's electoral victory.<sup>17</sup> As the party turned away from coalition building, they redoubled their efforts to educate the party rank and file, as well as interested workers and peasants, to the value of communism. In doing this, the Party further distanced itself from the PNP, calling on members "stuck" betwixt the two, to make a decision.<sup>18</sup> The WPJ leadership portrayed both parties as progressive in nature, yet pointed to the alleged shortsightedness of the PNP for not advocating full communist revolution and national liberation. Juxtaposing the two parties, Munroe and the WPJ leadership were hoping that their experience with the Left wing of the PNP and grassroots organizing with PNP supporters would win the WPJ members.

The WPJ at this point in history also began to take up social questions rather than economical ones, and with less theorization behind their analysis. While the social and economic questions of any society are inextricably linked, the party tended to incorporate an increased scrutiny into specific social problems under the Seaga regime. The party pointed to the slashing of social services, particularly when it came to young people.<sup>19</sup> At times during this period

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<sup>16</sup> Workers Party of Jamaica, *Report of the Central Committee to the Second Congress*, 17 Dec. 1981.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Munroe, *Scientific Socialism and Democratic Socialism*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *The Conditions of Jamaica Youth*, 2.

the WPJ seemed to be optimistic in the prospects of a resurgence of radical politics, but it never came.

The 1983 election in Jamaica as well as the defeat of the New Jewel Movement in Grenada had much to do with this. As people grew bitter at a flat lining economy under Seaga between 1980 and 1983, the WPJ thought that the needed resurgence was underway. Yet fate would have it another way. When Maurice Bishop was assassinated and Grenada invaded in 1983, the demoralization within the WPJ was palpable.<sup>20</sup> The JLP and Seaga, taking notice of fleeting public opinion, utilized the events in Grenada to call a snap election that the PNP was in no way ready for.<sup>21</sup> The JLP ran away with the entirety of the seats in parliament as the PNP refused to contest the elections. This relegated the PNP as well as WPJ to mere vocal nuisances as the country was completely controlled politically by the JLP.

The PNP and WPJ attempted to reorganize, the former this time much more removed from the latter. Having won local elections in 1986, the PNP was poised to reassert its authority on the national level.<sup>22</sup> The PNP exploited the opportunity to cash in on the animosity of the Jamaican populace towards the JLP, the Grenada affair (The JLP government had sent the JDF to fight alongside the U.S. military when the island was invaded) and general disenchantment with

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<sup>20</sup> For the NJM's relationship with the PNP and Jamaican radicals in general see: Bishop, Maurice. *Maurice Bishop Speaks: The Grenada Revolution and its Overthrow*. For the particular view of the WPJ on this issue see: Munroe, *Grenada: Revolution, Counter Revolution*.

<sup>21</sup> Stone, *Politics Versus Economics*, 40-1.

<sup>22</sup> See: People's National Party, 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, 17-20 Sept. 1987, Message From the Party President, *Message from the Party Chairman, Message from the General Secretary*.

the neoliberal agenda. The PNP campaign propaganda was devoid of socialistic semantics. The language of the PNP in the closing years was calm and not at all as inflammatory as it had once been. The WPJ, as they would learn in the early 1990's had played their small, yet important role in Jamaican history.

## Conclusions

The PNP won the election in 1989, removing Edward Seaga and the JLP from power. The rhetoric of “democratic socialism” had fallen out of favor inside the PNP for a more neutral political lexicon. The radical Left in Jamaica saw to their dismay, a seemingly rote continuation of JLP policies by the incumbent PNP government. The devaluations of Jamaican currency as a tool to increase completion in the 1980’s continued under the auspices of the newly elected PNP government. Although by this point in time, domestic capitalists had accumulated enough wealth to oust some of their foreign competitors, the neocolonial rebirth under neoliberalism in the 1980’s had allowed foreign capital to maintain a grip on a plethora of industries on the island.<sup>1</sup>

With the prospects of socialism in Jamaica dead and dying, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and much of the world communist movement in 1991, the WPJ slipped into further isolation, disbandment.<sup>2</sup> The rampant privatization of publicly owned lands and enterprise did ebb immediately after the PNP regained power. The rate however did increase as Jamaica succumbed to the Washington Consensus.<sup>3</sup> The WPJ served as an agitational force that brought together a wide variety of radical and revolutionary minded individuals in

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<sup>1</sup> Hudson, “Imperial Designs: The Royal Bank of Canada in the Caribbean”. *Race and Class*, 52:33 (2010) 44-5.

<sup>2</sup> See: Alexander and Parker, *A History of Organized Labor in the English-Speaking West Indies*.

<sup>3</sup> Handa and King, “Structural Adjustment Policies, Income Distribution and Poverty: A Review of the Jamaican Experience”. *World Development*, 25:6 (1997), 919.

the PNP, yet was unable to bring its idealized goal of a communist Jamaica into existence.

The failure of all radical movements in Jamaica have hinged on a plethora of factors. From the strict electoral nature of the SPJ to the inconsistent and at times contradictory theorizations of the WPJ, to the unorganized social dislocations resulting from *Abeng*, the Rodney affair and broader Black Power ideology, the radical Left in Jamaica failed. I say this because despite, as Trevor Munroe points out radicalism, particularly the later Marxist oriented ones, helped to solve persistent structural problems in the interest of the common people.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the majority of radical leadership in Jamaica had a middle class upbringing is an immensely important factor for this failure. If we recall Fanon's theorizations on the development of a post-colonialist society, it is evident that the radical leadership did not suffer an "auto-de-fe."<sup>5</sup> The middle class moorings of radical political leadership in Jamaica served to segment the proverbial head from the body. And while no revolutionary movement is purely made up of workers and farmers, a level of cohesion must exist for the various ideological gaps, tactical errors to be avoided.

The continuity of Jamaican radicalism does exist as the WPJ attempted to demonstrate. While it is not a cohesive linear body of thought, a rebellious and revolutionary spirit exists in Jamaica and is at times over shadowed by stronger forces or attempting to reorganize itself to fit into an fluid Jamaican polity. As Edward Seaga stated in his March 2012 speech in Kingston, Jamaica's socio-

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<sup>4</sup> Munroe, *Jamaican Politics*, 253.

<sup>5</sup> See: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

economic development over the first half century as an independent state has been obstructed by fragmented political leadership and ideologies imposed upon various sectors of the society, from both the Left as well as the Right.<sup>6</sup>

This bleak picture should not make us forget the positives of what was a fighting history for radicalism in Jamaica. The linkages between the People's Freedom Movement and the SPJ, the surge in racial and class-consciousness, as well as the phenomenon of Michael Manley and the nuanced alliance eked out by his PNP party and Trevor Munroe's WPJ are all tangible. The problematics of independence does not necessitate the abject failure of radicalism in Jamaica, but rather its continual rebirth and rebranding. With nominally disparate political leanings, the wider body of the radical Left in Jamaica did as Munroe posited, they pushed forward a progressive and at times aggressive agenda, in the interest for their national comrades. The middle class backgrounds of radical political leadership in Jamaica is a phenomenon of capitalist social relations that is seemingly endemic the world over. The Radical Left in Jamaica will continue to reorganize as it had in the past, and while currently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dilution of the PNP's brand of socialism, Jamaica is without a radical political organization, the seeds have already been sewn. The continuity of radicalism in Jamaica is simply awaiting a new generation of Jamaicans to take up the anti-capitalist banner in efforts to ameliorate or possibly complicate the post-colonial experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Seaga, *"Fifty Years: Backward or Forward?"*

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