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Jamaica: Progress Report

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JAW

Progress Report

By Michael Manley

We are making progress in Jamaica. First, I would like to say a word about the economy—not just to talk about it, because talking about the Jamaican economy today is a means of illustrating what is a world-wide problem, particularly in the Third World context.

During 1972 and 73—even into early 1974—we had begun to make very, very substantial progress in a number of areas; employment had started to come down from nearly 25 percent down to about 20 percent—still terrible but at least a great improvement. We initiated free education and land reform programs. We began the process which we have just completed of bringing into national ownership all the sugar estates previously owned by foreign corporations. And a State Corporation responsible for all trading in sugar has been established, with the realization that sugar is a national asset to be traded on behalf of the whole nation. All proceeds from the sugar industry will benefit the Jamaican people as a whole once the requirements of servicing the industry had been met. This is an important socialist program that involves the establishment of Worker Co-operatives on the sugar estates. And I must confess, one of

the proudest experiences of my life is when I recall some of the old grass weeders, spreaders of fertilizer, marked and bent by a life-time in the field with nothing to believe in, nothing to hold on to except the hope that there might be some small wage increase to relieve their misery, and when I see those people today on their sugar farms going to their executive meetings to discuss what to do with their proceeds, how to plan the next crop's activity, and what to set aside to buy the tractors for next year.

The workers are now the democratic voice of decision at the place where they work and see the transformation of the human spirit, and the dignity in their efforts—that alone makes the Jamaican struggle worth while.

We have started work in education, not completed but we have initiated exciting new programs. That is the key—education is the key to everything.

We have completed the acquisition of all the public utilities which are now owned by the state. In the bauxite industry, we have done some of the most important pioneering work that has been done anywhere in the world among primary raw material producers by introducing and imposing the Bauxite Levy by taxation, and by proceeding to re-acquire for Jamaica a quarter of a million acres from the multi-national corporations.

The Bauxite Issue

We have started negotiating the majority ownership of the bauxite institutions and setting up a completely new concept of the bauxite industry. And the Bauxite Levy is regarded as the most advanced form of mineral taxation in the world today and is serving as a model that is being studied throughout Third World countries.

It is a revolutionary concept in taxation because, for the first time, it locks benefits into metropolitan inflation, which means that if the price of aluminum rises in the North American market, the tax take of Jamaica also rises. It took, for a little country like Jamaica, a lot of courage to do that. We formed the International Bauxite Association and now, for the first time the association has made history by setting an international minimum price for all bauxite delivered to North America—a historic break-through.

But while all of that was happening, the storm clouds of the economic crisis were gathering, beginning with the big grain price take-off in 1973, followed by the inflation in tractor prices. Energy prices eventually overtook their historic role, also. But with all the attacks against higher energy prices, they are at the level where they really ought to be. It took a long time for some people to perceive the fact that there had to be some relationship between the price of oil and the inflation of industrial economies. And because all of those things happened all of a sudden,

they have now been associated with the collapse in the world sugar price; the slow down in the world alumina market and, at one stage, the serious contraction in tourism. Jamaica, like many other similar countries that are dependent on the Import-Export relationship, have been caught in a massive squeeze. For example, it used to cost us \$30M a year to bring the oil that we need (95% of Jamaican energy is based on oil), it now costs us \$220M after three years to bring the same amount of oil into Jamaica. I won't even mention wheat prices but one can follow it right down the line to the dumping.

And so Jamaica has been under extreme pressure at the energy level, and the dumping level, that has created an acute balance of payments crisis. This is what we have done: ask the people for extreme sacrifices, and cut out the importation of all irrelevant and luxuries goods.

The foreign exchange that Jamaica has today is spent first of all on food; secondly on medicine; thirdly on raw materials to keep the factories going; fourthly on spare parts, and fifthly on the capital goods that are needed for expansion. This is not done because of the lack of foreign exchange, it is done to create the conditions under which the Jamaican people will learn to produce for themselves.

The truth is that we have spent a lot of time in our history allowing a small fringe of our society to waste the national substance in a kind of riotous living.

When we have built the internal economy that uses our raw materials, that exploits our own by-products, then we can talk about the next phase. But I do not believe in luxuries for a minority when there are thousands of children that cannot get into schools.

Distribution of Resources

It is not for me to quarrel with the distribution of resources in another man's country. Every country has to work that out for itself. But the decision that the Jamaican people took was a decision that we are going to go for the satisfaction of the basic needs of the majority of the people as our priority. And that is why we are working first of all massively in housing, in clothing, in domestic agriculture, in education, and in health.

Lest there be a misunderstanding, we are doing everything possible in the area of exports. I am proud to note: one of the greatest examples of Third World solidarity involves a pact between Mexico, Venezuela and Jamaica to build a major industrial complex that will begin with Jamaican bauxite. This project was a dream that began at a table in a room in Jamaica House between the President of Mexico and myself in 1973. I know of corporations that have jumped high and

low to try to stop it happening because they saw it as an interference in traditional lines of power. But we have overcome.

In January we sent a mission to Algeria for bauxite and alumina sales, and we have recently finished major exploration with the Soviet Union in the area of trade possibilities and economic cooperation. At the same time, we are trying to expand our sales in the United States and also in Canada. We have just entered into a major economic agreement with Norway and are holding negotiations with Yugoslavia. What we have insisted upon is this: we are little but that doesn't mean that the world is not our stage also.

We do believe in internationalism and maintain excellent relations with most nations of the world, including the United States.

But what we are making clear to the world and to others is that we will not accept a world that says to us that friendship is the exclusive preserve of any one corner of the world. We regret all international conflicts. I believe there is only one thing in the world worth worrying about and that's the plight of the two billion people that are poor. And the day the world community recognizes that—and deals with it—the world will begin to move forward.

As the result of the tremendous efforts that we have undertaken last year, for the first time since independence, we have

30 very nearly closed the trade gap between Jamaica's exports and imports. We still have some problems but we also have a great determination. We need assistance, yes, and cooperation. We welcome foreign capital only on terms that are consistent with our national priorities, standards of good corporate citizenship and joint venturing with the home government so that we become partners in whatever takes place.

The Common Fund

We have a tremendous confidence in the future. But all of those efforts take place in the context of the world itself. And one of the tragic events of our time is the continuing failure of the developed world to come to terms with the needs and just requirements of the Third World. Even now negotiations in Geneva on what is known as the Common Fund have broken down again.

The Common Fund is an attempt to create, through international political management, a system in which basic commodities such as sugar, cocoa, cotton, copper and tin can be managed so as to secure that they have minimum prices that guarantee some level of prosperity to the Third World countries that produce them. It is to ensure that if North American tractor prices rise, we don't find ourselves producing more and more sugar to buy one tractor. Instead, the floor price of sugar will move if the price of tractors moves upward. And it seems, at least to me, that is a preeminently reasonable proposal. But it is rejected in the name of free enterprise.

We are not asking for charity. We are asking for the political organization of justice.

One of the things that is extraordinary to observe is that right now the whole world economy is stagnant. It is so because the Third World is trapped in an economic structure that bleeds it of resources through the current terms of international trade. It is stagnant because the Third World is staggering under the debts that have been accumulated in the

past to finance the survival of human beings.

It is stagnating because most Third World economies are now so stripped of foreign exchange that they cannot buy the manufactured goods from developed economies.

The developed economies themselves are in a log jam of the debt overhang of the debt at this moment. They too are stagnant because part of their own margin of growth is the potential market of the Third World. Therefore, all of us are being sacrificed on the altar of a false theory of free enterprise. The answer lies in political perception, political education and political will. □

This report by Michael Manley, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, was excerpted from an address he gave at Howard University a few months ago. Ed.

salih the drummer

never play with guns his mother always
told him
they may wound or kill you
but you will necessarily arm yourself
for this mans world

so he plays with sticks building sounds
he plays like bullets
he will fill you with his music
he will fill you with his
drumming
stick you way up with his
rhythms
make you move

never fool yourself his father always
told him
there is no time in here and now
for pretense
for you will inevitably stand face to face
with the one creator
of this mans world

so he plays with pieces of trees
building truth
he plays like roots
he will move you with his music
he will move you with his
drumming
build a full circle with his
timing
make you envision

never trade intensity for sincerity his
master always told him
you may be heard in many ways other
than forcefully
and you must be sensitive to the
infinity of feelings
in this mans world

so he plays with feather brushes
building echos
he plays like silence
he will lull you with his music
he will lull you with his
drumming
rock you low down with a
cymbal
make you remember

he plays like bullets
he will never need a gun
he plays like roots that know the life
source
he will never be fooled
he plays like silence and he tells
everything
you will remember him . . .

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Wings

Time is wasted often on the dawn
and the night.
The sunlight and dusk are wasted
on things unalterable.
Our hands need time to go over
ourselves each day
And the eagle Wings of the mind
need time to touch the soul.

Betty Taylor Ashe
Howard University

The Pyrrhic Victory

Here comes the vengeful warrior
Not killed at Shaperville
Not buried at the Cape of Burials
And not drowned in the styx of
Rouben Island

Here comes the vengeful warrior
His name ablazed with a gilded spear
Symbol of vengeance, symbol of potence
Sworn in a blood resolve

Here comes the vengeful warrior
Invading the fortress of tyranny
Chasing outlanders and child rapers out
Punic Boers emptying divine shrines

Here comes the vengeful warrior
Singing the African National Anthem
Singing hallelujah for the Pyrrhic Victory
And the Juggernaut of apartheid speared
to death

Its pedestal now a bust beneath the earth
Fateful calamity for a wicked semen
That bred long in a false phylogeny.

Mohamed Khalief Salad
Mogadiscio, Somalia

From an Orphan to Her Mother

Mother Africa I hear the soft mellow
 sound of your voice
 Stretching across rivers of time
 and timidity
 I close my eyes and envision your
 tranquil beauty
 A blazing yellow star amidst the horizon
 If I were twins I would part myself
 from this alien land
 And travel near to nurse you back
 to strength
 But alas a body has but one soul/And
 Fate hath planted mine here
 But still shall I strive towards our
 unified goal
 A renewed Mother Africa who shall
 once regain her renowned
 prominence and strength.

Sherrie J. Calfield
 Washington, D. C.

He is One

I am beholding through the eye of All.
 I am working through All hands, I am
 Walking through All feet.
 The brown, white, olive, yellow, red
 and black bodies are all Mine.
I am thinking with the Minds of All,
I am dreaming through All dreams,
I am feeling through All feelings.
 The flowers of Joy blooming on All
 heart-tracts are Mine.
 I am eternal laughter.
 My smiles are dancing through All faces.
 I am the Waves of enthusiasm in all
 God-tuned hearts.
 I am the Wind of Wisdom that dries the
 sighs and sorrows of all humanity.
 I am the silent Joy of Life moving
 through All beings.

Maurice Cotton
 Howard University

The Mundane is a Sonnet Too!

Well, you may ask,
 "Why have you not written a sonnet,
 It's a test of your literary skill?"

Well, just what is a sonnet?
 Fourteen lines of iambic pentameter,
 fixed verse

Rhyming a b b a, a b b a, c d e, c d e
 Or a b a b, c d e d, e f e f, g g
 Expressing lofty poetic thoughts?

Well, so what!

Whenever I rise in the mornings,
 Find my tall, lean,
 Black mate cuddled by
 My side, eyes sleepily searching
 For me from under his stocking cap,
 That's a sonnet.

When I find that this months bills
 Are paid, and three dollars
 Left for a movie show,
 That's a sonnet.

When I behold my senses
 Tingling, vibrating, indicating
 Life, sensitivity,
 Inabling me to stand
 For hours in the unemployment
 Line, or the gasoline line,
 That's a sonnet in its rawest form.

When I whisper in my ear,
 And tell myself that
 I am somebody
 Though I wearily push
 The linen cart down the motel corridors,
 That's a sonnet.

So you say, my theme is too mundane!
 SO WHAT!!!
 So you say, this is not the proper form!
 SO WHAT!!!

The mundane has its own form,
 It sings a sonnet too.
 A darn dandy one!

Excuse me! I left my
 Teeth in POLIDENT.

SMACK! SMACK!

Janet R. Griffin
 Columbia, Md.

Looking for Dignity

I sat with an octogenarian
 on a bench at the park
 overlooking the Atlantic
 as he gazed in the distance
 toward New York, Boston, and Newark
 I gazed with him.

Afterwhile I saw ships, hundreds
 of them
 Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish,
 French, English—
 leaving sun beaten and wind
 swept Goree

I saw women in tattered garments
 throw their children to the sharks
 and plunge to their own death.
 I saw white guards shoot into the water
 to express their anger at the escape.
 I saw proud African men
 in coffles
 struggling to defend their dignity.

I looked at the octogenarian
 and tears slid down his face
 He could hear through time
 the heavy breathing in the hold
 of the ship where Alex Haley's kin
 and mine,
 and yours,
 gagged for space to breathe
 and to be left alone to dance.

Asante, M.K.
 Williamsville, N.Y.

Changes

I am no longer cold, firm and resistant
 Having to be beat into shape.
 Like gold or silver in the
 silversmith's hand,
 I am soft and malleable.
 Like clay in the potter's hand
 Ready to be molded into shape.

Sandra Walker
 Washington, D. C.

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