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Edward Seaga

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The Right Honourable **Edward Philip George Seaga** (born May 28, 1930) was Prime Minister of Jamaica for the Jamaica Labour Party from 1980 to 1989, and served as leader of the opposition 1989 to January 2005.

Seaga entered politics as a member of the appointed Legislative Council, the upper house of the pre-independence legislature in 1959. He made his mark in one of his first speeches as a legislator on the theme of 'The Haves and Have Nots'. In the 1960s and 1970s he served as minister of development and welfare in the government of Alexander Bustamante and as minister of finance under Hugh Shearer. He became leader of the JLP in 1974, after becoming MP for Western Kingston in 1962.

Initially seen as a man of the left, Seaga moved to the right in the 1970s in reaction to the adoption of democratic socialism by the rival People's National Party. In the crucial election campaign of 1980, Seaga proclaimed nationalism his philosophy while simultaneously making it clear that he would align Jamaica with the United States and against the Soviet Union and Cuba.

His electoral victory in October 1980 (the JLP won 51 of the 60 seats in Jamaica's House of Representatives), led to his becoming one of the first foreign heads of government to visit newly elected US president Ronald Reagan early the next year. With Tom Adams of Barbados, Seaga was one of the architects of the Caribbean Basin Initiative sponsored by Reagan. He marked the end of his first year in office by breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba, accusing the Cuban government of giving asylum to Jamaican criminals.

The collapse of the revolutionary regime in Grenada, and the US invasion of that island in October 1983, which Seaga supported, led his rival Michael Manley to publicly criticise Seaga. Seaga called snap elections at the end of 1983, which were boycotted by the opposition. His party thus controlled all seats in parliament.

After 1983, Seaga's popularity slumped, in large part because he was unable to deliver on his early promises of general prosperity. Rioting in 1987 and 1988, and the government's failure to respond adequately to Hurricane Gilbert in 1989, led to his defeat in that year's elections.

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