



Michael Manley and family.

# MICHAEL MANLEY

Prime Minister of Jamaica

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by a Special Correspondent

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Manley is one of the new generation of Caribbean leaders who are not oppressed by the tangled history of their people. He believes in self-reliance and the establishment of a society that should be "economically viable, capable of the full engagement of its human resources, a rising standard of living and an equitable distribution of wealth".

The Africans in Africa and the New World have shared an historical and on-going experience of being colonised, exploited and underdeveloped. And, throughout the span of modern African history they have come together to articulate their common plight and to formulate, collectively, solutions to their problems — from colonialism to racism to underdevelopment.

The development of the philosophy of pan-Africanism on the continent of Africa found its impetus and intellectual strength from Caribbean thinkers like Marcus Garvey, Du Bois and George Padmore. And the emergence of an independent black Africa, proud of being black, was a source of inspiration for the Caribbean.

Michael Manley, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, declared during a State Visit, his first to black Africa, to Zambia in 1973 that: "Anything that hurts the people of Zambia in the struggle in the south hurts the people of Jamaica." He also pledged total material and moral support for the African liberation movements, and offered to send volunteers to "stand side by side with the freedom fighters." Here was the expression of that common identity which spans the Atlantic.

And, typical of the essence that makes the man, this was not just rostrum rhetoric. It represented genuine beliefs and convictions — beliefs which are enriched by practice. Manley has seized every opportunity, from the chambers of the United Nations to the Commonwealth gathering at Ottawa last year, to speak for the liberation struggle. When Smith closed Rhodesia's border with Zambia, Jamaica was among the first to make a financial contribution towards the easing of Zambia's immediate problems. Recently, he sent functionaries of his

ruling Peoples National Party to Africa to study Tanzanian and Zambian political institutions, and to make contacts with the liberation movements.

It is not only Southern Africa that holds his attention, the economic and social condition of the Third World — a world defined by its underdevelopment — has engaged his penetrating mind. His concern with it is inevitable. "Jamaica," he says, "is a microcosm of the Third World condition. We contain every factor which now challenges the political intelligence of mankind."

In his new book, *Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament* (Andre Deutsch, £2.75, paperback 95p.), a scholarly work in its own right, Manley outlines his ideas for the establishment of a society that will give concrete meaning to the Jamaican national motto: "Out of Many, One Peoplee." And that society should be "economically viable, capable of the full engagement of its human resources, a rising standard of living and an equitable distribution of wealth."

The programme he outlines is based upon what he calls "human resource development." This involves huge programmes of education, literacy drives and programmes of vocational training intended to provide the human resources required in the processes of development.

He also outlines strategies needed to develop in Jamaica a more diversified agricultural base, with the objective of raising agricultural productivity, and thereby make the country self-sufficient in food. One of the methods towards this end, which Manley is already implementing, is the mobilisation of scientific resources to explore every possibility of by-product utilisation which will guarantee maximum extraction of value from the crops Jamaica grows.

Manley has the support of his compatriots. The measure of his popularity was his party's overwhelming victory in the 1972 general election over the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) which had ruled Jamaica uninterrupted for ten years.

A remarkable factor of the election

was that it was the first time Manley had led the PNP into the hustings. Before then, it had been led by his father, Norman Manley, who, with Sir Alexander Bustamante, leader of the JLP, had dominated Jamaican politics for more than 30 years. He succeeded his father in 1969, and the old man died shortly afterwards.

Although Manley benefited from his father's great status, it is generally conceded that he was elected leader on his own personal achievements. Long before he made his debut in Parliament in 1967 as member for Central Kingston, he was already well known as a journalist and trade union organiser.

He became Prime Minister when Jamaica, which has a population of about 2 m. and covers an area of 4,243 square miles, was going through a most difficult period with unemployment estimated at 25 per cent. Jamaicans had always emigrated to Britain to escape from difficult conditions at home. But in 1972, Britain introduced a new immigration law, which severely restricted the number of Jamaicans, and other Commonwealth citizens, allowed into the country. To make things even more difficult for the Manley administration that took office only that year, 44 per cent of the country's population was aged under 15, and violent crimes were increasing daily.

Manley is one of the new generation of Caribbean leaders who are not oppressed by the tangled history of their people. He acknowledges that great harm has been done to the economy of Jamaica and the psychology of its people by centuries of foreign domination and exploitation, but he is rather more anxious to get on with the job of planning for the future.

Eighteen months before Manley achieved power, he had written: "Where gross disparities in wealth, massive unemployment and showpiece industries co-exist in an overpopulated island, violence and even revolution must lurk in the wings. Jamaica cannot hope to provide the basis of a decent society unless it substantially restructures its economy." When he assumed power, he

initiated a programme to break down class barriers, which included the introduction of free secondary and university education, and fiscal and economic measures designed to create more employment opportunities and ensure equitable distribution of the national wealth.

He is also trying to reduce dependence on Britain and the United States, whose nationals own most of the industries in Jamaica. He has recognised China and improved relations with Cuba. Generally, Manley has been pursuing a policy of closer economic and political cooperation with other Third World countries, because he believes that is where Jamaica's future lies.

Manley, a father of four, graduated from the London School of Economics in 1950 and briefly worked in London as a freelance journalist for the BBC. In December 1951 he returned to Jamaica to become Associate Editor of the influential weekly journal, *Public Opinion*. By 1953 he had joined the National Workers' Union, organising members in the sugar plantations. In 1959 he organised a national strike which forced the British colonial administration to appoint a high-powered commission of inquiry into the pay and conditions of service in the sugar industry.

Now that fighting spirit and organisational ability is being harnessed to mobilise the entire nation and secure the political will necessary to build a self-reliant and truly independent Jamaica. Internationally, along with other Third World nations, he has pressed for fair prices from developed nations for his country's raw materials. "We do not wish aid from anyone because we believe that we can build a better future for our people through self-reliance supported by fair economic dealings with the rest of the world".

For Manley at the moment, the search is for self-reliance because, in his own words, "we understand that we alone are responsible for the outcome of the freedom which we sought." This should also be part of the African Testament. □

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