

Jamaica's Democratic Socialism; Michael Manley's Model

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by

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Abstract

Democratic Socialism has been widely criticized as being economically and politically unfeasible. This political ideology has experienced mass support for the promises it pledges in its inherent dogma of human welfare over profit maximization. It is often pitted against and likened to Marxism-Leninism, however, advocates of democratic Socialism heavily oppose the authoritarian nature of past systems such as the Soviet command economy during the 20th century. Over the years, socialist revolutions took place across the globe from Cuba to Vietnam to China. Democratic socialist movements erupted in areas such as Tanzania and Jamaica with enigmatic leaders such as Julius Nyerere and Michael Manley. The 1970s and 1980s were eras of large-scale decolonial movements spanning across the Third World as seen in Pan-Africanism and the New International Economic Order (NIEO). Leaders and scholars such as Thomas Sankara, Walter Rodney and Kwame Nkrumah all were powerful advocates for their nations. They tried to use their positions in power to lead their nations into a prosperous future. This thesis concentrates on Michael Manley's approach to democratic socialism as Jamaica's prime minister for three terms (1972-80 and 1989-92). This thesis hones in on Michael Manley's action and its impact on Jamaica's political economy. It explores the domestic and foreign hurdles that were present during his three terms in office. The thesis concludes with postulations on the pivotal roles external and internal factors played on the demise of Manley's regime and loss of public support.

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Introduction

I was unaware of Michael Manley and Jamaica's experience with democratic socialism until early December of last year. When deciding on a thesis topic, I knew I wanted to dive into global issues of impoverishment, unequal wealth distribution, climate change impacts, sustainable development, and more. National economic planning has been an area of interest of mine, as I've studied the various experiences of countries with free-market capitalism, state-centralized communism, radical socialism, welfare capitalism, and democratic socialism. My thesis presents an opportunity to explore my growing thoughts of a post-capitalist world and the existing alternatives. My interest in developing countries' experiences with socialism and going against the grain of the dominant global capitalist order led me to explore the 1960s/70s political climate of nations such as the Republic of Cuba, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Jamaica. Jamaica's prime minister for three uniquely non-consecutive terms, Michael Manley, emerged from my research. He was a charismatic, enigmatic, and complex political leader that launched a democratic socialist regime in Jamaica in his first two terms, and pivoted towards a more neoliberal, free-market based economic structure in his third term.

During his first two terms (1972-80) results were mixed. He implemented a plethora of social welfare programs and reforms in Jamaica's policies that represented the changing tides he hoped to navigate his nation on. This thesis highlights the work produced by past scholars on the causes of Manley's limited success. Domestic factors include his political miscalculations and constraints rooted in Jamaica's class politics. And external factors including capital flight, rising oil prices, and deliberate efforts by the US and the IMF to undermine Jamaica's democratic socialist experiment. He was an academic who published multiple expansive works such as *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*, and *Up The Down Escalator: Development and the*

International Economy—A Jamaican Case Study. They, and many others, were published during and after his career and proliferated his thoughts on liberal democracy, social organization, and the imperial international economic order that operates to hold the Third World in a chokehold even after decolonization.

This thesis serves the purpose of understanding Manley's three terms in office, the internal and external barriers to his policies he faced during his first two terms, and the international impact he had on the emerging Non-Aligned Movement of the period. In the remainder of Chapter 1, I share a brief profile of Manley's political thought and career and explore the changes across his three terms. In Chapter 2, I dive into the internal barrier he faced during his first two terms. Similarly, I explore the external factors that impacted Manley's efforts in implementing democratic socialism in Jamaica during the early 1970s. Chapter 3 sheds light on the international impact Manley had during his time as a leftist political leader. My last chapter holds my conclusions on Manley's efforts.

Throughout the thesis, I provide wide-ranging research into Manley's administration and its impacts on Jamaica's political economy. I examine Manley's overarching vision of egalitarianism, national sovereignty, and economic/human development, alongside his international collaborations within the Third World. I conclude with my thoughts on the key factors that led to the dismantling of Manley's regime even after his unprecedented transformation in his third term. Jamaica's ultimately unsuccessful experience with democratic socialism was the result of its time, an intensity polarizing rules-based international economic order, and ambiguity within Manley and the PNP's leadership.

1. Manley's Profile

Michael Manley is remembered as one of Jamaica's most idealistic, enigmatic, and revolutionary politicians. His father, Norman Manley's People's National Party (PNP), worked alongside Manley to lead Jamaica into achieving true liberal and participatory democracy. His party affirmed their political affiliation with democratic socialism in 1974, shortly after his electoral victory. The 1972 election victory of the PNP was astounding considering the decade-long domination of the opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). People were fed up with unfilled promises by the JLP. They resonated with the campaign of Manley and his party with slogans such as "Time for a Change", "Better Must Come", and "Power for the People."

Manley was the son of two accomplished and influential parents, his father, Norman Manley and mother, Edna Manley, had by far the most impact on the building of his character and intellectual spirit. He was also a cousin of Sir Alexander Bustamante, the Jamaican Labor Party's originator and prominent political figure. He lived in a well-maintained suburban manor in Jamaica where creativity, ambition, and political discourse were not only allowed but encouraged. He was an exemplary student who had a history of standing up for those whose voices were shot down. He had an impressive role model, his father the inceptor of the People's National Party and first prime minister of Jamaica.¹ His stirring background heavily influenced and shaped his politics and the persona he held while in office.

He was a part of the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War 2, in 1943 after briefly studying at the Jamaica College and McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He received his bachelor's degree in Government and Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 1949, under the mentorship of socialist theorist Harold Laski, and had a particular academic interest in Caribbean Development. He worked in journalism before

¹ Communications, P. S. C. (n.d.-a). *Early life*. Retrieved April 28, 2025, from <https://www.michaelmanley.org/about/early-life/#5>

joining the National Workers Union (NWU) in Jamaica and grew heavily involved with the trade unionist movement. He was a part of and led notable worker strikes from the Goldenberg Commission of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry settlement, the Alcan (Aluminum Company of Canada) Strike in 1953, and the 97-day strike at Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation. He was the president of the Caribbean Bauxite, Mineworkers, and Metal Workers Federation until 1974, and was slowly integrating into the political atmosphere of Jamaica.²

His first term in office is remembered fondly as a time of great social progress with initiatives around canceling book bans, lowering the voting age, and tax reforms on luxury items and property. Social welfare programs such as the National Literacy Programme were jump-started by Manley to reach his goal of moving Jamaica past the lingering remnants of colonial institutions and creating systems geared towards the unique needs of the Jamaican population. He made great strides in increasing Jamaica's industrial sovereignty by imposing a bauxite levy on foreign mining of bauxite to increase the government's earnings from this industry. Manley's experience as trade unionist, and political activist had been confronted with the class and race divisions that presided over Jamaica's economy.

His opposition to these prevailing polarizing measures empowered disenfranchised, low-income populations to side with his policies and support his views for transformation. However, with his declaration of democratic socialism and alliance with Third World revolutionaries from Cuba and Tanzania, came violent and forceful opposition from right-wing Western supporters in the JLP and the wealthy class of Jamaica. The 1976 election has been described as a violent match between socialism and capitalism, with Manley coming out on top.³

² Becker, M. (1997, January). Michael Manley - A profile Caricom Week . National Library of Jamaica. https://nlj.gov.jm/BN/Manley_Michael/bn_manley_mn_045.pdf

³ Kerr, L. (n.d.). *Jamaican Politics, Reggae and Rastafarianism in the 1970's*. The Dread Library. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://www.uvm.edu/~debate/dreadlibrary/kerr.html>

Understanding the period after this election to the 1980s defeat of Manley and the PNP is crucial to grasping the transformations Manley's administration went through and the challenges they faced with continuing to align with their agenda of democratic socialism. His reentry to office in 1989 is also a fascinating point in Jamaican history, especially considering the differences in Manley's approach to the public and Western institutions. This paper will explore the various terms of his time in office to aid in understanding what happened to Manley's aspirations of a different future for Jamaica, and what forces were at play. There have been numerous published works investigating this puzzle, with various entry points from Manley's relationship with socialist countries, and Western nations, and his economic mismanagement, being put on the spot as the cause of his downfall. He has published works dedicated to evaluating his country's role in the world periphery alongside his Third World counterparts, and he grappled with the struggles of developing worlds in our international political economy. One country going against the grain in the periphery does little to tear the comforting fabric enveloping the core. I wonder what the future holds for our current global shift of multilateralism and more of the periphery fighting against this prescribed alignment for the core.

1. First Term

Manley's first term in office was from 1972-1976, where he held the role of Jamaica's fourth Prime Minister. From there he embarked on a political journey to launch the transformative changes he believed needed to be realized for Jamaica to truly be an independent nation. This period has been characterized as his nationalist period of building Jamaican self-confidence, breaking racial divisions through music and Rastafarianism, and integrating leftist trade unionism with his policies. He would eventually lead the PNP in his father's stead and took on his mantle of trying to advance Jamaica to real sovereignty based on his definitions

of social organization and beliefs on reaching true independence as a post-colonial nation. His policies aligned with his ideals of egalitarianism and liberal participatory democracy. His key target was mobilizing the redistribution of wealth in Jamaica, which had been documented as possessing one of the world's highest levels of income inequality at that time. He once expressed that "each person, like each nation, is or should be treated as sovereign. Superior talent, and superior power, are mere assets to be used with discrimination."⁴

The plans for democratic socialism under Manley's administration were announced in 1974 to the Jamaican Parliament and a rally of 75,000 people in central Kingston. Michael Kaufman explains the definition put forth by the PNP.

"A political and economic theory under which the means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned and/or controlled by the people. It is a system in which political power is used to ensure that exploitation is abolished, that the opportunities of society are equally available to all, and that the wealth of the community is fairly distributed. A process rather than a rigid dogma, its application must depend on the particular conditions obtained from time to time in each country. It emphasizes cooperation rather than competition; and service rather than self-interest as the basic motive forces for personal, group, and communal action. Its ultimate objective is the building of a classless Society by removing the element of entrenched economic privilege which is the basis of class divisions. As distinct from scientific socialism, its method is based on the alliance of classes around clear objectives. It rejects capitalism as the system upon which to base the future of Jamaica. This system involves the exploitation of people and obliges individuals to pursue private gain at the expense of their fellow citizens without regard to any other interest. Jamaica will flourish best under a mixed economy in which there is a clear and honorable role for responsible private businesses working in partnership with the public sector of the economy." (P.78).⁵

Working-class rights were at the forefront of Manley's initial reforms and remained integral to his future policies and interactions in public. In 1974, a *National Minimum Wage* law was passed to empower the workforce and ensure their wages were representative of their labor. Informed by his connections with trade unionists, Manley set out to create a Workers Bank, a centralized financial entity to enable economic empowerment to the working class and remove the fear of prejudice and discrimination often faced by low-income populations in banking. He

⁴ *The most honourable Michael Manley (1924-1997)*. (1979, February). The National Library of Jamaica. <https://nli.gov.jm/project/rt-hon-michael-manley-1924-1997/>

⁵ Kaufman, M. (1985). *Jamaica under Manley: Dilemmas of socialism and democracy*. London : Zed Books ; Toronto : Between the Lines.

initiated an adult literacy program through the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) and passed legislation around increasing paid maternity leave.⁶ He subsequently established the National Housing Trust, to develop affordable housing projects and just loaning practices. The PNP set out to repeal discriminatory laws that continued to affirm colonial legacies based on racial plantation slavery. The *Masters and Servants* law was directly related to the power dynamics established during plantation slavery. Manley repealed this law and replaced it with the Termination of Employment Act in 1974, which gave workers more agency in employee-employer relationships. A critical reform was found in his changing of the *Essential Services Act* to the *Labor Relations and Industrial Disputes Act (LRIDA)* which stopped the persecution of trade unions in essential services and pushed for effective conflict-resolution methods between essential workers and their employers.⁷

His appreciation for class struggles translated into his ideologies of an egalitarian society. His novel, The Politics of Change, voiced his thoughts on ‘creating a society where everyone feels instinctively unhesitatingly and unreservedly that his or her essential worth is recognized, and that their government aligns with that principle.’⁸ An individual’s economic ranking should not translate into social rankings, as often demonstrated by race and character being interchangeably employed to create stigmas and biases against people. Histories of racial oppression have entrenched nations like Jamaica into colorist mentalities that foster divisions and the forming of opposing nationalist groups. Manley believed he could tackle these issues through his political action, however, he was heavily criticized for valuing these ideals while Jamaica’s economy suffered. His experience with the Sugar Workers Co-operative Council (SWCC) has

⁶ Meeks, B. (2017). *Michael Manley’s vision*. Jacobin.

<https://jacobin.com/2017/05/michael-manley-jamaica-non-aligned-movement-imf-austerity-imperialism>

⁷ Bogues, A. (2002). Michael Manley, Equality and the Jamaican Labour Movement. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 48(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2002.11671880>

⁸ Manley, M. (1990). *The Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament*.

been recorded as being an attempt to shift ownership of the means of production to the workers, however, it ultimately failed due to a lack of international competitiveness, according to Manley. This experience led him to cultivate new initiatives around increasing democracy in the workplace, such as employee share-owning schemes (ESOP). Manley's outright condemnation of Jamaica's wealth class aided in spurring discontent for his regime towards the end of his second term. In later chapters, we see how the capital flight from Jamaica's business class derailed Manley's plans for building up domestic capital to finance the human development goals he had. His privileged background plays a key role in his view of class division in Jamaica, and the methods he employed in trying to tackle the wealthy disparities within the nation that ultimately led to further societal tensions.

Manley's administration's alignment with socialism was the product of his experiences with capitalist workplaces inherently opposed to the democratic rights of workers. He found that capitalism was completely antithetical to the values of an egalitarian society, especially when operating in a post-colonial context. His notions of socialism differed from the Marxist-Leninist models of state power. He explained that democratic socialism represents the preservation of free political institutions, pledged to the preservation of the freedom of the individual, and was for the planned economic progress/development of Jamaica.⁹ He heavily adhered to his principles on the right of the worker to be recognized as a full and equal partner in the transaction of employment. He remained cognizant of the role class, race, gender, and other identity markers played in varying levels of discrimination faced in the workplace. Despite his efforts to promote this iteration of democratic socialism, his efforts were undermined by the looming geopolitical attitudes toward anything remotely related to socialism due to the influence of the Cold War. He

⁹ Bogues, A. (2002). Michael Manley, Equality and the Jamaican Labour Movement. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 48(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2002.11671880>

faced international backlash from Western powers and domestic public outcry from Jamaica's business class that alluded to the upcoming incessant defamation from the JLP leading to a violent election in 1976.¹⁰

The start of this disillusionment with the business class of Jamaica can be traced from multiple avenues. The series of social welfare reforms initiated by his administration did stir discontent within the middle class who felt neglected during this period. Manley's path toward defining Jamaica's democratic socialism found himself implementing social safety nets similar to the Scandinavian social democracy capitalist models. He launched a skill training program, free secondary and university education, food subsidies, rent controls, and a National Youth Service.¹¹ He instituted agrarian reform through the Project Land Lease, which enabled the creation of large-scale agricultural cooperatives. He launched tax reforms on land value tax and a controversial 7.5 percent Bauxite levy, under the new International Bauxite Association, to increase government revenue and offset the costs of increasingly expensive imported oil, which attracted the attention of wary U.S. officials. He was confronting the unfortunate reality of land ownership in Jamaica, 10 percent of the population owned 64 percent of the land, and 20 percent of society received 61 percent of the national income.

Manley's government nationalized all foreign-owned utilities, commodity production facilities, hotels/tourism instruments, and other businesses. These changes inspired the fear that led to the capital flight of the business class and Chinese migrants, expanding antagonism in the rich/white populations, and diminishing returns from foreign investment.¹² It was shortly after

¹⁰ Communications, P. S. C. (n.d.). *Political leader*. The Michael Manley Foundation. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://www.michaelmanley.org/about/political-career/#5>

¹¹ Benn, D. M. (2002). Michael Manley charismatic leadership and ideological pragmatism. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 48(1), 5–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2002.11671875>

¹² *Island of the Commonwealth Caribbean*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2025, from https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/Islandspercent20ofpercent20thepercent20Commonwealthpercent20Caribbeanpercent20Study_2.pdf

the accumulation of these issues that Manley was forced to call a state of emergency and a general election in 1976. PNP won but that was only the beginning of what can be characterized as the downfall of the old Manleyism, and rise to the new.

2. Second Term

The PNP's second term in power with Manley leading the stead was short and directly connected to their defeat in the 1980 election to Western favorite Edward Seaga and the JLP. Jamaica, like many developing countries at this time, was facing an exponentially rising debt burden. The funding for the previously mentioned welfare reforms primarily originated from fiscal expenditure, which led to a growing deficit. With diminished returns from foreign investment, Jamaica was drowning in a balance of payments deficit.¹³ Manley turned to the International Monetary Fund in December 1976 to combat the economic crisis his country was under. This failure was due in part to his inability to satisfy the various classes and demographics in Jamaica. His revolutionary attitude was not going to attract the wealthy class which would be pivotal to building up domestic capital to fund the various reforms he had in place. It's a slippery slope that Manley did not handle well, according to his critics. However, Manley would change his tune in his last term in office but was still unable to move past the damage done to his administration's credibility.

The reality prevailed that Jamaica's deficit increased from J\$66.8 million in 1972-1973 to J\$278.2 million in 1975-1976. Important context to note here is that Jamaica was an exporter of low-valued cash crops such as sugar, coffee, and cocoa, they were an oil importer, who was hit hard when the OPEC oil embargo started in the 1970s causing prices to skyrocket. This crisis combined with the U.S. The Federal Reserve's raising of interest rates had the Jamaican

¹³ Bernal, R. L. (1984). The IMF and class struggle in Jamaica, 1977-1980. *Latin American Perspectives*, 11(3), 53–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x8401100304>

government allocating 40 percent of its revenue to debt repayments.¹⁴ For Manley to accept an IMF loan, he would have to accept their Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) for Jamaica. It included devaluing the Jamaican currency, wage freezes, and more austerity measures. His party rejected the recommendations and came up with the Emergency Production Plan of 1977 to implement their austerity measures. This plan focused on agriculture development, devaluation of the Jamaican dollar, and self-reliance. Manley's relationship with the IMF grew cordial as IMF officials continued to offer more loans through agreements such as the two-year Standby Agreement (1977), and Extended Fund Facility (1978). The consequences of these agreements proliferated Jamaican society. Consumer taxes rose, currency devaluation continued, privatization and the suspension of public sector employment increased, and wages froze. Manley was proposing alternative paths to economic recovery apart from the IMF's inflation spurring plans. However, the 1980 election saw the end of his second term, and the start of Edward Seaga's JLP administration with close ties to the U.S. and their international financial institutions.¹⁵

3. Third Term

The Jamaica of 1989 was a new place in the context of the international community when Manley was sworn in for his third term. His public address at his swearing-in ceremony was littered with goals of continuing the past administration's cordial relationship with the U.S. and other Western powers. He spoke of expanding relations with Canada, European nations, and international organizations such as the World Bank for support. He commended the work of his predecessors and affirmed continuing efforts from the JLP and PNP in fighting organized crime,

¹⁴ *Jamaica - Debt justice*. (2013, March 7). Debt Justice - International Debt Charity. <https://debtjustice.org.uk/countries/jamaica>

¹⁵ *Island of the Commonwealth Caribbean*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2025, from https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/Islandspercent20ofpercent20thepercent20Commonwealthpercent20Caribbeanpercent20Study_2.pdf

and drug trafficking that terrorize the country.¹⁶ It's unsurprising for a denounced leader to hold a gracious and benevolent stance while assuming office years after his crushing defeat. Manley reportedly abandoned his alignment with prioritizing the needs of low-income populations and bridging Jamaican national identity with ancestral African identities, which he advocated for originally with his support of Rastafarianism. He donned western style business suits instead of his usual Jamaican Kariba suits that he popularized during his initial political terms. Edward Seaga was the first to denounce the usage of the Kariba and Manley continued with this change during his last term in office.

This directly contrasted the stances he pushed forward in his novel *The Politics of Change*, where he explains the concessions one takes once they accept a form of dress not suited to your physical environment or culture. He calls it “a confession of a paralysis of judgement,” when one dresses in direct contrast to their climate to satisfy a socially constructed norm.¹⁷ He was dubbed the ‘new’ Manley who sought to ‘repair’ the damage he had done to Jamaica’s economy and its U.S. relations. He cut ties with the Marxists Workers Party of Jamaica, but still maintained the PNP’s leftist orientation and described the new policies as representing their growth in diplomacy and compromise.¹⁸ His administration separated themselves from Manley’s previous close ties with Cuba and the polarizing class divisions that were spurred on by his political rhetoric in his previous terms.

He set up a National Planning Council to aid in this endeavor, but he didn’t have much scope to initiate change as he inherited the SAP that the Seaga administration left. He continued

¹⁶ *New PM sets a mandate for the third term*. (1989, February 14). Jamaica Gleaner. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/esponsored/20230217/new-pm-sets-mandate-third-term>

¹⁷ Manley, M. (1990). (P.60). *The Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament*.

¹⁸ Payne, A. (1992b). The “New” Manley and the new political economy of Jamaica. *Third World Quarterly*, 13(3), 463–474. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3992196>

down the path of neoliberal government deregulation in the private sector to boost productivity.¹⁹ Jamaicans' living standards were deteriorating exponentially as inflation rose and people fled to the informal economy. Jamaica's economy was at the whims of the IMF's tests, when the deficit was up to 15 percent of its GDP, another set of increased taxation, currency devaluation, inflation, and rising interest rates. The Five Year Development Plan encapsulates the shift Manley and the PNP were heading towards in this term. It emphasized building strong partnerships with the private business sector, nongovernmental organizations, and industrial agriculture, increasing domestic savings, and limiting external borrowing. It aligned with the mixed economy and social welfare market-oriented economic development. Manley and the IMF were at odds on the realization of this plan as Manley openly opposed further devaluation of the Jamaican dollar. This led to further disruptions in the delicate fabric of an already tumultuous relationship. However, Manley was steadfast in his embrace of empowering the private sector to spur the economic production he claimed was greatly lacking during his previous terms in office.

This period included the emergence of previously unknown PNP politicians and economic planners who had a more pronounced role in Manley's administration. PJ Patterson, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development, Planning, and Production, played a prominent role in Manley's third term, especially in regards to his deteriorating health conditions that removed him from the forefront at times. Patterson set out to grow the private sector through widespread deregulation in price setting of fuel prices, commercial banking, and promoted privatisation of state assets to increase foreign capital. Manley reinforced these changes as he acknowledged that,

¹⁹ Payne, A. (1992). The 'new' Manley and the new political economy of Jamaica. *Third World Quarterly*, 13(3), 463–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599208420290>

“The state is not ideally suited to create additional production through direct involvement in productive activity” and that the “private sector ranging from the smallest farmer, hairdresser, shopkeeper and small manufacturer is the only means to dynamic increases in the production of goods and services.’ The government had therefore decided that ‘once and for all it must put an end to the stop-go policies which have got us nowhere’ and make a radical change of economic direction.”²⁰

He implemented a J\$100 million social support program to complement his commitment to the welfare of his people. However, similar to the 1970s, Jamaica was hit with the aftermath of the Gulf War on oil prices. The IMF held itself as the only source of support and led Jamaica’s economy down a path of further taxation, and decreased subsidies in low-income communities. At that point support for the PNP and Manley took a swan dive in numbers. Then came a radical action taken by Manley, his party eliminated all previous restrictions on taking money in and out of Jamaica. As Anthony Payne describes,

“Jamaicans could legally hold foreign exchange accounts in the island, while hoteliers and exporters were no longer required to deposit foreign exchange earnings in special accounts to which the government had access. The government would purchase its foreign exchange like any other buyer, rather than at special rates for special quantities as had been the system. As Seaga recognised in his reaction, the decision was risky in the extreme, ‘the last card of desperate men’, as he pejoratively put it. The result was a further depreciation of the currency. Although the amount of hard currency being bought by the commercial banks increased substantially in the weeks following the abolition of controls, little of this was made available to those seeking foreign exchange. The banks explained that priority was being given to the payment of arrears accumulated by Jamaican businesses...in the face of inflation which was officially put at 56% for the year ending on 31 August 1991.”²¹

This action, alongside political scandals within the PNP and Patterson, led to the dissemination of an unfavorable attitude towards Manley. His worsening health conditions ultimately paved the way for his resignation and the succession of Patterson in office. Manley’s efforts have been marked down in history alongside his Third World revolutionary counterparts such as Fidel Castro and Julius Nyerere, as the start of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) of the 1970s. NIEO refers to the motions laid out by developing countries in direct contrast to the Western hegemonic Bretton Woods system that favors the domestic economic

²⁰ Payne, A. (1992b). The “New” Manley and the new political economy of Jamaica. *Third World Quarterly*, 13(3), 463–474. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3992196>

²¹ Same as above

growth of developed nations. It targeted the exploitative nature of external foreign debt, free trade system, multinational corporations, and He explained the limits in his leadership's ability to, "aid in uniting third world countries into a sort of trade union of the poor of the world... because first world countries had their agenda as technology led to increasing globalization of the world economy."²²

Manley was a part of movements such as the Non-Aligned Movement, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Socialists International, the alliance of African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, and the presently operating G77. He fought against the unequal terms of trade, ("low end of the value-added scale"), often found in our international trade system. He was a staunch supporter of the prioritization of social welfare which inspired his connections with Nordic economies. He, also, stood strong in support of Cuba and the fight against apartheid in South Africa, which put Jamaica on the U.S./CIA purview. He advocated for more South-South cooperation and tried implementing related programs in Jamaica. The debt crisis mobilized the success of neocolonial U.S. hegemonic neoliberalism over the NIEO, and it was evident in Manley's interactions with the IMF to troubleshoot Jamaica's burgeoning debt burden.²³ Right before his defeat in 1980, Manley was interviewed by Altaf Gauhar in the Third World Quarterly. His ambitions for transformative change were embedded in his words, and he builds on the ideological framework he operates on when discussing the role developed countries play in opposing NIEO. He states,

" But the developed countries begin with the reality of the enormous economic presence expressed in the powerful private sectors, multinational corporations, and the huge finance structure that has such an important role in the way their economies work. All of these corporations within a developed country and all of these economic institutions begin, of necessity, with an enormous vested interest in the status quo. And they, I think, regard an international dialogue with obvious hostility. They are there to guard as jealously as they can the system of which they are the

²² Communications, P. S. C. (n.d.). *Political leader*. The Michael Manley Foundation. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://www.michaelmanley.org/about/political-career/#5>

²³ Getachew, A. (2019, February 5). *When Jamaica led the postcolonial fight against exploitation*. Boston Review. <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/when-jamaica-led-fight-against-exploitation/>

expression, so that within the political systems of the developed countries you start with this economic reality that is opposed to change.”²⁴

He grappled with reaching true sovereign economic progress and development that he desired for Jamaica while operating within an international system designed for them to remain at the short end of the stick. He pushed for increased Third-World cooperation to combat the domineering hegemonic Western influence in post-colonial economies. He criticized the standardized austerity policies favored by the IMF and World Bank as being inconsiderate to the limited domestic infrastructure of post-colonial states to accommodate rampant privatization and opening up to global markets. His transformation in his third term presents a unique scenario as he was once a steadfast NIEO Third World champion that pivoted to catering towards neoliberal privatisation-bound development practices. Despite this switch, Jamaica’s economy and people suffered and his visions of egalitarian liberal democracy were not realized. .

His legacies are riddled with ridicule, condemnation, as well as reverence, and veneration. The start of his political career was in an era of powerful time of resistance against the neocolonial powers that remain today. His time in power grappled with the realities of external and internal opposition to change and that paved his path towards achieving egalitarianism.

4. Methodology

The primary method is content analysis (text/videos/films (Life and Debt 2001), (primary source), speeches, and interviews he's given (North/South Dialogue), Manley’s published work (“The Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament,” “Global Challenge: From Crisis to Cooperation; Breaking the North-South Stalemate”, a product of the Socialist International Committee on Economic Policy, “Up The Down Escalator: Development and the International

²⁴ Manley, M. (1979). North-South Dialogue. *Third World Quarterly*, 1(4).
<https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/3990392>

Economy – A Jamaican Case Study”, “Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery.” I conducted an interview with Professor David Kennett of Vassar College’s Economics department, who provides a firsthand account of Manley’s visit to Vassar and his impressions of him and his iteration of democratic socialism.

Chapter Two: Internal Barriers

Karl Marx's dialectical materialism perceives the world as an ever-changing entity whose historical/societal changes must be viewed in the context of the material (economic/political) conditions of life. Everything that happens can only be understood with a comprehension of the context and setting. Marxist historical materialism complements this concept by applying dialectical materialism to history. Marxism looks at the entirety of a society; the economic conditions such as production, consumption, and wealth distribution, the political climate, and class conflicts. Manley, under the mentorship of the esteemed British political scientist, democratic socialist Harold Laski, adhered to these concepts as he examined his iteration of Democratic Socialism in "Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery," placing his country in the context of a Third World nation in dependent capitalism. In Laski's most recognizable work *Liberty in the Modern State*, (1930), he stated "Any society, in fact, the fruits of whose economic operations are unequally distributed will be compelled to deny freedom as the law of its being."²⁵ His views on workers rights and the government's duty in improving living standards for all bleed through all of Manley's efforts in lifting the quality of life for low-income, disenfranchised populations in Jamaica. However, with these ideals came the categorization with and the negative connotations of Marxist socialism and namely Marxism–Leninism communism.

The key distinction lies in governance; Laski and Manley sermonized on the duty of a government to govern not only for the people but with the people. Laski believed in the potential for the marriage of Socialism and democracy to ensure the accurate realization of each concept.²⁶ Manley was a staunch supporter of the democratization of society and asserted that free

²⁵ Laski, H. J. (1930). *Liberty in the modern state*.

²⁶ *View of Harold Laski's socialism*. (n.d.). Merlin Press. Retrieved April 28, 2025, from <https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5660/2558>

enterprise capitalist-driven electoral democracy is not enough and that democracy must be consciously built in a nation's institutions. In *Democratic Socialism in Dependent Capitalism: An Analysis of the Manley Government in Jamaica* (1983), Evelyne and John Stephens focus on the internal obstacles Manley faced in implementing a lasting democratic socialist government in Jamaica. The expansive class conflicts between impoverished populations and the wealthy class, capital flight from the business class and foreign investors, and limited government revenue that was needed to compensate for the social welfare reforms of the PNP. Examining these barriers consists of exploring the economic and political conditions of Jamaica before Manley's administration to understand the context in which his reforms operated. This chapter is dedicated to examining the repercussions of these barriers on Manley's model of democratic socialism.

1. Background

Jamaica is a Caribbean island nation neighbored by Haiti and Cuba was first colonized by Spain in the 16th century and underwent the subsequent genocidal decimation of the Indigenous (Taíno Arawak) population as its colonized counterparts endured during the imperial era. Sugar cane and other cash crop plantations were created and maintained through African slave labor, which intensified under British colonial rule in the late 17th century. With the abolishment of the slave trade in 1834, the wage-laborer population grew alongside indentured workers from China, India, and Middle-Eastern migrants.²⁷ The creation of these post-slave plantations was not in favor of the rising demand for self-determination and separation from the British colonial system. This history of oppression via landlords and underpaid workers proliferated throughout Jamaica's struggle for equality and influenced its prominent trade unionist movement. The colonial economic structure was conceptualized in the context of dependence as Manley

²⁷ *Jamaican Embassy*. (n.d.). C. Paul Earle. Retrieved March 21, 2025, from https://www.embassyofjamaica.org/about_jamaica/history.htm

describes in his books *The Politics of Change*, and *Up the Down Escalator*. He explains how the psychology of dependence has been ingrained in colonized nations, and his aspirations for Jamaica can only be attained after a complete reshaping of this economic pattern. Just by looking at the reforms he implemented, we can follow his Marxist scholarly background influencing his work as a leader dedicated to leading their country into a prosperous and equitable future.

Through a series of worker-led uprisings such as the *1865 Morant Bay Rebellion*, Jamaica's independence was realized in 1962. However, colonial legacies of economic dependence and the reality of a Western-dominated international order remained present. Manley explained in the 2001 documentary *Life and Debt* by Stephanie Black, that decolonized nations faced the insurmountable task of building their nations without the economic strength needed to finance that restructuration. They didn't benefit from decades of exploitation and this perennial imperial power that the present rich 'developed' nations represent.

Caribbean Dependency Theory (CDT) explains the extractive nature of colonialism and its lasting legacy on post-colonial states. It was first discussed in the 1960s at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. It mobilized new ways of thinking about development apart from the domineering neoliberal free trade dogma. CDT explores the complexities of manufacturing economic dependence via mediums such as foreign aid, guaranteed markets, foreign direct investment, etc. The plantation economy to "industrialization by invitation" path inevitably led to the building of a consensus on our present hierarchical-based international economic system.²⁸ When a nation's citizens are consuming more foreign goods than domestic production, because the majority of what is being produced is not high-valued goods, there lies a discrepancy. Jamaica is extremely dependent on imported food, fuel, and institutions. Manley describes the

²⁸ Weedmark, V. (n.d.). Caribbean Dependency Theory and the Case of Jamaican Development. *Glendon Journal of International Studies*.
<https://doi.org/https://gjis.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/gjis/article/download/36398/33116/40460>

education system as a direct replication of their European colonizers. This was one of many reproductions that remained in the newly independent Jamaica that Manley set out to dismantle to stay true to his agenda of long-term progressive development. In *Politics of Change* Manley, dictates eight characteristics he found within Jamaica's post-colonial society. Export-import orientation, Trader Mentality, Lack of Confidence (Dependency on Foreign Forces, Trade, Tourism), Absence of Linkages, Poverty and Value Added, Foreign Capital and Foreign technology, Irrelevant Education, and most importantly the Gap between Rich and Poor. These eight elements speak to this theme of creating a national identity that moves away from colonial legacies and puts the growth of the Jamaican people and nation at the forefront. All of these traits affected Manley's plans for a democratic socialist Jamaica. He traced the connections between primary producing nations as seen in the developing world and the manufacturing, high-value producing countries in the developed sphere. Jamaica's raw sugar industry remains a key example of Manley's as the root of this cycle of growing unemployment, income inequality, and unsustained growth. He was operating within this framework as the newly elected prime minister in 1972. Although interconnected, two elements popularly regarded as the causes of Manley's downfall are the power imbalance within classes, and the limited economic strength of domestic manufacturing industries. These issues must be understood from the context of the battling political parties within Jamaica that shaped the trajectory of Manley's aims for a just and egalitarian society.

2. People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP)

Michael Kaufman expands on the shortcomings of the PNP in reining in the political opposition and vilification of Michael Manley during this period of radical change. The PNP and JLP have been at odds since their inception and Jamaica's independence with JLP's Alexander

Bustamante as its first prime minister. The JLP served to reaffirm a capitalist economic structuring of Jamaica's political economy, favoring the plantocracy and landowners. The PNP, especially under the leadership of Michael's father, Norman Manley, advocated for individual rights through a socialist lens, favoring the workers and impoverished populations. Fitzroy Ambursley explained the emergence of the PNP at a time of great civil unrest in the early 1930s. The PNP began as a bourgeoisie, capitalist organization that favored the needs of Jamaica's growing business class of merchants, smallholder farmers, and entrepreneurs.

Norman Manley aspired to support the growth of the rising capitalist class and operated with the perception of individual economic growth providing fuel for Jamaica's development. The PNP held ties with the British Labor Party and the Fabian Socialist Society, which influenced their politics over time. JLP's Bustamante became interconnected with the 'Twenty-One Families' of Jamaica's ruling oligarchy. The self-proclaimed trade unionist party became a staunch supporter of Western imperialist interests and multinational corporations. They opposed any form of nationalizing Jamaican production industries and actively promoted the benefits of cheap labor and operation costs to transnational companies. Ambursley notes the JLP's part in fostering the surge of North American aluminum monopolies in Jamaica during the 1950s and Cold War era. Years of back-and-forth political turmoil came to a head when Jamaica's fight for independence was achieved and the subsequent dependent development occurred.

The PNP and JLP at the time maintained a positive perception of foreign capital, however, both parties were confronted with the reality of growing social and income inequality within the masses. Ambursley states,

“Between 1962 and 1972 unemployment increased from 13 percent to 24 percent, while the share of the poorest 40 percent of the population in personal earned income declined from 7.2 percent to 5.8 percent in the last 10 years.”²⁹

Social inequality within marginalized groups such as the Chinese community and the Black Power demonstrations and Rodney Riots, after the banning of decolonial theorist Dr. Walter Rodney, rose as the JLP proceeded to ban all Black Power literature and leftist theory in educational institutions. The PNP quickly emerged as the liberal and socially conscious political party headed by enigmatic leader Michael Manley in 1972. They walked alongside protestors and represented direct opposition to the conservative JLP.

Ambursley criticizes Manley’s ‘overly populist appeal’ to the masses as depicted in his involvement in the Rastafari movement, reggae popularity, and the wielding of ‘the Rod of Correction’ he received from his time in Ethiopia. He addressed his people with such aura, charisma, and eloquence he has gone down in history as a ‘Joshua’ who sought to lift his people out of poverty. However, given the historical context of his political party and his experience as a trade unionist, scholars like Ambursley degraded his efforts as populist grandeur. The JLP oligarchy celebrated these critiques and set off on an anti-Manley campaign labeling his democratic socialist policies as state-centralized communism hubris citing Manley’s friendship with Cuba’s Fidel Castro as their frame of reference. Domestic factories owned by the wealthy class were shut down and were sending their capital abroad. Publications such as *The Daily Gleaner* produced slanderous media against the PNP to aid in dismantling support for Manley’s administration. Public unrest manifested itself into violence and outrage against Manley. This brutality was supported through the terror campaign led by the JLP and equipped with their artillery. Evelyne and John Stephens states,

²⁹ Ambursley, F. (n.d.). Fitzroy Ambursley, Jamaica: The demise of “democratic socialism”, NLR I/128, july–august 1981. *New Left Review*, I(128), 76–87.

“The increasingly obvious weakness of the government gave opposition leader Seaga the chance to press ahead with his campaign of delegitimization. With the heavy-handed support of the Gleaner and a receptive American press, he relentlessly hammered on the accusations of election fraud, victimization, political manipulation of the security forces, threats to press freedom, mismanagement, Communist infiltration, and Cuban subversion, in speeches at home as well as abroad. Domestic and foreign capitalists, large sectors of the middle class, and significant numbers of church leaders became convinced that the government was not only incompetent but also desperate to hold on to power by whatever means. The fight against the government through any kind of propaganda, civil disobedience, outright sabotage, or even violence was legitimized as a fight for the preservation of democracy.” (P.382).³⁰

Manley did not stray away from the PNP’s mutualism with the capitalist class and foreign capital, he drew distinctions between the present exploitative nature of these relationships and what could occur with proper regulations. Manley’s administration was met with extreme backlash and attacks from the JLP and their supporters that significantly damaged their reputation and goals for transformative change. That element alongside the pushback from the Jamaican wealth class sustained the toppling of the PNP and Manley’s democratic socialism.

3. Jamaican Capitalists Against Manley

Winston James described the growing skewing of income distribution as the top 10 percent of income recipients held 43.5 percent total income in 1958, and this figure rose to 49.3 percent in the early 1970s. Absolute poverty rose as real wages decreased and the minimum wage remained stagnant.³¹ Economic reforms Manley implemented in his cabinet such as increasing wealth taxes, and the Minimum Wage Law (no less than \$25 per hour), mobilized growing discontent within the private sector. However, through tax incentives such as the Kingston Export Free Zone, which led to significant increases in domestic manufacturing and employment, the PNP remained in the good graces of the capitalist class for a time. The Capital Development Fund, and bauxite levy are notably remembered as unprecedented state support of private industries through subsidizing and expenditures. James attributes the PNP’s political

³⁰ STEPHENS, E., & STEPHENS, J. (1983). DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN DEPENDENT CAPITALISM - AN ANALYSIS OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA. *Politics & Society*, 12(3), 373–411.

³¹ James, W. (1983). The decline and fall of Michael Manley: Jamaica 1972-1980. *Capital & Class*, 7(1), 143–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981688301900107>

rhetoric and Manley's ties with alternative progressive international regimes as 'scaring' the bourgeois into aligning with Edward Seaga's calls for neoliberal open-door policies. The fear of state centralization and the nationalization of enterprises, as seen in reforms done in education and the establishment of the International Bauxite Association, fueled this doubt in the promises of a welfare capitalist democratic socialism. It's important to be mindful of the setting, the Cold War period encapsulated the entirety of "anti-communist" hysteria, and the vilification of any Third World nation considered communist was absorbed into the Jamaican political discourse. The top 10 percent were concerned with Manley's relationship with the low-income working class.

Their respect and adoration for Manley's calls for transformative international political and economic change were seen as the cause of the mobilization of impoverished populations in occupying large estates within Jamaica. The wealthy areas in downtown Kingston and Beverly Hills were being robbed in a literal and figurative sense with increased crime being directly associated with the leftist rhetoric of the government. Manley condemned the actions of the rich in maintaining the cycle of poverty and for not redistributing their wealth into the country. He publicly condemned their actions after he visited Cuba in 1975. He stated at a by-election rally that "Jamaica had no room for millionaires. For anyone who wants to become a millionaire, we have five flights a day to Miami." The wealthy did not hesitate to take him up on his offer taking their millions (\$330 million estimated) with them. Winston A. Van Horne explains the capital flight that occurred due to this loss of confidence in the Jamaican government,

"By 1980, approximately 90 percent of Chinese Jamaicans had left the island. In their flight, they took tens of millions of dollars, even though the government reduced to US\$50 the amount individuals could take out of the country without official authorization. All sorts of ruses were devised to circumvent the limit, and these were highly

successful. Thousands of black Jamaicans did likewise. With the dollars that evaded customs officials, Jamaica also lost brain power.”³²

The ideological fear of socialism combined with the persistent focus on advancing the lower-income classes of Jamaica deterred the business classes' support for the PNP and Manley. Import restrictions and the rising anti-capitalist rhetoric that came out of the office did not garner the collective support Manley needed. This disillusionment remained and produced devastating consequences for the Jamaican economy and its people. The closing of factories, limits placed on production, and the rise in violence led to an extremely poor quality of life with rising malnutrition, unemployment, and overall scarcity. Manley's turn to the IMF did not produce the desired results and went against all he stood for, especially considering his public statements to the IMF of 'we are not for sale.' Yet, Jamaica was in a state of emergency and the public needed a change to bring back stability. The JLP's Edward Seaga administration promised just that and delivered, at least according to Manley's critics. There is more to this story on what happened to Manley's time in office and the aspirations he held for a new Jamaica. External factors such as Western opposition, multinational corporations, and global economic crisis all play a role in the tragic play of Manley's democratic socialism demise.

³² Van Horne, W. A. (1981). Jamaica: Why Manley lost. *The World Today*, 37(11), 428–433.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/40395241>

Chapter Three: External Barriers

Jamaica lies close to the center of the Caribbean Sea explaining its labeling as a Caribbean island nation. Its closest neighbors are Haiti, and Cuba with the dominant world power the United States nearby. Dependent capitalism was the norm in the 1960s/70s as large-scale decolonization had occurred and Third World nations were building their countries' economies. The path to development had been paved by the neoliberal champions of the West. Shifts away from heavy-handed Keynesian state centralization and control over the economy were at their height in the 1970s while stagflation spurred discontent. International financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF preached the economic benefits of making yourself more attractive to international markets. They encouraged post-colonial states to produce low-valued goods to encourage investment in foreign capital in their countries. Only through external finances can a developing country grow.

Michael Manley and the PNP fought against this one-size-fits-all approach and wished for a mixed economy. As Evelyne and John Stephens said, “This new path was socialist in its vision and involved partial disengagement from the economic system of multinational capital through increased economic self-reliance, tough negotiation, and Third World solidarity.”(P.374).³³ The ambitions for change did not come without its set of difficult hurdles as we discussed in the previous chapter. Winston James and similar scholars emphasize the impact internal contradictions played in the demise of Jamaica’s democratic socialism. Internal obstacles did play a key role in the tragedy of Manley’s story, however, external challenges had another hand in leading to its end.

³³ STEPHENS, E., & STEPHENS, J. (1983). DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN DEPENDENT CAPITALISM - AN ANALYSIS OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA. *Politics & Society*, 12(3), 373–411.

Manley's *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery* written after his first dismissal from office places much of the blame on Western hegemony and deeply ingrained imperialism in our international economic order. He targets the actions of the U.S. in particular and places his government's efforts within the context of geopolitical tensions such as the Cold War. External causes for the state of emergency that preceded Manley's electoral defeat included rapid stagflation due to global crises such as the 1973 OPEC oil crisis. Additionally, devastating blows were faced by Jamaica's tourism industry and its relationship with multinational corporations and foreign capital/investment. As well as the United States' involvement in dismantling and generating opposition towards Manley's government. The pressures built by the rising balance of payment national deficit and the IMF's austerity measures in their Jamaica program are pivotal to understanding the tragic end of Jamaica's time with Manley's democratic socialism. This chapter is committed to exploring these factors in relation to Jamaica's political economy.

4. Stagflation & Geopolitics

What came with the victory of the PNP and Manley in the 1972 election was the inheritance of an economically fragile Jamaica. The nation was deeply entrenched in dependent capitalism and operated similarly to its colonial past of exploitation and extraction. The mode of production was maintained by foreign control and interests. The bauxite industry vastly consisted of foreign ownership and did not operate in national interests such as increasing government revenue, and job opportunities, and representing a stable industry to global financial shocks. Tourism has been a topic of debate in many island nations, particularly due to its exploitative nature and harm done to local populations. Jamaican tourism was largely controlled by foreign-owned all-inclusive resorts that would restrict entrance into beaches increasing inaccessibility and disillusionment within the Jamaican population. Land management required

heavy restructuring, especially due to the deteriorating agricultural sector. Large amounts of arable land were neglected and a concentrated class of wealthy landowners held a stronghold over agricultural production. A strong dependency on North American and foreign imports of energy, oil, raw materials, and high-valued manufactured goods, remained in production and consumption.³⁴ Manley's ambitions for a mixed economy made sense as the state at the time had an extremely limited role in the economy. Jamaica was importing far faster than it was exporting and at a higher rate which enabled a rising trade deficit.

Unemployment was at a record high, alongside rising widespread crime. This trend of violence would follow Manley's administration up to the declaration of a state of emergency prior to his 1980 electoral defeat. Manley's prescriptions started with a policy of redistribution to tackle growing inequalities. Several of the aforementioned social welfare programs aided in targeting socio economic issues. Literacy campaigns, employment programs, land leases, food subsidies, rent controls, free education, sugar cooperatives, establishing a national minimum wage, and equitable small business loans were all a part of the initial phase of reform. Government expenditures for the financing of these programs placed extreme burdens on the growing deficit that relied on foreign borrowing, aid, and investment.

With the government's attention focused on stabilizing domestic industries and improving the quality of life of its citizens, the global financial crisis loomed over their efforts. As a small island nation heavily dependent on trade the impact of global shocks is felt tenfold in Jamaica's economy. This is especially true in oil imports, as it is one of the most important raw material imports in Jamaica's production processes. The 1973 Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) oil embargo was a principal cause of the economic instability that

³⁴ Kaufman, M. (1985). *Jamaica under Manley: Dilemmas of socialism and democracy*. London : Zed Books ; Toronto : Between the Lines.

followed Manley's first year in office. The United States' involvement in the Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur War drove this action by OAPEC, later shortened to OPEC. What followed was a widespread increase in the price of oil. Richard Bernal highlights key changes in Jamaica's economy as a result of the price increases.

"OPEC price increases in 1973 resulted in a tripling of the oil import bill from J\$65.4 million in 1973 to J\$177.6 million in 1974. World inflation also had a serious impact; import prices increased by 91.6 percent between 1972 and 1974 as a result and thus contributed to inflation in the Jamaican economy, which leaped from 8.2 percent in 1972 to 26.9 percent in 1973 and was 20.6 percent in 1974. Export volume declined 15.5 percent and 13.6 percent in 1975 and 1976, respectively; receipts from tourism declined in 1976; and there was a large outflow of private capital and investment income in 1975 and 1976. All of these factors contributed to the turnaround from a surplus of J\$36.4 million in 1971 to a deficit of J\$43.6 million in 1972 and J\$27.7 million in 1973. Foreign exchange reserves were only J\$76 million at the end of 1973-the equivalent of 1.5 months' import at the 1973 rate." (P.60).³⁵

This represented a time of high stagflation in Jamaica, characterized by low growth, high inflation, and unemployment. The responses from Manley's office included restricting imports, managing foreign exchange, and mobilizing consumer demand. This crisis led to the establishment of the historic bauxite/alumina levy on multinational corporations to increase government revenues and achieve Manley's goal of national sovereignty in the economy. Due to the heavy foreign control over the economy, the next item on Manley's agenda was the nationalization of numerous aspects of the Jamaican economy. This included mineral resources (bauxite), raw materials (cement, sugar), public utilities, financial institutions (Barclays Bank), trade (State Trading Corporation), and tourism (hotels and large resorts). The mechanisms for addressing the stagflation, as described by Manley, resulted in increased discontent among the domestic capitalist class and foreign entities. The bauxite levy, in particular, impacted government reserves and contributed to the growing external debt repayments.

5. Bauxite, Multinational Corporations & Foreign Capital

³⁵ Bernal, R. L. (1984). The IMF and class struggle in Jamaica, 1977-1980. *Latin American Perspectives*, 11(3), 53-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x8401100304>

The infamous bauxite levy of Manley's administration was an arduous endeavor and remains a focal point in discussions on Jamaica's time with democratic socialism. Its inception consisted of weeks of negotiations between the Jamaican business class and foreign bauxite companies. In the spring of 1974, the International Bauxite Association (IBA), with the National Bauxite Commission its predecessor, was formed and a 7.5 percent production levy was imposed on bauxite.³⁶ The repercussions on Jamaica's economy and political climate were devastating and raised large questions about the intensity of foreign capital in developing countries. Between 1975 and 1976, Jamaican bauxite production decreased across the board, alongside worker strikes, company shutdowns, and mass layoffs. United States and Canadian MNCs were enraged by Manley's policies and set off on all-out aggression towards Jamaica for having the gall to be anything less than grateful for their presence in their country. Kaufman provides striking statistics proving the aggressive actions taken by MNCs after the implementation of the production levy.

"Capitalist world production of bauxite fell by 7.6 percent in 1975 and grew by 5.3 percent in 1976, for a total fall of only 2.7 percent over two years. In Jamaica, it fell by 26.0 percent in 1975, and 9.6 percent in 1976, for a two-year drop of 33.1 percent. Canadian imports of alumina from Jamaica were 52.6 percent in 1975, and a further 49.4 percent in 1976, for a total of 76.0 percent. At the same time, overall imports of alumina fell in 1975, and rose in 1976 to above the 1974 level, for a two-year net increase ... The aim was to reduce government revenues, aggravate balance of payments problems, sow discontent because of economic hardships caused by loss of wages and foreign exchange, and generate social conflict by adding to the climate of instability and doubt in the government." (P.106-107)³⁷

MNCs protested the levy and lodged complaints with the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), further damaging Jamaica's prospects of engaging in more international trade. To mitigate the issues with Western nations, Manley looked towards other countries to diversify their international economic relations. The International Bauxite

³⁶ STEPHENS, E., & STEPHENS, J. (1983). DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN DEPENDENT CAPITALISM - AN ANALYSIS OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA. *Politics & Society*, 12(3), 373-411.

³⁷ Kaufman, M. (1985). *Jamaica under Manley: Dilemmas of socialism and democracy*. London : Zed Books ; Toronto : Between the Lines.

Association had demonstrated effort in trying to achieve the unity present in groupings such as OPEC. Manley's efforts in creating partnerships with more energy-rich nations to refine the bauxite ore into aluminum to cut out the need for foreign corporations. The government made concentrated efforts to work with Mexico, Venezuela, Trinidad, Iraq, and more nations. Yet, it was not successful due to political instability in these nations and global conflict. The IBA was unsuccessful in creating a coalition of bauxite-producing countries against the domination of Western MNCs. These nations took the opportunity to entice MNC investment in their domestic bauxite reserves by lowering their taxation on the ore.³⁸ However, despite the decline in foreign direct investment the bauxite levy significantly increased government revenue, though they still faced persistent inflated oil prices.

The Capital Development Fund was created to redistribute the proceeds, however, it was not that effective in driving productive investments for Jamaica's development. MNCs remained on the warpath and were effective in entering the political sphere to aid in laying the foundations of the dismantling of Manley's government. The role of MNCs in a host country is to generate profits for their home country, which is eerily similar to the colonial system of extraction for the development of the colonial power's 'Mother' country. They are incentivized to leave a country that no longer serves their purposes of cheap labor and production costs. Jamaica's reputation in the international community continued to face damage as corporations tried to destabilize its economy and publicly endorse the political opposition of the JLP. Fitzroy Ambursley highlights the actions taken by foreign corporations against Manley's regime.

"Between 1973 and 1976, for example, foreign capital inflow shrank from 9.7 percent of the GDP to a mere 0.9 percent. Meanwhile, the US State Department was organizing a systematic campaign to punish Jamaica for its friendship with Cuba and support for the MPLA. In 1975 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) turned down Jamaica's request for a US \$2.5 million food grant 1975, refusing to lend additional funds to the

³⁸ STEPHENS, E., & STEPHENS, J. (1983). DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN DEPENDENT CAPITALISM - AN ANALYSIS OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA. *Politics & Society*, 12(3), 373-411.

Manley government until it changed its stance. One year later the US Export-Import Bank demoted Jamaica's credit rating from a top to a bottom category. The actual number of visitors from the US, a figure which had been rising steadily since the sixties, declined by 13 percent between 1974 and 1975 and dropped by more than 10 percent in 1976."(P.81).³⁹

Though the 1976 election proved to be successful for the PNP and Manley's push for an egalitarian economic system, the following years demonstrated a shift in the government's leftist reform. April 1977 was the first time Manley's government worked with the IMF and accepted their terms to procure a \$74 million standby loan. This was in direct contrast with his pushback against the IMF and the slogans of "We are not for sale" earlier that year. Devastating debt repayments connected with a chronically rising external debt burden heavily influenced the decision to accept the IMF's terms, much to Manley's disappointment and ruin. Jamaica's economy was unequipped to tackle the deteriorating financial crisis solely through internal production capacities. With enlarging external debt and decreasing foreign exchange reserves due to the absence of MNCs and foreign direct investment, Jamaica was in need of "fast-cash" to sustain its operations. However, the IMF is not in the business of providing countries with fast cash, especially not with strings attached in the form of Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs). Being in America's backyard and remaining a close ally to Cuba were crucial to pushing Manley towards aid and international lending as it led to diminishing government revenue from internal production, MNCs, and foreign aid installments.

6. IMF Austerity & U.S. Involvement

Manley did not make his decision lightly when he eventually reached a loan agreement with the IMF in 1977. The PNP and local concerned leftist economists spent months exploring alternatives to working with the IMF to address the economic crisis they faced. However,

³⁹ Ambursley, F. (n.d.). Fitzroy Ambursley, Jamaica: The demise of "democratic socialism", NLR I/128, july–august 1981. *New Left Review*, I(128), 76–87.

Jamaica's foreign exchange shortage proved to be a more significant issue than domestic forces could resolve. Bernal states,

"Jamaica's balance of payments difficulties reached crisis proportions in 1976 when the deficit was J\$231.3 million. Net foreign exchange reserves fell from J\$136.7 million in June 1975 to J\$181.4 million in December 1976. External debt repayment increased from J\$49 million in 1974 to J\$100 million in 1976 as gross external debt increased from US\$194.9 million in December 1973 to US\$488.6 million in December 1976. The government's budget deficit increased from J\$66.8 million in 1972-1973 to J\$278.2 million in 1975-1976."⁴⁰

After rejecting the IMF's initial proposal, the Jamaican government was able to reach an agreement and accepted the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). Jamaica and the IMF went back and forth due to the draconian terms of the IMF loan agreements and their standards for lending.

"Jamaica received \$240 million at first, and \$429 million in 1979. In December 1979, Jamaica failed to meet the stipulated target when the ceiling on the net international reserves was exceeded. The IMF suspended the EFF agreement, having disbursed only US\$172 million."⁴¹

Like many IMF borrowers, they were at the mercy of the IMF coin as well as oil price fluctuations, inflated interest rates, and natural disasters. The lending agreement included these stipulations;

- "devaluation to discourage imports and make exports more competitive;
- minimizing wage increases to (a) reduce aggregate demand to reduce import demand and (b) reduce the cost of production to increase profits and reduce cost-push inflation;
- deregulation of the economy by removing price controls, subsidies, exchange controls, import licensing, and import restrictions;
- reduction of government expenditure and the elimination of budget deficits. This would reduce the ability of the state to intervene in the economy
- promotion of capitalist enterprise by eliminating state enterprises and programs that support noncapitalist forms of production; and (6) restrictive monetary and credit policies including reduced money supply, higher interest rates, and limits on borrowing by the state and state enterprises."⁴²

The implementation of these policies spurred civil unrest from staunch supporters of the PNP and Manley. By adhering to these regulations Manley was painted as a traitor to his socialist

⁴⁰ Bernal, R. L. (1984). The IMF and class struggle in Jamaica, 1977-1980. *Latin American Perspectives*, 11(3), 53-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x8401100304>

⁴¹ Same as above

⁴² Same as above

now agenda and betrayed the low-income classes he swore to protect. The IMF operates in capitalist world power, the U.S., and aims to maintain the neoliberal capitalist world economic order. Manley's call for a new multilateral, South-to-South cooperation-driven world economic order with his Third World counterparts was not aligned with the IMF's goals. At the time they held the power as Jamaica's lenders. Public confidence deteriorated heavily during the IMF policies of lowering the price of exports (price liberalization), decreasing the minimum wage (wage-freeze), currency devaluation (40 percent of the Jamaican dollar), decentralization (public sector job layoffs), and cutting social services (decreasing government expenditure). However, Manley's PNP persisted and pushed for some compromises on the policies the IMF pushed and was able to institute a 15 percent devaluation compared to 40 percent.⁴³ And more efforts were made to try to mitigate the ripple effects of this complete change from Manley's management of the economy.

Stephanie Black's 2001 documentary "Life and Debt" featured a back-and-forth between Manley and an IMF official. It depicts the varying priorities of both a leader of a developing nation and a lender of an international financial institution. They disagree on what the underlying causes are of the problem they face, and the solutions for them. The IMF is not in the business of helping nations with long-term development, they offered Manley the liquidity he needed to address Jamaica's current financial crisis at full interest rate. The two varying perspectives highlight the shortcomings of international financial institutions in hearing what nations say they need, it is clear they don't trust that they know what they need.⁴⁴ Since these institutions emerged out of Western hegemonic ideals of economic management, their air of superiority seems self-explanatory. This system of economic restructuring had lasting implications for Jamaica. It's

⁴³ Manley, M. (1982). *Jamaica: Struggle in the periphery*.

⁴⁴ Black, S., (. p. d., Becker, B., Manley, M., Fischer, S., Witter, M., Aristide, J., & Kincaid, J. (2003). *Life and debt*. Collectors ed. Tuff Gong Pictures.

more expensive to import, but the export industry is not that beneficial, there is more extraction than there is production in the nation; a free market paradise. The discontent with the IMF and the subsequent failure in the 1979 IMF performance test led to serious plans being made for a break from the IMF. In March 1980, the Jamaican government broke apart from their IMF agreement and what followed was a series of short-lived efforts by the PNP in maintaining control over the Jamaican economy. The successive elections resulted in a tragic defeat of Manley's administration and his iteration of democratic socialism. Alongside, IMF austerity was an element of U.S. interference in driving this election result and the pernicious living conditions in Jamaica. Kaufman states,

"Early in 1976, the government charged unnamed forces with conducting a systematic campaign to destabilize Jamaica. That autumn, on a visit to the island, ex-CIA agent Philip Agee was more explicit. He charged that his former employers and the international aluminum companies were working with certain JLP supporters in an attempt to unseat the Manley government. Agee, who had carried out similar operations in Ecuador in the 1960s, spoke across the country of CIA methods. These, he said, included spreading false information in the local and foreign press, funding oppositional groupings, supplying arms and logistical support, and helping plan disruptions and paramilitary operations. Agee named 11 US embassy personnel as either CIA officers or working with the CIA." (P.118).⁴⁵

Several visits from U.S. government officials such as Henry Kissinger, inspired speculation about U.S. involvement. Manley shared lunches he shared with Kissenger where he was pressured to publicly denounce Cuba and Agostinho Neto's democratic socialist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Kissenger would bring up Jamaica's applications for aid and trade credits during these discussions alluding to the positions the U.S. wanted Jamaica to hold and the benefits they could potentially receive. Manley described these situations in his novel *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*, he claimed to stay true to his ideals and his Third World comradeship.⁴⁶ The U.S. government was unhappy with the bauxite levy and the 'encroachment' on the operations of multinational corporations, most of which originated

⁴⁵ Kaufman, M. (1985). *Jamaica under Manley: Dilemmas of socialism and democracy*. London : Zed Books ; Toronto : Between the Lines.

⁴⁶ Manley, M. (1982). *Jamaica: Struggle in the periphery*.

from their nation. The JLP and MNCS collaborated to launch the anti-Manley campaign in full force with the support of media publications like the *Jamaica Gleaner* and foreign news outlets. Tourism took a shift dive as North American media published negative depictions of Jamaica with reports solely on violence, civil war conspiracies, and turbulent political tensions. Through the Cold War rhetoric, they were justified in branding Jamaica as a short step from Cuban socialism and employing communism fear-mongering. U.S. involvement was a clear depiction of the intensity of their impact on developing nations and the choices they made in employing that power.

Chapter Four: International Effects

Alongside Manley's efforts in reforming Jamaica's economic and political structure, he was a dedicated advocate for a new economic world order that accurately ensured equal representation of developing nations. He was an active member of the Non-Aligned movement, the alliance of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Group of 77 developing nations. He recognized Jamaica's positionality as a post-colonial small developing island nation facing the lasting detrimental effects of colonial exploitation on their economy. As Western powers dominated international trade and global markets, he knew his efforts in financing an egalitarian economic structure in Jamaica would be void. His academic and professional background as a Marxist scholar and trade unionist bled through his work in calling for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). His written work in Socialist International as chair of the Committee on Economic Policy alongside Willy Brandt, president of the publication, demonstrated the issues found within the existing economic world order. Manley has published expansive work on his thoughts on dependent capitalism and development economics such as *Up the Down Escalator: Development and the International Economy—A Jamaican Case Study*.

His allies were found in social democrats such as Olof Palme of Sweden and Odvar Nordli of Norway. And socialists such as Fidel Castro of Cuba, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Agostinho Neto of Angola, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and neighboring Caribbean nations such as Forbes Burnham of Guyana.⁴⁷ He, alongside them, called for increased transparency in the terms of trade between primary producing and manufacturing nations, reformed international financial institutions lending practices, and increased South-South cooperation in a multilateral

⁴⁷ Communications, P. S. C. (n.d.). *World Statesman*. Retrieved April 8, 2025, from <https://michaelmanley.org/about/world-statesman/#4>

world. Various scholars such as Winston A. Van Horne held that by taking these bold stances, Manley's administration was put under fire and his consistent loyalty to these ideologies led to his ruin. Insight on the truth of his ruin can be found by examining Manley's international involvement with socialist countries and the repercussions that followed them. The legacies from his international efforts are evident in our current shifting world economic order therefore deserve recognition. This final chapter takes a look into Manley's notable international collaborations and the movements he tried to push forward and inspire within his capacity.

7. Manley's International Ideology

Manley's main point of contention when taking office was that Jamaica as primary producer operated under a dependent economy oriented towards foreign capital accumulation. He recognized the similarities between newly independent Third World nations that continued to operate under this dependence while trying to develop economically. He found camaraderie and unity in this struggle and stood by his goals of change in the international economic system through the collective efforts of oppressed Third World nations. In a speech to the World Council of Churches Fifth Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, he explained his ideas on NIEO.

"Basically the new international economic order seeks to introduce the notion of justice into international economic relations. To ensure justice, it seeks to replace the present free market forces with a system of international political management. For example, it aims to remove unfair metropolitan advantage from the movement of capital and the transfer of technology. It seeks to ensure that the exports of developing countries will fetch just and realistic prices. It urges that these prices must be related to the ever-increasing cost of imports from metropolitan countries. The equitable prices that will result are aimed to secure the economic stability of Third World countries. More importantly, such an arrangement would create, for the first time in Third World experience, the conditions that would enable us to reduce the vast difference in the current living standards of rich and poor nations."⁴⁸

It was within this framework that Manley made strides in reaching Third World equitable development, and encouraging Caribbean regional partnerships. He played a pivotal role in pushing discussions on unequal terms of trade to the forefront of international dialogue. He

⁴⁸ Position paper on Michael Manley. (n.d.). *National Library of Jamaica*.

called for a global Third World economic strategy and cooperation. His numerous contributions to the against apartheid movement in South Africa accurately depict his beliefs on maintaining a united front against imperial oppression across the Third World. Manley was a part of many independence movements from Zimbabwe, Puerto Rico, to Angola. He spoke out for the rights of Puerto Ricans in their fight for independence. He worked on international initiatives that made lasting impacts on the geopolitical crisis. For example, the Gleneagles Agreement against apartheid in sports and United Nations International Convention Against Apartheid, the Panama Canal Treaty, International Bauxite Association, and the adoption of the Law of the Sea Convention. He offered military aid to the MPLA in Angola, financial contributions to the Organization of African Unity for Zimbabwe, and facilitated the transfer of economic assistance to Mozambique through the Commonwealth. The IBA led to a historic price setting of bauxite from producers to the North American market.⁴⁹ His participation in these efforts aided in the deterioration of his ties with the United States and Jamaica's relationship with their Western neighbors.

8. Manley's Foreign Policy

Steps towards fostering more South-South cooperation were seen after the implementation of Manley's 1977 Emergency Production Plan. The transformative change he called for in the NIEO could not be financed with the current economic relations with Western states that vehemently opposed the changes he advocated for. Manley made strides in "developing closer economic contacts with Eastern European countries; strengthening relations with the People's Republic of China; implementing agreements with progressive Third World countries like Mexico, Venezuela and Tanzania; and a reorientation of relationships within the

⁴⁹ Same as above

Latin American and CARICOM spheres"⁵⁰ Manley visited many of these nations such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Yugoslavia, Venezuela, Hungary, Ethiopia, Mexico, the Soviet Union, and South Africa. He invited leaders from various Third World nations to Jamaica representing his dedication to building unity and camaraderie among the 'developing world.' Visits from Cuba and the MPLA were not well received among those vehemently against communism and these instances aided in the growing antagonism for Manleyism. Lewis notes the milestone plan between Jamaica and the USSR in infrastructure development.

"At the end of November a Soviet technical team visited Jamaica and held extensive talks with the government under the direction of Foreign Minister Patterson, signing an agreement involving, inter alia, Soviet assistance toward the construction of a cement plant with a capacity of about 500,000 tons per year. Patterson described the agreement as "another milestone in the further development of economic and technical co-operation between Jamaica and the USSR," based on "the principles of respect for sovereignty, national independence, non-interference in each other's domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit."⁵¹

Manley's efforts in building Third World Solidarity started to crumble as plans for the joint construction of a JAVEMEX aluminum smelter with Mexico fell through in 1978. The introduction of the Bauxite levy and the IBA did not live up to the expected aspirations for bauxite producing nations' solidarity. As Winston James explains it,

"The members (Australia, The Dominican Republic, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Sierra Leone and Surinam) were far too disparate in their political outlook and degree of dependence upon their respective bauxite industries to have put up a united front against the more cohesive companies (MNCs)."⁵²

Jamaica's expanding ties with the 'Soviet-Cuban' axis of resistance fueled opposition to Manley's regime from neighboring Caribbean states such as Trinidad. The increase in trade partnerships with Eastern European and the USSR rang the alarm bells of many CARICOM states leading to worsening relations between Jamaica's regional neighbors. The context of

⁵⁰ Lewis, V. A. (1983). The Small State Alone: Jamaican Foreign Policy, 1977-1980. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 25(2), 139-169. <https://doi.org/10.2307/165516>

⁵¹ Same as above

⁵² James, W. (1983). The decline and fall of Michael Manley: Jamaica 1972-1980. *Capital & Class*, 7(1), 143-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981688301900107>

extreme anti-communist rhetoric justifies the actions of these states, especially considering their proximity to the U.S. world power. Lewis's description of Jamaica as 'the small state alone' represents the political and economic turmoil Manley's administration and the Jamaican population faced leading up to the ultimate end. There were virtually no cash flows available to remediate the financial crisis Jamaica's economy was in and the hopes for Third World Solidarity could sustain the turbulent times.

9. Western Backlash

Manley's friendship with Fidel Castro and Julius Nyerere inspired fear in Washington's political officials as they scrambled to push forward the demonization and fear-mongering around socialism and communism. What Manley's international work represented was a changing tide from the 'a rising tide lifts all boats' concept that had allowed for the continuous growth of rich countries through the exploitation of poorer nations. He was working on something different with his fellow forward thinkers, and the U.S. could not let that slide. Henry Kissinger and his associates came to Jamaica in 1975 to pressure Manley into remaining neutral on Cuba's army presence in Angola to support the MPLA. Manley opted to aid Cuban troops in their fight with MPLA against apartheid. Brian Meeks in the Jacobian states "Cuban forces needed to refuel on their way to Angola, and Manley, along with Forbes Burnham in Guyana and Errol Barrow in Barbados, agreed to provide landing bases and diplomatic cover for the Cuban forces."⁵³ Grenada's Maurice Bishop, Fidel Castro, and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega were often placed in the same grouping of radical socialists in the Western eye. Cuba's contributions to Jamaica were significant in building infrastructure and capital. Manley remained in support of Castro, even awarding him the Order of Jamaica in 1977 at the King's House in Jamaica in front

⁵³ *Michael Manley's vision*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 9, 2025, from <https://jacobin.com/2017/05/michael-manley-jamaica-non-aligned-movement-imf-austerity-imperialism>

of the nation. U.S. Senator Edward Zorinsky of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said this on Manley's actions,

"Mr. Manley's association with Fidel Castro may be one prime reason that many bankers have turned down his requests for the borrowing capacity of Jamaica, why their tourism industry is at a low ebb, and why their economy is on the brink of disaster. These are the prices people sometimes have to pay for their association with the wrong people."⁵⁴

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) U.S. operatives increased their presence in Kingston and collaborated with the JLP and right-wing extremists to bring down the credibility and recognition of Manley's administration. Manley became the target of the CIA destabilization program as the divide between political parties grew and public unrest increased in the form of violence. Attempts on Manley's life continued as described below,

"On December 3, 1976 — 12 days ahead of national elections — Manley came under the gun. Under the cover of night, two carloads of gunmen drove into his Kingston home and shot it up with automatic weapons; Bob, his wife Rita and at least two others were wounded."⁵⁵

Large populations were massacred leading up to the 1976 state of emergency and the subsequent devastating electoral loss in 1980 which was accompanied by a total casualty count of 800.⁵⁶ As the Cold War anti-communist rhetoric was propagandized through U.S, Canadian, and British media publications, anti-Manleyism found its roots. Concentrated international efforts were placed in dismantling the PNP from rising debt repayment reminders from the IMF and World Bank, to public denouncements of the Manley government by Western authorities.⁵⁷

His world views were ripped apart and soon after he met the bitter end to his regime. His

⁵⁴ Garrison, A., & Editor, B. C. (n.d.). *Remembering Jamaica in the east/west crossfire*. Black Agenda Report. Retrieved April 29, 2025, from <https://www.blackagendareport.com/remembering-jamaica-eastwest-crossfire>

⁵⁵ Cherise. (2016, December 13). *Before bernie sanders was michael manley: Social revolutionaries of the third world*. Truthout.

<https://truthout.org/articles/before-bernie-sanders-was-michael-manley-social-revolutionaries-of-the-third-world/>

⁵⁶Garrison, A., & Editor, B. C. (n.d.). *Remembering Jamaica in the east/west crossfire*. Black Agenda Report. Retrieved April 29, 2025, from <https://www.blackagendareport.com/remembering-jamaica-eastwest-crossfire>

⁵⁷ James, W. (1983). The decline and fall of Michael Manley: Jamaica 1972-1980. *Capital & Class*, 7(1), 143–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981688301900107>

inspirational international work inspired his recognition in scores of notable awards such as, the World Peace Council's Juliot Curie Peace Award, the South African Order of Supreme Companion of O.R. Tambo for his outstanding role in the international campaign against apartheid. Manley was an advocate for mending relations between the U.S. and Cuba and working towards a 'normalization of relations.' He faced extreme backlash and was painted as being indecisive and trying to play the peacemaker while advocating for reform. It was at this point that the Jamaican population voiced their contempt for the current government and the fated election was held.

Conclusion

Michael Manley's tumultuous time in office was complex and layered, the actions he took and the decisions he made, cannot be boiled down and dismissed as a failure. The end of democratic socialism in Jamaica has been likened to the overthrow of Chile's Allende, and Tanzania's Nyerere. In Manley's case there came a point where the Jamaican population was no longer aligned with the path he had in mind for Jamaica. His efforts have not gone unnoticed or debated over time as demonstrated by the wide range of studies and academic work done on analysing what exactly happened to lead to the crushing defeat of such a beloved figure in politics. And why, during his third term in office, he continued the work of his competitors in shifting Jamaica into a neoliberal free market capitalist economic structure.

Scholars such as F.S. J. Ledgister, Evelyne and John Stephens, and Winston A. Van Horne criticize Manley for encouraging class divisions and polarizing historically tension-filled populations. His linear grouping of Jamaicans by not acknowledging the complexities around race and class division and by demonizing the wealthy class destroyed all his efforts in building a collective and just Jamaica. Michael Kaufman, Fitzroy Ambursley, and Winston James target Manley for not doing enough to deconstruct the colonial legacies of dependence in Jamaica. Contrary to this, they attribute the abandonment of support from the wealthy class to Manley's ties with socialist and communist nations such as Cuba and Russia. Manley and the PNP proposed a mixed economic structure and implemented policies to appease the capitalist class. In their view the democratic aspect of democratic socialism significantly impacted the capacity of the state in reaching true equality and equitability. According to Kaufman, Manley operated within the parliamentary system, whose limitations he was aware of but did not move towards making new principles of power and building new institutions. Michael Manley himself, and

Tony Weis emphasize the role Western hegemonic interference through wide-spread propaganda, and demonization of Manley's government aided in this tragedy. Dependent capitalism carried over from an imperial colonial slave labor history is deeply ingrained in the international economic order and therefore prevents Third World nations from effectively going against the grain. Manley in *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*, states,

"But the dilemma in Jamaica is compounded. Not only must change occur within an economy that is capitalist and a political system in which opposition is institutionalised, but in a geo-political environment in which we, as part of the Third World, are on the receiving end of the imperialist whip." (P. 216). "The entire Third World is part of an economic periphery. But social democracy, even when in power, has become part of a political periphery. Would they but realise it, the progressives of the North need an international economic strategy as badly as does everyone in the South." (220).⁵⁸

Manley's political and economic ideologies drove the actions he took while in power, it led him to implement social welfare reforms across the country. It also led him to enter the geopolitical space as a political leader calling for transformative change for his nation and all of the Third World. His work in international spaces represent his values on unity, solidarity, and collective action against oppression. Kaufman asserts that by maintaining that outlook in domestic politics the nation suffered under polarization and the mobilization that was needed to aid in Manley's movement did not reach its full potential. Manley had the support of the working class population and the wealth class to a point. The external obstacles that Jamaica was forced to operate under pushed the economy to the brink of collapse.

Jamaica's dependence of foreign trade, investment, aid , and transfer of technology enabled extreme vulnerability to global financial shocks and crises. The 1973 OPEC oil crisis was devastating to states that were oil importers like Jamaica. Oil prices increased and with it came record high inflation. Commodity prices took a sharp downward turn during this time dangerously impacting Jamaica's production capabilities. His efforts in increasing Third World

⁵⁸ Manley, M. (1982). *Jamaica: Struggle in the periphery*.

trade partnerships and the establishment of the International Bauxite Association were stalled as world crises prevented through coalition building to occur among the developing world. The reforms implemented under Manley's regime were placed under fire as exacerbating the situation and increasing national foreign debt. Manley, as against the IMF as he was, reached out for short-term financial assistance to mitigate these effects and was met with the brutal reality of getting into business with them.

Given the Cold War context, any association with communism and socialism was met with extreme pushback and fear-mongering. What's unusual with Manley's case is that he was viewed as being too radical and inciting 'unholy' communism in the nation while also being criticized by the left as not going far enough to enact true revolutionary change. Manley was seen by communist groups as too weak-willed and playing into the hands of the capitalist class.⁵⁹ He was playing into Fabian socialism and used nationalist populism to garner support within the working class.⁶⁰ Manley remains an important figure in Jamaican political and popular discourse as he engaged with various cultural aspects such as reggae and Rastafarianism. He was a beloved figure who was known for his enigmatic and charismatic nature and demeanor. His iteration of democratic socialism must be understood within the context of global situations and their implications. He envisioned a new international economic order, and based on the proposals he made in his novel *Up The Down Escalator: Development and the International Economy—A Jamaican Case Study*, I wonder what success his iteration would have if he operated in the present time. He states,

"For example, the Third World countries were to propose: an orderly transition from high dependence on nonrenewable energy sources and international financial support for countries attempting to make this transition; orderly and predictable price changes; special arrangements, including financial assistance, to ensure supplies of

⁵⁹ ussectionwebdev. (2024, January 4). *Reform or revolution: Jamaica 1972–1980*. Revolutionary Communists of America. <https://communistusa.org/reform-or-revolution-jamaica-1972-1980/>

⁶⁰ Ambursley, F. (n.d.). Fitzroy Ambursley, Jamaica: The demise of "democratic socialism", NLR I/128, july–august 1981. *New Left Review*, I(128), 76–87.

energy to poorer developing countries; increased financing for the exploration and development of energy sources, including renewable energy, through international and regional financial agencies; and the creation of a global energy research center under the United Nations.”(P.66) ⁶¹

In a time of rising South-South cooperation and international climate change agreements his ideas of a self-reliant Jamaica and developing world would have had more of a fighting chance compared to that period of Western imperial hegemony. That is not to discredit the impressive work done at that time in protesting against neo colonial powers through the movements he was a part of, especially concerning anti-apartheid international work. And our current political climate has not reached the aspiration of NIEO yet and we are in an era of extreme global divisions in geopolitical conflict, climate change action, etc. It’s worth noting that our current movement towards multilateralism and regional collaboration aligns with the aspirations of Manley. However, Manley did not operate as a lone figurehead; he was backed by a political party with historical ties to bourgeois and private sector protectionism.

His iteration of democratic socialism cannot be understood as solely implemented by his personal political ideologies. His reelection in 1989 demonstrated this as he supported repairing trade relations with the U.S. and increasing IMF assistance. Manley was not a communist, nor a socialist, he spent his professional career asserting the benefits of democratic socialism as ensuring the needs of people and the development of the nation were at the forefront of its economic restructuring. He maintained that position in a world divided into anti-communist leaders of the free world, and revolutionary leaders of the hammer and sickle. By not stringently aligning with either side, he put himself and the nation in a precarious position vulnerable to attack. His was not a time accepting of various political orientations, at least compared to present day, which is still not all that better. He described his intentions in *Jamaica: Struggle in the periphery*,

⁶¹ Manley, M. (1987). *Up the down escalator: Development and the international economy : A jamaican case study*.

“Before our eyes were these two models — Puerto Rico and Cuba. Surely there was another path, a third path, a Jamaican way rooted in our political experience and values, capable of providing an economic base to our political independence and capable of some measure of social justice for the people. We were to spend the next eight and a half years in our periphery exploring that third path.” (P.38)⁶²

He did try to forge this third path in his first two terms, but the switch he made after getting re-elected in 1989 went fundamentally against his vision and his past aspirations. The Third World solidarity he so vehemently advocated for was no longer in his political rhetoric. He stood by his aims of improving social welfare and worker participation in the workplace as he described in his novel *A Voice at the Workplace: Reflections on Colonialism and the Jamaican Worker*. However, the repercussions of his actions were felt most by the exact disadvantaged, low-income groups he swore to raise up. The cutting of funding for social services, education, healthcare, transportation, while rampant privatization was the new economic model of choice. Alongside, constituent devaluation of the Jamaican dollar came an increased cost of living as imports became expensive while exports boomed. Manley’s vision and narrative lost its essential focus on improving the welfare of his people.

The time period and IMF austerity constraints are all important aspects of the story, but the transformation in Manley’s leadership must also be investigated. Professor David Kennett, who had the privilege of meeting Michael Manley at Vassar in 1986, described Manley as somber, quiet, and almost defeated, not the firebrand champion of the Third World he is recognized for being. Kennett described his thoughts on Manley by stating,

“Manley came to terms with his limited ability to create an alternative to the global trading system. He became disillusioned in the sense that it was sort of so powerful, it was awfully difficult to break away from. And if you did break away, as Cuba did, then they were going to just insulate you. And the consequences of Cuba's breakaway, I don't think anybody could have really seen it. I mean, here we are, you know, 65 years later, and the expulsion of Cuba from the national community goes on sufficient, you know, I mean, it's still an issue in American elections. I can't understand it. But there it is. But still, it's necessary to keep this going. And I think even by the 90s, I think that Manley realized that it was very, very difficult to break away.”⁶³

⁶² Manley, M. (1982). *Jamaica: Struggle in the periphery*.

⁶³ See Appendix for full interview transcript.

Being in ‘America’s backyard’ had large impacts on the efforts Manley made and it remained a constant reminder of the global hierarchy in the then international community and present global political economic order. It was also Manley’s derailing health that affected his ability to remain in office and impacted his abilities to continue a defensive, oppositional stance towards the U.S. That proximity and the real threat to Manley and Jamaica from the U.S. as foreign aid continued to plummet, was not a risk to handle lightly. Economic sanctions, and international financial blacklisting are a few of the tools in the U.S. toolboxes that Cuba and other nations like it face as consequence of not aligning with their agenda for the global capitalist machine. As a small island nation, facing the threat of international isolation in a rising globalized world was a large undertaking. The subsequent election of 1980 represented the loss of public faith in Manley’s administration, although his vision for sovereign economic development still remained popular.

The execution of it could not be fully realized, due to the dependent structure of Jamaica’s economy and its vulnerability to the global financial system. Stagflation, removal of main internal production sectors such as bauxite, and wide-spread capital flight from wealth classes, are a few of the factors discussed in this thesis as leading to the demise of democratic socialism in Jamaica. A multifaceted combination of domestic and foreign constraints aided to its collapse, however Manley’s role largely impacted the trajectory of the nation’s political economy. By trying to find this middle ground at a time of extremely divided zones of revolution and hegemony, Manley could not take a strong enough position on either side. Which led to the inevitable collapse of his socialist structure in of itself. After his return to office his clear alignment with neoliberalism and repairing Western relations demonstrated the stance he was taking in the debate. Jamaica’s populations and economy still suffered for many years after his

terms were over as national debt continued to increase in a rapidly declining economy. Manley's initial democratic socialist vision could not be realized within the People's National Party with its historic liberal democracy ideals. The reforms Manley started his beginning terms with could not be sustained in Jamaica's dependent status, and his unwillingness to pursue a more radical revolutionary approach.

His intellectual background in fabianism and relationships with Eastern European socialist states influenced that decision. His visions resonated with the ideals of a NIEO, however the application that was needed for a full separation from the Western dominated global capitalist international order was not accurately pursued. Manley advocated for increased South-South cooperation, yet he was not willing to build a revolutionary coalition to stand against the West. His third path and goals for Jamaica ultimately did not involve that revolutionary spirit, even though it is often mistaken to have been. The active foreign factors that were working against him also shaped the lowering of the intensity of his values and ideals in the political sphere, especially in his last term. Overall, his legacy remains integral to Jamaica's history and is carried on by his daughter Rachel Manley, and the Jamaican people who honor him as 'Joshua' the man of the masses.

10. Further Study

I wonder what Manley's administration would have looked like in our world today with heightened multilateral efforts and increased funding for developing countries in the form of the UN's Official Development Assistance (ODA), and other expanding development banks. In an era of anti-America rhetoric his efforts could have been pushed farther than was capable then. Less reliance on the Western world for trade agreements could have been fostered with China's rise as the world's second largest economy and other large G77 country blocs. With the

acceleration of the current administration's tarnishing of international relationships with Mexico, Canada, other neighboring countries, Manley's chances of success would have increased. His desires for uniting bauxite producers and working with Mexico in building an aluminum smelter with Mexico could have been realized given the increase in South-South cooperation to combat U.S. hostility. Would Manley have thrived under this push for sustainable development, and realized his aspirations for a united Global South presence? What would have happened if he was able to craft an 'axis of resistance,' with his neighbors Haiti and Cuba, reminiscent of the current coalition in Middle Eastern states against U.S. interference?

Manley was a complex leader, however he never strayed from his egalitarian ideals in his academic work. It's clear in the work he published after his 1980 defeat such as *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery* (1982), *Up the Down Escalator: Development and the International Economy: a Jamaican Case Study* (1987), and *The Poverty of Nations: Reflections on Underdevelopment and the World Economy* (1991). However, the government policies of deregulation and IMF austerity that he implemented in his third term demonstrated a clear shift in his methodology and politics.

His time in the international political community representing his nation presents an interesting case study, and can be explored at far greater length than within the scope of this thesis. Further study such as a comparative analysis between similar democratic socialist leaders of that time would be enriched by the research presented in this thesis. Deeper analysis on Manley's background and the influence it played on his politics could have been achieved through archival research and conducting interviews from people who have firsthand accounts of Manley. Field research in Jamaica would be an excellent extension of the work done here, and addition to the purpose of the thesis. The work produced here represents a preliminary dive into

democratic socialism in Jamaica and the possibilities it opened up before it reached a cumulative end. Jamaica is presently a mixed free-market economy that has gone through the lasting effect of IMF dictated structural adjustment plans. Manley's period has had lasting effects on the memories of the Jamaican people, and that is also worth further inquiry. The role race, class, cultural identity, and colonial legacies played in Manley's politics and its reception is another avenue of study that could pair well with the work presented here. This thesis presents a wonderful opportunity for greater inquiry into Jamaica's political economy and the possibilities for alterity in our international economic order.

Appendix

Interview with Professor David Kennett Full Transcript

Maham: Thank you for coming and doing this interview with me. I really appreciate it. Yes, so I'll start by asking you to introduce yourself and just share a brief background about your experience studying and teaching abroad in the U.S.

David: I'm David Kennett. I did my undergraduate degree at the University of Sussex between 66 and 69. I did my PhD at Columbia between 72 and 77, really. I started teaching here at Vassar in 1976. I was appointed to the economics program. I was one of the founding members of the international studies program in the late 80s, really, is when the program first came. And what else do you want? My experience teaching abroad? Yes, yeah, teaching and learning abroad and everything. Well, I've done quite a lot of teaching. I mean, you know, I'm teaching abroad all the time because I'm British originally. I found that an American liberal arts environment was very nice for me because it was actually quite similar in some ways to the education I had at Sussex, but atypical of what most people's experience was, at least in those days in England. In those days, you were accepted for a course of study at age 18, and it was very difficult to escape the confines of a very prescribed course of study over that period of time. And so it was nice to be in a liberal arts environment where students could wander around much more in an interdisciplinary framework.

Maham: That's great to hear and definitely gives a bit more insight on the thoughts you're going to share with today for sure. So yeah, we can start with the first question about when did you

meet Michael Manley? What were the circumstances of the meeting and what were your impressions of him?

David: Well, I had to think about that. I met Manley as far as I could make out. I think it was 1992. I think I met him because I was director of the International Studies Program, I think at that time. And that's why I did. I can remember being with him, although I believe it was in what we would call then a multi-purpose room, I guess, and I had breakfast with him. And it was, I mean, as you know from Manley's life, he changed his character somewhat. And the second coming and the second premiership of Manley were much less kind of firebrand than they were in the original time. So I didn't meet him in the 60s or early 70s when I think his political opinions and his self-perceived role, I think would have been rather different at that time. I met a much mellower man, I suspect. And in some ways, I don't want to read between the lines. I mean, he's very quiet. And I'm not really sure if the words defeated would really have been. But I mean, it was fairly clear to me that he saw the world by that time as less changeable than I think he would have seen the world in the 1960s. And that's just my impression. He was an older guy by that time, a quiet, spoken, older man with a lot of experience, a lot of interest. I was only with him, I have to say, as far as I can remember, for 20, 25 minutes. So I mean, it's not that he gave me the material for a biography there, but it was interesting.

Maham: Yeah, yeah, definitely. And especially 1992, if I recall, that's close to when he was going to resign from his third term in office. And yeah, I think I mean, I might be wrong on the dates.

David: You'll know the dates much better than me. My feeling was he'd resigned and he was out of it. So if 92 was before that, maybe I met him a little bit later. I don't I cant I can't say with certainty what the date was. Somewhere within Vassar College, there's probably a record of him coming to campus. I believe he came on to the political science department. And they kind of farmed me out for an early morning coffee. But that's how I remember it happening.

Maham: I'll look into that. There probably is some record or something.

David: Yeah. Now, you asked how I thought of him compared to the MPLA and things. Yes, that was what was it? I always thought of them in different baskets because the MPLA and I always thought of it as being a revolutionary socialist movement. And although, you know, Manley wanted popular socialism and social democracy, his situation in Jamaica, member of the Commonwealth, the monarchy of Jamaica, as it's still called, it just seemed to me to be different from the arms struggle in Angola. Now, maybe that's just my bias as a Brit. I don't know.

But certainly, you know, although Manley was radical, at least in the in the original, he wasn't fighting an armed guerrilla struggle, as were other people at that time. So, you know, I mean, so clearly, you know, people had been fighting back in the 60s. You had the whole kind of the extension of Cuba, you have the Jabaris movement, you have Angola, you have Mozambique, and they just struck me as being different kinds of struggles for Manley's own struggle.

And I think that's, I mean, there was subsequent violence in Jamaica, but it was actually tended to be violence between two Jamaican factions, rather than between Jamaica and the imperialists, which seemed to me to make a difference. I have to be careful, though, having recognized that I was, you know, at that time, at least, you know, in the bowels of the

imperialist movement, and maybe maybe I don't know whether I was getting a full reflection of all the facts. But I always thought that what was happening, particularly in the Portuguese colonies, and with respect to South Africa, and even with respect to Rhodesia, that things, you i know Zimbabwe, and things were different. And in Jamaica, you know, I mean, geez, we kept on playing cricket matches right through it all.

Maham: Definitely a lot of the critics, criticism from, I guess you could say the left side, right, like, was that Manley was kind of in between, he was saying he was a radical, but he wasn't pushing far enough from this Westminster parliamentary system.

David: And it was kind of confusing, because that also went for other West Indian radicals. I mean, particularly, I mean, you've probably read CLR James, for example. And you get this kind of, I mean, a guy who thought the Marxist revolution and test cricket were pretty much the same thing. It's a very bizarre notion. My daughter lived next door, actually, in Brixton, my daughter's house was next door to CLR James's old house in Brixton, which was very, very interesting. You know, it had a blue plaque and everything on it, you know. And it was very sort of interesting, but that sort of idea of, yeah, I mean, sort of progressive socialism, but still sticking to a kind of British empire slash Commonwealth kind of thing, which was sort of interesting.

Maham: Yeah, no, that definitely leads to the other question I was talking about, about when you, at that time, and right now, while you're thinking about these things, when you hear democratic socialism, what comes to your mind? Like, does it seem like a paradox in and of itself? Like, how can socialism be democratic? Or do you not think it's that?

David: No, no, no, that's never really bothered me. I mean, because you remember, I mean, I grew up in Europe, where lots of parties are called things like the democratic socialist party. I mean, the German socialists are the, you know, the German democratic socialists. So that didn't really bother me. I was a socialist, still am in some ways. I'm a little more sceptical about public ownership of a lot of things than I used to do. But I'm intensely critical, as you know, of Margaret Thatcher and turning back public ownership in that willy nilly way. But I mean, I grew up with the ideals that are of socialism, in whether that was strictly socialist in the sense of ownership of means of production, or a more sort of Scandinavian version of socialism, where you relied on the government to redistribute rather than to produce. But there never seemed to be any conflict to me, between socialism and democracy. I mean, you know, I grew up in a world where the Labour Party was also called the socialist party, and I was fine with that, you know. So obviously, I could accept the ideas of socialism and democracy. I mean, people in Britain at the time, in some ways, couldn't. And when Harold Wilson became Prime Minister in, what, 64 the first time, there was a lot of scepticism about, you know, what his, you know, the British establishment wanted to associate any form of socialism with Moscow-oriented socialism. But I never was, I never bought into that one.

Maham: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And then thinking about what you were saying, these revolutionary movements, and then you think about Manley's liberal democracy that he was saying, that he was making, and the context of the Cold War, and how they were so, like, heavy anti-communist, anti-socialist, everything, putting in this one grouping of like, this is bad, this is good. What do you think about, like, what would have happened if these movements were

happening at current times? Do you think that the Cold War really had that much of an impact in the success of these revolutionary movements and Manley's?

David: Well, certainly, the Cold War was immensely competitive in that sense. But, you know, in the remnants of the British Empire, particularly, there was a lot of, you know, kind of scrabbling to kind of try and keep people on one side rather than the other. To my mind, you know, sort of, I mean, so you, you had what was going on in the Congo, which was obviously international imperialism on a nasty scale. Then you had Nigeria, which was very kind of, I suppose, when Nigeria was happening, what would be Niger-Biafran Civil War would be what, 70, 71, I'm thinking. And certainly, the whole context of the Cold War was trying to keep people on the side in that respect. And I think the West, particularly the British, tolerated an enormous amount of inhumanity in the Nigerian Civil War just to keep Nigeria as a whole and in the Western camp. I think there was a struggle over Ghana. I mean, Nkrumah at one time was seen as the kind of guy who could be going one way or the other, and it took a lot of effort to put him in that particular way.

Maham: There's Tanzania with Julius Nyerere.

David: Yeah, Julius Nyerere, I mean, Julius Nyerere was immensely popular among my friends in Britain because he was progressive, but essentially nonviolent. He was extremely cultivated. He was extremely easy to listen to. And he was really, you know, he was really a kind of an ideal, okay, as opposed to some other of the African leaders who were kind of more difficult. But Nyerere was very, very persuasive. And in some ways, if you, you know, I regard, for no

particular reason, I would put Manley, who was intelligent, coherent, I'd put him in a basket with Nyerere rather than with more obviously violent socialists. But that's, you know, that's my view.

Maham: And I know you were saying what you thought about Manley's kind of iteration of democratic socialism as being sort of not, it wasn't pushing the realms of like really revolutionary in that sense.

David: Well, I think he was, he was, you know, that in the 60s, I think Manley thought that there was an alternative to the global trading system. And I think over time, he became disillusioned in the sense that it was sort of so powerful, it was awfully difficult to break away from. And if you did break away, as Cuba did, then they were going to just insulate you. And the consequences of Cuba's breakaway, I don't think anybody could have really seen it. I mean, here we are, you know, 65 years later, and the expulsion of Cuba from the national community goes on sufficient, you know, I mean, it's still an issue in American elections. I can't understand it. But there it is. But still, it's necessary to keep this going. And I think even by the 90s, I think that Manley realized that it was very, very difficult to break away. And I think, you know, I think this comes again, comes up again and again. You know, Jeff Sachs, who was for a while the advisor to Bolivia, just sort of said, well, you know, by any common sense, you know, Bolivia should repudiate its debt and tell the international community to essentially go stuff itself. But you live in danger because then you get this kind of retaliation and this forming a wall and you can never get back into the kind of community of nations in the way that Cuba has never got back into the community of nations. And it is just wrong, you know. I mean, Cuba, I must mean, my brother is in Cuba as we speak. And in fact, a lot of Europeans go to Cuba for vacation. But even that in

and of itself is a kind of difficult thing because, you know, the future of socialism was really, you know, running luxury hotels for rich Europeans. I mean, which is where it's ended up. And, you know, so it is strange in that way. Go ahead.

Maham: Yeah, I'm thinking about the things you're talking about, about how even to this day, Cuba and the U.S. relations are not like they're kind of put out as like this dangerous place or like there you can't go there. Well, I guess people go there, but it's not really advertised as this tourist place in the international community.

David: Well, you can't. I mean, it is one of those places where you can't go from here. I mean, if I want to leave here and go to Cuba, I've got to go somewhere else first. I think I can go to Mexico City. I can go to Montreal. I can go to other places. But America has been consistently ruthless with Cuba. Obama tried to open up relations with Cuba. And then the story was, well, the younger Cuban expats will welcome it. But no, you know, it was all rolled over. And you see even in this last election, you know, part of what keeps Florida on side for the Republicans is this threat that the Democrats will actually start talking to Cuba in a constructive way.

Maham: Yeah. And I guess thinking about the criticisms that Manley was facing about not doing enough. What do you think would have happened if he did push back considering Jamaica's proximity to the U.S.?

David: I think the combination of British pressure and U.S. pressure would have really circumscribed his field of action. And I think he knew that. Yeah. I mean, because basically as

well, I mean, the real problem is Jamaica as well didn't have a whole lot to sell. Right. It had bauxite. And that was important, but wasn't the only supplier of bauxite. And you could go around to other bauxite producers.

Maham: Manley made the International Bauxite Association, with the goal of gathering bauxite producers together to then put a minimum price on bauxite to North American Western companies.

David: And yeah, it was very much in the model of OPEC. It is in this belief that if OPEC can do it, there are certain other commodities that are essential for Western capitalism and where there are a small number of producers who can effectively form a cartel. But it turned out they couldn't.

Maham: Because, yes, it was that he had that levy on bauxite and then multinational corporations came out and said, well, we'll just go to other countries and then other countries saw that. It seemed that in other countries, they found they had that comparative advantage. They could sell their bauxite for cheaper.

David: But why didn't that happen with oil? You see, that's an interesting thing. Yeah. What you know, and it is, it is hard to understand why OPEC was such a success and other attempts. And bauxite was the most obvious because it was a country with few producers and a necessary commodity. But it couldn't reproduce what OPEC had done. No, I'm not really clear why.

Maham: Yeah. I also remember reading about how with those multinational corporations, there's this whole thing with the U.S. and Western intervention coming in and then using popular media to paint Manley as this, like full communist and stuff like that. And then the public's response, because what happened at the 1980 election, he was voted out. It was different. A lot of others where it would be like, oh, he was kicked out. But he was voted out by his own people. So that I look more into it. I was interested in seeing because he was Julius as well, and was very popular and charismatic. And people loved him, especially the working class. But a lot of the criticism is that he created this divide with the business class and the working class. And he wasn't able to make a cohesive resistance.

David: Yeah. And you're always left wondering about how. I mean, we now know elections could get influenced in all sorts of ways. Certainly. The West was happy when Manley lost power the first time.

Maham: So, if you could imagine Manley operating in the current state of we're pushing towards a multilateral kind of more representation of developing countries, interests, political economy, do you think that he would have had more success in the sense that he was he was still he was trying to emulate a lot of these when we were talking about earlier welfare state capitalism, but moving away from the word capitalism. But he still had relations with, I think, like Norway at that time, Sweden. And he still had relations with the revolution. So that's why he was in between a little bit. But how could you think he would have fared, let's say, in the present time?

David: Very interesting question. I don't know. And I was kind of casting my mind saying, who do I think of and who's existing today in international politics at all, who I would think of as being like Manley. And I just kind of feel that I don't know, the world is so much more polarized now and so much more difficult to deal with. And, you know, and I was mentioning, I think, in class the other day, you know, I was watching old films of Gamal Abdel Nasser, and, you know, how people were horrified and terrified of him and he was the boogeyman and all this kind of thing. In fact, he was very much, I mean, you know, he was an amiable, educated, middle of the road, war suits and ties kind of guy, you know. And whereas today, just politics seem to be so much more divided upon lines of religion and race that this idea of being somewhere in the middle being a guy who can be promoting socialism and also be seen in European capitals and everything like that just seems to be not quite the way it was. I mean, I was interested to go back and see some of those films and just sort of remember that time. And when I say remember, for me, that was really the time before memory. I mean, my impression, Nasser was, I was very small when Nasser was swinging his weight around. And I didn't really understand it. But certainly, especially to Britain, Nasser came down as some kind of terrible boogeyman. And where in fact, his objectives were, he was a kind of centrist. He was very much opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, for example. And he was, you know, and his objectives were relatively small. I mean, if I had a canal running through my backyard, I would think that I should have some species of ownership in the canal. It seemed to be perfectly reasonable to me. And indeed, you know, the Americans seem to think it was perfectly reasonable at that time. It was only the Brits and the French who wanted to dig themselves in. And, you know, so, I mean, I think there was a time when progressive liberal politics, including liberal socialism, could actually have a role in the world. It's harder to see that now. And because I guess politics and economics and

production kind of dominated the debate then, in a way that they don't know, because race and particular religion seem to have taken over, which is not something, frankly, that I could have foreseen in the 60s and 70s at all.

11. Manley at Vassar

A news article from the *Miscellany News* on February 28, 1986, chronicled a lecture by Michael Manley to the Vassar community in our beloved Chapel. His address was titled “Prospects for Third World Self-Reliance in the 1990s,” and he spoke about the reforms needed in the IMF and World Bank on lending practices to the Third World. He was described as Jamaica’s former prime minister and shared his thoughts on the effects of colonization on manufacturing post-colonial states economies to benefit the imperial free trade complex.⁶⁴

“The majority of the problems concerning Third World debt can be traced to the effects of colonialism and the international economy in the 1960's and 70's,” Manley said. In those decades, many former colonies won their independence. During the period of colonization, many “natural economies” were replaced by “artificial” ones, Manley said. In other words, the colonial powers were producing “what somebody else needed,” forcing the colonies to “import virtually everything” it needed. In addition, after many colonies achieved independence, the international economy was not in its “most favorable state,” he commented. Starting in 1973, the former colonies faced a “world inflation” as well as an increase in grain and oil prices. The First World “protected itself by raising prices,” said Manley, but the poorer nations “tried to borrow to save themselves.” However, as need became greater, the policies of the IMF changed, making it harder to borrow for “long-term” goals, he said. In response to these problems, Manley suggested that an “international conference on debt” be organized to “bring together debtors and lenders.” He suggested that the debts be refinanced on a “much longer term” basis and that these payments never exceed a “certain percentage” of a nation's exports.”⁶⁵

His visit to campus was well received by both Vassar professors and students and he had a lasting impression as demonstrated by Professor Kennett’s account.

⁶⁴ *February 19, 1986*. (1986, February 19). A Documentary Chronicle of Vassar College.
<https://chronology.vassarspaces.net/1986-02-19-manley-lecture/>

⁶⁵ Fugger, A. (1986, February 28). Michael Manley Addresses Independence Issues. *The Miscellany News*, P.2.
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