

7
 NEW YORK TIMES
 14 April, 1985
 ON PAGE 911

Jamaica Host For a Festival Of the Young

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

Special to The New York Times

KINGSTON, Jamaica, April 10 — There was an Afghan rebel in a camouflage jacket and turban, three Cambodian exiles, a handful of Young Republicans and a teen-ager representing the 4-H clubs of America.

Altogether, nearly 1,100 people were drawn here from about 100 countries to attend the International Youth Conference designed as a "free world" counterpoint to the Soviet youth festival to be held this year in Moscow.

For several days, delegates met late into the night, haggling over the fine points of a statement of democratic principles that they called the Declaration of Kingston and applauding passionate speeches praising democracy and condemning Communism and dictatorships.

When the conference ended shortly after 4 A.M. today, the delegates, many in their late 20's and early 30's and some even in their 40's and 50's, had agreed that the work begun here should be continued. And it seemed likely that another convocation of the world's democratic youth, or at least those interested in youth affairs, was in the making somewhere down the road.

Jamaican Official Pleased

Errol Anderson, Jamaica's former Minister of Youth, who first conceived of the event and served as its chairman, proclaimed the conference a "tremendous success."

Mr. Anderson, 45 years old, who is now the Minister of Public Works, said he got the idea several years ago when he learned that the United Nations was designating 1985 as International Youth Year and that neither the United Nations nor any country was planning a major commemorative event.

He said that he knew the Russians had been holding occasional international youth festivals for years, but that as best he could tell there had never been such a gathering in the non-Communist world. He said he saw an opportunity to break the Russians' "monopoly on youth politics" and was encouraged early on by Washington.

One of the most dramatic moments of the conference came in the final hours, well after midnight, when 10 to 15 American conservatives and representatives of about a dozen European and Latin American countries stalked out to protest an overwhelming majority vote to postpone indefinitely elections to replace the arbitrarily appointed organizing secretariat.

How, the protesters asked, could anyone support a conference on democracy that failed to elect its own leaders democratically? Inexplicably, the organizers had not included an election in the conference schedule. Those who

voted to postpone balloting argued that a hastily organized election would have been a fiasco.

Walkout Is Criticized

Mr. Anderson called the walkout "arrogant" and "undemocratic." But he said he did not think that it had spoiled the overall impression of unity among non-Communists that the organizers of the conference had sought to project.

Some of the Americans said they were disappointed that the conference seemed to have been dominated by what they regarded as slightly left of center and centrist delegates. But later, like almost everyone else, including Joyce Nichols, a 19-year-old 4-H member from Bean Station, Tenn., they said they felt they had benefited from mingling and exchanging ideas with people from countries some of them may have only vaguely heard of.

For the Afghans and the Cambodians, the conference was a chance to show videotapes and photographs of the hardships in their countries. A Chilean lawyer said it was "a blessing" for him to be able to meet with people who lived under less repressive regimes.

President Reagan, whose Administration provided half of the \$2 million in contributions that financed the conference, sent a message of support. So did Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose British Government chose not to lend any financial assistance.

Some Nations Stay Away

But most governments kept their distance. Besides the United States and Jamaica, only West Germany and Canada gave cash, \$150,000 by the West Germans and \$27,000 by the Canadians, Mr. Anderson said. The Jamaican organizers had hoped some heads of state would address the conference, but none came.

The also was trouble getting internationally known entertainers to perform at the arts festival that ran concurrently with the conference. At one point, officials in Washington confirmed, President Reagan personally telephoned Michael Jackson to ask him to perform here. But even that did not work.

The only national leader to address the conference was the Jamaican Prime Minister, Edward P. G. Seaga, who is widely regarded as President Reagan's closest ally in the Caribbean.

The lone guest speaker was Vladimir Bukovsky, a 41-year-old former Soviet dissident who came to the West in 1976.

Russians Call It a C.I.A. Plot

For months, the Soviet Union had been attacking the conference as a Central Intelligence Agency plot "to split the world youth movement."

As evidence of Soviet propaganda against the conference, some delegates showed handbills that they said had been circulated in Europe. The fliers warned, incorrectly, that acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS, was rampant in Jamaica.

Some members of the Polish union movement Solidarity said their delegation would have been larger had it not been for police interference in Warsaw. The conference adopted a resolution expressing outrage at the action.

Only a handful of staff correspondents of independent news organizations attended the conference.