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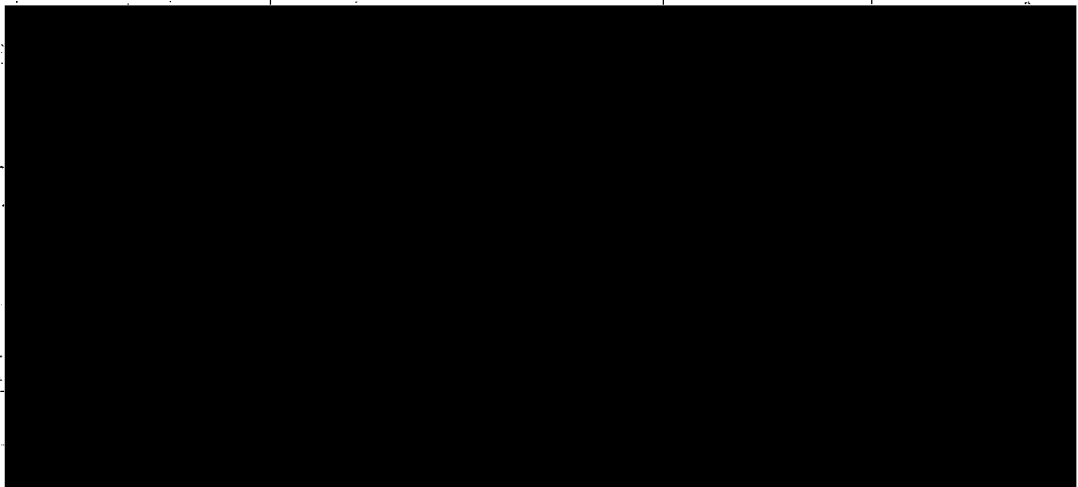
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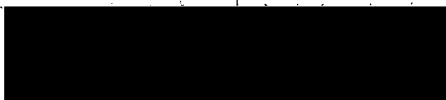
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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

JAMAICA: Short-Term Prospects

The Daily today prints the key judgments of a recent Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Short-term Prospects for Jamaica."

Acute political and economic tensions will persist in Jamaica over the next year or two no matter what the outcome of the pending showdown involving Prime Minister Manley, the radical pro-Cuban minority he has placed in power, and the island's moderate majority centered around opposition leader Seaga.

Seaga's Jamaica Labor Party is strongly favored to win the parliamentary election likely to be held by early October. The Party has strong support among organized labor, small farmers, the professional and business classes, and the security forces, all of whom desire to end the national crisis they blame on Manley's rule.

The radicals--with Manley's acquiescence if not full commitment--are using a campaign of political violence and vicious anti-US propaganda to avoid electoral defeat.

Manley's support would be important in any radical attempt to lock on to power. We judge he would be concerned about provoking civil war, inviting major Cuban intervention, and risking US countermeasures as well as the opprobrium of Caribbean and European countries.

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The radicals' course of action probably hinges on the extent to which their present campaign of violence and propaganda can demoralize and intimidate the ill-equipped security forces as well as civilian supporters of the Labor Party. High tension and uncertainty are likely to prevail throughout the preelection and immediate postelection period. Further incidents of violence involving US citizens could occur. We estimate that the Labor Party will retain its electoral advantage and that, in the end, the radicals will probably give way. ■

In our view, there is a 20- to 25-percent chance the radicals will launch a determined drive to retain power, through a coup or the blatant abuse of governmental authority, either before or immediately after the elections. We estimate that with their current resources, the radicals would have only an outside chance of succeeding in such an effort. Their prospects will remain limited unless they receive substantial external assistance. ■

Labor Party supporters and the bulk of the security forces would resist any radical effort to retain power illegally, almost certainly producing a period of large-scale and widespread violence. They would probably solicit US ■ assistance, and charge major Cuban involvement no matter what the actual level. If the antiradical forces thought they were losing, their pleas for aid would become urgent and public. ■

On balance, we estimate that Seaga and the Labor Party will probably attain control of the government over the next six months (70-percent likelihood)--either through elections or by prevailing in a forceful show-down. ■

A Labor Party government would hold some promise of restoring political peace and reviving Jamaica's economy by bolstering the confidence of local and foreign investors. But the obstacles would be imposing. Residual

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violence from any showdown with the radicals or a radical program of agitation and subversion would give pause to investors. ■

This would exacerbate the natural tension in a Labor Party program--the economic austerity required to lay the foundation for recovery versus popular expectations for immediate relief from severely depressed living conditions. Without a quick infusion of large-scale outside economic assistance, Seaga's popularity would decline sharply. Renewed disorders would work to the benefit of the radical opposition. The chances for sustained political peace and economic recovery--only fair under the best of circumstances--would be minimal. ■

If the radicals retain or renew their hold on power, they will work to undermine the parliamentary system and cement Jamaica's ties with Cuba, the USSR, and perhaps radical oil-rich states. The radicals' quest for revolutionary changes would be made easier by demoralization of the moderates and their accelerated emigration. Manley might seek to introduce greater policy balance, but we doubt that he could regain his old influence over his party or restore the confidence of Jamaica's moderates. ■

Entrenchment of the radicals in Jamaica would encourage leftists throughout the eastern Caribbean and embolden Cuba to speed its timetable for advancing its influence in the region. The need for Western economic ties would probably moderate radical tendencies over time, but US prestige and influence would be difficult to restore to current levels. ■