



Directorate of
Intelligence

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CIAALA LAR 87-018

Latin America Review (U)

31 July 1987

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Jamaica: Communist Party Struggling To Survive [Redacted] 27
[Redacted]

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The Communist Workers' Party of Jamaica, demoralized by a resounding loss in local elections in July 1986, is reported to be considering adopting a more moderate image. [Redacted]

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Articles have been coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to the Chief, Production Staff, Office of African and Latin American Analysis [Redacted]

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**Jamaica: Communist Party
Struggling To Survive** [redacted]

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The Communist Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ), demoralized by a resounding loss in local elections in July 1986, is reassessing its political strategy with an eye toward increasing its popular appeal. The WPJ, which has never garnered more than 2 percent of the popular vote in national or local contests since it was founded in 1978, has suffered additional setbacks in the past year. Consequently, its leaders reportedly are considering adopting a more moderate image.

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[redacted] the party's problems are so serious that it is unlikely to recover as a political force in the next few years. The WPJ, however, is likely to keep its organizational structure and small, ideologically committed hardcore membership intact. There also is a significant risk that the party, which has a history of violence and reportedly maintains a substantial arsenal of weapons, will resort to violent tactics against the ruling Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and its supporters to exert political pressure as the national election approaches.

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Declining Fortunes

The WPJ has experienced accumulating problems, since its poor showing in the parish council elections last year. The party fielded a record number of 14 candidates, but it lost all the races and polled fewer than 2,000 votes islandwide.

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[redacted] the beating has caused dissension among party leaders and the resignation of numerous party activists and other members. WPJ membership reportedly has dropped from more than 1,000 last year to about 200, causing income from dues to decline proportionately. Although we believe the membership figure last year was artificially inflated by relaxed membership criteria, the drop still has been significant.

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[redacted] seeking to broaden the party's appeal without jeopardizing its Marxist principles. Specifically, [redacted] the party has made mistakes in rejecting religion, seeming to pay greater attention to the Soviet Union than to Jamaica, and failing to criticize the murder of former Grenadian leader Maurice Bishop. [redacted] the party was not ready to compete effectively in the local elections last year.

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Strategy To Regain Ground

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[redacted] the party has begun a public relations campaign designed to counter these problems and, in particular, to dispel the antireligion image. [redacted] the WPJ has asked several leftist clergymen to persuade their congregations that Marxism and Christianity are compatible. In addition, party leaders reportedly are trying to project a new "open" image, speaking frankly in public about problems and emphasizing their intention to be less secretive about the party's plans and future activities. [redacted]

[redacted] maintain a substantial arsenal of weapons to support its criminal operations. [redacted]

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Outside Communist Support

[redacted] the WPJ's traditional Communist benefactors—the Soviet Union, Cuba, and North Korea—have reduced their financial support in recent years, probably in response to the party's poor electoral showing and the PNP's good chance of winning the next election. [redacted]

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[redacted] the party can make headway by launching a popular education drive, penetrating trade unions, and demonstrating against the Seaga government. The WPJ reportedly continues to hold political education classes in the Kingston area and monthly meetings for prospective party members, while targeting revolutionary youth and local trade unions for membership. [redacted] the WPJ is having only limited success in recruiting party members among university students but has made significant inroads in trade unions. Historically, the JLP and the leftist-leaning People's National Party (PNP) led by Michael Manley have derived considerable political support from their affiliated trade unions. [redacted]

despite Soviet disappointment in the party's performance, Moscow continues to provide the WPJ and its associated trade unions with about \$50,000 in cash per year, plus material support, including airline tickets and vehicles. [redacted] the Soviets probably have not provided funds to the party since its electoral defeat a year ago. [redacted]

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Havana had traditionally provided financial aid and training to the party, but the WPJ's criticism of Havana's role in the 1983 coup against Grenadian leader Bishop prompted Cuba to halt most, if not all, its support. [redacted]

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[redacted] greater cultivation of organized labor also can help his party. [redacted] that about 450 sugar workers—at the urging of the WPJ—are seeking to be represented by the University and Allied Workers Union (UAWU), a WPJ-affiliated union. [redacted]

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[redacted] we believe the party will try harder to encourage protests as the national election, which must be called by December 1988, nears. [redacted]

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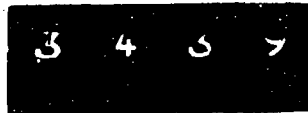
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Despite its efforts to project a more responsible image, the WPJ continues to resort to illegal means to help finance party operations. Members of the party's Action Committee [redacted] commit robberies and participate in marijuana trafficking. [redacted]

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Outlook

We judge that the WPJ stands little chance of making major political gains on its own over the next few years. [redacted] it will not run a parliamentary candidate this year to avoid splitting the left and hurting the PNP's chances of defeating the ruling party. Even if Seaga were to wait until 1988 to call an election, we believe the WPJ would not be in a significantly stronger position to run candidates. [redacted]

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[redacted] the WPJ will offer unofficial, discreet support to the PNP in the elections. Munroe probably believes that WPJ would have more for opportunities for expansion under a Manley government. [redacted]

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[redacted] The ruling party, [redacted] already has used this link to its advantage by condemning Manley's party for its affiliation to the WPJ. Unless the WPJ succeeds in moderating its image, the public's perception of close ties to the WPJ almost certainly would be a political liability for the PNP. Given the party's poor political prospects, it probably will increasingly revert to the kinds of sporadic violence, particularly shooting of JLP supporters, that marked the national election in 1980. [redacted]

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