



Bureau of Public Affairs

The Newly Independent Nations

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JAMAICA

Form of government:

Dominion

Date of independence:

August 6, 1962

Previous status:

Colony of the United Kingdom (internally self-governing)

Area:

4,613 square miles

Population:

1,609,814 (1960 census)

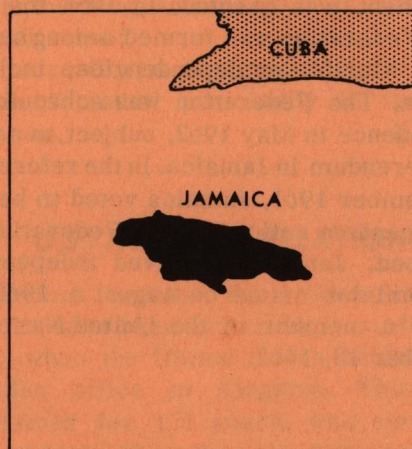
Principal cities:

Greater Kingston, the capital (population 376,520)

Montego Bay (population 23,610)

Spanish Town (population 14,439)

Jamaica--the name comes from an Arawak Indian word meaning "land of wood and water"--is the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to gain its independence since Panama became free in 1903. Much of the area is rugged and mountainous, except for narrow coastal strips and a few plains. It is a tropical land, humid most of the year, although the months from December to March



are pleasant, especially on the north shore. Slightly smaller than our State of Connecticut, Jamaica has a population of about 1.6 million.

When Christopher Columbus discovered this tropical island, it was inhabited by Arawak Indians. These, however, had become extinct by the time the British landed on the island in 1655. Throughout the colonial period most of the colonists and plantation overseers were Europeans, but the vast majority of the people were Africans who worked on the sugar plantations. The great mass of the people today are descendants of these Africans who were brought to Jamaica before slavery was abolished. The population also includes some 270,000 of mixed descent, 27,000 East Indians, 20,000 Europeans, and 100,000 others.

HISTORY

Jamaica was originally settled by the Spanish in the early 16th century. In 1655 the

British landed on the island, which Spain formally ceded to them 15 years later in the Treaty of Madrid. During the sugar and slave trading days it was a source of great wealth to its landowners, many of whom were absentees.

After a long period of direct colonial rule, Jamaica achieved limited local political control in the late 1930's. The early years of this period of limited self-government were marked by strikes and unrest, and during World War II several leaders, including Alexander Bustamante, the present Prime Minister, were interned under defense regulations. Following the war, increasing self-government was granted. In 1958 the West Indies Federation was formed among several British Caribbean dependencies, including Jamaica. The Federation was scheduled for independence in May 1962, subject to a popular referendum in Jamaica. In the referendum in September 1961, Jamaica voted to become an independent nation and the Federation was abandoned. Jamaica achieved independence with dominion status on August 6, 1962, and became a member of the United Nations on September 18, 1962.

GOVERNMENT

The constitutional head of state is the Queen of England, who is represented in Jamaica by a Governor-General appointed by her on the recommendation of Jamaica's Prime Minister. Executive power is vested in the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister, who also serves as Minister of External Affairs and Defense. Legislative power is exercised by a lower house, the House of Representatives of 45 elected members, and an upper house, the Senate. The Senate, which has 21 appointed members, may delay but not veto legislation passed by the House. A unique feature of the Jamaica Constitution is that, while the Governor-General appoints all Senators, 13 are nominated by the Prime Minister (leader of the majority party) and 8 are nominated by the leader of the opposition.

A general election was held in April 1962, from which Bustamante's Jamaica Labor

Party emerged victor with 26 seats in the House of Representatives. The People's National Party, which had formed the Government since 1955, won 19 seats.

ECONOMY

Jamaica can be described as being underdeveloped but with well-developed financial, educational, and political institutions and an advanced money economy. In spite of its large and rapidly increasing population, it had in 1961 a per capita gross national product of about \$440--one of the higher rates in the Western Hemisphere. The economic mainstays are tourism, bauxite, agriculture, and light industry.

Some 225,000 tourists come to the island annually, and facilities to accommodate them grow apace, principally on the scenic north shore around Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. In 1961 visitors spent \$40 million in Jamaica.

Bauxite, discovered in 1942, has since become the major industry, and Jamaica is today the world's foremost producer of this ore, which is used in the production of aluminum. Three American Aluminum companies, Kaiser, Reynolds, and Alcoa--and Alcan of Canada are engaged in large-scale extraction of the ore; Alcan is also engaged in reduction of the ore to aluminum.

The standard surface-strip method is used in the mining for bauxite ore. Preparation for mining and the reclamation of the land after mining are quite unique. The mining regulations require that each mined-out area must be restored "as nearly as may be practicable to the level of agricultural or pastoral production or of utilisation for afforestation purposes" as existed before the mining began. As a result the aluminum companies have established subsidiary agricultural operations to use the land to its fullest both before and after mining operations. They have developed new breeds of cattle and new feeds and grasses. One firm even has its own slaughterhouse. They now produce citrus fruits, grains and feeds, beef, pork, and poultry.

The companies have also built extensive port facilities for loading of the ore, and they

have built and are operating railroads to transport ore from the mines to the reducing plants.

Sugar, bananas, and citrus fruits account for most of the farm produce and form the bulk of the agricultural exports. The island is a heavy importer of other foodstuffs, and the Government encourages greater domestic food production to conserve foreign exchange. To increase the efficiency of the agricultural population, between 6,000 and 7,000 farmworkers come to the United States each year under a Farm Labor Program.

With the passage of the Pioneer Industries Law in 1949 and the establishment of the Jamaica Industrial Development Corporation in 1952, Jamaica has attracted considerable light industry to the island. Garment manufacturing, blankets, pottery, toiletries, jute processing, and oil refining are among the most notable examples.

In 1957 Jamaica undertook a well-conceived 10-year plan, which was revised and extended for 5 more years in 1962. The major goals of this plan are to increase the distribution of the national wealth and to improve the resources going to social development overhead.

U.S. assistance to Jamaica in fiscal year 1962 was concentrated primarily on housing and water supply. Other fields of assistance

include education, health, agriculture, and industrial development.

EDUCATION

Jamaica's educational system includes more than 800 elementary schools and also secondary and technical schools. Over 17 percent of the Government budget goes into education. It is available to all--the Government grants thousands of scholarships each year.

The University of the West Indies at Kingston has courses in the arts, sciences, and engineering, and it boasts an outstanding medical school.

A Peace Corps program is now in operation in Jamaica, principally in vocational education.

U.S.-JAMAICA RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Jamaica have been increasingly cordial since 1791, when the United States established a consular office in Kingston. This office, maintained for 171 years, was elevated to an embassy when the island became independent. The United States looks forward to continued friendly relations with Jamaica.

the newly independent nations

AFRICA

Libya
Sudan
Morocco
Tunisia
Ghana
Guinea
Cameroon
Togo
Malagasy Republic
Congo (Léopoldville)

Somali Republic
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Niger
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Ivory Coast
Chad
Central African Republic
Congo (Brazzaville)
Gabon
Senegal

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Tanganyika
Rwanda
Burundi
Algeria
Uganda

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Jordan

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Israel
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Burma
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Viet-Nam
Laos
Cambodia

Indonesia
Malaya
Western Samoa

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Jamaica

Trinidad and Tobago

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