

What's next for the Caribbean?

In the final weeks of the Jamaican electoral campaign, full-scale civil war was increasingly discussed as one potential outcome of the voting. Jamaica's bishop, the Right Reverend Neville Desouza, explicitly warned just days before the elections that the threats from both sides to not respect the election's results could lead to a direct confrontation between Cuba and the U.S. "If uncontrollable violence follows the election," the bishop declared in a plea for calm, "then either the Americans or the Cubans might send in forces to 'impose' peace."

The scenarios were not far-fetched. Well-armed forces from both sides of Jamaica's parties had threatened to contest the results of a close election by force. On election eve, for instance, Jamaican Labour Party candidate Edward Seaga called a press conference to announce his intentions of calling his supporters out into the streets in riots and disturbances should his contender Michael Manley take the election for prime ministry through "fraud."

Throughout the campaign, the Jamaican elections increasingly took on the character of a surrogate war between the ideologies of East and West, communism and capitalism. The more radical wing of Manley's People's National Party (PNP), which has close ties to Cuba, was repeatedly charged in the opposition press with receiving Cuban arms and training.

On the other hand, Seaga and the Jamaican Labour Party were accused of being financed by the CIA. Seaga has his own "Florida connection" as a source for weapons and armed support.

Seaga's unexpected landslide victory, however, has forestalled these extreme scenarios—for the moment. Unable even to entertain hopes of overturning the overall outcome of the elections, the defeated People's National Party will contest the results of only three seats. Both sides, for the moment, have stepped back to assess the situation—and regroup.

The results of the election, however, had "locked in"

confrontationist policies adopted both in Washington and Havana, and by strengthening the hands of the extremists in both "right" and "left" camps, could well lead to a bigger crisis when the next round explodes.

Seaga's first moves as prime minister—expelling the Cuban ambassador and promising a base in Jamaica for Cuban exiles—has increased a desperate sense of isolation in Havana. Viewing Michael Manley's failure as proof that attempts at peaceful transition to development in Third World nations are hopeless, Cuban ultraradicals see violent revolution as the order of the day.

That was the policy bluntly stated by Cuban Central Committee member Jesus Montane at a recent East Berlin conference: "The revolutionary triumph in Nicaragua verified the effectiveness of the armed struggle as a decisive means of taking power."

With the brief electoral "deal" between Carter and Castro now swept away, a step-up of "revolutionary" activity by Cubans in the Caribbean-Central American region is now likely.

In Washington, a new round of confrontation with Cuba is being prepared by Anglophile "conservatives." A recent policy statement by Reagan Latin American advisers promised that the "embargo will be maintained, dissidents encouraged, and defection of Cuban military units promoted"—unless Cuba breaks all ties with the Soviet Union. The provocative policy announced by Reagan's chief Latin America adviser, Roger Fontaine, is to organize a revolt inside Cuba à la Poland to produce "the socialist camp's first true deserter."

As in Poland, the chief result of such strategies is to egg on a direct Warsaw Pact military response.

Inside Jamaica, the election served to consolidate the grip of the terrorist-oriented factions in both main parties.

In the wake of Manley's defeat, the radical wing of the People's National Party is quickly moving to seize control, led by dentist D. K. Duncan. The party's unprecedented loss is being blamed on Manley's failure to move "left" hard enough, and new tactics are being demanded.

"We have accepted the bourgeois democratic process up to now," Duncan announced following the election, but "we now move into the final stage of revolutionary politics." While close to the Cubans, Duncan's wing of the party also cooperates very closely with the Washington-based terrorist center, the Institute for Policy Studies.

Manley's expected retirement from a leading role in Jamaica's politics will leave moderates in the country with little leverage against the increasingly drastic polarization.