

ABSTRACT

This work is essentially a study of the Dynamics of Protest and change in the Jamaican Polity during a critical period of thirty years which witnessed the transfer of political power from the British Colonial masters to the local populace. It was a time when the social order was undergoing increasing stress due to the impact of liberal and later increasingly radical ideas of social, political and economic reform.

The social order of Jamaica operated with the dominant objective of maintaining the control and domination of the minority cultural section. The protest movements in the period represented a challenge to this dominance giving rise to conflict and instability and the use of force and other containment measures in an effort to maintain social order and stability.

In Chapter I we contend that protest has always been a feature of Jamaican society since the seventeenth century. Hence, unlike most studies in this field, we have found it necessary to explore the dynamics of the interrelationships between master and slave, and the ex-slave ruling class and the freed men from the post-emancipation period through the 1831 Sam Sharpe Rebellion to the 1930's.

Chapter II focusses on the Riots of 1938. The stranglehold of the elite on the means of production, the inability of the working class to eke out at best more than a marginal existence and an unsympathetic political system which paid scant regard to its well being, resulted in islandwide turmoil.

Political Independence was achieved in 1962 but the basic order remained intact. The consequence of this provide the basis for continuing efforts among broad sections of the people to find solutions to these problems, efforts which lead to a questioning of existing institutions. This is what the Young Socialist League sought to do and an analysis of its programmes, policies and achievements is given in Chapter IV.

The Black Power Movement and the Rodney Riots of 1968 in a sense, represented the most severe challenge to the ruling class since 1938. It was followed by the protest of Abeng and we focus on these in our last Chapter.