

Extra Mural Dept

U. C. W. I.

Long St.

St. John's Antique.

13/7/54

894

"MORANT BAY, JAMAICA, 1865".

(This paper is a slightly edited version of the final chapter, entitled "Epilogue: the 1860's", of a Ph.D. thesis submitted at London in October, 1954, on the Economic Development of Jamaica, 1840-1865.)

by

D. G. HALL.

The " Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 " is one of the few local ~~his~~ historical events of which most Jamaicans know something , even if it is limited to the bare fact that there was some sort of a rebellion and massacre in Morant Bay, a port town on the south east coast .

In England the affair is remembered because of the tremendous public interest ~~at~~ which was at the time aroused when national figures such as John Stuart Mill, Lord Tennyson , *Charles Buxton, Benjamin Disraeli and* Thomas Carlyle , ~~and~~ Charles Kingsley entered into the pros and cons of the case. They , and the lawyers and judges , were concerned with the constitutional legality of the behaviour of Mr. John Edward Eyre, at the time Governor of Jamaica ; and with the implications of the case for future colonial administrators and administration. Eyre was , in fact , brought to trial : there was no conviction but the Morant Bay episode closed his career in the colonial service .

This paper is not concerned with the constitutional aspects of the event nor with the reactions of Englishmen to it . The purpose is simply to tell the story of what happened at Morant Bay in 1865 and to fit that story into the wider Jamaican framework of the time . Also , it is an attempt to give a proper definition to the event . Was it really a " Negro Rebellion " as contemporary observers and certain historians have claimed? or was it a " Jamaica Rebellion " as others have said ? Is there any real evidence to support either of those definitions , and, if not , what is the proper description of what took place ?

The early 1850's were not prosperous years in Jamaica . The passing of the Sugar Duties Act in 1846 and the subsequent reductions of the customs preference allowed to British colonial sugars entering the United Kingdom depressed the sugar industry and that depression was passed on , through falling estate wage-rates and employment, to the

economy as a whole . But there are signs that in the second half of the decade conditions had begun to improve . Various mining enterprises had been busy in the island during 1854 - 1857, though only small quantities of minerals (chiefly copper) had been produced ; and there was, especially after the appointment of a Main Roads Commission in 1859, a certain amount of work available on highway maintenance . During 1855 to 1860 sugar prices were better than they had been for several years previously , and estate abandonment was no longer taking place on the scale of previous years.

In November, 1858, Governor Darling (Eyre's predecessor), opening the Legislative Session , remarked :

" The spirit of public enterprise is not,
I have been rejoiced to find, altogether
dormant among us." *✱*

He went on to speak of proposals for a Slip- Dock in Kingston Harbour, of new project for railway expansion , and of the need for 'tramways in agricultural districts.' But the most interesting part of his speech concerned the financing of these various works . He understood the prevailing hesitancy of capitalists to embark on new , and especially such long term, enterprises, and had heard that there would be requests for government guarantees and assistance :

" Should they assume a substantial form,
and reach me, supported by your approval;
which I am confident will not be granted
without the fullest inquiry and deliberation,
you will find me disposed , and ready to
act in hearty co-operation with you, believing
as I do, that there is scarcely a limit to
the extent to which a government may, under
the requisite precautions, wisely and safely
promote the initiation of public works, whose
reproductive character may be relied upon with
reasonable certainty." *1*

The Governor , apparently, was willing to introduce a policy of deficit financing, or, to use the more attractive American term ' pump priming',

by which government would deliberately overspend the amount received in revenues so as to boost employment, purchasing power, and thus stimulate the demand for goods and services.

At about the same time two unconnected people visited Jamaica and subsequently published their views of conditions in the island.² They both had criticisms to make, but from neither account do we gain any impression of general poverty or public unrest. Indeed, they are both at pains to describe how, despite the reduced estate production of sugar, the general population could maintain itself by small-scale agriculture and other extra-estate employments.

In order to understand the tragedy of 1865 it is first necessary to realise that in the period of 5 years since 1860 a rapid succession of economic and political catastrophes, each of which by itself would have raised serious problems, had hit the island. Jamaica in 1865 was far ~~an~~ different from Jamaica in 1860. Behind these, moreover, and enhanced by them, was a gradual worsening of relationships between employers and labourers, and also between the people as a whole, the Island Legislature and the Governor.

In November, 1860, a great religious revival began, quite suddenly, among Moravian churches in Manchester, and soon spread throughout the island to include the members of other sects. It became known, subsequently, as the Baptist Revival.³ It is difficult to explain the origin of the movement. Manchester contained no sugar estates. It was a relatively ~~pr~~ prosperous parish of small-settlers. It is unlikely that the religious feeling arose as a reaction to any peculiar economic distress. In part, it may be ascribed to a desire to break away from the rather hum-drum routine of daily labour. Social amenities and recreational facilities were limited. The local Chapel was usually the social centre. An intense emotional appeal by the local preacher might well sway a congregation²

and the response, as well as the appeal, might prove infectious.

There is less need to fumble for explanation of the spread of the Revival to other sects and other parts of the island. The Baptists for example had good reason to encourage it. In the early post-emancipation period they had been given strong voluntary financial support by their members, and, as a result, had arranged that financial aid from the parent Society in England should be withdrawn. Then, as freehold settlement took the people away from established centres of influence, as the people became poorer, and as the old ministers and the old ex-slaves died out and were replaced by others who were not bound by such close memories and associations, the Baptists had lost both numerical and financial support. There had been a small recovery in the later 1850's, which possibly reflected the slightly improved conditions of those years, but membership and funds were still below the good days of the early 'forties.⁴ A recruiting campaign ^{certainly} ~~would have~~ had its attractions.

As the first revivalists took to the road they were joined by others along the way, and the emotional appeal gained strength. From the point of view of the planters, and their supporters, who wanted an abundance of cheap labour, the cross-country processions were proof ~~that~~ that the workers were content to fiddle while Rome burned. From the point of view of the Anglican Clergy, who had never been closely allied with the people, it was an "awful profanation of religion" which led the people to forsake work and thus to starve and later, perhaps, to steal.⁵ The more 'respectable' citizens were prone to condemn it on the ground that the revivalists were behaving immorally as they went.

"... in thousands from one District to the other, sleeping in Chapels and Houses promiscuously for many months..."⁶

The movement, it was said, encouraged "sensuality and reckless vagaries."⁷

But the sponsoring missionaries and preachers reacted quite differently:

" I have engaged Darliston house, in which there is a good room for the meeting and we shall , all well , remove up there in a few days . I ~~am~~ just returned and have only time to save the mail to add a mere line or two . On Lord's day , in the evening, many were brought to the Lord , falling down while I was speaking . At the end thirteen were found prostrated in different stages of their new birth . Before they left about eleven p.m. , they were full of joy , with one or two exceptions. "

And again , by the same writer ,

" One of the Kingston newspapers complains that ' the people cannot be induced to come to work, even if you offer them one pound per day.' The fact is, the people have a more important business to attend to for the ~~pre~~ present ! " 8

The Revival ended in 1861 and its economic effects might have been so short-lived as to be negligible, but in the same year the American Civil War began. The Revivalists had neglected not only the estates but their provision-grounds as well, and thus , at a time when the prices of imported foodstuffs were increasing, local produce was scarce in the markets. There was probably, therefore, subsequent to the dying down of religious fervour, a return to labour on provisions-grounds rather than on the estates. The planters would have continued their tirades against the unwillingness of the creoles to labour.

Early in 1862 there was an incident involving the seizure of two Americans from the Southern States who were on board one of the Royal Mail Steamers. Both Darling and the Colonial Office feared that the occurrence might lead to an outbreak of war with Britain and the threat of invasion of Jamaica. The island⁹ was therefore to be prepared to meet attack. Plans were immediately entered into to strengthen the force of Island Volunteers. Membership of this body was open to all who had an

annual income of £40 a year or more. ¹⁰ Thus at a time when agricultural employer - employee relations were somewhat strained the policy was adopted for a very good reason, to put weapons into the hands of the comparatively well-to-do.

In the meantime, the sugar industry had suffered from another price fall in Britain. American Civil War affected the North American market and supplies of Cuban and other foreign sugars were diverted to the United Kingdom. ¹¹ Prices, excluding duty, fell from 26/10 per cwt. in 1860 to 23/5 in 1861, with further decreases in the next two years. The price fall was followed, as usual, by attempts of the planters to lower wages, by reducing the rate per day or task, or by increasing the amount of work to be done for a given sum of money. The power of the peasant or labourer to earn was reduced, and, at the same time, there was a renewed inflow of indentured labour which reduced the number of estate jobs offered to local people. It is important to remark that the arrangements for these immigrants had been entered into before the outbreak of the American Civil War and the fall of sugar prices. Their arrival was another accidental addition to the causes of ill-feeling.

By the spring of 1862 it must have been abundantly clear that the ^{island} ~~island~~ was in a period of economic crisis which demanded action, or, at the very least, acknowledgement by the Legislature. At that time Governor Darling went to England on leave, from which he did not return, and the administration was taken over by Edward Eyre. Darling does not appear to have been a particularly able Governor. Perhaps his ~~greatest~~ asset was his familiarity with the ~~island~~ and its people and their ideas, opinions, and prejudices. ¹² If he could ^{not} cure corns he was at least able to recognise them and avoid stepping on them. More unfortunately he seems also to have been able to create them, though he would have disclaimed this doubtful qualification.

The change of governors at a time of political and economic crisis was made worse by the fact that for the first two years Eyre held appointment only as Acting-Lieutenant-Governor in expectation of Darling's return, or the definite appointment of a successor to him. In short, as Eyre often pointed out in his despatches, the executive was in an embarrassing position. In matters of dispute he was unwilling to take up a position unacceptable to Darling, even though he did not support the absent Governor's point of view. Yet, the fact that Eyre continued to accept this situation for two years, during which he sank into irreconcilable disagreement with ^{one party in the Assembly (the "Town Party")¹³} ~~the Town Party~~, suggests that, despite its inconveniences, conventional deference to the absent Governor had its advantages for an incompetent Lieutenant.

To begin with, Eyre was not considered by the Colonial Office to be competent for the Governorship of Jamaica.¹⁴ Secondly, he was a 'correct' and abstemious son of a Victorian clergyman, and he disliked those whose social behaviour exceeded the limits of his own narrow code. He was the sort of man least likely to seek or to find friends in a colony where alcoholic drinks were habitually consumed in large quantities, and where one of the crying needs was for a 'bastardy law' to ensure the financial support by fathers of their illegitimate offspring. Moreover, and this probably from his own awareness of his unpopularity and the need to prove himself in the eyes of the Colonial Office, he resented all criticism and would go to great lengths to prove that his critics were either liars or nobodies.¹⁵

This would have been dangerous policy for a colonial governor anywhere at any time, and it was made more so by the attitude of the Colonial Office which, although it might issue a private rebuke to the Governor, never really challenged him.

Professor Burn , in his book "Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies"¹⁶, describes the official attitudes of James Stephen and Henry Taylor, the two permanent officials in the Colonial Office who were mainly concerned with West Indian affairs . In illustration he takes the case of Edmond Lyon, a Stipendiary Magistrate , who in 1836 described the planters of St. Thomas in the Vale as "not good" and as requiring to be watched to prevent oppression of their apprentices.

Lyon's report was published among other Jamaica papers , and when seen by the planters concerned , was denounced by them as "false and scandalous" . They demanded an investigation . James Stephen thought that this demand ought to be met , and that if the planters could make out a case , Lyon should be called upon to defend his position . Henry Taylor , who was at the time Stephen's right hand man , saw the matter differently:

"I think it would be a heavy blow and a great discouragement to the special magistracy if we first called upon them for general reports and opinions , then published them , and at last when the parties against whom they bore declared them false and slanderous called upon the magistrates to prove their opinions by adducing evidence and to stand the issue of a full investigation of the grounds on which they were formed" .

By the time of Eyre's governorship James Stephen had long been succeeded by Henry Taylor as the chief adviser on West Indian affairs . Thus at the very time when there was a Governor who did not hesitate to withhold or to misrepresent evidence in order to prove himself right¹⁷, there was at the Colonial Office an official who was prepared to stand behind the Governor and relieve him of the need ~~was~~ to defend himself against criticism .

Almost from his moment of landing in the Island Eyre became involved in political troubles . Incident succeeded incident , and in 1864 , commenting on a recent fracas in the Assembly , " The Morning Journal" of 15th January remarked :

" Whether it comes about now or hereafter, it seems inevitable that his Excellency will fall into difficulties from which , perhaps, it will not be possible to extricate him without serious embarrassment both to himself and the colony . His Excellency is not responsible so much as the Colonial Secretary , who has been remarkably indifferent about Jamaica affairs." 18

Already it was clear that serious trouble lay ahead , arising out of political disagreements alone and without even considering the economic problems which were, in the same year , to be still further increased .

In May and June , 1864 , the annual spring rains were heavier than usual . They resulted in floods which damaged crops , roads , and bridges . Later in the year the Governor reported that school attendance had fallen off considerably during past months

" . . . from the poverty and distress which existed amongst the labourers , owing to the failure of the provision crops ." 19

The floods were succeeded by drought²⁰ . Provision prices rose in almost every parish of the island .

In January , 1865 , E.B. Underhill^{Secretary of the B.M.S. in England} wrote to Mr Cardwell , the Secretary of State for the Colonies . He referred to letters he had received from Jamaica and set about to describe conditions in the island. The drought , he said , had aggravated previous distresses . The people were starving because they were too heavily taxed and because there was not sufficient employment for them . He accused the Legislature of unjust taxation of the coloured population ; of refusing just tribunals ; and of denying political rights . He recommended a searching

enquiry into island political and economic affairs ; the formation of marketing associations and the institutions of other encouragements to small-settlers' cultivation of all minor crops , but not of sugar which could best be done on the estates . Finally , he remarked that

"With just laws and light taxation , capitalists would be encouraged to settle in Jamaica , and employ themselves in the production of the more important staples , such as sugar , coffee , and cotton. Thus the people would be employed , and the present starvation rate of wages be improved." ²¹

The Secretary of State forwarded Underhill's letter to Governor Eyre, and asked for his comments . Eyre , in turn asked the Custodes , ^{the} Anglican Clergy , the Baptists , and other missionary bodies , to give him their views on " the various allegations " made by Underhill . It would be impossible to present a summary of every argument advanced and every point made , but one clear fact is this : in view of the evidence contained in many of ²² the reports it was without the shadow of doubt the duty of Governor Eyre to invite a thorough official enquiry into island affairs . Underhill's letter had been vague and , in some respects , ill-informed , but there was no reason why a ^{Baptist} minister in England should have been accurate in a survey of current economic conditions in a colony several thousand miles away.

Where Eyre failed the Colonial Office failed also , for the reports were duly forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. But there , under the persuasion of the Governor's covering despatches , drought , prices , taxation , and all else were forgotten while the theme of ' the lazy negro ' was drummed home ²³ . The propaganda had its effect . A Colonial Office minute of June 1865 remarked :

" I am~~am~~ not sure that this distress is a bad thing . The idleness of the peasantry needs an exemplary punishment . It may do something to open their eyes ." 24

For their own sakes , it must be assumed that the Secretary of State and his advisers had not read the reports . Even public servants like Mr. Justice Kemble , and Mr. Justice Ker had written to Eyre suggesting a reduction of ecclesiastical expenditures ; a reduction of the staff attached to the Legislature ; a reduction of the number of Judges from 4 to 3 ; an end to the paying of £600 a year to the " Registrar in Chancery " whose job was non-existent ; a reduction in the cost of publishing the Legislative debates ; and , finally, reform of the legal system which was " dilatory , costly and unsatisfactory wholly unsuited to a mercantile community " , and disadvantageous to all . 25

D^r Bowerbank , Custos of Kingston , had written of unprecedented suffering throughout the entire island . He blamed the drought and the American War and did not agree with Underhill on the points of over - taxation and lack of employment. But Bowerbank listed other sources of discontent . He mentioned the faulty performance of duty by Magistrates; the inefficiency of the law Courts; the "laxity and improprieties" of public servants ; the bribery and corruption at elections ; the misrepresentations in the local newspapers ; the lack of strict enforcement of law ; and " the disgraceful bickerings and battlings for office . 26

Richard Hill of Spanish Town reported :

" I have never seen the Colony sunk so low, in the wretchedness of 'difficulty of living' as at present . That difficulty is both extraneous , and not to be lessened by forethought, and internal , and directly produced by Legislative action ."

Among the internal sources he mentioned the lack of a satisfactory Poor Law , undernourishment , and the rising prices of essential foods and

clothing .

News of the Underhill letter and the allegations it contained leaked out , not suprisingly since Eyre had communicated it to so many people without any request for secrecy . Throughout the island mass meetings were held at which the Governor and Legislature were asked to take some action to alleviate the distress. Some of these meetings appear to have been sponsored by people who were attempting to make political capital out of the situation , but the fact remains that conditions were favourable to their attempts . One of the Petitions ^{to the Crown} came from certain poor people of St Ann , and "The Queens Advice" sent in reply to it , deserves quotation in full as a supreme example of administrative failure :

" I request that you will inform the Petitioners that their Petition has been laid before the Queen , and that I have received Her Majesty's command to inform them , that the prosperity of the Laboring Classes , as well as of all other Classes , depends , in Jamaica , and in other Countries , upon their working for Wages , not uncertainly or capriciously , but steadily and continuously , at the times when their labour is wanted , and for so long as it is wanted ; and that if they would use this industry , and thereby render the Plantations productive , they would enable the Planters to pay them higher Wages for the same hours of work than are received by the best Field Labourers in this Country ; and as the cost of the necessaries of life is much less in Jamaica than it is here , they would be enabled, by adding prudence to industry , to lay by an ample provision for seasons of drought and dearth ; and they may be assured that it is from their own industry and prudence , in availing themselves of the means of prospering that are before them, and not from any such schemes as have been suggested to them , that they must look for an improvement in their condition ; and that Her Majesty will regard with interest and satisfaction their advancement through their own merits and efforts." ²⁸

This supercilious message contains little for us to dwell upon .
The contradiction implied in the comment that the people should give

labour " steadily and continuously ,at the times when their labour is wanted , and for as long as it is wanted " hints at the seasonal nature of the estates' demand for labour , but pays no attention to its importance . The assumption that labour would make the Estates more productive and thus enable Planters to pay higher wages than were given to English field workers was completely baseless . It simply drew rings around the high¹ labour cost of sugar production and the influence of prices in Britain on wage - rates in Jamaica . The planter¹'s aim was to reduce the cost of labour . This could be done by lowering wage-rates still further , or by reducing the number of workers employed by the introduction of implements and machinery . In the latter case , any slight wage-increase which might be awarded to those remaining in employment would be offset by an increase of the number of unemployed workers , who would be unlikely to find new jobs in a period of economic depression .

The Secretary of State²⁹ either failed , or refused , to acknowledge the complicated nature of the labour market in Jamaica , and , of course , the comparison with conditions in Britain was invalid.

The situation in the island was now dangerous . It was quite possible that , under the influence of demagogues , local uprisings might occur in those districts where hardship was most acute . Even so, there was still not the slightest evidence that anyone feared a general upheaval . The fact of poverty does not necessarily carry with it either an intention to revolt or the existence of a revolutionary organisation . Nor could it be said that the people were showing any general inclination to resort to arms . Even in the better days of the 1850's there had been occasional and brief outbursts against some specific local grievance , but such events were not regarded as of

any great significance by the island authorities . They had been taken for what they were , isolated and limited protests against some actual or conceived injustice . Before discussing the disturbance which began in Morant Bay in October , 1865 , let us briefly outline two previous riots which had occurred in 1859 .

On the 9th. and the 21st. of February , 1859 , Governor Darling received letters from the Custos and local officials in Westmoreland informing him that mobs armed with cutlasses and axes had demolished the toll-gates in the Parish . In the open countryside toll-gates could be, and often were , easily outflanked , but evasion was more difficult on the outskirts of towns , and the approaches to Savannah-la-Mar were heavily taxed . Many of the offenders eluded the authorities , but early in March they presented themselves at the Savannah-la-Mar Court-house where Judge ^{ar}Cargill and Mr. Kelly, the local Stipendiary , were trying those who had been arrested . At first it was thought that the arrivals had come to give themselves up for trial , but instead , a large body of people armed with cutlasses attacked the police - station and , according to letters from Cargill and Kelly , " were hardly restrained from committing bloodshed ."

On March 13th. Darling embarked at Port Royal with a detachment of Black Troops of the West India Regiment and arrived at Savannah-la-Mar on the following day . Peace was immediately restored , and Darling , after lecturing the local magistrates " for their supineness " in dealing with the first outbreaks , dismissed the Custos . Finally , he explained to the people that the troops were there

"... in order to uphold the Legal Tribunals of the Country and ensure that the course of law should be uninterrupted ..." 30

That was the end of the Westmoreland toll-gate rioting .

In August of the same year a disturbance broke out at Falmouth , and here the events were almost parallel with those which were to occur in Morant Bay six years later . On August 1st. , the day on which Jamaicans celebrate the emancipation , a man named Theodore Brine and about sixty others were arrested for rioting during a dispute over the ~~the~~ possession of land on Florence Hall estate near Falmouth .

When the trials of these people began , a mob stormed the court - house , attacked the Magistrates and Police , and rescued the prisoners . General rioting followed during the next few days . Buildings were set alight , and the town's water supply was cut off . Finally , there was an attack on the police-station ; the riot act was read ; the police , outnumbered and fired on , were ordered to return the fire ; two women were killed and several people wounded . The town remained in a state of constant alarm with the rioters in command of the situation .

On August 6th. , 180 men of the West India Regiment arrived , many of the rioters were arrested , and order was restored. ³¹ Again it was emphasised that the military force was there to support , and not to supercede , the civil authority . At the subsequent trials there was a thorough investigation into the origin of the shooting when the police - station had been attacked . The courts were presided over by the Island Chief Justice , two assistant Judges , two Stipendiary Magistrates , and a Justice of the Peace , all of whom were unconnected with the local bench . ³² Many of the accused were reported to have been ably defended , and the results of the trials support the claim . Brine and his sixty associates were all acquitted of offence in the Florence Hall trouble , and of those arrested in the Falmouth riots some were acquitted , and ³³ the remainder imprisoned for periods ranging from 24 hours to 2 years .

Before going on to outline events at Morant Bay in 1865 , let us

note a few important facts about these two previous occasions . They originated , especially the second , in matters of very localised dispute ; they both involved mob attacks on the police ; they both necessitated the despatch of troops to support the civil authority , but not to over-ride it ; and in neither case was the restoration of order long delayed , nor was there any suggestion that the trouble was a prelude to general rebellion in the island , or even in the parish concerned . The towns involved were both relatively long distances , by sea or land , from Spanish Town , Kingston , and Port Royal , the headquarters of the Island Government , the military , and the naval ~~forces~~ forces .

On Saturday , October 7th. , 1865 , a Court of Petty Sessions was in progress at Morant Bay in St. Thomas in the East . There was a case of assault in which the accused was ordered to pay a fine , with costs . A spectator in the court thereupon loudly informed the defendant that he should pay only the fine . The Justice ordered the arrest of the man who had interrupted , but he was rescued by a large number of people who attacked and beat the police. According to the Governor's subsequent ³⁴despatch telling of the outbreak ,

" No further injury appears to have been done at this time , and the magistrates seem to have thought so little of the occurrence that no steps were taken to communicate with the executive ."

On the following Monday , October 9th. , the Justices were again assembled to hear a case of trespass which involved a long-standing dispute over the owner - ship of land on Middleton Estate near Morant Bay . The accused was found guilty , and ordered to pay a fine, with costs . Again there was an interruption from the crowd in court , telling the man to appeal against the judgement . The appeal was entered .

On the next day warrants were issued for the arrest of a man named Paul Bogle and several others who , with him , had been responsible for the interruptions in the court-house and for the attack on the police the previous Saturday. Six policeman and two rural constables were sent out to Stony Gut , a settlement bordering Middleton , where Bogle lived . On arrival there , they were surrounded and beaten by a large number of people , and made to take oaths swearing to " join their colour " and " cleave to the black ". Bogle and his associates also informed the policemen that on the following day they intended to go to Morant Bay , where a Vestry Meeting was scheduled to take place , " to kill all the white men and all the black men that would not join them " . That evening , Tuesday , 10th. October , the Custos , Baron von Ketelhodt , who did not live in the parish , arrived at Morant Bay and was told of the previous events . He immediately sent a letter to the Governor telling what had happened , and asking for troops to be sent .

Mr. Eyre received the letter at eight o'clock on Wednesday morning , and at once gave orders for 100 troops to be sent to Morant Bay . There was some delay in the embarkation , however , and the warship which eventually took them did not leave Port Royal until the following morning , Thursday 12th. October . The Governor , having seen the troops on board on the previous afternoon , went off to Flampstead in the Port Royal Mountains where he was accustomed to spend the latter part of each week .

At Morant Bay , in the meantime , the Vestry had met as planned , and while they were in session , Paul Bogle and a large gathering of armed people had approached the court-house square where the Custos had assembled the local militia of about twenty men . The mob was met by the Custos who told them not to enter the square . They ^{paid no heed to this order} ~~continued to do so~~ , and the militia withdrew to the steps of the court-house . The Custos

then began to read the riot act and at the same time people in the crowd began to throw stones . The Custos ordered the militia to open fire ~~and~~ and some of the people fell to the ground .The mob then rushed the militia who took refuge in the court-house , and a siege began . Finally the court-house was set on fire , and , as the inmates ran out several of them were killed by the attacking people . Among the dead were Baron von Ketelhodt , the Reverend Herchell (curate of Bath , a nearby town), and Mr. C.A. Price , a black man who was a local builder. The rioters , in command of the town , set out on the following day , Thursday , 12th. to attack and plunder Bath and sugar estates down the line of the Plantain Garden River . That day , the first troops to have been despatched by Eyre reached Morant Bay .

On Thurs~~day~~day 12th., also , news reached the Governor at Flampstead of the happenings in Morant Bay on the day before . He returned to Kingst^{on} despatched another 100 troops by sea , ordered a detachment of white troops to march eastwards along the Blue Mountain~~s~~ range to approach the rioters from the interior , and proclaimed a state of martial law to exist over the whole county of Surrey , excepting Kingston . On the Friday Eyre himself set out by sea with 50 more troops, arriving at Morant Bay at seven o'clock in the evening .

There is no need to enter any further into the detail of military operations . The balance sheet of destruction and retaliation by itself tells a tale . On 11th. October , the rioters had killed 18 and wounded 31 people .Subsequently , they were responsible for the deaths of 4 and the wounding of 3 others . They plundered 20 houses and shops , and burnt down five buildings including the Morant Bay court-house . The number of people killed and wounded by the militia on October 11th. is not known , but the authorities were later responsible for the execution

In the previous July there had been vague rumours of expected outbreaks in St. Elizabeth and St. James on the 1st. of August . Eyre had immediately sent warships to lie off Black River and Montego Bay , but in his letter to the Commodore West India Squadron he had written :

" Without attaching too much importance to the apprehensions which are entertained I think that prudence requires that all precautionary measures should be taken ." 36

But two months later he claimed the existence of a general conspiracy .

In October 1865 , while the Morant Bay disturbances were still going on , Charles Royes , then Custos of St. Ann , wrote to a member of the Executive Committee :

"...they [the people] do not know what to do , in fact they want leading and encouraging , for they are as afraid , as we are ." 37

Most conclusive of all is the fact that in the numerous reports from Clergy , Custodes , Baptists and others , in April and May 1865 , there is much about poverty , lack of moral discipline , and other distresses , but not a single word anywhere of rebellious sentiment. 4

The trouble at Morant Bay was another parochial , or even more local reaction to local grievances , chief among which were disputes over land titles . These disputes involved not only the Stony Gut people who claimed land on Middleton Estate , but also claimants to parts of Hordley , Amity Hall , and other St. Thomas properties . But it was a more serious occasion than any which had previously occurred , and it brought far wider and sadder consequences . The reasons for this are not hard to find , In 1865 both political and economic conditions were far worse than they had been in the 1850's , thus increased possibility of disturbance was coupled with decreased ability of the central authority to take preventative action . Secondly , Governor Darling , in 1859 , had displayed superior ability in his method of dealing with civil

disturbances . He had never allowed the military to take command over the civil authority . Thirdly the parish officials in St. Thomas in the East had delayed in notifying the Governor of the first sign of trouble on October 7th. Had the first attack on the police been notified, troops could have been in Morant Bay before the arrival of Bogle and his followers on the 11th. But even when the Governor had been informed of the second disturbance on the 9th. , he had not , apparently , been much alarmed . Here again , doubt is thrown on the existence of any wide conspiracy by Bogle , who does not seem to have been taken seriously before October 11th. It would surely have been thought ridiculous to send eight policemen to nip the bud of revolution . Fourthly , St. Thomas in the East was administered by a Custos and Vestry who were widely disliked. Most of them had been directly implicated in the dismissal of George William Gordon from the Commission of the Peace , and Gordon was popular with the labourers and small settlers - perhaps more popular than he deserved to be . Apart from the personal animosities , it would also appear that the St. Thomas Vestry was one of the most corrupt and inefficient of the time . Finally , add to all this the presence in the parish of Paul Bogle who , although he certainly does not merit recognition as a leader or lieutenant of organised rebellion , showed himself to be a dangerous man who could command a large body of followers , especially in a time of general hardship in a parish in which the local officials were unpopular .

The disasters which followed the assault on the Morant Bay Court - house provided Eyre with excuse and opportunity to strengthen the hand of the Governor by persuading the Assembly to vote itself out of existence . It was an end which he had long hoped to achieve , and in it he had the approval of the Colonial Office . In March 1864 he had

written his opinion that the present " mis-called Representative Institutions " did not reflect public opinion , somewhat illogically , he recommended , not an extension of the franchise or a lowering of the qualifications for candidature for election to the Assembly , but the constitution of a Single Chamber Government composed of representative and nominated members³⁹ . In October 1865 he declared that he would like a completely nominated Single Chamber , but thought that it would be easier to get the Assembly to agree to one with half the members elected and half nominated . He proposed to press the Assembly to take the necessary action .⁴⁰

On December 1st., the Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote Eyre to say that the British Government would willingly consider any plans of the Jamaica Legislature to change the constitution , but that full information about recent events would be required , including notice of what specific measures of general benefit might be expected of a newly constituted government , what expenses these measures would involve , and how these expenses would be met⁴¹ . But by the time the despatch reached Eyre , he had already sent off to England an Act which abolished the Assembly and substituted a Single Chamber Government of 24 members , half to be elected and half to be nominated⁴² . The Governor had moved quickly , and for good reason , as one of his supporters admitted :

" The doing away with the House of Assembly - That ' caricature of representative government ' - has been an unmitigated blessing , and great praise is due to Mr. Eyre for the promptitude which he displayed in inducing the House of Assembly to act at the moment when men's minds were panic-stricken , and when they were willing to make any sacrifice so that they might escape from the dangers which seemed to be imminent . One week later , and the measure of self-sacrifice , if carried at all , could only have been carried with extreme difficulty ."⁴³

Even so , the measure had its opponents . On December 16th. Eyre despatched a Petition signed by 29 people in St. Catherine against the constitution amendment act . He commented , with the ~~usual~~ disregard for fact which he often employed on such occasions , that none of the petitioners was " of any position or influence". Among the signatures were those of James Bernal , a proprietor and trustee of over 700 acres ; Richard Cowan, a master - builder and contractor ; Vincent Soares , probably a relative of David Soares whom Sir Charles Grey had once called " the principal builder in Spanish Town " ; and several well - established merchants, shop-keepers, and others, including John Fonseca, Isaac DeCordova, and Israel Lopez⁴⁴ . The Baptists also petitioned, asking for a Commission of Enquiry into the state of the Island and matter connected with the recent trouble at Morant Bay. To this Eyre appended the comment that the Baptists were " troublemakers " who by their own views and efforts tended to excite rebellion " in the minds of the ignorant and debased population ". The petition, he said, was based on " rumoured statements " and adduced no facts whatsoever⁴⁵ . Yet , seven months previously he had written of the report made by the Baptist Union on Island conditions :

" As a whole the report is a very fair and candid one, and will convey to Her Majesty's Government much important and useful information , though there are of course many statements , opinions or inferences in which I am unable to coincide".⁴⁶

Beyond ~~the shadow of~~ a doubt , Eyre was ~~unfit~~^{on his} for the Government of a colony.

The consequences , political , economic , and social , of the institution of Crown Colony Government in 1866 do not , strictly speaking lie within our scope. But we cannot abruptly drop the matter on a date. The new system did not solve any of the current political and

constitutional problems , it simply evaded them . Nor did it provide any political tutelage for people who were then thought to be unfit to exercise the vote. The introduction of adult suffrage in Jamaica in 1944 followed not from any growth of political intelligence , nor from improved social and economic conditions , but rather from new theories of government which hold that poverty and illiteracy should not disqualify a man from having a voice in the selection of those who shall govern him .

Within the island , the Church of England was disestablished , the number of Parishes was reduced , and Government revenues and expenditures were affected by other financial and fiscal reforms . More money was spent on social services. Fundamentally , however , the economic structure remained the same . Jamaicans still prosper or decline according to price fluctuations in overseas markets over which they have no command .

The social consequences can be gathered from the reported words of a coloured man who had been a member of the Assembly . In 1869 he said to a member of the new Legislative Council :

" You and I have been equals , but what will be the respective position of our children ? Yours will hardly speak to mine."

Under Crown Colony Government administrative positions were generally reserved for whites , and , even more exclusively , for Europeans . One of the paths which the ex-slaves had used to attain social acceptance among the ex-masters was now closed to them . It is important to remember that by the 1860's black and coloured men had attained positions of prominence , not only as merchants and the owners of landed property, but also as members of Assembly, Magistrates , Barristers , School - teachers, Newspaper editors , Clergymen , and as the occupants of

important Public Offices . Not all of these , it is true , had been slaves, many had been free-coloured people in time of slavery , but they provided the example which others followed .

The outbreak of a local riot in Morant Bay in 1865 gave to an incompetent Governor the opportunity to wreak the vengeance of his accumulated frustration and to seize power for the executive . His action, approved by the island legislature in momentary panic , was supported by the British Government , which , although it severely censured the brutality with which the 'rebellion' had been put down , welcomed the assertion of executive power as the means to more efficient government.

NOTES.

1. C.O. 137/340. Darling to Bulwer Lytton, No. 141, 10th. Nov. 1858.
2. W.G. SEWELL, "Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies" (N.Y. 1861); and E.B.UNDERHILL, "The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition" (London, 1862).
3. W.CARLILE, "Thirty-eight Years' Mission Life in Jamaica" (London, 1884) and E.B.UNDERHILL, "Life of James Munsell Phillippo, Missionary in Jamaica" (London, 1881), Chapter 34.
4. E.B.UNDERHILL "The West Indies..." pp. 429-30, gives the following data:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Baptist Members.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Aver. annual contribution each.</u>
1839	21,337		
1843-44	31,000	1844	11s. 11 ¹ / ₂ d.
1845-55	steady decline	1849	7s. 4 ¹ / ₂ d.
1852-60	slight increase	1854	7s. 4 ¹ / ₂ d.
		1859	8s. 2 ¹ / ₂ d.

5. C.O.137/390. See various reports of the Clergy and Custodes. The quoted words are from the letter from Rev. C.R.Chandler of Guy's Hill to the Bishop.
6. C.O. 137/390. Richard Carter to Charles Royes, St. Ann.
7. C.O. 137/391. Mr.Harrison to Custos Baron von Ketelhodt, St. Thomas in the East.
8. W.W.T. "A Letter from Jamaica on the subject of religious revivals" (London?, 1860).
9. C.O.137/364. Darling to Newcastle, No.9, 8th. Jan.1862.
10. C.O.137/367. Eyre to Newcastle, No.37, 20th.June 1862.
11. W.REED, "The History of Sugar and Sugar Yielding Plants" (London, 1866) Chapter 8.
12. Darling had been Agent-General for Immigration in the 1840's and a proprietor of estates in St.Thomas in the East.
13. By the mid-century two main political groups were recognisable in the Assembly: the Planter or Country Party, and the Town Party which included several well-known merchants and newspaper editors. The Planter group was numerically superior, but as estate business often kept them away from the House of Assembly the Town Party frequently enjoyed a working majority.

Notes 2.

14. C.O.137/357. Darling to Newcastle, No.173, 9th.Dec.1861. See Taylor's Minute.
15. On occasion this earned him a rebuke. See C.O.137/367, the Secretary of State to Eyre in the case of George William Gordon, a J.P. whom Eyre had dismissed: "I take this opportunity of observing to you that I feel sure you will find it more conducive to the public interests you have at heart, to occupy yourself rather with the substance of acts & proceedings with which you have to deal than with the private characters of the persons who may assail or defend them"
16. Pages 130,131.
17. This is a serious charge, but it can be substantiated by reference to certain despatches from Eyre to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.
18. This was perhaps the most balanced of contemporary local papers. It was owned and produced by Edward Jordon and Robert Osborn, and the quoted editorial was probably written by the former.
19. C.O.137/384. Eyre to Cardwell, No.256, 10th. Sept.1864.
20. And in certain areas by a disease which attacked root crops.
21. "A Letter Addressed to the Rt. Hon. Edward Cardwell..." (London,1865)
22. Most of these are in C.O.137/390.391.
23. There were also people in Britain, who had never been to the West Indies, who were expert at playing this theme. The most notable was Thomas Carlyle whose "Occasional Discourse on The Nigger Question" was first published in Frazer's Magazine, Dec.1849, later reprinted as a pamphlet in 1853, and finally included by Carlyle in a book "Latter Day Pamphlets" published in 1858.
24. C.O.137/391. See Roger's Minute on Eyre to Cardwell, No.135, 23rd. May,1865.
25. C.O.137/391. Eyre to Cardwell, No.149, 20th.June. 1865.(Enclosures).
26. C.O.137/390. Bowerbank to Eyre, April 1865.
27. C.O.137/390. Hill to Eyre, April 1865. The Poor Law was administered by the local Vestries who submitted, each year, an estimate of expenses for approval and grant by the Island Legislature. These estimates were usually inadequate. Details of the Poor Law are to be found in C.O.137/375 and 385.
28. Cardwell to Eyre, Jamaica No.222, 14th. June, 1865.
29. "The Queen's Advice" was actually drafted by Henry Taylor, but it was approved by Secretary Cardwell.
30. C.O.137/344. Darling to Bulwer Lytton, No.48, 25th.March,1859, with enclosures.

Notes 3.

31. C.O.137/345. Darling to Newcastle, No.103, 9th.Aug.1859, with enclosures.
 32. The Judges were J.F.CARGILL and F.ROPER; the Stipendiaries were RICHARD HILL and HENRY LAIDLAW; the Justice of the Peace was W.H. COOKE.
 33. C.O.137/348. Darling to Newcastle, No29, 28th. Jan.1860.
 34. This despatch and other official documents and other records on which the following account is based are to be found in "Facts & Documents Relating to the Alleged Rebellion in Jamaica", published by the Jamaica Committee in London (1866); and W.F.FINLATSON, "A History of the Jamaica Case" (London, 1868). Of these the former criticised and the latter defended the actions of Governor Eyre.
 35. C.O.137/394. W.H.Cooke. J.P., to Custos Vickers, 30th.October; and Vickers to Edward Jordon, Governor's Secretary, of the same date. Most of the 22 Germans, survivors or descendants of immigrants entered in the late 1830's and early 1840's, were small settlers. The coloured men were: 6 carpenters, 4 labourers, 4 settlers, 3 domestics, and 1 blacksmith. The black men were: 17 labourers, 5 settlers, 1penkeeper, 1 estate headman, 1 carpenter, 1 mason, and 1 saddler.
 36. C.O.137/392. Eyre to Commodore Cracroft, 26th.July, 1865.
 37. C.O.137/394. Royes to Mr.Westmoreland, 24th.Oct.1865.
 38. Evidence of this can be found in several sources: C.O.137/392. Eyre to Cardwell, No.220, 4th.Sept.1865, with enclosures; T. HARVEY, and W. BREWIN; "Jamaica in 1866" (London,1867); G.E. PRICE, "Jamaica and the Colonial Office:Who Caused the Crisis?" (London, 1866);and W.P.LIVINGSTONE, "Black Jamaica" (London, 1899).
 39. C.O.137/380. Eyre to Newcastle, Separate, 18th. March, 1864.
 40. C.O.137/393. Eyre to Cardwell, Confidential, 24th.Oct. 1865.
 41. C.O.137/394. Cardwell to Eyre, Confidential, 1st.Dec. 1865. (Draft).
 42. C.O.137/396. Eyre to Cardwell, No.313, 7th.Dec. 1865.
 43. J.W.MITCHELL, "Contrasts in Jamaica" in THE SUGAR CANE, Vol. 1,p.87. (London, 1869).
 44. C.O.137/396. Eyre to Cardwell, No.331, 16th.Dec. 1865, & enclosures.
 45. C.O.137/396. Eyre to Cardwell, No 332, 20th. Dec. 1865.
 46. C.O.137/391. Eyre to Cardwell, No. 128, 6th. May, 1865.
 47. J.W. MITCHELL, *op. cit.* p. 87.
-