

Antigua is handed over on cricket pitch

From Jeremy Taylor
St John's, Antigua, Nov 1

Britain last night handed independence to the largest of its remaining Caribbean dependencies, Antigua and Barbuda, in a quiet ceremony at the island's sodden cricket ground. The rain that for two days had threatened to wash out the festivities eased and by midnight the sky was clear and ideal for fireworks.

The band of the Royal Marines squelched bravely through the mud of the island's recreation ground, playing: "What shall we do with a drunken sailor?" followed by a detachment from HMS London and the Antigua police band in almost identical white uniforms.

But the elaborate dais where Princess Margaret was to hand Antigua its constitutional freedom was abandoned. The VIPs were seated with dry feet under cover in one of the stands directly underneath the press box where the press corps spent much of the night fending off hordes of belligerent moths and beetles.

There will not be many more of these independence ceremonies with their remnants of imperial splendour; the lowering of the Union Jack, the "Last Post," and the raising of the new nation's flag. Antigua's has a yellow sun rising over a blue sea, cupped in a V for victory.

The Royal Navy provided helicopter acrobatics, a cutlass display, 21 shattering midnight gun blasts, half the parade and a fireworks display which thundered over St John's like Nelson's guns.

Watched by over 40 delegations, a brigade of Caribbean leaders and a capacity crowd of Antiguan crammed into the cricket stands and perched on the scoreboard, Mr Vere Bird, the Prime Minister, a vigorous 71-year-old who has spent 40 years pushing for last night's handover, forgave Britain its imperial interference.

"We cannot blame today's Britain for the rule of yesterday's empire," he said. "Those days are gone and should only be recalled in a constructive



Princess Margaret and Mr Vere Bird, the Antiguan Prime Minister, at the independence ceremony. Rain drove the moff the dais.

sense, as a reminder to never to relinquish our freedom again."

The key to that, he argued, was productivity, without which this tiny new state of 74,000 will risk "dependence on a new master who will once again dictate our policies and direct our affairs."

Antigua's links with Britain will remain strong, however. Yesterday morning Princess Margaret climbed the gentle hillside overlooking the St John's deep water harbour to open a smart new £320,000 parliament building, built with the help of British aid funds.

Mr Neil Martin, Britain's Overseas Development Minister, promised continued friendship and assistance, while Mr Ernest

Williams, Antigua's Works Minister, hinted broadly at the need for more development aid and swore loyally to preserve Westminster democracy.

Britain is likely to be a big donor to Antigua's 1981-84 £40m public sector development plan, which includes expansion of tourism.

Antigua's economic growth is the envy of most of its eastern Caribbean neighbours, averaging 7.5 per cent between 1977 and 1979 and 3 per cent last year. At 16 per cent, its inflation rate is the lowest in the area. Yet after three and a half centuries of British domination Antigua's economy remains dependent on a single fragile commodity.

First it was tobacco, then

sugar, abandoned as uneconomic in 1972 and reintroduced on a small scale this year to save foreign exchange. The island is studded with abandoned sugar mills and the shortage of trees and food crops are a legacy of the British plantations.

In the last 20 years tourism has taken over and now accounts for 60 per cent of employment, though only 40 cents in every tourist dollar actually stays in the island. A network of luxury hotels, mostly on gorgeous white beaches and two with casinos, is tucked away from villages in which the African slaves first settled 150 years ago when they were turned off the plantations to save money.

Hongkong has doubts about refugees

From Richard Hughes, Hongkong, Nov 1

Hongkong will review its policy of granting asylum to Vietnamese refugees, Mr John Heywood, Deputy Secretary for Security, has said.

"The newcomers are now economic adventurers and are not leaving their country for political reasons," he said in an interview. "It is time for us to stop and reflect on what we have done so far." His remarks came after rioting at one of the Hongkong camps, where refugees are obviously becoming concerned over delays in resettlement.

Mr Jacques Terlin, Hongkong representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said: "Most countries are reluctant to accept refugees because they think the problem has been resolved."

He said that most of the 19 countries accepting refugees in Hongkong had halved their quotas. So far this year the United States has accepted 11,709 refugees from Hongkong, compared with 16,382 last year. Canada has reduced its intake from 6,542 last year to 1,771 and Britain from 5,087 to 1,713. There are 16,700 Vietnamese

refugees in Hongkong, about half of whom have been awaiting resettlement for two years. Most of the arrivals this year are of Vietnamese origin.

Mr Xiang Nam, Communist Party chief in the neighbouring Chinese province of Fujian, has told visiting Hongkong journalists that any Chinese who left and who are finding it difficult to live and work in Hongkong would receive a hearty welcome home. "We will not discriminate against them." A quota of 150 Chinese are granted visas to Hongkong each day.

CABINET OFFICIAL ACCUSED

From Moshe Brilliant
Tel Aviv, Nov 1

Mr Arye Naor, the Israeli cabinet secretary, was charged his weekend before a civil service disciplinary court with conduct unbecoming to a government official.

The complaint was lodged by Mr Raanan Lurie, the cartoonist now employed by *The Times*, who claimed Mr Naor had given him secret information about a telephone conversation between President Carter and Herr Helmut Schmidt,

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The map on Thursday incorrectly plotted the grounded submarine to the south-west of Karlskrona.

Antiguan independence

Fragile future for a tiny tourist state

From Jeremy Taylor, St John's, Antigua, Oct 30

Barely six weeks after granting Belize its precarious independence, Britain sets free the largest of its remaining Caribbean dependencies, Antigua, this week.

As the Union Jack comes down for the last time at midnight tomorrow in the island's recreation ground, ending three and a half centuries of British domination. Antigua's 74,000 population will face a fragile future as a tiny state far from self-reliance. There is also a possibly explosive threat of secession by Barbuda, its sister island.

Unlike Belize, nobody in Antigua seems to oppose independence. Even the opposition Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) supports it, having campaigned for it while in office in the early 1970s.

"Can we depend on the mother country to guide our destiny?" asks one of the patriotic calypsos competing for radio time amid promotion for a new "instant money game" and the American accents of preachers and disc jockeys: "It's time we stand on our own feet . . . make independence mean something".

The Government is spending an estimated £625,000 on independence celebrations and has lifted the 15 per cent consumption tax on paint, so that many of the jaded shops and offices in St John's, the sprawling capital, have had a multi-coloured facelift.

The obligatory British warships are in the harbour, ready to give a midnight welcome salvo. A modest new parliament building and a new airport terminal are ready for opening; and cranes are struggling to complete an independence arch of three slender concrete pillars next to the recreation ground, one of which somebody dropped at the first attempt.

Antigua, a leisurely, uncrowded island of 108 square miles with more than 300 white sand beaches, has been virtually independent for 14 years already. In 1967 it was one of six Caribbean associated states for which Britain retained only defence and foreign affairs responsibility.

Its politics have been dominated for 25 years by Mr Vere Bird, now 71 and the last survivor of the Caribbean independence generation of tough, mainly union-based politicians that included Bustamante, Norman Manley, Grantley Adams and Eric Williams.

A wily pro-Western politician, Mr Bird, who has spent only five years in opposition since 1956, becomes Antigua's first

Prime Minister in spite of taking a hard line on labour unrest and riding a scandal set off by the Canadian Space Research Corporation, which in the mid-1970s was using Antigua as a trans-shipment point for military equipment destined for South Africa.

Mr Bird was swept back to power in April last year when his Antigua Labour Party won 59 per cent of the vote and 13 of the 17 parliamentary seats. He is expected to hand over before long to his burly son and deputy, Lester.

Antigua's most famous export is the cricketer Viv Richards, followed by sea island cotton. Its economy has been built loosely around tourism which is now suffering from international recession. The World Bank has urged Mr Bird to diversify into agriculture and agro-industry; Antigua imports most of its food.

Sugar has been reintroduced this year, there is a small light manufacturing sector turning out garments, paint, rum and appliances, and a Swiss firm is renovating the island's 20,000 barrels a day oil refinery. Gross domestic product in 1979 was about £36m.

Independence, in other words, is not going to remove Antigua's economic clienthood. The island is actively wooing foreign investment with tax holidays, no personal income tax, its boast of political stability, and a firm, pro-Western line.

"My government rejects any transplant of foreign ideology to Antigua and Barbuda" Mr Lester Bird says bluntly, referring to the left in general and Cuba in particular.

The Opposition PLM is still demoralized, and the island's tiny left-wing party, the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, won only one per cent of the votes last year.

Antigua plays host to three American military bases as well as a new Voice of America medium wave transmitter and the BBC's Caribbean relay station.

Apart from winning enough economic support to survive, the one problem that will really test Mr Bird's political skills is Barbuda, a flat coral island 30 miles to the north, whose 1,500 people have their own island council and are complaining loudly of neglect by the central government in St John's.

The Barbudans refused to sign the final accord at the end of Antigua's constitutional conference in London last December.

Seaga break with Cuba criticized

Kingston, Jamaica, Oct 30.—Jamaica's main opposition party last night condemned the Government's decision to break off diplomatic relations with Cuba and accused it of using fictitious arguments to back the measure.

Yesterday, Mr Edward Seaga, the Prime Minister, announced the break because authorities in Havana were harbouring criminals wanted by Jamaican police.

The left-wing opposition People's National Party, which was defeated by Mr Seaga's conservative Jamaica Labour Party in the general election a year ago, said Mr Seaga had used fictitious arguments to justify allegations of interference in Jamaica's internal affairs.

Mr Seaga told Parliament that tape recordings and letters in police hands indicated that three Jamaicans wanted locally on murder charges were now in Cuba. "We are in no doubt that the presence in Cuba of these wanted men is with the complicity of the Cuban Government", he said.

The seized documents had been taken from a youth leader of the People's National Party recently detained by police and Mr Seaga said the party must have been aware of the situation.

The Cuban Chargé d'Affaires in Kingston was given 48 hours to leave the country yesterday after the Cuban Government failed to comply with a request for the return of the three wanted men, Mr Seaga said.

Mr Seaga, who ordered the Cuban Ambassador to Jamaica out of the country shortly after taking office a year ago for interfering in internal affairs, said he had revealed only the tip of an iceberg in the Cuban affair.—Reuter.

SECURITY COUNCIL POLL DELAY

New York, Oct 30.—The Security Council, in what the chief United States delegate called a deadlock within a deadlock, has suspended its search for the next Secretary-General of the United Nations.

A meeting to resume balloting on the candidacies of Dr Kurt Waldheim, the incumbent and Mr Salim Ahmed Salim, of Tanzania, was cancelled.

Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick, the United States delegate, said neither Dr Waldheim nor Mr Salim would withdraw unilaterally. Until they did no new candidate wanted to present himself.—Reuter.



the third most interested country, has so far made no diplomatic move. Jakarta is still suspected by the sultan of backing the abortive 1962 rebellion, though relations after independence should be smooth.

Brunei, with its predominantly Malay community, its Muslim faith and a similar way of life, obviously looks to Malaysia as its closest neighbour. There are signs that it is modelling its administration and laws on Malaysian lines. Last October a mandatory death penalty was introduced for possession of firearms and ammunition; and in January a similar penalty was instituted for trafficking in dangerous drugs — as in Malaysia. Also in January, the sultan introduced the Internal Security Bill, along the lines of Malaysia's Internal Security Act, giving the authorities powers to detain people for up to two years, to impose restrictions on movement and to impose curfew. The powers were an obvious preparation for 1983, when the current Emergency — declared by the former sultan during the rebellion in 1962 — will almost certainly be lifted.

The whole process of bringing Brunei into the world on its own is being encouraged by the state's old colonial masters, the British. But Whitehall knows that any wrinkles in the programme, and any backlash on independence, will be laid squarely at its door. Which is why Britain, like Brunei's Asean neighbours, is counting on a smooth transition in December 1983. ■

Oh to be in Brunei now that it is free

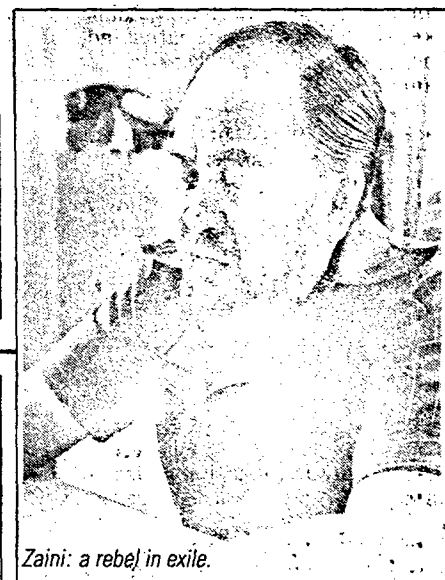
Kuala Lumpur: One group of Bruneians who should be cheering louder than most on Brunei's independence day in December 1983 is the leadership of the outlawed Parti Rakyat Brunei (Brunei People's Party — PRB) which has campaigned for more than 20 years for full independence from Britain. But unfortunately it is highly unlikely that the PRB leaders will be allowed to join in the independence festivities in their native state — they are all in exile, and if they return they face almost-certain arrest.

The PRB was outlawed by the sultan after it led a brief, abortive rebellion in 1962. The party's leaders say the rebellion was mainly to oust the British, but the then sultan, Sir Omar Saifuddin, felt that it was against the sultanate.

The PRB, under its president, A. M. Azahari, had in 1962 just won a whopping 98% of the vote in elections for Brunei's legislative council, campaigning for full independence and also strong links — even a federation — with the neighbouring Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak. But it soon became evident after the election that the sultan was not going to allow the

party to attain any political power in the state, which prompted its frustrated members to launch the rebellion.

The rebellion was directed by Azahari and his deputy, Zaini Ahmad, from Manila. When it failed, Azahari first went to Malaysia; but from 1975 he has reportedly been living in the Indonesian resort town of Bogor just outside Jakarta. Zaini returned to Brunei and was immediately arrested along with other party leaders. He and seven other PRB leaders eventually escaped from detention in 1973 and were granted asylum by Malaysia, which was



Zaini: a rebel in exile.

Whitehall worries about all the sultan's men

Bandar Seri Begawan: Brunei has some of the best trained, best equipped soldiers in the region. And on top of this it looks as though one of the toughest fighting units in the British army — the Gurkhas — will remain in the state after it achieves full independence in 1983.

A Gurkha battalion has been based in the Shell oilfield in Seria, western Brunei, for the past 18 years. Theoretically, its role is confined strictly to external defence, a point which the British stress. Yet it would be difficult to imagine the 750 highly-disciplined Gurkhas sitting in their barracks and ignoring any internal security crisis. Also, Sultan Sir Hassanah Bolki-ah has been discreetly building up his own private army of Gurkhas, mostly men who have retired from the British army — a development which is causing some concern in London, which has no control over them.

The state's main defence lies in the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment (RBMR) which, during its 20-year history, has expanded to two full army battalions with one more planned, a naval flotilla and an air wing. About a third of the government's budget is spent on defence. Last year the amount was B\$416 million (US\$195.3 million). The armed forces total about 4,000 men, still substantially officered by Britons either on secondment from the British armed forces or employed by the sultan on contract — in much the same way as the Sultan of

Oman, in the Gulf, uses British expatriate officers in his armed forces. But the British are being gradually phased out and their places taken by locals: by independence, all lieutenant-colonels will be Bruneians, leaving only the regimental commander — currently former Black Watch officer Brig. Duncan Cameron — and the chief-of-staff as British-seconded officers.

The army is currently beefing up its equipment by acquiring a battery of British-made Rapier surface-to-surface missiles. It already has an armoured squadron of 12 Scorpion tanks, also British, and is forming a field-gun battery. The regiment's naval flotilla comprises six fast patrol craft, equipped with French-made Exocet missiles. And its air wing, which currently comprises Bell helicopters, is soon to acquire a number of German-made BO-105 helicopter gunships, equipped with missiles.

In two or three months, the sultan is due to visit London for negotiations on the future of the Gurkha battalion, which is currently based in Brunei on a rota basis with other Gurkha battalions in Hongkong and Britain. The sultan and his family are known to want the Gurkhas to remain — they have fond memories of the part British Gurkha troops played in efficiently putting down the rebellion in 1962. The British would also like the Gurkhas to stay because of a British army jungle-training area near the Gurkha base where British

units, including the crack Special Air Service Regiment, are constantly assigned for training. It is Britain's only jungle-training facility, and London is anxious to keep it. Above all, the sultan foots the entire bill for the Gurkha battalion — an estimated £3 million (US\$5.5 million) a year; which means that it is no burden on the British taxpayer.

Although Britain might be open to charges of neo-colonialism if it keeps its Gurkhas in Brunei, and it will constitute a tangible political stake in the state's future, it can point to the regional precedent already set with the Australian air force presence in Butterworth, Malaysia, and the New Zealand army battalion in Singapore under the Five-Power Defence Arrangement, which groups Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. If the Gurkhas remain in Brunei, they might also come under the five-power pact, or there could be a separate bilateral mutual defence treaty.

"There would be good reasons for us to stay after 1983," Lieut-Col Vernon Beauchamp, commander of the Brunei-based 2nd Battalion 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas, told the REVIEW: "It would ensure a certain amount of stability in Brunei at a time which could be uncertain, going into full independence." He