

# Semn de întrebare

Interviu cu Sir James Mancham realizat de Aurora Martin

1. We are currently witnessing American leadership in international affairs. What do you think are the prospects for the future of American primacy now and tomorrow?
2. It has been stated that there is growing power rivalry in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the region where the Seychelles archipelago is situated. Can you tell us something about this?
3. You have recently published your autobiography in the USA – „*Seychelles Global Citizen: The Autobiography of the Founding President*”, at Paragon House, from which I note that over recent years you have been very active in the Balkans. Can you elaborate?
4. As a member of the Board of Advisers to the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) you were recently in Berlin celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall?
5. Your autobiography, „*Seychelles Global Citizen: The Autobiography of the Founding President*”, ([www.paragonhouse.com](http://www.paragonhouse.com)) and the reviews about it – including one of from the Washington Times which called you „A Man for all Regions”, have certainly confirmed your international dimension but from our information there are many in Seychelles who would like to see you becoming more active locally. Is it true that a group of prominent Seychelles citizens called on you recently about playing a more active role in the future of Seychelles?

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: **James Mancham** - Sir James Richard Marie Mancham KBE became :  
: the first President of the Republic of Seychelles. When Britain an- :  
: nounced its intention to give independence to the colony, he founded :  
: the Democratic Party (S.D.P.), and served as its leader until February :  
: 2005. As Chief Minister of the colony, James Mancham promoted tour- :  
: ism to the Seychelles and arranged for the building of the airport that :  
: was to make the Seychelles accessible to the rest of the world, for de- :  
: veloping the economy. In 1976, James Mancham won the popular vote :  
: when the British gave the Seychelles independence. He was overthrown :  
: a year latter when he was attending the Common-wealth Heads of :  
: Government Conference in London, at a time of the Cold War when :  
: USSR and the USA were struggling for the pre-eminence of power and :  
: influence in the western Indian Ocean astride the world's most impor- :  
: tant oil route. He was deposed by Prime Minister France-Albert Rene in :  
: .....



▶▶ a coup with the support of Tanzanian-trained revolutionaries and Tanzanian-supplied weapons. He spent over 15 years in exile in London, promoting joint ventures, until the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and France-Albert Rene, declaring that the Seychelles would once again become a multi-party state, ended the ban on the S.D.P. and its activities. He returned to the Seychelles in 1992, as the Apostle of National Reconciliation; ran for president 1993 and finished the second and 1998, receiving third place. James Mancham is invited as special guest to the different symposia and conferences over the world. He is also the author of some books, one about the coup called *Paradise Raped*, one written after 9/11, *War on America Seen from the Indian Ocean*, another one, *The Sayings of James R. Mancham and recently, Seychelles, Global Citizen. The Autobiography of the Founding President.*

**1.** I am not too sure that we have a case of American primacy prevailing today on the global stage. Perhaps this is the appearance seen from a European perspective, particularly because of the role which the Americans are playing within NATO. No doubt the USA is at the moment the most important military power, but my understanding is that China is catching up very rapidly. Despite the fact that China still considered itself a Communist nation, it is certainly not that sort of Communism which threatens other nations, as China engages with them in people to people diplomacy and becomes a more and important, if not privileged trading partner. Unfortunately during the presidency of G.W. Bush, the USA departed from many fundamental principles which had made the USA revered during the presidency of President Kennedy. When a nation starts to sacrifice principles, the result is that the nation becomes confused. And in the end a confused people will lack the resolve to remain great. One of the problems of the USA is the way by-partisan politics is being played today. In my recently published autobiography, *„Seychelles Global Citizen: The Autobiography of the Founding President“*, I have stated that President Barack Obama has a unique opportunity to go down in world history as a global statesman, but for him to do so he will have to put the interest of the world first, second the interest of the USA and the interest of the Democratic Party third. He must not be too mindful of being reelected next time otherwise he will soon be sucked up in the vicious and aggressive cross-current of internal by-partisan politics. Unfortunately world statesmanship does not always go along with party politics.

**2.** The 110 islands of Seychelles group are spread over an extensive surface of the Western Indian Ocean which has become the primary route for oil shipping – and indeed a major shipping trading route.

At one time this whole area of the Western Indian Ocean fell under the influence of the British and the French. The British were in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), in the Maldives, in Aden (now Yemen), in Kenya, Mauritius and in Seychelles. The French were in Madagascar, the Comoros, La Reunion and Djibouti, then known as French Somaliland.

Stupidly in the sixties the British decided to pull out „East of Suez“ at the very time that the surrounding zone was becoming more and more important as producer and exporter of oil. At this time the Americans decided to fill the vacuum which the British were leaving behind. This resulted into the creation of the US naval base and military complex on the island of Diego Garcia, in the Chagos archipelago. For this purpose some 3.000 chagosians (name given to the inhabitants of the Chagos archipelago) were taken away from their homeland and resettled on the

island of Mauritius. At that time India, who alongside Soviet Union was promoting the policy of „*Indian Ocean – Zone of Peace*“, was dead against American penetration of the area.

But, these days things are different. The interest and arrival of China in this part of the Indian Ocean has got the Indians and Americans in the same bed. Once India actively protested at the American's presence – today they are partners in joint military and naval exercises.

**3.** For several years now, I have been a member of the Academic Council of the European Centre for Peace and Development (ECPD) which over recent years has been endeavouring to try and dry up the waters where hate is swimming today in that part of the world. This year I have just participated in the Fifth International ECPD Conference on „*National and Inter-Ethnic Reconciliation, Religious Tolerance and Human Security in the Balkans*“, which took place between the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2009 in Croatia, on the Island of Brioni where the late President Tito of Yugoslavia entertained his Russian guests, VIP's of the Non-Aligned Nations and actresses like Elisabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren.

The island provided a most pleasant environment for serious discussions on the prevailing issues concerning the present and future of the West Balkans region. Issues raised covered the downturn of the economy and higher unemployment resulting from the global financial crisis; is EU integration a solution in itself or only the stimulus for the solution of the problems of Western Balkans; the need to address the problem of minorities including Roma people; the role of women in achieving reconciliation and tolerance; human security; the need for the younger generations to be educated through peace studies.

The next conference will most probably be held in Ljubljana, in Slovenia, next year.

**4.** Yes I felt very honored and privileged to have been invited to participate, among a group of honoured guests, in an International Congress on Soft Power, Interdependence and Cultural Diplomacy – between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009, which the ICD had decided to host.

In fact, I had the pleasure of meeting two important political players from Romania – H.E. Emil Constantinescu, former president of Romania and the Rt. Hon. Dr. Vasile Pușcaș, the Romanian Minister for European Affairs. The conference was held under the theme „*A World without Walls*“. It focused on soft power, cultural diplomacy and interdependence and provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the development of international relations since 1989, the challenges faced by the leaders of the future, and the growing influence of cultural diplomacy and „soft power“ in the contemporary international political environment.

**5.** Yes, over recent months I have often been asked to save „paradise“ from its troubled waters, hence my repeated calls for us to focus our attention in a mood of reconstruction and reconciliation. Our country is today one of the most indebted nations of the world. Seychellois are not only disappointed but frustrated in the way things are developing. They are saying that a majority of the people would vote for a change, if there was unity behind a credible leadership on the side of the opposition forces.

Am I prepared to offer this leadership? My priority remains the emergence of a Government of National Development and Reconstruction. It is not that important who leads that government provided, it is a government which is sincerely committed to national reconciliation and committed to pursue a SEYCHELLES FIRST policy in a transparent way. I want to see a Seychelles where the Seychellois feel proud and dignified again, and not feel like second-class citizens vis-à-vis „imported cronies“ – i.e. outsiders who have been specially given national status to vote for the status quo.