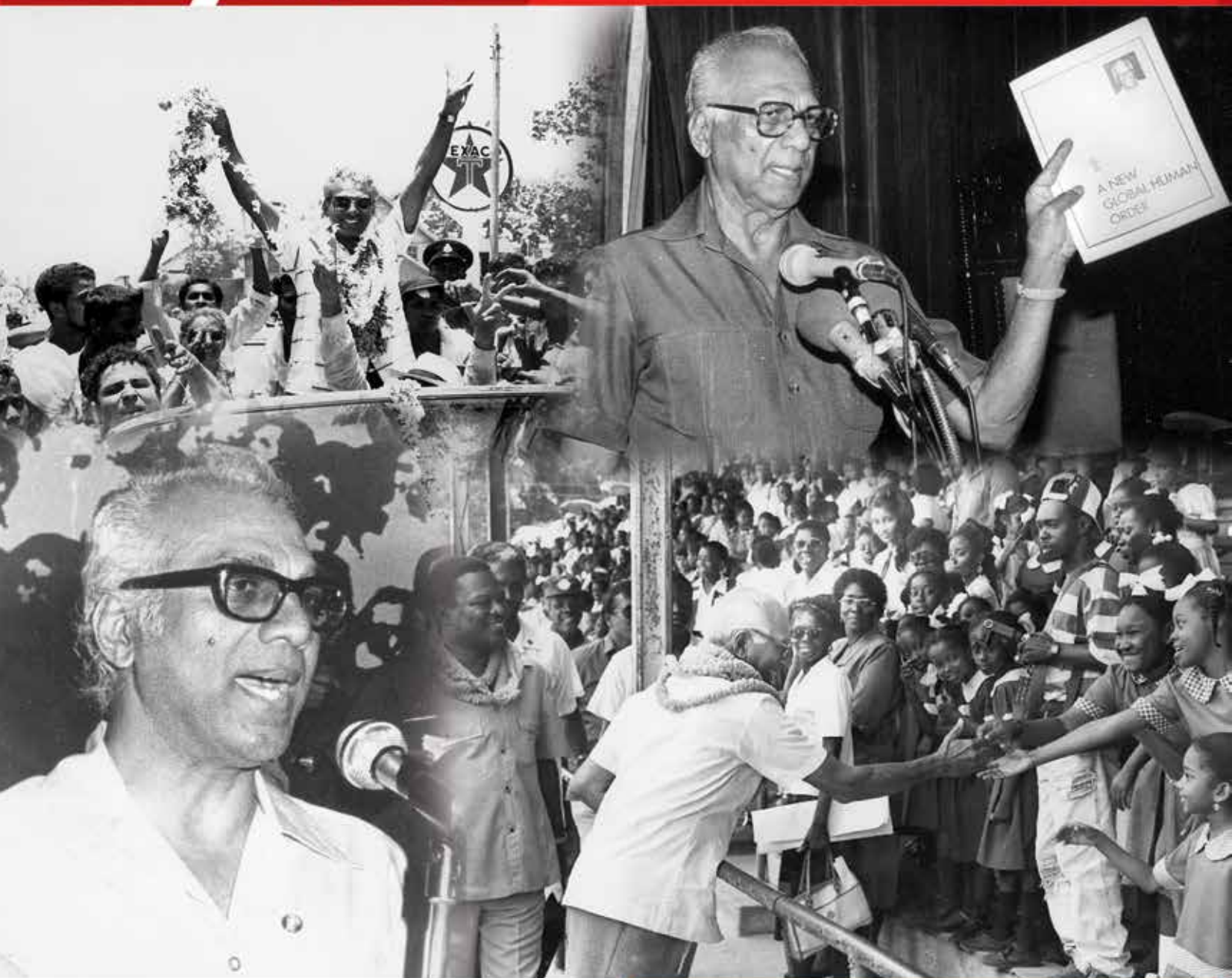


THE THINKER

Volume 4

January - June 2021



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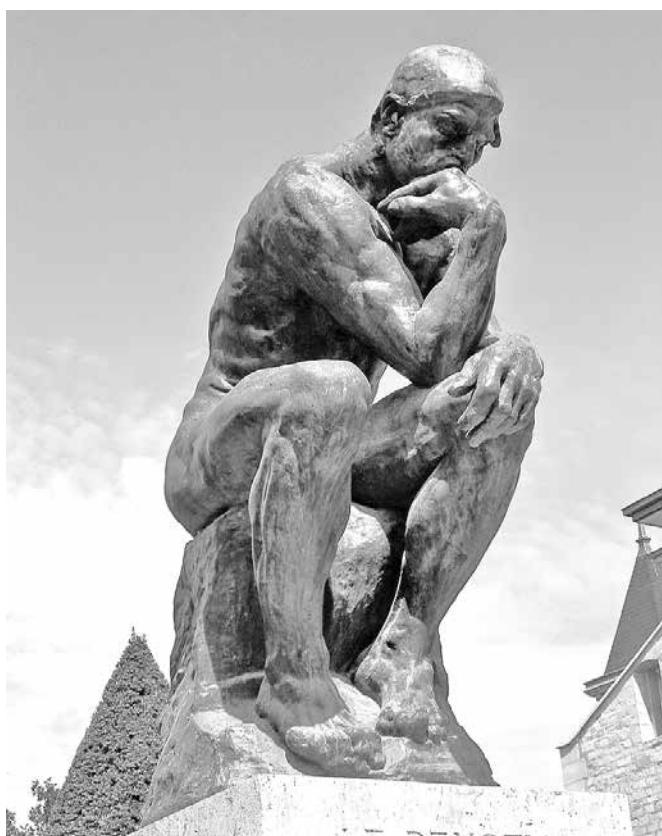
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The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin.

EDITORIAL

This edition of The Thinker coincides with a number of significant landmarks, both at the national and international levels.

At the national level, March 22 marked the 103rd birth anniversary of former President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan. Dr. Jagan is widely regarded as the Father of the Nation and the main architect of our national liberation struggle. March 6 also marked the 24th death anniversary of Dr. Jagan who, along with his wife Janet, were the founder members of the People's Progressive Party. As fate would have it, Mrs. Jagan also passed away on March 28, 2009.

At the international level, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China. China today is a major economic player on the world stage. Of significance also is the Covid-19 virus which continues to take a heavy toll on human lives not to mention the devastation inflicted on the global economy. Coincidentally, this year also marked the 100th anniversary of the H1N1 influenza. The virus, also referred to as the Spanish Flu decimated over 100 million people worldwide.

Several of the articles centered on these broad thematic areas such as the inequity in vaccine distribution, tributes to Dr. Jagan from close associates, commentaries on international issues including the recent coup in Myanmar. We have also included a tribute to the late Feroze Mohamed and a book review on Blood on the River. A few of the articles, even though dated, have been selected due to their perspicacity and historical relevance.

This year, our country will observe its 55th Independence celebrations on May 26, 2021. An article carried by the Mirror newspaper dated May 31st, 1966 highlights the status of the newly birthed nation during a state of national emergency.

In keeping with editorial policy, these articles provide readers with perspectives that are informative, balanced and progressive in outlook. The Editorial Committee wishes to thank all our contributors for submitting articles and also our readers for their continued support and patronage.

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The Thinker

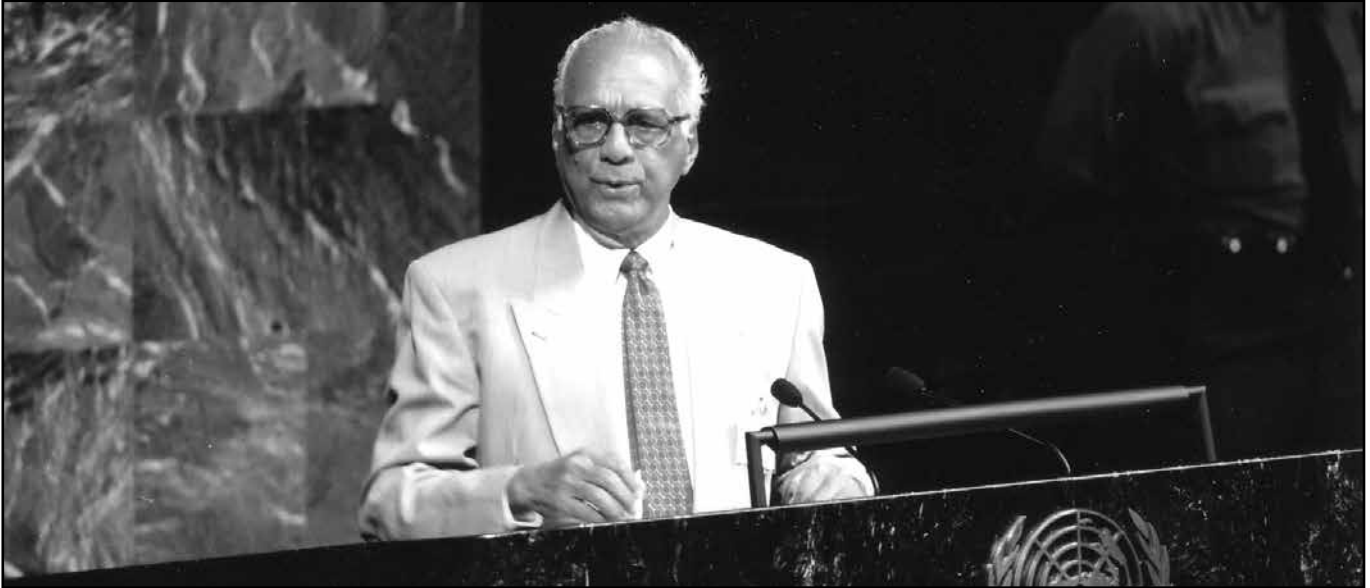
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Cheddi Jagan's Ideas continue to illuminate our Path



Dr. Jagan addressing the UN General Assembly

On March 22, 2021, we mark the 103rd birth anniversary of Cheddi Jagan, the man most responsible for lifting the political consciousness of the people of British Guiana and led the struggle for independence.

He led the government of British Guiana from 1957 to 1964. Those were extremely difficult years, for he and his comrades worked under some of the most trying conditions. The PPP government of that period was opposed by the combined forces of the British Colonialists, who had real power in their hands, the US imperialists, which by then had become the most powerful nation in the world and the local collaborators, the PNC and the United Force who became tools in the hands of the British and the Americans.

The PNC, as they are doing today, used race to divide and weaken the movement to stall independence and to be given the government by the US and British Imperial powers.

Despite that formidable opposition, the PPP government scored very important achievements in the economy. When the PPP left office in 1964, British Guiana had one of the highest per capita income in the colonies and semi-colonies. In the social area, the PPP administration expanded areas to education for the children of the

working people and established tertiary institutions such as the University of Guyana and the Guyana School of Agriculture, opening the door to the underprivileged.

In the area of health, the Georgetown Public Hospital was expanded to become the largest hospital in the English-speaking Caribbean. Malaria was eradicated and Health services spread across the country. Due to this and the improvement in the economic conditions of the working people life expectancy grew sharply. The leadership of Dr. Jagan was most important in making progress in the wake of the opposition to the socio-economic development.

However, since the passing of Dr. Jagan twenty-four years ago, some have begun to say that his ideas are no longer relevant. This is expressed by those who in his lifetime were opposed to him. But it is not confined to them, even among those who express sympathies with him, share those views.

It is true that in the twenty-four years that have elapsed since Dr. Jagan's passing a lot have changed. Therefore, it is not every speech that he had made or all his writings will reflect the reality of today. However, what has not changed is the direction which societies are going which Cheddi Jagan spoke about. His principles remain sound

and worthwhile to be emulated.

His approach to issues and problems internally and internationally remains valid as ever.

Some of the issues that Cheddi Jagan championed are still with us today. Indeed, many have become even more acute now than they were during his lifetime.

For instance, the question of inequality in our world today. That is even more skewed now than in his lifetime. Figures from Oxfam and others have shown that wealth is more concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Today the wealth of ten (10) of the richest persons have more wealth than the lower 50% of the world's population.

This is mind blowing.

Poverty, which Dr. Jagan saw as a systemic problem rooted in the capitalist mode of production is a worldwide problem. Not only in the third world where it is more acute, but in the developed world as well. The poor today are not just those who are unemployed, but they are in the category of the working poor.

These are people who are working but are homeless and cannot afford some of the basics of life.

Some would argue that the number of people living in absolute poverty in our world has fallen over the last 25

years or so. That may be true. However, relative poverty has grown exponentially. The world has never witnessed such concentration of wealth as we see today, much greater than when Dr. Jagan was with us.

Those who were and are opposed to his visions often point to the collapse of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe to say that Cheddi Jagan's views are outdated.

Yet a close examination of Cheddi's works and practices would show that he had many views that were very different from what was happening in Eastern Europe.

For instance, he always advocated a tri-sectorial economy - the public, private and cooperative sectors of the economy. He believed all were important in the creation and distribution of wealth.

That brings up the contentious question of foreign capital which many of his detractors say he was against. He himself corrected that position over and over particularly during the 1957 to 1964 period. He demonstrated that he could work with foreign investors. Jock Campbell, chairman of Bookers and many other foreign investors expressed confidence in his government and even increased their investments. However, he was opposed to them controlling the economy and being the dominant factor.

For him, it was more a question of sovereignty. He was



Dr. Jagan, along with other officials at the launch of The New Global Human Order

not going to compromise sovereignty by allowing foreign capital to dictate to the government what developmental path to take and which countries Guyana should have relations with.

Under his leadership the co-op sector was very strong. Hundreds of cooperative societies flourished and even owned important means of production such as rice mills, among others. The principled positions he held are being validated by events in our time.

Today we see that huge corporations are not just threatening the sovereignty in third world countries but even the most developed are feeling corporate power. Donald Trump, then President of the United States, had his views removed from Twitter and was blocked by Facebook.

Facebook just banned views it did not like. Here is the owner of a company who no one elected to public office deciding that an elected President be banned from his platform for his views. Not any President at that, but the president of the most powerful country in the world, the USA.

That is not an isolated case. When the Australian government sought to tax Facebook, it faced the power of the company and was forced to retreat.

Does this not justify Dr. Jagan's principled stance? Indeed democratic-minded people must be very concerned and fearful of the power of these huge companies.

It is also important to note that the countries that are making real human progress that benefit working people are not the huge capitalist states.

It is China that has ended absolute poverty. It did this in a very short period of time. It is China's support in Third World countries that is allowing countries in Asia and Africa to experience real growth. China is a country on the path to Socialism.

Vietnam, a country that was devastated by wars from the 1960's to 1975, is now growing at a rapid rate and

the standard of living of its people has improved greatly. Vietnam is also on the socialist road.

Cuba's experience is also important. It does not have the same successes in its economy as China and Vietnam. This is because of the decades of economic blockade and sanctions that it had to endure and is enduring.

However, its strides in education have been great. Cuba has one of the most educated people in the world. It is the only country where the state provides family doctors and where health services of a high standard are free.

That is why it has one of the highest life expectancy in all of the Americas. This, for a country whose economy was made to scream because of its principled stand and its own insistence on sovereignty.

Finally, it is important to recall Dr. Jagan's work on a New Global Human Order (NGHO). This work was adopted by the United Nations as worthwhile to be pursued.

In our time when we are confronted with many problems that affect the whole world, such as climate change and world peace, the NGHO is a realistic programme to lead the world away from the edge of disaster.

Dr. Jagan made a positive contribution to every aspect of life, his ideas and views are very relevant and in some cases even more urgent and timely than when he was alive; the socialist path he advocated is not dead as some claim. US Senator Bernie Sanders of the Democratic Party has become popular due to his call to pursue a socialist path.

The collapse of the Eastern European socialist countries represents a model of socialism and not socialism as such. Dr. Jagan recognized this and was advocating a socialist society based on the traditions and culture of the Guyanese people.

On the occasion of the 103rd anniversary of his birth it is appropriate to say that he not only lived among us, he lives and will continue to live!



Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.

Cheddi's Bold, Daring Socio-Political Innovation in 1990 and My Bridge into Politics

Perhaps we should not see Cheddi Jagan's innovation of the PPP/C in 1990 as something altogether new but as another return by Cheddi to bringing together us Guyanese, fragments of six distinct and different populations with our emergent issues of - race, class, status, religion and coastland-hinterland regions - for the growth and development of a Guyanese people and the country of Guyana, in convergence with each other. This is evident in Cheddi's first creation of the PAC in 1946 and in the subsequent launching of his PPP on 1st January, 1950 with the position of Chairman provided to the recently returned Forbes Burnham, Ashton Chase stepping aside. In the year 2000, at one of the events to mark fifty years of its endeavours, Janet Jagan is musing with Ashton, "I often wonder how our politics would have turned out if we had not called on you to stand aside for Forbes".

It is fashionable amongst many commentators to portray Cheddi and the PPP as much the same as Forbes and the PNC. No doubt, some want to avoid disagreeable disagreements and continued acrimony. But, the

historical facts say differently - most recently - the period from the NCM of December 2018 to Elections of March 2020, and the five-month delayed declaration to August 02, 2020 should make such comparisons ridiculous and reprehensible.

Those commentators who call for political leaders who would not just go where their supporters would want them to, taking the easy road; those who call for leaders of principle, ready to take the difficult road, providing the strong, national leadership which a people and country like ours needs, to create and shape the experiences, the views, attitudes and behaviors desirable to achieve our national aspiration as early voiced by old Brindley Benn – one people, one nation, one destiny; those commentators should see what they have been calling for in Cheddi and the PPP.

Those lazy, facts-ignoring comparisons of Cheddi and the PPP being the same as Forbes and the PNC do great harm in nurturing a leadership style and a series of leaders in the PNC who have fallen far short of being good for our people and country - most of all for their



Former President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan exchanging ideas with Former Prime Minister, Mr. Samuel Hinds

own supporters, overwhelmingly Afro-Guyanese, who on so many occasions have felt themselves constrained to put their tongues between their teeth and not give play to their better nature.

It has been Forbes and the PNC party that have been the bane of Afro-Guyanese, not Cheddi and the PPP.

Meeting Cheddi

When Nan Gopaul took me from his NAACIE Building stronghold in High Street, where he then resided and held court, to meet with Cheddi at Freedom House, about late July 1990, it was the first time that Dr. Jagan and I had consciously, knowingly met each other.

I had heard it said that Nan had gone through a number of cycles of being close to Cheddi and the PPP, and then distant. He and Mike McCormack seemed to be the leading supporters of Yesu Persaud, apparent founder in early 1990 of GUARD (Guyanese Action for Democracy) seemingly modelled on Solidarite of Poland. An old QC friend, Clairmont Lye, had prevailed on me to speak in Linden at the same-day public launching of GUARD by Yesu Persaud, first at the Parade Ground in Georgetown, then at Dutchie's Boat Landing on the Wismar shore in Linden, and concluding in Rose Hall.

I had lived my forty-six plus years trying to keep my nose out of politics and stuck into my chemical engineering work, but we, Guyana and Guyanese were being taken downhill, very evidently so from the mid-1970s. It was the first time that I had dared to step onto our country's social-political stage. I was at it again two or three days later at Dutchie's Boat Landing, where old school days friends mostly of the WPA, had prevailed on me to speak at the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Walter Rodney on Friday 13th June in 1980. A large number of old QC boys of the era when I was there in 1955 to 1962, and who were in Guyana, had gravitated around Walter Rodney and the WPA and were still shaken by his assassination.

I had held off joining them in the WPA until early 1990 when I felt that the horse I had been holding onto, my chemical engineering for the course of development of Guyanese and Guyana, could only come alive with a change of Government. I had become a card bearing member of the WPA as I began speaking regularly at GUARD meetings, two or three times a week all across Guyana.

The response of the public was intoxicating. GUARD personalities and supporters, and other sympathetic persons from other unions and small political parties were often assembling at NAACIE building – union personalities, Paul Tennessee - leader of the DLM, many professionals, business people, and religious leaders

were all there from time to time. Elections were due in a few months' time, before the end of 1990, and everyone was anxious, highly motivated and activated.

There at the NAACIE Building and on my travels to meetings in Berbice, often with Mike McCormack and Basil Butcher, I sensed the emergence of two lines of thinking. One line favoured, "Fair and Free Elections and whoever wins, wins," the other line said, "Fair and Free Elections but Lord help us, let it not be Cheddi and the PPP." I had urged amongst my GUARD colleagues that we needed to hold a retreat. And so we did one Saturday, about the third weekend of July at the St Paul's Retreat Centre at Vryheid's Lust, a few miles outside Georgetown, on the East Coast. There was not much discussion or yearning to discuss the two lines but I declared then that taking account of all that Cheddi and the PPP had endured from the early 1960s to date (July 1990), and had still maintained their commitment to all Guyanese and Guyana, we, GUARD, should offer Cheddi and the PPP our unconditional support in the upcoming elections, without any preconditions or reservations.

For many years I had thought that it should not have been required, but Cheddi and the PPP had paid their dues many times over to be Guyanese. I had a feeling that that position of mine was unexpected by a number of my colleagues in GUARD but passed over as being enthusiastically naïve, as one might expect from someone who had stood on a political platform for the first time, only about six weeks earlier, mid-June 1990. Nonetheless, without any expectation or forewarning, I was acclaimed Chairman.

It was as the only-recently-heard-of, new Chairman of GUARD that then TV hosts Freddie Kissoon and Bibi Naraine welcomed me to their talk shows. In those very early days of TV in Guyana, with only one or two available TV recording studios, and GEC supplying power about 40% of the time, the studio had been chosen to match my available time and the GEC published but still uncertain schedule. The power went five minutes early, on my last word. I recall Freddie grumbling that somewhat like Cheddi, I was not giving short, direct, yes-no answers but long-winded ones. I took it as a compliment - but Freddie and I would have known that questions, positions, even facts would have different significance in different settings and world views, so one has to establish the world view in which he sees the question being put and the view within which he is responding.

The body language of a serious Cheddi signaled to Nan that he should go and Cheddi and I began talking: I cannot recall much specifics of our talk. Dr. Cheddi Jagan was well known to everyone and greatly respected by me. It was more a matter of me telling Dr. Jagan about myself – in the manner as we might think these days of



Dr. Cheddi Jagan with Prime Minister, Mr. Samuel Hinds and Mrs. Yvonne Hinds

a potential US VP candidate making full disclosure to the Presidential candidate.

I had been a regular at the Michael Forde Bookstore in Freedom House ever since I had returned home in June 1967, from the University of New Brunswick. I was buying and reading Times and Newsweek every week from Lord Thompson's "Graphic" bookstore in Linden, and I found at Freedom House, news magazines from the other sides of our World - the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, and Africa. I spoke about seeing Indra Chandarpal working at the bookstore.

Quite likely, word of my position at the GUARD retreat a week or two earlier, had reached Dr. Jagan. He knew that I had been acclaimed Chairman of GUARD. A Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD), had been formed soon after our last, also-rigged, 1985 elections, with the aim of fielding one combined slate at our next elections, expected before December 31, 1990. The PCD was expected to be strong enough to take on the PNC and unambiguously expose and bring an end to the PNC's long reign of illegitimately holding office on the basis of rigged elections. But the PCD had founded on the assumption by the other parties that Dr. Jagan and the PPP had long passed their prime, and consequently demanded that Cheddi should not be put forward as the Presidential Candidate nor should the PPP have a majority of seats amongst this combined opposition. The other members of the PCD were being unrealistic and unreasonable, no doubt carried away by the seeming growing wave of demand for a political change in our Guyana.

Cheddi was aware of the estrangement that had developed between our peoples from the time of that regretted PPP split of 1955, and through the elections and events of 1957, 61, and 64 in our run-up to Independence; the rigged elections from 1968 and the inevitable dismay and falling standards of living from the mid-1970s - recognized that he and the PPP had to make a big demonstration which would give substance to his oft-repeated position of not wanting to dominate but also not wanting to be dominated - perhaps not to win the elections but to be allowed to win it, and having won to have a fair chance of being allowed to govern.

Cheddi would have been aware too that in the presence of Burnham's and the PNC's growing stranglehold over social and economic life over those 28 years, many rising young professionals, farmers, and business people with their natural desires to get on with their lives, kept their distance from Cheddi and the PPP when they might have otherwise become members. Card bearing PPP members had become a relatively small hard-core who had been ready to endure great constraints on their lives and to face deprivations and death. Cheddi knew that he and the PPP had to reach out again in a dramatic way, to win Guyanese people of all races, of all classes, all religions, and from all regions of Guyana back to their side.

Cheddi extended an invitation directly to all patriotic Guyanese, who, not members of the PPP but not at the time hostile to Cheddi and the PPP, to join the PPP in the struggle for fair and free elections. The PPP was willing to offer one such person the second spot on the ticket,

that of Presidential Running Mate and Prime Ministerial candidate, and to include others to the extent of one third or more in the PPP's slates at the National and Regional levels and in their Cabinet.

I had been hearing at the time and subsequently, that there had been three or four named AfroGuyanese men considered before me for the Running Mate/Prime Ministerial slot but no agreement was reached, for one reason or another. It was in the top corridor of the Bauxite Operations in Linden that I had first heard, unexpectedly from a colleague, Phil Yeung, that I was being considered to be Cheddi's running mate. Kim Kissoon, a mutual friend active in GUARD and with logging business in the Region 10 area to feed his plywood plant, and Vic Oditt who had relatives working at the bauxite company and some Novar, Mahaicony connections were my sponsors.

I learnt later from Dr. Jagan that "Choka", Pooran Singh, PPP activist and my schoolmate who lived next to the old (before 1954) Novar Canadian Mission Primary School and who knew Maam Bruce, my grandmother, who taught there for many years and my grandfather, Brother Bruce, was very supportive. Incidentally, I can recall Moses Bhagwan who came to teach at Novar about 1954 and much earlier, Cleveland Hamilton, a Central Mahaicony man (later, a Mayor of Georgetown and writer of "Our Song of the Republic") taught there about 1950, on his return from the Royal Air Force after World War II.

Cheddi must have sensed something good in me from that very first meeting, for he would be taking a big gamble on me if I were to be chosen. It is a tribute to his earned long-standing in his party, his vision for Guyana, and his persuasive skill that he could induce the party at a time when it appeared that it would win a fair and free election on its own, to welcome others who had by all appearances just been standing aside and apart, during their tribulations of those 28 years, and worse yet, some who had actively contributed to those tribulations.

Like many long-lasting, important, decisive agreements, I cannot recall the moment of a decision that I was to be Cheddi's running mate but at the end of that meeting, I felt that I was in.

My meeting with Cheddi would have given substance to rumors that I was being seriously considered. I needed to speak with my WPA friends and colleagues. Talking with Rupert Roopnaraine, Clive Thomas, Jocelyn Dow and others on the upper floor of Taitt House (then under Jocelyn's management, now the older wing of Cara Lodge), the advice I received as they left in the Land Rovers of Clive and Feinminster, was to leave Cheddi and the PPP alone – let them see sense and return to the PCD, and do the sensible thing – accept the demands of the PCD. I caught up with Moses Bhagwan separately

and he warned that whilst he understood my stated position, I would in time find the embrace of Cheddi and the PPP –suffocating. The WPA and I parted company.

A Vacation Interlude with Heightened Awareness of Things Political

As it happened, I had some months before booked vacation leave for my wife, Yvonne, and me to visit with relatives and friends in New York, London - UK, and an old University of New Brunswick (UNB) friend, Desmond Green, in his native country, Ireland. GUARD and Cheddi both separately said, go ahead with your vacation.

Perhaps about one-third of Guyanese born, live across the New York-New Jersey area: they could not be missed. They will tell you many reasons why and how they left Guyana. They all miss Guyana. Returning to our lodging at my cousin in Apt 16U on Grand Concourse at 161st St, in the Bronx, some were squeezing and offering cane juice at the subway station in the shadow of that huge federal court building. They are a long way from Guyana but trying to keep some pieces of Guyana with them. My cousin, Maxi Hinds, former Officer in the GDF, acclaimed for his Recce patrols, was then, from that distance very much a part of the WPA at Taitt House, later an advocate for the AFC, but always making us welcome.

There is a photograph of Yvonne standing in the light of the setting sun, on Maxi and Gloria's small door verandah, overhanging the Grand Concourse. She is wistful and pensive, in a yellow dress, Aquino yellow, a shade favoured and made popular by then President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines who had been thrust into politics on the assassination of her husband who had been leading the campaign to end the Marcos dictatorship and return democracy to the Philippines. Yvonne must have been wondering what our venture into politics in our country would bring.

Our friend in the UK had gone there in the early 60s, recruited in Guyana by a British regiment posted here to keep the peace during our troubles of those times. On his own, he disclosed that he was one of three then young persons who in 1968 had been locked away for over 36 hours, voting for those horses in abandoned railway stations – the bogus UK overseas votes taken to Guyana by our then High Commissioner in London, Sir Lionel Luckhoo. The second named person was known to us. He had arrived in the bauxite company in Linden, shortly after its nationalization, and now we understood his air of superior knowledge, and special leave whenever an election was in the air. As things happen, a cousin of his of the same name has been a long, faithful activist of the PPP to this day.

It was when we were on the stairs hurriedly leaving that friend in London, to catch the plane to Dublin that the

expected telephone call came from Vic Oditt, for my formal acceptance to be Cheddi's Running Mate. That call had to be concluded in Dun Laoghaire, outside Dublin, at Desmond Green's place. Our stay in Dublin was noteworthy for two other reasons. Desmond, who I was learning had been a bit of a revolutionary during his undergraduate days in Dublin, encouraged us to step forward and promised that he would be there for us if any critical situation developed with us – that was reassuring. He took us to a midday reception for the lady candidate, in the elections in a few weeks for a President of Ireland. She was then running third behind two former male Prime Ministers. Some scandals broke concerning those two a week or two later and she, Helen Robinson, became President of Ireland in 1990 and has been enjoying a career at the UN since.

Also, with great anticipation, I placed a call to an old QC schoolmate, Mahindranauth Naraine at the University of Lancaster in Bailrigg. Mahin's father once headed the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF). We had both graduated in 1967, I from UNB as a chemical engineer and he from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, in Geology. Corresponding by the postal 'snail mail' of that era, we wondered what we should do on graduation. Return home and take over that country, he had suggested but concluded that that country already had owners – Forbes and Cheddi. He had continued to a PhD in Metallurgy, becoming involved in the hot subject then of mining ocean floor nodules and ended up in the Laws of the Seas, International Relations, and the Department of War and Peace at the University of Lancaster.

We had last spoken sometime in 1985 as I was leaving Newcastle upon Tyne, a member of a team led by Dunstan Barrow which was visiting European bauxite customers. That conversation ended with Mahin remarking on how remarkable it was for a "coolie man and a black man from Guyana to be picking up their never-ending, intense discussion across the north of England". I was thinking of challenging him to now come back to Guyana and let us take over the country – but the receptionist said, "Alas, you would not have heard: Professor Naraine went to an International Radio Conference in Geneva in 1988 and on the morning of his returning, suffered a massive heart attack and died".

The PPP/C Is Born

On our return in early September things were moving at a quickening pace – elections were, at that time, about twelve weeks away – there was still so much to be done on so many fronts: many, many persons were joining in the struggle – I had to get working.

The PYO called for an early go at looking us over, Yvonne and me, at a cocktail party for about thirty or so hosted

by Prakash and Ragmatti Ramjattan at their home in Delph Street, Campbellville. There, a widening circle we were getting to know and be known to, of thirty to forty years old, holding on and supporting Cheddi in his long struggle for fair and free elections. Amongst the new and interesting persons we did meet were Annan Boodram, Lionel Peters, Moses Nagamootoo, Navin Chandrapal, Frank Anthony, and perhaps Feroze Mohamed. Much bantering of various uneasy encounters with the police in the course of and as a result of their political activities; they had invested a lot, feeling at times their lives were on the line, the chosen running mate may put it all at risk – we could understand their concern - it was nonetheless a pleasant event we left with intimations of acceptance.

I joined a march around the Parliament Building alongside a comrade with whom I subsequently worked closely for many years, personal friends to today – Harry Persaud Nokta. I joined my first picketing exercise under Mrs. Indra Chandrapal walking along Robb Street from Freedom House to under the upper floor office in the GPOC building of then GECOM Chairman Mr. Harold Bollers (friend of a benefactor of mine - Mr. Frank Denbow - and father of a bauxite, chemical engineer colleague) shouting, "Bollers must go".

In Linden, my wife Yvonne and I, local PPP activist Mr. Ronnie Anthony and Neil Kumar (on his arrival from Georgetown) took up our pickets demanding fair and free elections and elections free from fear, and walked brazenly along Arvida Road past Blair's Delight, the former Sproston's building and turning onto Powell Crescent passing the old Recreational Hall, the McKenzie market and along the boat landings on the McKenzie shore; then crossed the river by boat to Burnham Drive along the Wismar shore. Our fellow citizens of Linden, on their Saturday morning shopping, looked on us with great disbelief, distaste, amusement, consternation, and ridicule as well as concern for our wellbeing and pity for our stupidity. "You think the PNC will allow Cheddi and the PPP and you to win any elections? You think those people will really make you their Prime Minister?" I have no doubt that it was because the view prevailed that I would likely be more of a drag than a boon to Cheddi and the PPP, that I was left largely undisturbed on my job and came through it all unharmed.

Henry Jeffrey and Dale Bisnauth had been early on the team working with Cheddi and the PPP, and that team kept growing rapidly in numbers and variety. I recall discussions at Freedom House on how we should call ourselves. I had proffered PPP/AA, PPP, and Allies. In the end, it was Cheddi who put forward PPP/C, People's Progressive Party/Civic, and that carried the day. The PPP/C was born.

Cheddi kept on calling and receiving many who would join us. I could never forget Dr. Jagan's joy as he informed



Boy Scouts and Girl Guides during a Hands Uniting Guyana event. L to R: Derek Jagan, Samuel Hinds and Reepu Daman Persaud

us that Mr. Jeffrey Fraser (son of WO Fraser, Financial Secretary of our post-1953 Interim Government) had agreed not just to be on our Region 5 RDC slate but on our National slate. He was subsequently our MP, and the following term, our Chairman of Region 5 RDC. Along the way, Jeffrey Fraser acknowledged that most likely, for some long time neither his father nor Cheddi might have seen a good bone in the other.

One might think, that the Civic group might have been largely AfroGuyanese, bearing in mind the historical development of politics in Guyana and the unspoken and unwritten position that for a racially balanced slate, the Prime Ministerial Candidate, the First Civic as he might be styled, would, for the time being, be AfroGuyanese. The Civics was a welcome slot for a number of AfroGuyanese but also for even larger numbers of IndoGuyanese and others - lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants, religious leaders, business people, who all for various reasons had not been ready to have become members of the PPP. There was amusing bantering about those who had stopped being CREEPs long ago, those who were CREEPs up to yesterday, and those who might still be CREEPs today. Similarly, in Linden which had been hitherto nominally 100% PNC, one could be amused by the disputes during the ongoing wave to sign up for PPP membership, as to who was senior to who, who had stopped being PNC long ago, others only yesterday and some still being PNC.

Cheddi was, certainly, and would have been seen by anyone open-minded, to be trying to attract and accommodate as many people as he could under his PPP/C banner, if not the PPP then the C. There was substance in my jocular exchange with some of my PPP comrades that we were all Cheddi's pickney: they, the inside pickney from birth and we Civics the outside pickney coming out in his old age.

A PPP Congress was being held as scheduled, at the defunct Empire cinema building, to inform the party and pull it together for the imminently due elections. Without a doubt, a major task of Cheddi would have been to win enthusiastic acceptance of his bold, daring socio-political innovation of going to the elections as the PPP/C, and with me, an AfroGuyanese Civic as Running Mate and Prime Ministerial candidate. I was presented at an appropriate time, my first opportunity to get to know and be known to much of the party's rank and file across our country.

I, then had to be introduced formally to the country – a Friday afternoon sit-down with Sharief Khan, editor of the Stabroek News, prepared the following Sunday's astonishing, front-page headline news. That Sunday morning our newspaper vendor in Linden seemed to be very late getting to Richmond Hill, but when he did he was shouting more loudly than ever, "Sam Hinds to be Dr. Jagan's Running Mate," so that all our neighbours would know.

Finally: Glorious October 5, 1992.

It is a matter of history that we, PPP/C, managed to win the elections eventually held on October 5, 1992. It was after the third assembling of our slates, the third march to City Hall to present our PPP/C slates, the third vetting of the voters' lists to the last name, and after our third campaign launch in Alexander Street, Kitty. I had a sense that Cheddi might have heard after each aborted elections, questions about maintaining the CIVIC and Running Mate/Prime Minister format.

The many new and small parties would have been greatly disappointed in their poor returns. My former colleagues of Guard had fielded a party with Nan Gopaul as Presidential Candidate – he, later, joined our administration. The WPA emphasized two points: that politics in Guyana was all about race and that it was only the WPA that could deliver Guyana from its race consciousness. The electorate seemed willing to accept their first point but rejected the second. Many of the other small parties were led by young IndoGuyanese men who I thought were not really intent on challenging Cheddi but on posting their faces and names against the day when Cheddi would have passed away.

There might have been some blessings in disguise in that two-year delay so that I, the other Civics, and the PPP faithful had time working together, getting to know each other, gaining confidence in each other, and becoming a sound PPP/C team. There is nothing like enduring some hardships together to build strong bonds of camaraderie.

I think of Cheddi catching some sleep at the bottom of a small boat as we chugged our way from Karamang past Waramadong to Paruima, along the Kamarang river. Diane McTurk had opened her ranch at Karanambo to Cheddi. Cheddi, caught up in his address to an Amerindian village in the deep-south - we missed our latest departure time from Annai and so we spent the night sleeping on the floor of our local representative, a teacher from the coastland. Of some concern, Harri Nokta after his trip through the highland villages of Region 8 had come down with both typhoid and malaria. Taking off from the airstrip after we had dropped him off, I saw Harry well along the trail to an abandoned-looking Matthews Ridge, hurrying there to prepare for a meeting the following day. Away from Georgetown we often stayed at our comrades' places, where, as Clement Rohee reminded me, we were often awakened to the sound of the ladies clapping roti to energize us for another day of campaigning. In Georgetown (especially in the south), in Linden, in New Amsterdam, and several largely Afro, pro-PNC villages we would expect taunts and jeers and our meetings would be closed with rotten eggs and bricks but, we never abandoned those areas.

In the summer of 1991 a three member team of Cheddi,

me, and "Rouser" - Eddie Da Silva - traveled to North America. In the New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania area, Cheddi had to keep some five disagreeing factions at peace whilst explaining and defending his adoption of these CIVICs and giving away the prime PM spot, and so many MPs and Cabinet Ministerial slots also. In Washington, compliments of Paul Reichler assisted by Jannis Brennan, we met a number of sympathetic representatives in Congress, and relevant Officers in the State Department and National Security. We met a few of the faithful in Minnesota. In the gatherings in Toronto, (where I lodged with the Sash Sawh family – Sash had a Mahaicony childhood but we didn't know each other before), Cheddi again had to placate two or three factions and win everyone over to his PPP/C innovation.

At my urging, we PPP/C held a two-day weekend retreat early in 1992 at Freedom House. We had been campaigning and doing all the necessary practical things together – we needed additionally to bring our thoughts together on socio-economic-political topics. There were six presentations and a summing-up by Cheddi. I recall Dale Bisnauth presenting on "Race, Religion, and Region". George Fung-On, Henry Jeffrey, and Clement Rohee also presented. I presented on "Production, Productivity, Efficiency and Effectiveness" reflecting my concern that many well intended revolutionaries and revolutions lose sight of the fact that we must produce: there are no goods nor services to be had and shared except those which we have produced through our work as individuals and all together. There is some opinion that our Cuffy-led 1763 slave rebellion failed partly from insufficient attention to growing enough food. One cannot live by bread alone but bread is essential. I had obtained about eighteen copies of a book by one of my gurus, "The Practice of Management" by Peter Drucker, and made them available to whoever wished. Two or three years ago I was pleased to see that Clinton Collymore still had his in his office.

The PNC did not yield the 1992 election easily. President Bush (senior) and former President Carter prevailed on Guyana's President Hoyte to eventually concede a number of key changes in the running of our Elections including a new Election Commission with the Chairman determined in a certain way, and counting the votes at each place of poll. And US Ambassador, Fleming Jones, had to place himself in harm's way outside the GECOM headquarters in the "Action Tyre" building, suffering a few cuts from glass windows broken by threatening mobs, acting allegedly with directions from Hamilton Green to stop the count and have the elections canceled.

The realities of the painful effects on families of our polarized politics in Guyana had begun to hit me at a new, personal family level about six weeks before



Mr. Samuel Hinds sharing a toast with Mrs. Janet Jagan and Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud

the elections, about two weeks before the start of the Christmas school term. Our old, retired, family friend in Kitty, sadly informed us that her relatives and neighbouring friends had prevailed on her that her house would be at great risk of destruction if the family of Cheddi's Running Mate was staying there as Election Day came near. She could not have our girls return to staying there to attend school. And it was the same at all other relatives and friends, and appropriate places where we might rent a room or two at short notice. We accepted the offer for Yvonne and our children to stay at "Zangara", the adjacent sister building to Freedom House. I joined them one or two nights when I had to stay late in Georgetown, conversing with the other residents - Eddie "Rousa" DaSilva and Lutch, who for many years had been the PPP man on the ground in Trinidad and Tobago. Our children, understandably, wanted to avoid any teasing and jeering from their schoolmates knowing where they were staying, so when in company they would walk past Freedom House, part company further on and then return.

Our family awoke in Linden on October 5th, Election Day 1992. Yvonne and I voted early as I continued visiting the polling stations across Linden and its suburbs. Not uncommon was a polling station in Amelia's Ward. At a neighbouring house not completely out of sight, fingers were being cleaned with chlorine bleach as persons returned to vote again. No doubt the real turn-out on Amelia's Ward was expected to be low.

Meeting up with Kim Kissoon who had come up from Georgetown to lend a helping hand, he passed on the message from Cheddi that our family should get out of Linden before dark, heading for Georgetown but stopping at Dr. Motilall's home for an evaluation of the situation. (I had first met Dr. Motilall when he was an older lad at QC, a lad from Buxton travelling on the train with other lads, Haslyn Parris, Weygand Younge and two or three Paynes.) We stayed hunkered down with the Motilall family for nearly two days until Roger came to take me to Freedom House, along a thought-out route. Lying on the backseat of the car so as not to be visible, but not seeing out either, I worried about where we were and what might befall us before we reached Freedom House.

As I was to learn later, Mr. Razack who lived in a rented house at the corner of Arvida Road and Powell Crescent, with his shop on the ground floor, from where we often started our picketing and assembled before and after our meetings - a mob broke in on election night going upstairs looking for him. Fortunately, he and his teenage son had the presence of mind and in good time hid above the ceiling where they prayed and stayed all night until well into the morning. I do not want to imagine what might have been our fate if we had stayed on in Linden. It was an experience the likes of which many of the PPP faithful had been experiencing over more than two decades, which hopefully were about to end.

Winning the 1992 Elections brought great joy to Cheddi, the PPP and us Civics - it vindicated to a great degree



L to R: Navin Chandarpal, Police Commissioner Laurie Lewis, Mrs. Janet Jagan, Mr. Samuel Hinds and Dr. Cheddi Jagan

Cheddi's approach to national unity embodied in the PPP/C. However, a serious problem appeared as we were getting ready for our first meeting of Parliament, in an unexpected request for each of us to sign an undated letter of resignation. It seemed that the PPP members had all confirmed – party discipline no doubt- but it was distasteful to us Civics, smacking of Burnhamism. Our Attorney General, Bernard DeSantos, bluntly refused to sign any such document. I signed up aware that it might have been a precautionary arrangement that Cheddi might have had to concede in the circumstances. It would take some time for us Guyanese, if only from fear of being seen as stupid, to put behind us a number of seemingly smart though detestable moves imposed by Forbes Burnham. As I expected and hoped, this request never raised its head again after any of our many subsequent elections.

To the PNC party and its supporters, unfairly in Office since 1964, the loss of the 1992 elections could not be but traumatic. A popular calypso at our Mashramani Republic celebrations a few months later (February 1993) was, "Desi, you wrong". Very artfully, the calypso was admitting to the series of elections won by rigging, criticizing Desi for losing, consoling to PNC supporters and at the end saying, accept the loss and allow Cheddi to carry on. A video can be seen of me, Roger, Moses and Sita braving the jeering crowds at the Calypso Finals. The Mighty Rebel (we became friends, in time) made-up to look like a stern Burnham appears out of dense smoke from a replica of the Seven Ponds Mausoleum to chastise a penitent-looking Desi for losing the elections. "I hear that the ballots had to be counted at the place of poll in the evening – Desi, you wrong – If a leader wants to stay in position he must never think of a fair and free election – Desi you wrong". The calypso however ends, "As Former President of the land (I say) let them (Cheddi and the PPP/C) function and carry on". Looking back one

wonders whether there was not a yearning for truth and reconciliation at the heart of that calypso.

The PPP/C at Thirty Years: What Future?

Since 1990, it has been the PPP/C that has contested every one of our elections – National and Regional as well as Local Government Elections. The PPP/C has been a winning formulation and we can declare that it has been a success. The PPP/C has had the minimum of dissensions, disputes, and departures, and it has survived what is said to be the most critical time in the life of any organization – the death of our founder, Cheddi. Are there features in the PPP/C in meeting that particular constellation of circumstances of 1990 that could serve our country and party well, even as the changes we work for are realized?

In those early days, PPP members and Civic persons met in many settings, generally under the Chairmanship of, or in the presence of, or with the blessings of Cheddi. Without a doubt, Cheddi, for as long as he lived and in respect for his memory unto this time, has been the main glue of the PPP/C. Under the aura of Cheddi, there has been little or no sense of any difference between PPP and C, not in our meetings of MPs, nor our Cabinet meetings, nor various joint meetings with the Party's ExCo or CC or other leading PPP persons, as the case might be.

Success brings new and different challenges. After we won Office in 1992, we were tested by some in the media and our society at large, by their messaging that the Civics should stand up to the PPP, even distinguish themselves from the PPP. At the early meetings of Civic persons, there were recurring calls for various degrees of organization of Civics, which could have ended up in the direction of founding a new political party – the Civics -

which might have then sought formal coalition with the PPP. I discouraged any such organization pointing out that it would not be in accord with the spirit and manner in which each of us as an individual was called to be a Civic. In principle and for many of us in practice, there was a call and/or a meeting with Cheddi himself. Many of us would not have known or interacted with each other before becoming Civics; our ideological beliefs and assumptions were as varied as could be, and finally, any number of us was always free to withdraw and form a separate new party – there would be no taking over or hijacking of Cheddi's Civic group as a whole.

I took favourable notice however of the suggestion from old George Fung-On that, we seek organization in having each party group open a second register of associated Civics who would participate in many of the activities of the party at the group, district, and regional levels. Old Cheddi and Old George used to walk on afternoons around our National Park and who knows what they talked about. There may still be some merit in this suggestion.

Thirty years on, the PPP/Civic has weathered well. We prevailed at our last 2020 Elections. I have a good warm feeling of the many new persons in the embrace of the PPP/C formulation, today. Our General Secretary, Former President, and now our Vice President, Dr. Bharat Jagdeo has been reasserting the work of the PPP to win more members from all groups hitherto underrepresented in our party for known historical reasons: in particular, the party has been working to win more AfroGuyanese members - the PPP/C may be one route.

We must expect that in time, the need for the PPP/C to bring racial balance to our slate, will go. The PPP/C would then be a welcome umbrella for worthy Guyanese, not wanting a life-career in politics and who would have distinguished themselves, to join in Government service in our country at various levels. Cheddi's PPP/C innovation may well be a useful umbrella over the next thirty years.

There's one more thing I need to do, extend thanks and appreciation from all the Civics of 1990, to the often old and hard-core faithful of the PPP, relatively few – who so readily welcomed us, with little concern about being upstaged, they might have been saying, better late than

never.

On my behalf, I extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to three who my insertion would have surely displaced: Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud, thought by many to be second to Cheddi, recognized expert in our Standing Orders and Erskine May, sitting by him over many years in Parliament he never lost patience explaining to this novice the tactics of Parliament and Government; Roger Luncheon famously referred to and passed over as “black but red”, in the heat of the PCD disputes – him and me and Neil Kumar and Yvonne departing Kwakwani in the after-sunset dark, in the hectic days of 1990, pushing our spluttering Niva in the laterite mud on the Ituni-Linden trail; he, humming along with his old “golden-oldies” tape as we ate the last of Yvonne's banana bread; Gail Teixeira who swimming against all sorts of tides, departing her family in Canada and returning to Guyana in those mid-70s days of shortages and suppression, to be Cheddi's secretary.

And there was that foot soldier, Cecil Ramcharran, the PPP activist on the Corentyne coast, sent into the Berbice River the day before to meet us at DeVeldt, me and Ronnie Anthony and Neil, on my first trip along the Berbice River. Night was catching up with us at the Wiruni (creek) landing, at that scenic bend in the Berbice river, with the Dubulay ranch and resort less than a mile further on and on the other, eastern, shore the landing for the trails to Kimbia and the Ebini savannah, - a place for us to develop a bustling mid-river town in a hundred years or so, with the trail to Millie's Hideout and Linden a paved highway. Cecil had grown so cautious and fearful of harm over the years that he instructed us to travel an extra mile passing the shed where we were to hang our hammocks that night. Then we silently paddled back hoping that it might not be known where we were sleeping. In the growing early morning brightness, a few cows assembling themselves at the shed as it seemed their custom, appeared to be as surprised as we were on beholding each other.



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Dr. Jagan and Culture

Cane

[for Cheddi Jagan]

*You were born of cane
Not as the planters hoped -
Barefooted, beggardly of mind -
But hugely wise, a soul blown high
By the incensed breath
Of a cankered slave:
Cane made you a vision of mankind.
So let the empty-handed, toothless, blind,
The endless poor, the desperate, the folk,
Those whom we spurn, debauch or trade,
Come, for in you they will find
What is most healing in mankind,
Your hands forever open, giving, fatherly;
Your ceaseless heart, your mind's nobility.*

David Dabydeen

In 1998 a collection of poetry and prose was published out of the University of Warwick campus in the UK in which a wide range of poets, writers, academics and others contributed tributes dedicated to the memory of Dr Cheddi Jagan. This is a variety of work by well-wishers with different interests and nationalities, some of whom are not poets, but all of whom share admiration for Dr Jagan and recognition of his great worth and his contribution to human society.

Cheddi Jagan: Tributes In Prose and Verse edited by David Dabydeen emerged from the Centre for Caribbean Studies at Warwick. One of the significant factors of this publication is that Dr Jagan is acknowledged as a national hero of the Republic of Guyana who dedicated his life to political service and was not universally associated with the fields of culture, poetry and the arts; yet it was considered appropriate to mark his memory in tributes of poetry and prose. Poetry is appropriate to all things and on all occasions, but the irony of this is that there is considerable depth in the real association of the man of politics, of laws and of the social economy, with letters and poetry.

Among the foremost poems in the collection is "Cane" by Dabydeen, prize-winning poet and novelist, editor

and scholar, excellently crafted to explore Jagan's essential qualities. In techniques of the finest poetry, Dabydeen dramatises the humanity, the decency, the caring gentleman balanced against the determined militant and fighter in the trenches. Above all, the poem presents an honorable man with a vision for the liberation of vulnerable people. It is thorough in the use of art to show a protagonist whose nobility is perhaps his most enduring feature.

The concept of cane is central to the poem as symbol and metaphor. Jagan's birth and background are located in the sugar estate, complete with its history of slavery and indentureship, and the archetypal villainy of both. He rose out of that to become the large figure of a liberator on behalf of sugar workers and those from other sectors of industry, fighting in the trenches as well as the boardrooms of the legislature and the executive. But the poet places a further focus on "cane" as a symbol of humanity – in particular of suffering humanity and mortality. This is taken from the Christian concept of the Biblical character Cain who symbolises human mortality and the hereditary suffering of mankind. Here lies the deeper image of Jagan as an exemplary picture of humility – a complementary side of the warrior against poverty and injustice, and infuses him with humanising

qualities. This further locates him among the people, as a caring, healing and noble human being.

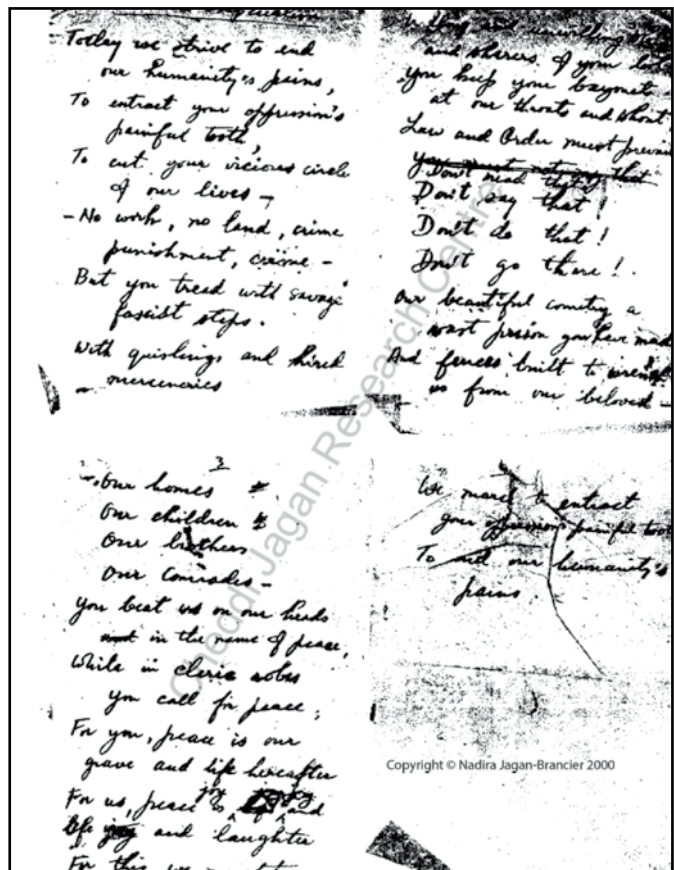
It is thus fitting to capture the public personality, vanguard activist and proletarian leader in poetry, because of his deeper and subtler qualities as a visionary statesman who saw as equally important to an equitable world economic order, “a global human order” such as he proposed to the UN. What is more, and what has not been given equal treatment as the political factors in the story of his life, is his closeness to cultural affairs, the way he facilitated and created opportunities for the arts in his management of political party and government, his personal involvement in letters, and even poetry. Where those matters are concerned he has not been sufficiently recognised.

Jagan’s best known, most direct involvement and greatest achievement in the field of letters is authorship of *The West On Trial*, a major publication by a practicing political leader and head of state. Several heads of state have published books, and some have even been artists themselves, such as playwright Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia or Senegal’s Leopold Sedar Senghor, but it is worth stressing the absence of ghost writing or dictating material to professional writers in the production of Jagan’s published writing. He had the ability and the mindset to articulate his thoughts in clear, comprehensive informed prose such as in his reasoned statement in Washington surrounding his audience with President Kennedy as Premier of British Guiana in the 60s. As a writer, Jagan sat at a desk with pen and paper.

He was a writer of compelling prose. He will never be known as a creative writer or as a poet. Yet, what will surprise most readers, is that he is known to have written one poem – “Death To Imperialism” (1954). We are provided with a surviving copy of the verses from the files of Nadira Jagan Brancier, along with a facsimile of the original hand-written manuscript, which she notes, was written “while in prison in 1954 on toilet paper, and it was later smuggled out. This is the only poem he ever wrote”.

*Today we strive to end our humanity’s pains.
To extract your oppression’s painful tooth,
To cut your vicious circle of our lives,
No work, no land, crime, punishment, crime –
But you tread with savage fascist steps,
With quislings and hired mercenaries
Willing and unwilling slaves and sharers of your loot,
You keep your bayonets at our throats and shout*

*Law and Order must prevail,
Don’t read that!
Don’t do that!
Our beautiful country a vast prison you have made,
And fences built to wrench us from our beloved –
Our homes
Our children
Our Comrades –
You beat us on our heads in the name of peace.
While in cleric robes you call for peace.
For you, peace is our grave and life hereafter
For us peace is joy and life and laughter
For this we march tomorrow
We march to extract your oppression’s painful tooth
To end our humanity’s pains.*



“Death To Imperialism” itself is not surprising in subject, tone or form. It is the weapon of defiance by an imprisoned socialist aimed against the colonial power, Great Britain, who had, in 1953 suspended the constitution of the colony British Guiana to revoke a socialist government, effecting a military invasion of the country and imprisoning many of its leaders. Jagan turned to poetry as a way of keeping spirits up, as another sortie against the besiegers in the role of the undefeated rallying his people. Poetry served here as not only a convenient mode of effective communication

Cheddi Jagan

The West on Trial



My Fight for Guyana's Freedom

that could be smuggled out past the guards, but as the chosen medium of one sufficiently sensitive and already disposed to literature.

The poetry ranges from lines of plain language to verses of commendable craft. Jagan was a dental surgeon who did not forget to turn his scientific training into metaphor, as in “extract your oppression’s painful tooth” and to shape it as a symbol of the colony’s hardships. He recognised the effect of contrast in the concept of “beat(ing) us on our heads in the name of peace”. There are well balanced lines in rhythm and rhyme in “*For you, peace is our grave and life hereafter / For us peace is joy and life and laughter*”. There is neatness in the way the poem ends with the last two lines mirroring the first two.

Jagan is therefore not insensitive to the poetic. It is easy to recall that he is in very flattering company in the smuggling out of poems written in prison because of the way his own act echoes that of Martin Carter. Many of Carter’s poems in the ground-breaking *Poems of Resistance from British Guiana* (1954) were written while the poet was also imprisoned during the British occupation. Carter was a companion to Jagan in those

experiences as a member of the PPP and a political activist in the leadership of the struggle in 1953.

What is more, however, is the more integral role of the Jagan leadership in Carter’s career and the association with literature and the arts in the 1950s. The PPP established two periodical publications early in the development of the party – *Thunder* and the *Mirror*, both of which sustained a relationship with the arts. *The Mirror* is a weekly newspaper, while *Thunder* was founded in 1950 as the theoretical organ of the party. It is important to note that the party ideology under Jagan has held a place for culture, with which very important leading members of the party were associated. These include Janet Jagan, Sidney King and Martin Carter.

Not only did *Thunder* publish poems, but they seemed to maintain a dialogue with ideology, with the cosmic vision of the PPP as a socialist party, not inconsistent with Dr Jagan’s consciousness, which held poetry as an important functionary in public information and public awareness. King, who later changed his name to Eusi Kwayana and is today referred to by that name, has, from the outset, been a literary personality, has written poems published in *Thunder*. In the issue of April, 1950, two of his poems appeared, “The Jobless Brothers” and “Call To The Toilers”, both proletarian and working class in outlook.

*Big able bodied men ‘aint workin’
Are they sick or are they lame?
Big strapping men, ‘aint workin’
O Comrades, isn’t it a shame?*

*They are free! – From jobs my Comrades,
Free to starve, by law unharried
Free to break the shops at midnight
Living men, but dead and buried. [. . .]*

Like Jagan’s single offering, King’s poetry is revolutionary, with “The Jobless Brothers” highlighting the uncaring class position of the capitalist factory owners, while alluding to a reality facing his society in 1950. It is consistent with the Marxist approach taken by *Thunder*, and elsewhere in a critical article, King himself describes Carter’s poetry as taking “the humanist standpoint of the communist”. Several other poems by King appear in *Thunder* between 1950 and 1957. In paying close attention to the social situation in Guyana, the theoretical organ from its very first edition, published poems. In February, 1950, a poem by Mike Quinn titled “The Flood” appeared. Significantly, according to notes

by Donald Ramotar, “That was at a time when B.G was experiencing great floods on its coast”.

Of even greater significance, is the relationship with Martin Carter. Carter began to grow, and to come to public notice as an extraordinary poet around 1951 with the publication of his small group of poems “The Hill of Fire Glows Red”. At the same time he was prominent in the PPP, and was assigned to a long relationship with *Thunder* throughout the 1950s until the time he left the party. He was very active as a writer and produced some of his most acclaimed verse during that period. Foremost among them was the series of poems titled “Poems of Shape and Motion” (1955). Carter did not separate his politics from his life and from his poetry, seeing politics in wider cultural context than most readers, and he grew up as a poet stride for stride with his association with *Thunder*.

He worked closely with Janet Jagan, from whom he took over the role as editor. His years with this organ contained his period of most serious development as a poet and prose writer, also suggesting the influence of Dr Jagan on his life and thought. According to Peepal Tree Press in a brief biography,

“By 1945, it seems likely that he had come into contact with the Marxist ideas of the Political Affairs Committee (the Jagans, Cheddi and Janet, and HJM Hubbard). A friendship with the Jagans began, with access to their extensive, radical library”.

As a poet, this nurturing also proved crucial, because it was at that time that Carter started his development as a published poet, while he was employed in the Civil Service. Peepal Tree continues –

“His first poems began to appear in Thunder in 1950 and in Kyk-over-Al in the following year. He was also writing political pieces in Thunder under the pseudonym of M. Black (to protect his civil service post)” .

This was verified by Phyllis Carter, who spoke of Martin’s determination to write for *Thunder* in spite of the Civil Service rules. In later years, free of those restrictions, he was fully immersed in the organ and was able to publish most of his highly acclaimed and most important pieces of prose writings under his own name. These pieces cover political thought, philosophical pieces, public affairs and cultural matters.

One of these was an editorial in *Thunder*, October 22,

1955 under the title “Wanted: A Great Obeahman” , which also turned out to be the source of some humour. Carter told the story about a man who walked into the office shortly after that piece was published, introduced himself and declared “I is the man you want” .

Both *The Mirror* and *Thunder* frequently carried reviews of books and films and pieces of art, acknowledged by the political leadership as essential to political and economic existence and the quality of life. Two examples of these are of interest. Janet Jagan reviewed most of them, but on one occasion in 1960, Cheddi himself was moved to comment in tones of considerable anger. The notes of Donald Ramotar provide the background to this anger. In those years, long before the establishment of a national gallery, the great Guyanese painter Aubrey Williams gave to Jagan a gift of a painting “Revolt” which the Premier promised to add to the national collection. At the same time there was a national exhibition mounted by the Royal Agricultural and Cultural Society (RACS) to whom the painting was sent for inclusion. However, the RACS refused to exhibit the work because of its contents. (Ramotar, 2021)



The painting “Revolt” is quite unlike the regular Aubrey Williams pieces, being a fairly vivid and radical presentation of a very bloody slave rebellion. But Jagan was concerned about showing radical pieces that reflect a reinterpretation of national history representing points of view that might disturb or incur the disapproval of colonial authorities. The Premier’s response exemplified an approach to art and social responsibility entertained by his government, which included their commitment to art as a relevant stimulus to national consciousness and socio-political awareness.

CHEDDI JAGAN

TRIBUTES IN PROSE AND VERSE



Edited by David Dabydeen



The second example demonstrates the Jagan government's emphasis on art as a means of instruction, in addition to the encouragement of social/political awareness accompanied by an appreciation of excellence. This was also complementary to the resistance to bourgeois art and the need for relevant historiography. Both *The Mirror* and *Thunder* carried film reviews, and Janet Jagan reviewed a film called *The Brave One* (1956) in the March 28, 1959 issue of *Thunder*, recommending it to all cinemas for excellence and instruction. This was a film "written by the famous Trumbo, a Communist who was persecuted during the McCarty period in the USA. Trumbo could not put his name on the film. However it won the Oscar for The Best Story of the year, 1956".

For the same reasons he could not collect the award. Eventually, it was belatedly presented to him in person in 1975. (Ramotar, 2021)

On January 7, 1965, Shiek Sadeek, at the time a fast rising playwright and fiction writer, wrote to Dr Jagan.

"On behalf of the National History and Culture Council, I shall like very much to thank you for your very fine

gesture in donating the Dr Jagan Gold Medal to be awarded as the prize for the best contribution in the field of literature".

This was evidence of Jagan's involvement in the arts in a more direct way in the 1960s, a crucial period for the development of literature among local writers when there was a particularly strong sense of nationalism in the writing. Jagan donated what was at that time the major national literary prize that bore his name as an incentive for the production and encouragement of good Guyanese literature.

The Dr. Cheddi Jagan Gold Medal was awarded to Sadeek who won the top award presented at a national awards ceremony for writers organised by the NH&CC in 1964, at which Janet Jagan presented the medal. There was a very distinguished panel of judges consisting of the Chairman Prof Joyce Sparer Adler, of the English Department at the University of Guyana, the poet Martin Carter and veteran poet JW Chinapen. The ceremony also presented the Sandbach Parker Gold Medal to Cyril Dabydeen, with prizes also to Cyril Seaforth, Randolph Scott and Sheila Vay.

Sadeek won the 1964 Prize for his collection of short stories "Four Pages of Guyana", to become a four time winner. Chinapen was also a previous winner of the Jagan Medal for his submissions of poetry.

The existence of the NH&CC itself is testimony to the genuine interest and the consistent agenda for culture demonstrated by Jagan's leadership of the PPP Government. The party gained power in 1957 and in 1958, Brindley Benn, the Minister of Education, responsible for culture established the "National History and Culture Committee", which introduced a History and Culture Week in October of every year. This Committee was chaired by A.J Seymour, poet and outstanding man of letters. The notes of Donald Ramotar, who researched this period, provides the extremely interesting fact that Minister Benn, who was also Party Chairman, is credited with having coined the slogan "One People, One Nation, One Destiny" to be used as the theme for the Culture Week. That slogan became our Moto at Independence.

These facts speak to the creative minds of the PPP leadership and the genuineness of culture as a national priority. It can be safely assumed that the NH&CC was later transformed after independence into the National History and Arts Council, and still later into what is now the Department of Culture. But the business, creative

energy and ideas of the original body in the early 1960s are amazing. Moreover, the personal involvement of Dr Jagan might just surprise many who are unaware of his active cultural side. When in 1963 the NH&CC started a series of lectures throughout the country to mark important dates, Jagan gave the lecture on February 23, 1963 to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the 1763 Berbice Rising. Consistent with his ideology, he stressed the urgency of historiography so that history is not learnt only from the point of view of the coloniser.

The records of that pre-independence period reveal a remarkable track record of the indefatigable energy and prolific activities, including cultural contributions towards the attainment of independence. The unending litany includes the setting up of a “Tri-Party” in 1964 to look at designs for the national flag, coat of arms and national anthem. This group comprised Benn, Boysie Ramkarran, EMG Wilson, Lawrence Mann (PPP), WOR Kendel, John Carter, W Blair (PNC), RE Cheeks and EV Viapree. (Ramotar, 2021). It continues with

- Guyana Music Festivals established in 1962;
- The Bartica Regetta and the Rodeo in the Rupununi began by the government in 1963;
- A Ballet School opened in March, 1963 headed by Helen Taitt;
- A steel band tour of Cuba during which the Guyanese band spent 6 months teaching the music to Cubans;
- A dance group from Venezuela performed in Guyana in 1959 to start a series of cultural exchanges.

It must be said that even in opposition, the PPP did not seem to flag and had quite a noteworthy cultural programme at Freedom House which included guest lectures, panels and important films introduced by an expert critic and screened. During Jagan’s second installation as head of state in 1992 he never hesitated to continue the Guyana Prize for Literature started by President Hoyte who he succeeded in office. It was during the early years of his new government that

the country finally set up a National Gallery of Art (at Castellani House) to be curated by Elfrieda Bissember in an initiative led by Mrs Jagan. Further important strides in the fine arts saw the re-establishment of the National Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition coordinated by Alim Hosein.

It is in the face of that overwhelming evidence that it can be concluded that “all the instruments we have agree” that poems to the memory of Cheddi Jagan are not misplaced. It is worth noting that VS Naipaul delivered in his controversial travel book *The Middle Passage* (1962) perhaps the most scathing dismissal of the Caribbean nations ever written. But what is significant is that his critical interrogation of British Guiana reveals a most favourable treatment of Cheddi Jagan by whom Naipaul was impressed. Perhaps Naipaul, the Caribbean region’s harshest critic, found in Dr Jagan as David Dabydeen found – “what is most healing in mankind . . . a soul blown high . . . Your ceaseless heart, your mind’s nobility”.



Al Creighton has held various positions at University of Guyana: Director of Confucius Institute; Head of Language and Cultural Studies; Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities, Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Associate Fellow, University of Warwick, UK; Lecturer, and member of Council, UWI. Awarded Research Fellowships, ACU Fellow at Univ. of Ibadan, Univ. of Warwick; Director, National School of Theatre Arts and Drama; Secretary, Guyana Prize for Literature; Prize Winning Playwright, Poet, Theatre Director; University Captain and winner of Full Colour in track and field athletics and hockey.

Annual Cheddi Jagan Commemorative Lecture



President Irfaan Ali delivering the Annual Cheddi Jagan Lecture

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an absolute honour for me to have been asked to deliver this year's Annual Cheddi Jagan Commemorative Lecture. For me to serve in the party which he established, to occupy the office of Head of State over which he once presided, and to now be asked to deliver this annual lecture in his honour is truly an overwhelming privilege.

I thank the Management Committee of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre for providing me with this opportunity. I express my appreciation to the Committee for organizing this virtual celebration, especially given the challenges which we are now facing as a result of the global coronavirus pandemic.

This activity –modest but important – is recognition – if any was needed – that Dr. Cheddi Jagan has not been, and will never be forgotten, not in our party or in our country.

The wicked suggestion has been made that the party has sidelined the memory of our late President. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan's ideas and ideals are engraved in the psyche of our party and its leaders. They have become part of the PPP's DNA. His example and contributions continue to inspire us, especially in the face of the attempts which were made to derail our elections and to destroy our democracy. Indeed, Dr Cheddi Jagan would have been very pleased with the leadership of our party, the General Secretary, and the Central Committee in those difficult times, a difficult period.

During those five months between March and August last year, our party and its leaders remained unbowed. The insidious attempt to deprive our people of their right to choose the government of their choice was never going to deflate us. At no stage were we prepared to succumb or surrender to this political, blatant, rascality.

We knew that in our corner we have the best example of political tenacity. Dr. Jagan and the PPP never succumbed, never compromised the democratic principle during the 28 years that the party was cheated out of office. We were confident that by following in his example and by staying true to what he believed that democracy would prevail. And it did.

Cheddi Jagan is without question Guyana's greatest citizen. He is considered the Father of our Nation and was widely respected as one of the Caribbean's leading internationalists and the patriarch of the PPP. His heroic 28 year-long struggle for the restoration of democracy and the foundations, which he laid in his abbreviated yet impactful tenure as President, bequeath to him a permanent iconic standing.

We remember him today and we will remember him for all time. But we especially recall his contributions during the month of March – the month when we commemorate both his birth and death anniversaries. This year's observance is significant because we are also reflecting on our people's defiant defense of democracy, one year ago.

Cheddi Jagan remains Guyana's foremost democrat, who possessed unfaltering faith in democracy. He was committed to the ideal of a national democratic state.

For him, this national democratic state should rest on a tripod of principles. The first was the right to free and fair elections – a cause to which he dedicated his entire political life.

The second was respect for human rights which he saw integral to freedom and development.

And the third part of the tripod was meeting the needs of our people.

Democracy, for him, went beyond the country's political system; it encompassed the very substance of the society which was being fashioned. It was not only about elections and respecting human rights, but it was also about realizing the full capabilities of our people.

On that fateful night in March, 1997, as Dr. Cheddi Jagan was about to pass to the Great Beyond, Guyana's then Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Odeen Ishmael, said, "The flame that lit the torch of freedom and democracy in Guyana was flickering low." And after the President had passed, he said, "The President is dead. The flame has now gone out."

Cheddi Jagan reignited the national liberation struggle when he returned from medical studies in the United States. Upon his return to the then colony of British Guiana, he launched himself into the struggle for an end to colonialism and for the improvement in the lot of the working class. There were others before him, but he helped to re-fire the engines of the anti-colonial struggles

For him democracy was integral to the nationalist struggle, the eradication of social ills, rejecting of despotic tendencies and for establishing a peaceful and prosperous Guyana. He considered people as the foremost agents for the freedom struggle, and democracy one of its catalysts. He argued forcibly that democracy

was essential for mass mobilization, and necessary to defend national sovereignty and Independence, for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity and as a shield to protect the people from anti-popular and dictatorial forms of government.

He never lost faith in the power and potency of democracy. Deposed by the suspension of the Constitution in 1953 and in Opposition from 1964 to 1992, he continued to insist that democracy must become part of the solution to the country's political and economic crises.

Democracy was part of Dr. Jagan's worldview. Some misguided elements, including those once close to him, have sought to insinuate that his support and advocacy of democracy were opportunistic. How little they know of him! How little they learnt from him!

Dr. Jagan made no pretensions about his socialist convictions. He never disavowed his ideological leanings, unlike those who were once in his camp and who now are scared of the 'S' word as if it were a leper.

Cheddi Jagan was a socialist and did not consider democracy incompatible with his socialist convictions. He was unapologetic in affirming that socialism could not prevail unless it practiced full democracy. He quoted Lenin who said:

Socialism is impossible without democracy because 1) the proletariat cannot perform the socialist revolution unless it is prepared for it by the struggle for democracy."

So, Dr Jagan's ideological position, his ideological underpinning was based on democracy, it was based on freedom, it was based on equality, it was based on the creation of a just society, it was based on a society the gap on inequality as reduced. His ideas and ideology were all wrapped in the tenancy of democracy and freedom.

In 1966, Dr. Jagan published a three-part series in which he discussed Professor Crawford Macpherson's categories of democracy. According to Macpherson, democracy can be viewed in two senses. Democracy in the first sense, he said, was to enjoy the right to vote, the right to join political parties, the right to freedom of association, the right to freedom of speech, and the right from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. Democracy in this sense meant respect for a person's fundamental rights and freedoms.



President Cheddi Jagan (March 22, 1918 - March 6, 1997)

The second sense of democracy implies a movement towards the creation of a more equal society in which everyone has a right to be genuinely human. The goal was to provide the conditions necessary for the full and free development of a person's capabilities.

Dr. Jagan subscribed to the belief that genuine democracy must exist in both form and substance. He insisted that it must not only protect fundamental rights, but also ensure freedom from want – requiring that the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and security in old age are satisfied.

The satisfaction of people's material needs and of ensuring a more dignified existence formed a critical element of Dr. Jagan's programme of development. He was fond of saying that "democracy cannot be built on an empty stomach." This tells you the wide range of issues Dr Jagan looked at under the democracy umbrella.

In this regard, democracy and development for Dr. Jagan were interrelated. Democracy, for him, was also a prerequisite for development since nothing, he argued, can be achieved without it. He also saw democracy as a motor of human development, including the attainment of social goals and of ecological justice.

Today as we commemorate his 24th death anniversary,

we have a duty to protect his legacy, one of the most important of which was his commitment to democracy. Cheddi Jagan fought for and was vindicated when democracy was restored in 1992. He planted the seed of a consultative and participatory democracy. It is our duty to ensure that the tree of democracy is sturdier.

It is equally our obligation as citizens of this great country to protect this legacy from being felled. Never again must Guyana's democracy be imperiled. We must strengthen our electoral laws, including ensuring stronger penalties for those who dare to violate this sacred canon. We must insist on greater integrity on the part of some of those who manage our elections.

In safeguarding democratic rights and principles, particularly the right of citizens to elect the government of their choice at free and fair elections held at regular intervals, we will be honoring his memory and protecting our rights and our country's development.

Today as we pay tribute to this Great Soul, let us recommit to ensuring that Guyana's democracy remains safe and secure. It will be the greatest tribute we can pay to the finest son of our soil – Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

I thank you.

CHINA'S INVESTMENTS IN THE WORLD: LIBERATIVE OR EXPLOITATIVE?

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the United States and Western Europe no longer view Russia as a great danger from the economic perspective. They have shifted their focus to China due to the rapid development of the People's Republic of China during the last four decades. They now see China as the main threat to their global dominance. Thus the need to discredit the People's Republic of China (PRC).

One of the areas that they have focused on is China's economic and trade ties with the developing countries in general and Africa in particular. Using the powerful mass media at their disposal they have been portraying their relationships as exploitative on the part of China and even using terms like "neo-colonial" and the "debt trap" to describe China's ties with poorer nations.

In so doing they are using experiences that Third World countries have had with their former colonial powers which were and are truly exploitative and neo-colonial in nature. By pursuing this propaganda line, they hope to create hostility in the Third World against China.

A close examination of the US and EU investments in the former colonies would reveal that investments were predominantly in natural resources area. For the Western powers Asia, Africa and Latin America were seen mainly as sources of raw material to feed the factories in the developed world.

Hardly any investments went to important infrastructure and value-added products from the raw materials extracted from the developing countries. Almost all the value added was done in the developed capitalist countries and exported back to developing countries. For Western Europe and North America the Third World was not just a source of raw materials, but a market for their industrial goods.

Through these means and others, such as high debt owed by Third World countries to the developed nations and services such as consultancies, profits from transnational corporations etc the developing states, were turned into net exporters of capital to the rich western powers.

In 2008 for instance the net flow of capital from poor



Former President Donald Ramotar with President Xi Jinping

to rich countries was US\$891 billion and in 2009 it was US\$568 billion. Thus, developing countries were kept in a state of perpetual underdevelopment and totally dependent on the countries of the European Union and the U.S.A.

That experience is widely known and that is why the aggressive propaganda to paint the Chinese relations as similar to the neo-colonial nature of the Western countries. To create suspicion and distrust and to isolate the poor countries, particularly those in Africa, from a true friend, China.

China always had close relations with Third World countries, contrary to what is being propagated now by the West stating that China is new to Africa.

In the immediate post-1949 period this relation was mainly political and based on solidarity with the colonized countries struggling for independence.

At that time China itself was a poor developing country and could not offer great economic assistance to former colonies in the developing world.

Never-the-less it did contribute significantly, albeit in a limited way.

One will recall the building of a railway from Zambia to Tanzania in the 1970's. This was a very important project both economically and politically. It was at that time the most important infrastructural project in Africa. The only other project to match this was the Soviet Union's construction of the Aswan Hydroelectric project in Egypt.

The TAZARA Railway relieved Zambia of pressures from apartheid South Africa where Zambia was forced to do its exports due to it being a land locked country. Now it could do its international trade via Tanzania. So, it broke the strangle hold of the racist regime in South Africa, on one of the front-line states and allowed Zambia to give greater support to the ANC-led liberation movement in South Africa. This project had a great impact on the struggles in South Africa.

Economically both countries Zambia and Tanzania benefited greatly, being able to trade in larger volumes with each other and the world. Zambia in particular, which depended heavily on the exports of copper, was greatly freed up. The infrastructure in Southern Africa was enhanced.

In the late 1970's China changed its developmental strategy in the process of constructing socialism. It moved to opening up its economy to the world. In a short period, its economy began to experience double digit growth.

As the People's Republic of China (PRC) economy began to grow, its companies also developed quickly and began to outgrow its domestic market.

By the beginning of this century Chinese companies began looking for investment opportunities outside of its borders; they became international companies.

By this time too the Government of China realized that for the country to continue to grow it needed to become more international and to be part of the global economy.

China began to look for areas to invest. It began to focus first on the Third World and Africa in particular. Why Africa? Because it was so underdeveloped that it had the greatest need for infrastructure. It was also because historically, mainly in the anti-colonial period, China and Africa had very close relations.

However Chinese investments had a qualitative difference from those of the western capitalist countries.

While the western powers were just looking to maximize profits and focused on the mining sector where the returns of capital was fast, China looked-for long-term partnerships.

Its philosophical approach was different and new. It proceeded on the belief that for China to have sustainable development it needed partners that were strong and whose economies could become strong as well.

It was willing to take on projects in which the returns to capital was slower, but which would strengthen the capacity of African states to build strong and sustainable economies. That is the essence of its win-win approach of the PRC's leadership. The infrastructure that China was engaged in constructing created the basis for African countries to industrialize and grow.

Moreover, Chinese investments did not have the same conditionalities as western loans and investments. There were no demands for privatization, no calls for structural adjustments, no demands for military bases, in a word there were no strings attached.

Its relationship with the poorest of Third World states have been based on mutual respect and benefits. It was never a one-way relation where China got all the benefits and leave a Third World country impoverished.

Even when it did not have the economic might it has today, it related with countries in a mutually beneficial way. In 1983 China was in Liberia helping that country to grow rice more efficiently and dealing with its food security problem.

In the early period too, it helped Ethiopia to add value to its cattle industry by turning the skin from the slaughtered animals into leather and partnering with a Brazilian company, began making leather shoes in Ethiopia.

Yanis Varoufakis, former Minister of Finance in Greece, spoke about China's reasonableness at the bargaining table. In one of his talks in the US he related how he was able to re-negotiate a contract on the building of a port with China at very favourable terms to Greece. He also spoke about the many projects that the PRC did with African countries favourable to Africa.

African leaders and researchers of Chinese/Africa links will repeat the same experiences. China's assistance is helping to connect African countries and stimulating economic growth on the continent. China has built some 6200 kilometers of railway in Africa. Some of the more significant are:

1. The Mombasa – Nairobi line in Kenya some 480Km long. This is helping the links inside of Kenya in the movement of goods and people. However, this is just the first leg of a larger rail that would cover some 2935Km. It would connect Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. This project will be a major boost to the economies of those countries, enhancing trade and people to people contact. It would be a great boost to Africa's integration.

2. The Ethiopia – Djibouti Railway is a very important project which will help Ethiopia, which is landlocked, to gain easy access to the sea, this will be a big boost in its international trade. Moreover, it will facilitate the industrialization of Ethiopia which has been growing in recent years.

3. The Lobito - Luau Railway in Angola. This has linked the coastal city of Lobito in the west and Luau city which borders the Democratic Republic of Congo. The plan is that this railway would connect with the Angolan-

However, these are not all the infrastructural works that the Chinese have contributed to. It is known that one of the most vital need for social and economic progress in any society is cheap energy. Here too China's contribution to Africa is very significant.

The PRC's involvement in Africa's oil sector is well known and highly publicized, often it is put in a negative light by the Western media.

What is apposite to note though is that Western countries have been operating in Africa for a very long time but only extracting oil and other minerals while those companies became very rich the African masses remained very poor.

China, while buying a significant amount of oil from African countries, has also been involved in value added and as seen above, in the construction of infrastructure to broaden Africa's economic base.



China's Belt and Road Initiative in Africa

Zambian railway and the Tanzania-Zambia railway.

This will facilitate economic growth and trade with the various countries in Africa and internationally.

4. Another important project is the Abuja-Kaduna railway in Nigeria. This project will help to integrate the multi-ethnic country and increase its internal trade.

Other railways include a new and the first for Africa, an electric line in Addis Abba, Ethiopia.

These trains are very modern traveling at speeds of 120-150 km/hr. This is way in advance of the railways of many countries in the west.

In the field of transportation, the Chinese have not only connected the continent with railways but have built roads. Over recent years they have built more than 6000km of roads to international standards. We all know that roads are important to economic development.

Some of these include an Angolan/Chinese agreement to develop Angola's infrastructure, neglected for centuries. China built a refinery in Angola in 2004 producing some 240,000 barrels per day of refined oil. This has enhanced Angola's revenue significantly.

China's conditions were very favourable to Angola. It had provided Angola with a loan of US\$2B at an interest rate of 1.5% to be repaid in 17 years. Angola can also repay with the delivery of oil to China and not with cash. This give a lot of ease to that country's cash flow.

A similar model was used in Nigeria and other African countries. Many countries repay China with their traditional exports, including agricultural goods.

Africa is not just rich in hydrocarbon but has strong renewable energy potentials as well. These include solar, wind, natural gas and thermo energy. China has been helping Africa to develop its energy potential. The main area is in hydro power.



Chinese officials with their Guyanese counterparts: Mr. Donald Ramotar, Mrs. Janet Jagan and Mr. Komal Chand in China

With these potentials and cheap energy many African countries are opening up industrial zones and other special zones. These are contributing greatly to the creation of jobs and allowing African countries to grow rapidly. For the first time, Africa is becoming industrialised.

Chinese investments also cover the social sectors in many African countries as well. Many hospitals, schools, potable water, low-cost housing among other projects have been helping to solve the huge problem in many of those countries. It is now rapidly tackling illiteracy and providing medical assistance which never existed before.

China has also provided a large amount of scholarships to the continent's students. In 2018 there were 81,562 students from Africa attending Chinese universities and other institutions of higher learning. This is allowing Africa to build its capacity and laying the foundation to end its depending on foreign specialists.

This is a great contribution to Africa's sustainable development providing the human capital to manage the rise of modern industries on the continent.

From the above it is clear that the charge of China's establishing an imperialist type of relation with Africa is totally unjustified.

To understand this one must look at the philosophy of the PRC towards its own development and its relations with

other countries. Its outlook prevents it from pursuing imperialistic type of relations. That is why in general, it encompasses the win-win concept.

This principle was laid out clearly by President Xi Jinping in a speech he made in Johannesburg, South Africa on December 4, 2015. He said that China's relations with Africa must be built on "...political equality and mutual trust... A high degree of mutual trust is the foundation of China-Africa friendship..." He added "...China strongly believes that Africa belongs to the African people and the African affairs should be decided by the African people..."

All the independent commentators have debunked the theory that China is exploiting Africa. They all point out that the relations represent a true partnership that is mutually beneficial.

This is a far cry from the aim of western companies which is to maximize their profits at the quickest time possible. Moreover, western states' philosophical position is more self-interest or as they themselves describe it 'national interest'. Very often such 'national interests' are achieved at the expense of the weak and poor developing countries. That is why Africa remained underdeveloped despite the centuries of Western control of its economy.

It is therefore important to note that it has only been since China has taken a more open and internationalist stand and only since it has taken the 'risk' that western powers was unwilling to take in Africa that that continent began to experience real progress. Today Africa is being seen as a continent with a bright future thanks mainly to its relation with China.

The Chinese approach of mutual benefits and equal partnership has proven to be a far superior strategy to the "aid with strings." The structural adjustments programmes and other impositions of some international institutions which are controlled by western powers have only reproduced dependence and poverty.

The Chinese approach on the other hand is proving to be truly liberative and opening a new era in international relations. It offers real hope for prosperity and a better world for all.



Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.

[Reprinted] Booker's Bitter Legacy: British Guiana after Empire

Awarded annually for the best novel in the English language, the Man Booker Prize has established itself as a major event in the British cultural calendar. Its fiftieth anniversary was commemorated accordingly: a documentary on the BBC; a festival at the Southbank Centre; a reception at Buckingham Palace for former winners. But the prize harbours a darker history, one which this Anglocentric story of literary triumph firmly seals within the distant past. The prize takes its name from its initial sponsor, Booker McConnell, one of the preeminent companies of the British empire. The commercial lifeblood of Booker had been sugar and its heartland was British Guiana, a colony on the northern tip of South America. Indeed, so dominant was the company in the country's affairs that it became known simply as 'Booker's Guiana'.

Bringing a rare shaft of light onto this imperial relationship, the winner of the Booker Prize in 1977, John Berger, used his acceptance speech to publicly denounce the company's exploitative practices in what by then had become the independent state of

Guyana. Fusing race and class politics, he symbolically dedicated half his prize money to the Black Panthers and their ongoing resistance in the West Indies "both as black people and workers". While Berger's intervention retains critical force, it requires contemporary renewal. Booker's has long since gone, divesting from the country and diversifying into other activities like wholesaling, slowly erasing public memory of their colonial past. For Guyana meanwhile, the preeminent issue in the sugar industry is no longer exploitation but expulsion, with mounting economic pressures linked to trade reforms in Europe erupting in plantation closures, mass redundancy and political discontent. The ongoing celebration of the Man Booker Prize thus provides a way to reconnect these developmental stories and consider again what the legacies of British imperialism mean for both modern-day Guyana and the UK.

The fight against sugar imperialism

It was a friendship between two white British



Formerly owned by the father of British Prime Minister William Gladstone, the Wales sugar estate was closed in 2017. Source: author.

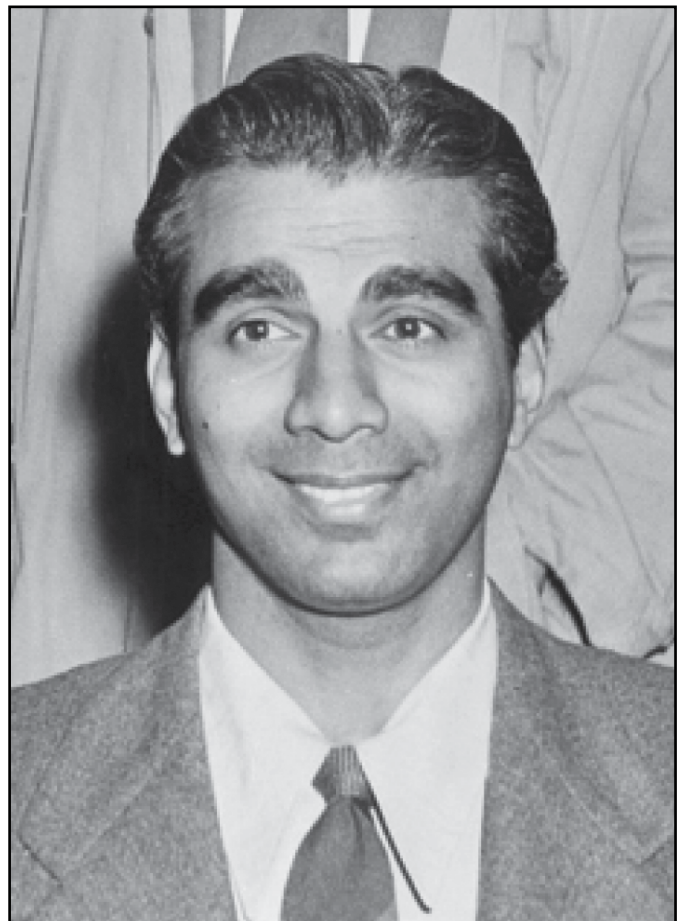
expatriates based in the Caribbean – the writer, Ian Fleming, and the Chairman of Booker McConnell, Jock Campbell – which first led the company into the literary business. Fleming had wanted to reduce the taxes he was paying on the James Bond books and did so by selling the copyrights to Booker McConnell in 1964, creating what would become its profitable Author's Division. Shortly after, when two enterprising publishers sought sponsorship of a prize for English-language novels written in the Commonwealth, it was to this division that they turned for funds.

Campbell's interest in supporting the arts can be seen as part of his broader commitment to what we would now call 'socially responsible business'. Campbell had been a powerful reforming force within Booker McConnell, driven by his guilt at seeing first-hand how his own family had made their fortune in British Guiana. As told to the historian Clem Secharan, Campbell recalled: "On the day I got there I was conscious that this had all been built on, first of all slavery, and then cheap labour". He was right. Records collated at the UCL Legacies of British Slave-Ownership database show that after the abolition of slavery in 1833 and decision by the British government to compensate slave-owners for their loss of property, nine members of the Campbell family successfully claimed for 2,261 slaves. They were awarded £106,556 by the British state, around £13m in today's money.

The Campbell family firm merged with Booker in 1939. The latter had grown significantly during the nineteenth century, haphazardly acquiring indebted plantations that were struggling to compete against subsidised European sugar beet imported from the continent. Quickly ascending the corporate hierarchy, one of Jock Campbell's most notable achievements was to negotiate the 1951 Commonwealth Sugar Agreement with the British Ministry of Food. This guaranteed fixed imports of sugar by Britain at prices offering 'reasonable remuneration to efficient producers' – a concept cleverly appropriated from its post-war policy toward domestic farmers as set out in the 1947 Agricultural Act. Benefitting from more stable revenue flows into Booker McConnell, Campbell oversaw paternalist initiatives to improve the housing, health and social welfare of workers, and as part of his broader support for decolonisation, advanced a 'Guianisation' of the industry through training and promotion.

For the agitators of independence, this was insufficient. Chief among these was Cheddi Jagan, a descendant of the hundreds of thousands of 'British subjects' in India

who had been transported to Guiana as indentured labour following the eventual manumission of African slaves. This was a mass migration, orchestrated by the British state and sponsored by planters like the Bookers and Campbells, which tied workers to specific plantations until they earned their legal freedom after a given number of years. Jagan's way of seeing the world was indelibly coloured by the violence he witnessed on these plantations and other places controlled by colonial capital. Neatly encapsulating this worldview, the map on the very first page of his autobiography, *The West on Trial*, depicted Guyana not by electoral constituencies or sites of national significance, but simply by commodities: sugar plantations along the coast, bauxite mines along the rivers, timber concessions in the forested interior. Jagan's sense of injustice found expression in revolutionary Marxism, which he used to articulate his "fight against sugar imperialism". Counter-posed against Campbell's social reformism, his position was uncompromising: nothing less than full nationalisation of the sugar mills, cane land, transport networks and irrigation systems would suffice. Through the autonomous labour movement, and in particular the



Cheddi Jagan. Source: ANEFO. Creative Commons



The GAWU office in the capital, Georgetown

militant sugar workers who would form the Guiana Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU), Jagan oversaw a number of strikes to further the cause of trade union recognition, taking tactical advantage of the need for sugar cane to be cut and milled at precisely the right moment in the harvest season to cause maximum disruption. And to appeal to disenfranchised people across the colony, the political wing of this movement, the People's Progressive Party, extended its ideological ambition beyond just sugar, declaring its intent to "build a just socialist society in which the industries of the country shall be socially and democratically owned".

In 1968, the same year as the Booker Prize was launched, Guyana finally had its first general election as an independent state. The struggle for independence had been intensified by the military and political interventions of the UK and US. Both had perceived a threat in Jagan's ideology: another Cuban Revolution and state seizure of foreign-owned property could not be countenanced. More than just stalling decolonisation, Anglo-American machinations deliberately splintered the fragile multi-ethnic coalition of the People's Progressive Party, pitting its Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese constituents

against one another. Consequently many industrial relations disputes escalated into racialised conflicts as 'scab labour' of African descent was recruited on behalf of Booker and used to undermine strikes by predominantly Indian sugar workers. One infamous clash occurred in 1964 when a strike-breaker drove a tractor through protestors squatting outside a sugar mill, killing a woman named Kowsilla. A defining moment for the sugar workers, a bust of Kowsilla still sits in the GAWU office today, pride of place alongside pictures of Marx and Lenin.

With covert financial support from the US, it was the People's National Congress, the renamed faction of the People's Progressive Party led by the Afro-Guyanese leader Forbes Burnham, which presided over independence, rigging and winning the ensuing election. Despite the political animosity, Jagan was determined to realise his vision and so subsequently offered "critical support" to his former party ally in order that the Burnham government might press ahead with nationalisation of the sugar industry, foreclosing the formation of a broader opposition to the ruling regime with multi-ethnic parties like the Working Peoples' Alliance led by radical black

intellectual Walter Rodney. With Jagan's backing nationalisation of the sugar industry was completed in 1976, albeit by compensating Booker rather than expropriating them. At a stroke a company accounting for almost one third of the country's GDP was put under state ownership, renamed and reclaimed as GuySuCo – the Guyana Sugar Corporation.

Any hopes that this would induce cross-party socialist unity in the country soon disappeared. Disagreement over profit-sharing led to an industry-wide strike by GAWU members lasting an incredible 135 days, supported from afar by dock-workers in the UK who refused to unload what Guyanese sugar was exported. This compounded the mismanagement of Burnham's one-party state, which had become increasingly self-serving and detached from its initial ethnic constituency, manning GuySuCo with politically favoured appointments who awarded contracts to their own business interests. As the economy began to collapse, straining under the debt incurred by nationalisation of the sugar and bauxite industries, further state repression and mass emigration followed. Driven by this exodus, Guyana still has one of the highest emigrant populations in the world, with over one in three citizens living outside the country – a people "twice diasporised" to borrow Stuart Hall's term.

The conflict over industrial restructuring

The colonial ties of ownership had been severed in Guyana but those of trade lived on. Following the UK's accession to the European Economic Community in 1973, the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement evolved into the Sugar Protocol. Its supporters included Jock Campbell, who was by now a peer in the House of Lords, as well as Tate & Lyle, soon to become the UK's sole refiner of cane sugar. As with its predecessor, the Sugar Protocol had the deliberate effect of locking suppliers and buyers together through a formal trade agreement and insulating both from the vicissitudes of the world market. The difference was that this time it had to be shoehorned into Europe's Common Agricultural Policy.

The resulting arrangement used tariffs to restrict imports and guarantee high stable prices to European beet farmers and some former sugar colonies, including Guyana, which were granted preferential market access. This came under repeated attack from sugar exporters excluded from the Sugar Protocol and in favour of free trade. This external pressure was mirrored internally as the European Commission

sought consistency with the multilateral trade rules agreed on within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and were prepared to sacrifice elements of the Common Agricultural Policy to do it. Triggered by a dispute brought to the WTO by Australia, Brazil and Thailand, the EU began a decade-long overhaul of its tightly managed sugar regime, loosening controls over supply and lowering domestic prices to world market levels. The Sugar Protocol was unilaterally renounced and its signatories effectively paid off with development aid. In Guyana, which exported the vast majority of its sugar to the EU, the price cut was a painful wound to suffer, in both commercial and moral terms.

Compared to other sugar exporters, GuySuCo has been relatively high cost. Attempts had been made after the Burnham era to make it commercially viable. Booker was brought back to manage the company under contract, part of a broader structural adjustment programme orchestrated by the International Monetary Fund to resuscitate Guyana's ailing economy. Industrial relations improved too after Cheddi Jagan had been brought to power in 1992, thanks ironically to belated US support for free and fair elections in the country. Jagan's People's Progressive Party and GAWU were tied together by a shared destiny and inter-personal networks, making collective bargaining between the state-owned company and the dominant trade union less conflictual. Yet this alliance made decisions around restructuring difficult to take, given that any loss of jobs or wages would hurt the party's electoral base. The industry had turned from cash cow to sacred cow. The historic animosity to Booker also threw up challenges. As well as providing management functions, Booker had been approached in 2000 to oversee construction of a brand new sugar mill and plantation in one of the country's largest ever capital investments. After this ran into operational difficulties, the government tore up the contract. Booker sued and was vindicated by the courts, awarded £664,000 in fees owed.

The Indo-Guyanese alliance governing the sugar industry came to an end in 2015 when the People's Progressive Party was defeated in the general election by a coalition of parties including a successor to Burnham's People's National Congress and removed from office after 23 years in power. Regime change happened at a critical juncture. The EU price cut and subsequent decline in export revenues had made industrial restructuring all but inevitable. Seeing this coming, a National Commission had been established to set out a roadmap, which involved privatising the industry, reducing manual labour costs through



A protest by redundant sugar workers at Port Mourant, the birthplace of Cheddi Jagan. Source: Deonarine Chand on behalf of author.

mechanisation, and developing spin-off businesses in biofuel and aquaculture to provide alternate jobs. As the country's single biggest employer it was also agreed that GuySuCo had to avoid swingeing redundancies, though at the same time must not take on any more risky expansions.

The new government was accused of renegeing on this plan. Mills and plantations were closed down, with seven thousand workers – around the half the company's payroll – losing their jobs, the majority permanently and with delays in their severance pay. Meanwhile the state agency given oversight of privatisation immediately took on more debt, borrowing £110m to fund capital expenditure and make GuySuCo assets more attractive to buyers. The ripple effects of these decisions have been seismic. Small-scale farmers who grew cane for the mills lost their buyer, local shops and markets saw custom disappear, neighbourhood councils and the national insurance scheme suffered shortfalls in tax contributions. There are future impacts to brace for too, chiefly a heightened flood risk to residents in the low-lying coastal cities of New Amsterdam and Georgetown should GuySuCo no longer provide its water management functions of dredging canals and

pumping rainwater out over the seawall.

Criticism of the government by opposition politicians and trade union leaders has been scathing, interpreting their decisions as incompetent and callous; the latter position intentionally hinting at the inter-ethnic conflicts that have punctuated the country's past. Indeed, it was this supposed mishandling of sugar restructuring that one MP cited in his reasons for defecting in no confidence vote in December 2018, effectively bringing down the government by triggering the process for an early general election.

The legacies of Booker's Guyana

Looking back, three centuries of imperialism created a deep-seated dependency on sugar that could not be overcome through political decolonisation and economic nationalisation. Reliance on an export commodity whose market value would continue to fall relative to other traded goods – the buffer provided by preferential trade arrangements notwithstanding – meant that Guyana would always need to diversify its economy. But such a transformation was rendered implausible by the systematic repatriation of profits during the period of foreign ownership and the

country's deeply entrenched role as raw sugar supplier, which limited the possibilities for building inter-industry linkages to serve as alternative sources of growth and employment. Articulated within the tradition of dependency theory, which had its own rich heritage in the Caribbean, the Guyanese situation can be seen as one of *underdevelopment*: an export industry in the periphery is abandoned by the metropolitan power that first created it, with the poverty left behind mistakenly interpreted as an endemic feature of the region and its supposed failure to integrate into international markets.

Looking forward, the focus in Guyana is now on another primary commodity, one poised to revolutionise the country and begin a new chapter in its history. In 2015 ExxonMobil made its first significant oil discovery in the Guyana basin. It has now located offshore over three billion barrels of recoverable oil; a reserve equivalent to Iraq on a per capita basis. Commercial drilling is expected to begin in 2020 and will likely triple the country's GDP. Though questions have been asked of the favourable royalty rates granted to Exxon, there is no doubt that state finances will receive a sizeable fillip, raising the stakes at the next general election to an unprecedented level. Indeed, the sheer anticipation of a commodity boom is already having an effect: large swathes of former cane land have been made available for gated communities and entertainment complexes to serve expatriate workers, while training schemes and corporate responsibility initiatives have sought to convince Guyanese society of the gilded era that black gold will bring.

Seen in respect to the rise and fall of cane cultivation, though, the developmental strategy of oil extraction loses much of its lustre. Though it heralds a definitive break from 'sugar imperialism' it also re-inscribes the country into a similar set of power relations, this time with American capital. The financial asymmetry alone is stark: Exxon's quarterly profits are bigger than Guyana's annual GDP. What will this mean for state sovereignty, electoral democracy, economic diversification and ecological stability? The answers suggested by Booker's Guiana are not encouraging.

Consider the parallels in the imminent environmental contradiction, whereby investments in coastal infrastructure and property funded by oil wealth will at the same time be imperilled by the sea level rises and extreme weather events caused by fossil fuel burning – a heightened vulnerability that will long outlast Exxon's presence.

Despite the successive ruptures between the British 'motherland' and its sugar colony, the legacies of Booker's Guiana remain relevant to the UK too. The labour of enslaved, indentured and proletarianised workers on the sugar plantations enabled an accumulation of capital that has been inherited and transformed by subsequent generations, reproducing inequalities of wealth that sustain disparities between the two countries today. Erasing this racialised exploitation is to whitewash British economic development; a move laid bare by studies on slavery and its abolition, showing, for instance, how compensation for slave-owners was reinvested into the railways and credit lines of the industrial revolution.

To best remember the colonial past of Booker is to bring such processes into the present. This can be seen at Tate & Lyle, for instance, which used its profits from decades of sugar refining to grow into a multinational food ingredients company, selling off its 'non-core' sugar division in 2010. It can be seen at Tesco too, which in 2017 bought up Booker's wholesale division for near £4 billion to help it retail to restaurants and corner shops as it does to high street customers. It is there in the food and drink industry, the UK's largest manufacturing sector, which has long benefitted from a steady supply of affordable sugar shipped from former British colonies. And finally, it is buried in the cultural capital of the UK, those testaments to artistic achievement that began life with money made through empire – from the Tate Modern gallery to the Man Booker Prize.



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Blood on the River: A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast

Marjoleine Kars. 'Blood on the River: A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast' New York; The New Press, 2020

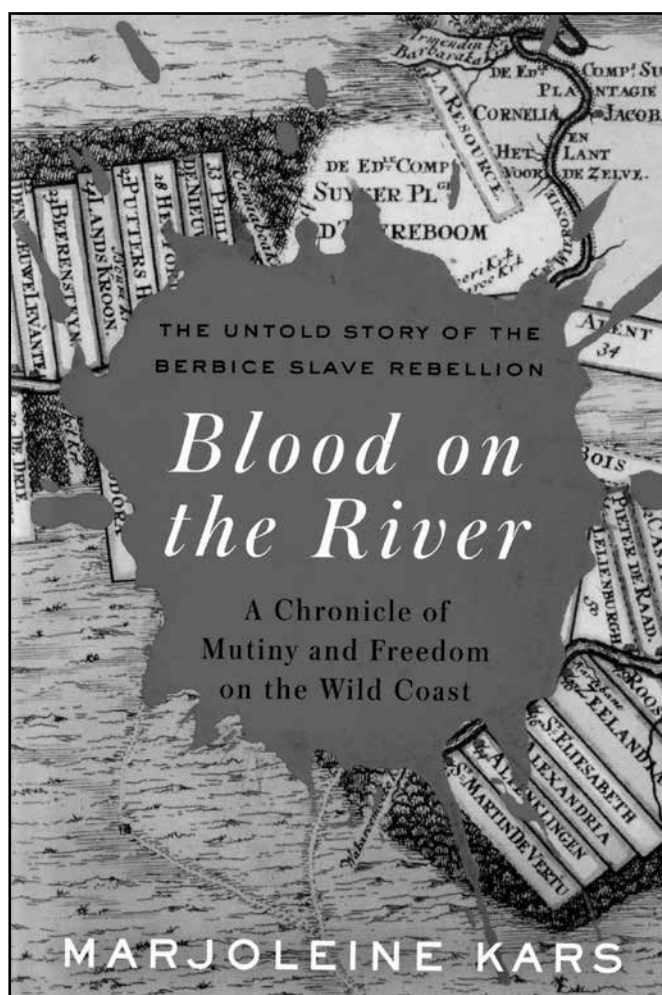
Marjoleine Kars, Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and a historian of slavery, has published a recent study of the Berbice slave rebellion, titled **Blood on the River, A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast**. Interested readers in this field will need to go back several years, to Ineke Velzing's *De Berbice Slavenopstand 1763*. Velzing, 1979. 176 pp or Anna Benjamin's *The Berbice Uprising 1763*, 2013 135 pp to find another noted work on the subject

Kars builds upon these earlier works by creatively analyzing and synthesizing little used primary source documentation hitherto ignored or neglected by scholars in the field and has produced a reassessment and an incisive validation of interpretations that have informed discourse on this 18th century uprising of enslaved Africans on the Berbice River.

The 1763 Rebellion is hardly known outside of Guyana and hopefully, Marjoleine Kars's work will bring this *untold story* to a much wider audience. According to the author, she ***happened upon a cache of records, an extraordinarily rich archive in the Netherlands about the massive but little known slave rebellion in Berbice about which she, and few others, had ever heard.***

The book is described as a master piece and an astonishing work of history. One reviewer declared, with a certain degree of justification, that one of the great slave revolts in modern history has at last found a gifted historian to tell its epic tale.

Ms. Kars deserves our gratitude and commendation for treating this defining event in Guyana's history with such commitment and frankness, sparing no one, but always reaching for balance in her interpretation of a violent human response in the vexed inhuman system of enslavement.



Plantation slavery was one of the most horrendous forms of tyrannical rule in modern history. It was the embodiment of the worst excesses of a depraved age. Not only did it exploit and abuse one class of humanity for a period in excess of two hundred years but, also throughout its existence, it brutally suppressed any and all expression of disaffection on the part of the outraged victims.

The plantation, the New World theatre in which this

horrid historical episode was enacted, was to all intents and purposes a large-scale commercial system of inhuman barbarity. Disaffection or resistance of any kind was countered by a variety of severe responses including the lash, the branding iron, or some other more excruciating form of torture, dismemberment or death.

Armed might was the plantations' main instrument of oppression. This included the construction of forts and barricades, the employment of large military forces and the presence of a legally enforceable ratio of armed whites on every plantation. Professor Beckles argues that ***slave societies were constructed with violence and were maintained by the systematic application of violence***. The slave master was always prepared to execute unthinking acts of violence against the enslaved. The enslaved understood this and were not themselves reluctant to execute planned violence of their own against their oppressors.

In the beginning, rebellions took the form of small-scale skirmishes, aimed at harrying and wearing down the resistance and resolve of the European master class whom the enslaved African knew were forever on the verge of panic and instant flight. The rebelliousness of the Africans grew in its intensity as they became more determined in their resolve to strike a decisive blow for their freedom. In 1733, there was a small rebellion on the Canje in which only two overseers were killed. In 1740, the enslaved at Plantation Petershof failed in a bid to take over the estate. In 1752, the enslaved on Plantation Switzerland revolted and it was necessary to call up the Amerindian reserves to contain the spread and the success of the disaffected. Then in July 1762 the enslaved on plantations Goed Land and Goed Fortuin broke out, threatening to destroy the European economy on the Canje.

By 1763 the enslaved Africans had tested the system and were more than familiar with its strengths and its weaknesses. It was obvious to the more perceptive, and militarily inclined among them, that there were many factors favouring a successful overthrow of the white ruling class. And this is exactly what occurred, temporarily, in 1763

On the 27 February 1763, enslaved Africans on the Berbice River revolted in mass and took political and administrative control of Berbice. The Dutch planters, their families, service officers and allies, fearing for their lives, abandoned their holdings and fled down the river. The rebels encountered little opposition from a panic-stricken planter class and in short shrift took the major plantations: Lelienburg, Juliana, Hollandia, Zeelandia, Elizabeth and Alexandria. There was one significant

encounter with the whites at Plantation Peerboon, where it took some time for the enslaved to overcome white resistance. In a little over a month the majority of the Berbice plantations had passed into the control of the rebels whose numbers had by this time swelled to about 4-5000.

At this point, Akara one of the African leaders of the revolt, dispatched an expedition, under Fortuin, to the Canje, where he enlisted the Canje rebels and proceeded to drive the remaining white planters out. Canje therefore passed into the hands of the rebels in very much the same manner as had most of Berbice. Governor Wolphert Simon van Hoogenheim, with some of the panic-stricken white population, took refuge at Fort Nassau, but soon realising the hopelessness of their position, retreated to Plantation Dageraad, and finally, to the dilapidated Fort St Andries. At this point, the enslaved had taken control of all Upper Berbice.

Having emancipated themselves and taken the upper Berbice for their own, the Africans set about establishing administrative and military structures. The Berbice Rebellion was only exceeded in length of time by the successful 1791 Saint Domingue Revolution and in so far as numbers are concerned by the not so successful Danish St. John's revolt of 1733.

The revolt was ably led by Kofi, an enslaved African, who appointed himself Governor and set up an administrative arrangement for running their colony. The seat of government was, at first, located at Plantation Hollandia thence at Fort Nassau. Kofi, as Commandeur, was assisted by a Council, consisting of Akara, Atta, Frans van Staaden, Derent, and Nouakou, all enslaved Africans who had distinguished themselves in the struggle. The military establishment consisted of captains, lieutenants, ensigns and ordinary soldiers recruited from those who had actively engaged the enemy.

Kofi did not encourage the destruction and pillaging of the plantations. Rather, he engineered a policy to save the plantations, worked by the former enslaved, this time under African oversight. Governor Kofi also put in place coping measures for the maintenance of law and order, then set about the protection of their territorial gain. In pursuit of this objective he opened a line of written communication, through which he began negotiations with the Dutch Governor Van Hoogenheim. ***Cuffy, Governor of the Negroes of Berbice, and Captain Akara send greetings and inform Your Excellency that they are not seeking war.*** He did not desire a war with the whites but if that was their choice he was prepared for war. ***The Governor of Berbice asks Your Excellency to come and speak to him; Do not be afraid. But if you***



The 1763 Monument at the Square of the Revolution, Georgetown

don't come, we'll fight on until there is no Christian left in Berbice.

Kofi proposed the partitioning of the colony and a future of peaceful coexistence between the defeated master class and the former enslaved ***We will give Your Excellency half of Berbice, and all the negroes will retreat high up the rivers, but don't think they will remain slaves. The negroes that Your Excellency has on his ships – they can remain slaves.*** Van Hoogenheim, for his part indulged Kofi while scrambling around for the military capability necessary to retake the colony.

The insurgents controlled the colony until the arrival of an army from the Netherlands. As they ran out of food, weapons, and ammunition, the attacking regulars and their Amerindian allies killed scores and captured hundreds. Many surrendered, some turned traitors, some migrated, while others established maroon enclaves from which they waged a bitter but, in the circumstance, futile struggle. Many were killed in battle and others were taken prisoner. Acabre was taken on 23 March 1764 and Atta the following month. Between April and December 1764 a vengeful planter community performed the last barbaric rites with accustomed ferocity. The European military forces, having accomplished their task, departed the colony on 24 November 1764.

With the revolutionary spark snuffed out, the Dutch

began investigating the various roles of captured insurgents. They questioned close to 900, took statements, determined the extent of culpability and handed out punishment accordingly.

It is these statements that Kars fell upon and together with the letters exchanged between the rebels and the white administration sought to construct a better informed and more balanced view of the uprising. She recognised one important/critical limitation immediately. That, with severe punishment hanging over their heads, those questioned had every reason to distort, omit, or lie in their depositions. She found them vague about time lines which made it difficult to properly grasp the sequence of events. But there would inevitably have been other problems. One of which would have been the language of the enslaved, a means of effective communication between and among the enslaved, could not have been easily interpreted by the Dutch officials and this is not to underestimate the instinctive biases of these officials themselves. In counter she found that by, ***comparing testimonies, cross referencing them with reports from Amerindians, slave spies, and European observers, and by reading examinations against the grain, it was possible to begin to piece together a deeper picture of the rebellion, one from the inside out, or the bottom up.***

She confessed that ***Even so, many questions remained***

unanswered, and her interpretations and conclusions remained at best tentative.

Kars must be commended for her professional and scholarly honesty in recognising the limitations of testimonies secured under the then current conditions

The Berbice Rebellion has been little studied. Generally we secured our insights from two primary sources, both in Dutch, dating back to 1770 and 1888, respectively:

Hartsinck, Jan Jacob. *The Story of the Slave Rebellion in Berbice – 1762*. Translated from J.J Hartsinck's *Beschryving van Guiana act*. Amsterdam, 1770, Walter Roth. Georgetown, British Guiana: Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society, 1958-1960.

Netscher, P.M. *History of the Colonies Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice: from Dutch establishment to the present day*. Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1988.

More recently, **Velzing**, **Benjamin** and **Thompson** have added to the scant historiography.

It is in this light that one can begin to assess the significance of Kars' work. While the use of testimonies from the enslaved secured under extreme duress might not be the most reliable information base upon which to effectively appreciate the role of the enslaved in the uprising it is a novel means and one with important possibilities and as the author pointed out by means of cross referencing she was able to get much closer than anyone, to date, to telling the story of the enslaved. Alas, we who are weary must continue to await the lion's story of the hunt.

Blood on the River is not the traditional history text. It is not a cause, course and consequence reader Rather it is a beautifully written story of the revolt. The history is told but so too are the stories of people, places and peripheral incidences. Using the testimonies Kars gives names to enslaved characters and tell their stories so that the human background is not partial, dedicated to the white participant at the exclusion of the Black. A tapestry glorifying the white master class and demonizing the Black.

The language is simple and one is reminded of Prof Rodney's ability to present the complex and profound in simple, beautifully textured language. The 366 pages essay which is divided into 14 chapters is generously adorned with historical drawings [sketches] maps and diagrams. The scholarly tradition is further enhanced by the addition of a useful index and copious notes. Here, it is perhaps not extraneous to direct attention to Kars extensive use of primary source documentation. What is critically significant is the fact that she does not drop these sources into the narrative but scholarly interrogates each as per the influence of motive, mood and vested interest

This compelling and thoughtful book is highly recommended. Thorough, skillfully organized, well written, and readable, **Blood on the River** makes an important contribution to the literature of the enslaved African in the New World. In authoring this sweeping yet compact text, Kars has provided a considerable service to scholars, researchers, teachers, and students working on slave systems in the Americas and the Caribbean.



Dr. James Rose was a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana. He is a Graduate of King's College. He taught History at the University of Guyana. Dr. Rose also served as the Director of Culture.

Janet Jagan and the Democracy of Social Liberation

Only last week an item featured as part of a BBC 'Outlook' programme posed the question of, 'Federal Germany as a model' for a post Covid 19 pandemic global community.

Internal as rubric was the focus on the role of Chancellor Angela Merkel in the political realm as well as Historische Deutsche.

Across the Atlantic the American president elect Joe Biden when he officially moves into La Maison Blanc will have as Vice President Kamala Harris, a Black woman whose parent (maternal mother) was born and grew up in Painganadu, Tamil Nadu, India.

In realpolitik there exists at the comparative binary traits that one can associate with women politicians as leaders. But it would be naïve to identify Janet Jagan in the same category as Eugenia Charles, Margaret Thatcher, Theresa May or even Indira Gandhi. The notion that all women display matching feminist traits and attitudes is absolutely false.

However, a prominent woman who assumed power in Argentina Evita Peron, emerged during a particular immediate post WWII phase, when economic sovereignty, or 'populism' gained precedence in Buenos Aires, Cordoba and Rosario as 'centres' of Euro-monopoly

capital in Argentina.

Evita Peron was as charismatic as her husband Juan Peron and similar to Janet Jagan, she was popular as a leader for women's rights.

The country's trade union confederations also played a very important role in the struggle for working class rights.

It is this evolutionary interval that situated Janet Jagan as part of a vanguard movement for domestic servants and other female workers.

Perhaps one of the contradictions that undermines the positions of elements that are socially hostile to marxism-leninism is that dynamic that conditions, that mediates the feminisation of labour (including unpaid household), within the broader structure of the Lander or plantation whether this is based on cotton, tea, sugar or oil palm).

If Karl Marx in urging Proletarians of the world (to) Unite reminded that these class forces had nothing to lose but their chains ... then political figures such as Janet Jagan and Shirley Dubois were quite correct in mobilising and organising female workers.



The 'A' Team - Mr. Samuel Hinds, Presidential Candidate, Mrs. Janet Jagan and Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo. Mr. Satyadeow Sawh (dec'd) at back.

Janet Jagan as Freedom Fighter, the last to leave the room.

Delivering the feature address at a symposium organised by the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) on October, 2020, President Irfaan Ali utilised the rhetorical moment provided by the occasion to cite the issue of 'leaders and responsibility' (WM 24-25 October, 2020. P 7, item "Janet Jagan hailed as torchbearer for freedom and democracy").

The President further noted that since 1997 there had been a trend where certain elements including PPP supporters who had taken to practice of "telling/spreading lies ..." it is necessary that we call them out", he stated.

This was another factor associated with Janet Jagan as she worked side by side with Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who incidentally, she used to describe as being a real man.

A recent missive scripted by Clement Rohee analyses the contradiction of historical inevitability in the context of what in reality is a period of political stagnation - where there is a reversal of gains previously attained and accepted in Society (Weekend Mirror 21-22/, 11/2020, & "In the end democracy always emerges". Also Stabroek News, 14/11/2020)

Perhaps it was this conviction, this deeply held perspective that formulated Janet Jagan's optimism. Perhaps.

What can be stated here are mere insights. She was perhaps one of the most well read and informed leaders in the English speaking Caribbean. Regularly, she received correspondence from most United Nations agencies.

American universities included Janet Jagan on their mailing roster.

Some years ago (during the 1960s) the Paris based journal 'Revolution' edited by Jacques Verges, included an article written by Janet probably edited in Tricontinental mode. This at a time when the wars in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were raging during the Cold War, and well before Gorbachev's perestroika.

Janet Jagan will always be relevant because she was a true fighter. Always the last to leave the room.

Janet Jagan Centenary – A Reflection

100 years ago when the world capitalist system continued to experience crises aggravated by the so called Great War (1914-1918), particularly in terms of Wall Street share price fluctuations and the 'socialisation' of organised labour locals in North American centres, Janet Rosenberg was born in Chicago.

According to the conventional narrative her Jewish family origins afforded her the kind of cultural opportunities that characterised a yearning for education.

It must be recalled that European migrants Italy, Ireland/Britain as well as Germany and the 'Oster-Reich' had contributed towards the development of diverse immigrant communities wherever scarce employment could be made available during the 1920's and the decades of the Great Depression.

Janet Rosenberg to the extent that she made appreciable progress at the collegiate level, would have become conscious of the racial and ethnic division of labour in cities such as Chicago, Detroit and New York.

Guyanese born Cheddi Jagan and his dedication radicalised by British colonialism and the hierarchy of Plantation 'propertial' norms, would have presented to Janet in her early adulthood, an individual she could identify with chivalry and a certain quality of 'liberte et egalite' that was rare.

At least this is the impression one could abstract from various publications; even moreso, that from the modesty and reserved conversation as set out in the West on Trial, 1966; pp 55/56.

American political society and its institutions were regulated by the hegemony of monopolies that were found during the Great Depression strategically placed to garner huge war profits. Or as described by the Socialist Party leaders of the period, the armaments industry based on contracts that invested billions on the construction of armoured vehicles, artillery, military aviation and especially, destroyer ships and submarines amongst other similar industrialisation.

To coerce the industrial workers movement into supporting the Anti-fascist war against the Axis powers, the ruling circles launched systematic attacks against workers through job cuts, banning of strikes and Special Emergency Laws proscribing the Communist Party as an illegal organisation.

In fact as early as the 1940-1941, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration was instrumental authorising indictments (through the United States Department of Justice (USDJ) against 29 members of Local 544-CIO and the Socialist Workers Party of James Cannon. Coupled to the anti-labour attacks were the ingrained Jim Crow racism against Blacks.

Janet Jagan upon her marriage to the young Cheddi Jagan had already become a professional in the medical health-care community. In practical terms despite the constraints imposed by gender prejudices Janet Jagan could have become an 'associate' editor of any prestigious medical journal such as those based in New

York or Illinois.

Racial discrimination and political intimidation served to create a generation of Anti-fascist and Anti-racist dissenters. These social and class tendencies were not the same as the 19th century 'Communards' and Anarchists (Debray Regis and Beard Charles). Historically, with the expansion of American colonialism in the Pacific and Puerto Rico, Anti-fascist dissenters eventually were aligned to militants supportive of Civil Rights in the United States itself.

Cheddi Jagan himself has recounted the tremendous presence of Paul Robeson as a cultural icon and role model for the Civil Rights movement. But Robeson although provided with sanctuary by Stalin's Communism during the decades described by Leon Trotsky as the "Left/Turn", was never known to be a card registrant member of the CPUSA. (See West on Trial, p.98, where the author identifies Paul Robeson and Henry Wallace as the founders of the Progressive Party (PP/ USA).

Both the Jagans therefore, became 'acculturated' into 'Freedom-Ways' of thinking and action even before the Cold War declaration by President Harry Truman in 1947.

If there developed a revolutionary Left politics in America that avoided the risks of demanding a Union of Socialist United States at a time of widespread social distress, deprivation and homelessness that was juxtaposed to 'cyclic' phases of dramatic capitalist accumulation defined as the Boom years, then it would be historically necessary to investigate the impact of both the Great French episode of 1789, and of course, the victory of the Black Jacobins in Haiti (Lenin, VI, State and Revolution and CLR James, Black Jacobins the Haitian Revolution).

Returning to British Guiana the Jagans had fortunately prepared themselves to confront challenges and colonial subterfuges. That is the story that provides a realistic grasp of what comprised of the first mass based political organisation of the working class movement.

However, as related by Ashton Chase in his History of Trade Unionism in British Guiana (New Guiana Company 1961) the colonial masters had gained the support of the traditional if we like, Man Power Citizens Association (MPCA). Other unions including the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), led by Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow,



Mrs. Janet Jagan in China with Chairman Mao Tse Tung

did not retain either the class formation depth, or the theoretical refinement that would enable a fundamental seizure of political power from the elements determined to maintain the status quo (Leslie Melville A History as well as the essential PAC Bulletin prior to January 1950).

To conclude this segment, the following could be cited:

- (i) That the McCarthyite Anti-communist campaigns of the 1950s influenced the core organisations within the then West Indies, i.e., all the political organisations that emerged in the Eastern Caribbean.
- (ii) The Jagans survived anti-semitism including the slurs bandied around during the frame up trial and execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.
- (iii) CIA intervention in Guiana utilised not dissimilar tactics adopted by the AFL CIO elites and bureaucracy that were deployed against American labour including offshore seamen on ocean going vessels that would schedule destinations including Port Georgetown.
- (iv) LFS Burnham's attempt to seize power and capture the PPP had a mentor in the experience of the nationalist movement for Puerto Rican Independence of Pedro Albizu Campos as well as the Sandistas and the Contras in Nicaragua.



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Editor's Note:

This article was reprinted with the kind permission of Mr. Joseph Holder. The article provides some interesting perspectives on the Parika-Goshen Road Project, also known as the Del Conte Project which was initiated by the PPP government in the early 1960s. The project was aborted by the PNC-UF Coalition Government after it took office in 1964.

Parika–Goshen Road Project

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What is today being referred to as the Parika– Goshen Road was called the Parika–Urisirima Road in 1961 – 1963. A recent visit to Goshen has revealed that the place which on the map is called Urisirima is the place where the community called Goshen or Riversview is located. During most of the twentieth century Guyanese had a strong interest in connecting Georgetown to Lethem by a road. In the 1930's the Bartica–Potaro Road was constructed to enable trucks to travel between Bartica and Mahdia, and between Bartica and Issano. The road was not paved and had a single traffic lane. A truck transportation service was provided by the Transport and Harbours Department between Bartica, Mahdia and Issano. Transportation of people and goods between Bartica and the mining areas on the Potaro and Mazaruni Rivers by river was largely replaced by transportation by road. Transportation of people and goods between Georgetown and Bartica was by river ferry between Georgetown and Bartica, or by road and railway between Georgetown and Parika, then by river ferry between Parika and Bartica. During the 1950's the Government of British Guiana embarked on a programme to improve the Bartica–Mahdia Road starting from the Bartica end. This involved reshaping the existing road to conform with modern highway geometric standards and paving it with sand clay material stabilized with asphalt of various compositions on experimental stretches of road.

In 1961 the United States Operations Mission to British Guiana of the International Cooperation Administration contracted Metcalf & Eddy International Inc., Engineers of Boston to conduct an investigation and produce a feasibility report on a modern highway between Georgetown and Lethem. The report was delivered by Metcalf & Eddy on 11 August 1961 to the U.S. Operations to B.G., and bore the title:

A MODERN HIGHWAY
BETWEEN
GEORGETOWN
ON THE ATLANTIC COAST OF BRITISH GUIANA
AND
LETHEM
NEAR THE BRAZILIAN BORDER

The report stated as follows:

Our contract describes the purpose of this investigation as follows:

“To provide the Government of British Guiana with technical assistance in an appraisal as to the economic feasibility of constructing a modern highway from Georgetown, on the Atlantic Coast of British Guiana, to Lethem, near the Brazilian border; and, if such is shown to be economically feasible, to recommend a route to be followed and design to be used in constructing the said route.”

The scope of the work of the contract was further defined as follows:

The report will present the results of studies made to determine the best route for the construction of a modern highway, suitable to the requirements of British Guiana for the next twenty years, between the principal city of Georgetown and the interior town of Lethem. These studies are to cover two routes; namely, construction and reconstruction of a highway as proposed by the Government of British Guiana (Route No. 1, Vreed en Hoop-Parika-Potaro-Good Hope-Lethem) and the alternate (Route No. 2, Georgetown-Atkinson Field-Mackenzie-Ituni-Kurupukari-Good Hope-Lethem).

The report summarized its recommendations as follows:

Of the two routes studied, we have recommended the adoption of Route No. 2 since it will be better located to serve existing populated areas; it will provide access to a larger area of exploitable forests and farm land; it will cost less to construct; engineering and construction time will be less; no ferries will be required in regions of high



Demerara Harbour Bridge



Abary Bridge

traffic density; and the time required to travel the entire route will be appreciably less.

In short, while construction of the proposed road along either route is economically justified, the economic advantages are greater if it is built along Route No. 2.

We recommend that the road be constructed from Georgetown to Lethem along Route No. 2.

As noted in the Metcalf & Eddy Report the Government of British Guiana had proposed to construct the road between Georgetown and Lethem along the Vreed en Hoop-Parika-Bartica-Mahdia (Potaro)-Good Hope-Lethem Route. The Metcalf & Eddy Report did not change the Government's preference for this route, on which, as noted above, improvement works had been in progress on the Bartica-Mahdia Road in the 1950's. The revival of the claim by Venezuela to the area west of the Essequibo River in British Guiana strengthened the Government's resolve to stick to this route, since it would promote increased occupation by Guyanese of the area claimed by Venezuela. In 1961 the Government signed a contract with Grupo Del Conte, a Venezuelan Contractor, to construct a road between Parika and Urisirima, which was diagonally across the Essequibo River from Bartica. The road was designed by the Public Works Department (PWD) of the Government, while the bridges were designed by Grupo Del Conte (GDC). Payment for the construction work was to be by cash and bonds issued by the Government, the major payment being by bonds. It is to be noted that in 1961 GDC submitted to the Government a proposal for the construction of a highway between Georgetown and Rosignol along the railway embankment, accompanied by design drawings.

In February 1962 GDC started construction work on the Parika-Urisirima Road. It brought in its equipment by water transport, landing it at Makouria, where it established its base camp. The PWD was represented on site by a Resident Engineer (initially William "Chubby" Phang, followed by Fred Debidin), Assistant Resident Engineer Joseph Holder, Soils Investigator, Surveyor and supporting staff, all housed at Makouria. The road reserve for the road was set out and declared by PWD. The GDC started clearing and grubbing the

roadway north of Makouria going towards Parika, followed by construction of the road embankment with its associated culverts. The material used for embankment construction was white sand from the area. The embankment construction reached Ithaca Creek, where it was halted. GDC then proceeded with clearing and grubbing the roadway from Makouria going south, jumping across the Makouria River and going towards Urisirima. This was very hilly terrain, and the earthworks which followed the removal of vegetation involved a large amount of cutting and filling. The soil in this section of the road contained significant amounts of sand clay, and construction with this material was hampered by rainfall. The culverts associated with the embankment construction were installed.

In February 1963 GDC halted construction stating that it had a cash flow problem, caused by it not receiving the expected price for the Government bonds which it sold primarily in the USA. The Government then took possession of the Parika-Urisirima road construction site, including the materials and equipment belonging to GDC. GDC responded by filing a law suit against the Government in the Guyana Law Courts. The breach of contract was never settled by the two parties, nor was the matter heard in court. The Roads Division staff from the PWD who worked on the project returned to the head office in Georgetown. In the hope that the part of the project from Parika to Aliki would have been constructed by the Government with its own funds, the bridge across the Bonasika River was redesigned by two engineers, Dindial "Pablo" Ramsamooj and Joseph Holder, in the Roads Division with composite steel plate girders and reinforced concrete deck forming two cantilever and one suspended spans, in substitution for the prestressed concrete bridge designed by GDC.

Following national elections in 1964 the Government returned to the project of connecting Georgetown to Lethem by a modern highway with the choice of Route 2, as recommended by Metcalf & Eddy. During 1966-1968 the Soesdyke-Linden Highway was constructed as part of this connection and opened to traffic. In 1970 the Roads Division, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics was tasked by the Government to identify and select a route,



Linden-Soesdyke Highway



Mr. Holder interacting with staff of Demerara Harbour Bridge

and construct a road along the selected route to connect the coastal road system with the Bartica-Madhia-Issano Road system. Three routes were identified, viz.

- (1) Georgetown-Linden-Rockstone-Suribanna-Sherima-Wineperu-19 miles Bartica-Madhia Road;
- (2) Georgetown-Vreed en Hoop-Sand Hills-Makouria-Urisirima-Bartica; and
- (3) Georgetown-Vreed en Hoop-Parika-Urisirima-Bartica.

A feasibility study was done which showed that the benefit-cost ratios of the roads constructed along these routes were all negative, but the least negative was the Georgetown-Vreed en Hoop-Parika-Urisirima-Bartica route. The Roads Division recommended that the road be constructed along this route.

However, the Government did not accept this recommendation and decided to construct the road along the Georgetown-Linden-Rockstone-Suribanna-Sherima-Wineperu-19 miles Bartica-Mahdia Road. 19 miles Bartica-Mahdia Road was named Allsopp Point. In 1974 the Government decided to build a large hydropower station in the Upper Mazaruni, and to provide access to the area by constructing a road along the following route: 13 miles Bartica-Mahdia Road-Marshall Falls-Kwapau-Kurupung-Sand Landing, with a branch road from Kwapau to Itaballi at the mouth of the Mazaruni River. It was also proposed to construct a floating bridge between Suribanna and Sherima. The project to provide a laterite surfaced road with modern highway geometry and bridges across all rivers was

known collectively as the Upper Mazaruni Road Project (UMRP). The Itaballi-Kwapau-Kurupung Mouth section of the road was constructed as a penetration road, following which the project was closed in 1977, due to a decision not to proceed with the Upper Mazaruni Hydroelectric Project.

In 1969-1972 the public road between Parika and Uitvlugt was reconstructed as a modern highway with a change of alignment between Metem meer Zorg and Parika from the existing road to one parallel to the Vreed en Hoop-Parika Railway alignment. In the Hydronie area the road alignment was joined to the alignment of the Parika-Urisirima Road and followed it until it reached opposite the Parika Stelling, where it left the Parika-Urisirima Road to connect with the stelling. The northern end of the Parika-Goshen road is therefore at the junction of the approach road to the Parika Stelling and the Parika-Urisirima Road alignment.

The construction of the Parika-Goshen Road will be a return to the site of the Parika-Urisirima Road Project to finish the work which was started in 1962 and halted temporarily in 1963. Many expectations by residents along the route aroused by the start of the road project in 1962 were dashed by the closure of the project in 1963. Frustration was also experienced by all the persons who worked on the project, as all the hard work done for one year did not result in any finished work which would be of benefit to road users. The completion of the proposed Parika-Goshen Road Project with a ferry between Goshen and Bartica would be of tremendous benefit to residents and building construction projects along the route, to residents in Bartica and to persons engaged in mining, quarrying and logging in the Mazaruni-Cuyuni Triangle. It will also enable housing schemes in coastal areas in West Demerara and East Bank Essequibo to be supplied with white sand, sand clay and maybe crushed stone transported by trucks from suppliers in Makouria, instead of areas along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway and across the Demerara Harbour Bridge, increasing the wear and tear on the latter. With the proposed construction of megahydropower projects on the Mazaruni River, the existence of the Parika-Goshen Road and the Goshen-Bartica Ferry will be of critical importance for the successful execution of these projects.



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The Pandemic, Jobs and Technology



Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been the most important issue facing the world. It would not be outlandish to say that the rapid spread of the virus, its effect on humans, and the various strategies governments have used to fight it has affected everyone on the planet. The policies implemented by governments; curfews, lockdowns, work from home directives, quarantines etc., have so far had the most disruptive effect on people's daily lives. However, were it not for these measures and had they resorted to waiting for a non-vaccine based "herd immunity" the death toll of the virus would be measured in the tens of millions. In many Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries 2020 saw the first decrease in life expectancy since World War 2, and it is estimated that worldwide 20.5 million years of life have been lost because of the pandemic. Therefore governments had to react and had to be disruptive in order to assuage an even bigger disaster.

In this article we will be looking at the role technology has played to mitigate the disruptions in our lives and what role they will play going forward. This article, however, will not examine the role that technology has played in the quick and effective development of vaccines. We will also focus on the use of technologies in industry and education and what will be required in the future.

According to the UN's International Labour Organization, in 2020, the equivalent of 225 million full-time jobs were lost. Of this, 114 million have been complete job losses while the remainder have been as a result of cut in the number of working hours. The sectors most adversely affected are travel and accommodation, food services, retail, construction and, arts and culture. At the same time the pandemic can be seen as a boon for businesses that have leveraged technology. Companies like Amazon, Alibaba, JD.Com, Netflix, Door Dash have all benefited; as lockdowns have limited access to brick and mortar businesses consumers have switched to retailers with large online presence.

A survey by the UN Conference on Trade and Development shows that small merchants in China were best equipped to sell their products online. This is credited with the Chinese experience of the SARS (another coronavirus) crises in 2002-2003 which kickstarted companies like Alibaba, JD.com and others. To transition, businesses need to take advantage of the new ways people are accessing retail stores, the following conditions should be taken into account:

1. Create digital market place and accept contact-less payments from customers as well as to suppliers.
2. Invest in digital marketing to get your products viewed in Google, Bing, Amazon, Alibaba, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter searches.
3. Make the user experience simple by leveraging existing and proven e-commerce platforms. This will also allow for quick roll out of e-commerce sites.
4. Invest in good cloud based technological infrastructure that can be easily scaled for high user traffic and is resilient to network outages and cyber security attacks.
5. Either create or partner with logistics firms that provide last mile delivery. This has been especially effective for food delivery services where firms like Doordash and Uber Eats provide contact-less last mile delivery and can be credited with keeping many restaurants in business during the lockdowns.

It is expected that even after the pandemic is over, e-commerce activity will not be rolled back significantly, if at all. People have now become accustomed to ordering all sorts of items online and have them delivered to their

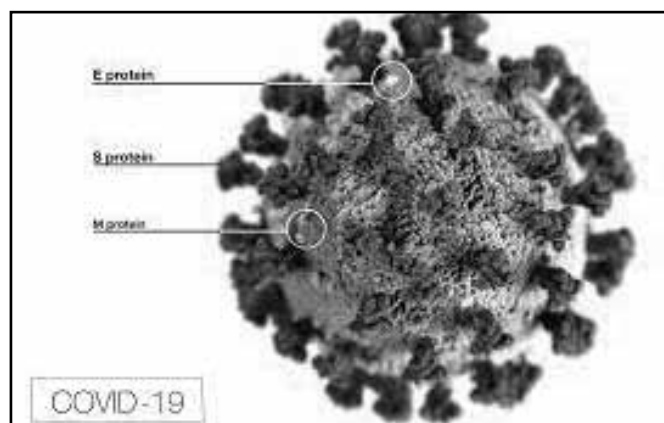
doors that the convenience of the process has now been fixed.

Two of the most obvious areas of disruption that the pandemic and the response to it has created is in the white collar jobs and education sectors. The work from home directives that many firms have implemented has seen up to 40% of these workers moving to a remote office. Prior to this few employers were willing to allow workers to work from home. For example, in the US, over the previous 10 years before the pandemic the number of workers who were working from home went from 1.5% to 3%. What is interesting about this massive increase is that the work from home directive was accomplished within a few weeks. The insight here is that no new innovations or technologies were required. What we actually see is the leveraging of existing technologies that allowed workers to move from the office to the home and accomplish much of their tasks. Firms like Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft have seen incredible revenue increases during this pandemic period. If we look at Microsoft, as an example, their reported financial disclosures show that their profits increased by 33% in 2020. Much of the revenue increase came from their cloud services (50%) and Office365 product (39%). While actual sales of their operating system installed on new devices was only 1%. Likewise the education sector has also leveraged existing technologies.

The logistics sector is also expected to suffer major disruptions. Already companies like GAP (the retailer) have accelerated automation within their warehouses, purchasing robots to automate their packaging, ordering, storage and local distribution. At the beginning of 2020 Amazon already had a reported 200,000 robots working in its warehouses across the US. Additionally Amazon has been using AI to monitor human workers output and dismiss workers who do not perform. These types of automation were expected, however, the pandemic has accelerated the process and shrunk the timeline from an expected 10 years down to 2-3 years. In Asia, robots are also taking up traditional human positions from robotic waiters, nurses to robotic receptionists at hotels. However, the expectation of robots replacing humans has to be tempered. Amazon in 2020 added 175,000 additional human workers. This is because many “complex tasks”, like picking up oddly shaped

objects, is still difficult for robots. At the same time redesigning warehouse layouts to cater for automation will take some time. While robot usage will expand and replace high volume repetitive jobs, new better paying jobs (for humans) will be created in the operations and maintenance of these robots.

Much of the mitigating factors that have allowed workers to work from home and students to continue studying away from school is the presence of significant and pervasive ICT infrastructure. Guyana will have to significantly increase this infrastructure. With GTT, E-Networks and the announcement of Canje Tel's plan to land another undersea fiber optic cable, the major populated regions in Guyana will be well served with access to the outside world. What the government should now be focusing on is the continued expansion of the backbone network across Guyana, especially the coast. Multiple fiber optic back bone networks have to be put in place connecting the Corentyne to Anna Regina. With the opening of the telecom sector, companies can now concentrate on increasing the last mile connections to homes and offices. At the same time the government should start back the One Laptop Per Family/Child project, but not simply as a one off distribution of computing devices but also consider long-term maintenance, operations, training and replacements; this would be an excellent initiative during the ongoing pandemic particular for low income families. Additionally the government, if it is not already considering it, should begin investments in a central bank digital currency. The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank is already looking into this, while China is already testing such a currency in several of their major cities.



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The Coup in Myanmar

by Oliver Sam, Writer and Political Analyst

On February 1, 2021, the army in Myanmar, formerly Burma, seized power in that country and ended a relatively brief period of civilian government.

On that same date the military began jailing the leaders of the civilian ruling party, the National League for Democracy, including its most popular and world-famous leader Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

The leader of the coup is senior general Min Aung Hlaing. He was the head of the army known as the Tatmadaw, during the 2017 genocidal attack on the ethnic minority Rohingya community resulting in an exodus to Bangladesh. Some 800,000 were forced out of their homes, unknown thousands murdered, raped and their villages razed to the ground. He is ruthless and now seem determined to crush the resistance to the coup.

Already the military and police have killed more than 500 civilians in various parts of the country who have taken to the streets to oppose the coup.

Brief history of Myanmar (Burma)

This is not the first coup in Myanmar. Indeed, that country has been ruled by the military for more years since independence than by a civilian government.

Myanmar, then Burma, became independent in 1948. This was just after the end of World War II when the wave of National Liberation to end colonialization was sweeping the world. These movements for freedom and ending of colonialization were inspired by the feats of the Soviet Union's Red Army in crushing Hitlerite Fascism in Germany.

That gave rise to the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the early piloting of the Decolonialization Resolution in the UN shortly after.

India, led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was the first to break the colonial chains in 1947, followed by Burma in 1948 and in 1949, China, a semi colony, also had its National Liberation Revolution.

Burma began as a parliamentary democracy in 1948.

Its army always had a strong influence in the country due to the role many of the leaders played in the fight for freedom. Foremost among them was the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, General Aung San who was the most prominent leader of the independence movement.

In 1962, the military carried out a coup in the country. It was led by General U Ne Win. He stayed in power for twenty six years.

In 1974, following a series of successes of the National Liberation movement and the Socialist oriented course that many former colonies chose to follow, U Ne Win instituted a new constitution for Burma.

He proclaimed the constitution Socialist and then nationalized the major enterprises in the country. He was promising paradise to the people.

However, that course failed terribly. It failed basically because of the undemocratic nature of the military regime and the fact that it was accountable to the people for its performance and actions. This led to massive corruption with the military officers and former officers beginning to own almost the whole economy.

The economy deteriorated and it led to shortages. Black-marketing for all essential items was the order of the day. The political dictatorship coupled with a broken economy resulted in widespread dissatisfaction which led to protests by the people, including workers, but mainly students.

The protest movement reached a peak in August, 1988 when the widespread demonstration reached a stage that was threatening the power of the military regime. The military moved to crush the protests. They did so very brutally. They killed more than three thousand persons and displaced thousands more.

The strength of the protest however shook the military regime deeply. It forced the Junta to make concessions. General U Ne Win resigned, and a new junta took over. It was in this period that Aung San Suu Kyi came to prominence.

She had the advantage of being the daughter of one of Burma's anti-colonial leaders in the 1940's, General Aung San. She began to speak out against the government. In 1988 along with others, Suu Kyi formed a political party, National League for Democracy (NLD). The party grew quickly attracting a wide cross section of dissatisfied people.

So rapid was the growth of the NLD that the military began to feel threatened by its growing popularity. In 1989 the Junta arrested Suu Kyi. For the next two decades she was a prisoner, either in jail or under house arrest.

Suu Kyi's determination to stay in Myanmar and to oppose the regime made her an icon to the people of that country as well as the international community. In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to democracy and freedom.

Suu Kyi's party remained extremely popular as the socio-economic situation in the country continued to worsen. Apart from the repressive political situation which saw the Junta controlling the judiciary and the press, the economic situation remained dire.

The military became even more corrupt and began to take over the whole economy. It established two conglomerates, "Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) and Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd. (MEHL)."

The extent of their holdings was revealed by a UN Fact Finding Mission set up after the massive ethnic cleansing drive against the Rohingyas in 2017. The 110 page report was published in 2019.

It showed that these two business arms of the military controlled huge tracts of lands, licenses and economic concessions. The two bodies owned enterprises and investments ranging from beer, tobacco and consumerables to mines, mills, tourism, property development and telecommunications. In Myanmar it is said they owned from SIM card to beer, from sky diving to jade mining.

The military Junta is not just a group of officers, but a bunch of capitalists with great financial interests throughout the country and abroad.

As the situation began to worsen resistance continued to grow. The Junta then began to exploit differences among the multi-ethnic population of Myanmar. The Rohingya

became the main victims in this policy. They resisted and even a small group among them began to offer some armed resistance.

While the discriminatory policy brought the junta some relief it could not stop the growing dissatisfaction in the population as a whole from spreading.

In 2017, protests against the general socio-economic and political conditions exploded. Mass demonstration began once again, this time sparked by the rising price of food. In these demonstrations the Buddhist monks played a leading role. As a result of the frontal role played by the monks the 2007 episode became known as the "Saffron Revolution", due to mode of dress of the monks.

Like the previous uprisings, the military put down the protests. However, recognizing the strength of the intensity of the feelings among the masses the Junta began to make some reforms.

They put out a new constitution to transition towards civilian rule. At the same time the Junta began talking to the opposition to meet some agreement to form some kind of civilian government.

In 2011, the military government dissolved itself and established a civilian parliament. A former army officer and former Prime Minister, Thein Sein, became the president of the country.

In order to protect its political power and its vast economic empire the Junta extracted quite a lot of concessions from the opposition. It is quite possible too that the NLD led by Suu Kyi and other opposition groups thought that getting a foot in the door of power was most important to return to democracy. So, they made major concessions, leaving much power in the hands of the military.

These included that the military would occupy one quarter of the seats in Parliament. It also has a veto power over any constitutional change.

The military also made some concessions such as signing into law the right to peaceful demonstration and to allow trade unions to function.

In 2011, a new government was put in place comprising civilians and military personnel. In a way it was a dual power with the balance in favour of the military.

Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 2010. Hundreds of political prisoners were released as well. In April of 2012 forty five (45) by-election were conducted. The NLD was allowed to contest and won 43 of the 45 seats, one of which was won by Suu Kyi. She then entered Parliament and was seen as the leader of the country. This allowed the international community to ease sanctions on Myanmar. In November of 2012 President Barack Obama visited Rangoon. The U.S eased the sanctions that were imposed on Myanmar earlier.

With a better international atmosphere and progress on the ground, the opposition parties, including NLD began to make concessions to the military excesses that took place against Rohingyas in 2013. The military had killed many of them. But there was a silence on this. It appears that Suu Kyi and the rest of the opposition did not want to antagonize the military and stayed silent. It was an appeasement policy in the hope of preserving the limited democracy it had gained.

That obviously emboldened the military. In 2017 they launched a massive attack on the Rohingyas again. Committing crimes against humanity including murder, rape and razing whole villages. This led to a massive exodus to mainly Bangladesh. Some 800,000 refugees had to flee for their lives.

To the astonishment of the world the main political party in Myanmar, the NLD, led by the iconic Suu Kyi remained silent. Even worse than its silence Suu Kyi herself went to defend the military actions at the International Criminal Court months later.

All of that to pacify the military and to save the “democracy” recently acquired.

Like so many appeasement policy before, it did not work. The Military became even more aggressive.

Myanmar held elections in November 2020, the NDL swept the polls in a landslide victory. It won 396 of the

476 seats contested. The party of the military “Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)” did poorly.

The massive victory shocked the military. They began talking about the elections being rigged.

Their main concern was that the big victory by the NLD gave it the power of changing the constitution.

Moreover, Suu Kyi was in the process of forming the government. She was in talks with other parties to form a unity government. That would have further reduce the influences of the Junta.

The military, with so much at stake on February 1, 2021, the day before the convocation of the parliament, Suu Kyi and other leaders of the NLD were arrested. Two of whom have since died in custody.

The masses responded spontaneously and went to the streets in massive demonstrations. The demonstrations have spread throughout the country.

The army’s response has been brutal. People are being shot by snipers, so far more than 500 have been killed. Thousands of arrests were made.

At the time of writing the demonstrations were continuing and a general strike was being considered.

The situation remains very fluid, the outcome is yet uncertain. However even at this early-stage lessons can still be learnt.

The most important lesson, it seems right now is never to make concessions on human rights violations. The NLD should have been vocal and oppose the genocide that took place against the Rohingyas. Had they stood up then they would have been in a stronger position today to resist the might of the military and would have been in a stronger position to defeat the Junta.



New Global ‘Moral’ Order

Former President Dr. Cheddi Jagan, in his publication ‘A New Global Human Order’, advocated the need for a paradigm shift in the way rich countries relate to poorer countries which, he argued, was based on a high level of inequity and social injustice. He posited the need for a new global economic infrastructure which is highly skewed in favour of the developed world. Dr. Jagan’s ideas on a new world order found resonance with the vast majority of the world’s population and made its way to the hallowed chambers of the United Nations General Assembly which by resolution A/55/L.15/Rev.2 entitled “The Role of the United Nations in Promotion of a New Global Human Order” tabled by Guyana on November 24, 2000. The motion was adopted by consensus.

In introducing the Resolution, Guyana’s Permanent Representative Ambassador S R Insanally reminded the Assembly that the concept of a New Global Human Order, the brainchild of the late President Dr. Cheddi Jagan was aimed at promoting a new and enlightened partnership for peace and development involving all actors of the world community based on mutual respect, democratic governance and popular participation to deal with the challenges of development and poverty eradication and to arrest the growing disparities among and within countries.

The harsh reality was that the gap between the richest and the poorest countries continue to widen over the decades. The UNDP 1999 Human Development Report pointed to a steady increase of the ratio of 30:1 in 1960 to 44.1 in 1973 to 60.1 in 1990 and to 74:1 in 1999. The conclusion to be drawn is that the current international economic system allows the rich countries to get richer while making the poorer countries poorer. Meanwhile official development assistance promised by the developed countries continue to fall well below the target set at 0.7 per cent of their GNP set by the United Nations in 1970.

Regrettably, not much has changed since the adoption of that Resolution. In fact the situation has even deteriorated as the gap between the rich and poor countries continue to widen with each passing year. This fact has become all the more evident since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic roughly one year ago prompting calls for a new global moral order to safeguard against the glaring disparities in the distribution of vaccines between the rich countries and the rest of the underdeveloped world.

The fact that an inadequacy of supply of the vaccines

to the global population poses an existential threat to humanity as a whole appears to be of little consequence to policy makers in the richer countries. The market principle of demand and supply has never been more evident. In the case of the vaccines, demand has outstripped supply resulting in a situation where the cost of the vaccines had proven prohibitive for most countries in the developing world. Were it not for the benevolence of some of the more technologically advanced countries, more particularly India and China, the vaccines would not have landed the shores of the majority of poor countries, Guyana included.

According to the World Economic Forum, for the vaccines to be effective it must be equitably available. The richest nations have secured billions of doses of Covid-19 vaccines, while developing economies struggle to obtain supplies giving rise to the term ‘vaccine nationalism’ where rich countries use their financial and economic might to get first access to the vaccines. This, according to the World Economic Forum, could slow down the global economic recovery effort to the tune of nearly \$119 billion annually. This is much higher than the cost of supplying low-income countries with the vaccines, estimated at \$25 billion.

This view was shared by the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) which argued that a more equitable distribution of the vaccines is the best and only way to end the acute phase of the pandemic.



Health Minister, Dr. Frank Anthony receiving a shipment of the Sputnik V vaccine.

The question that needed to be answered by the developed countries is whether it is in their best national interests to put the health interests of their own country ahead of humanity as a whole. Most experts agree that by focusing on the latter, a win-win situation could emerge where the richer countries could benefit in the long term from greater economic buoyancy amounting to some one trillion dollars per year while also reaping significant health benefits.

Despite some progress to ensure access to the vaccines to the poorer countries, the fact remains that the vast majority of the world's population are still unlikely to be immunized in 2021. This stands in sharp contrast to the world's richest nations which have already pre-ordered billions of doses enough to protect their populations several times over!

The inequity in the Covid-19 vaccine distribution bears some resemblance to what took place during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic when vaccines for smallpox and polio were only available to developing countries after developed countries had secured enough to fully satisfy their domestic needs.

The fact of the matter is that the rush by the developed countries to shore up supplies beyond their needs could result in overpricing of the commodity way beyond the purchasing power of the poorer countries which in turn could lead to a prolongation in the life of the pandemic. In such an environment of suppressed vaccine demand, the only winner is the virus. Not only will the poor suffer but so long as the pandemic lasts the economic cost will continue to escalate and could reach the staggering sum of \$1.2 trillion per year according to financial experts.

The truth of the matter is that wealthy countries had already procured millions of doses of the Covid-19 vaccines long before several of the now approved vaccines had even completed their clinical trials. In the United Kingdom many of the front line health workers received their first dose of Pfizer or Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines. The United States has also intensified its vaccination programme. It has procured over 800 million doses of at least six vaccines in development with an option to buy about one billion more. The UK has purchased 340 million shots, approximately five doses for each citizen.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concerns about such unilateral actions on the part of the rich countries which will make the vaccines inaccessible to those in the poorer countries. According to Director of the WHO Adhanom Gebreyesus wealthy countries should avoid that tendency towards vaccine nationalism and urged a more collective and coordinated approaching especially given the global nature of the pandemic which he noted could have a crippling effect on all economies if

a universal solution is not found.

'If we were to vaccinate only those countries that bought up the majority of the supplies of the vaccine, it would mean that the virus would continue to rage in other non-vaccinated countries. And we have already seen just how quickly and efficiently this virus can mutate when allowed to ravage unchecked through populations anywhere'.

According to the WHO Director, the more people it infects the more likely it is that further mutations will occur and it is inevitable that an 'escape' mutation will eventually surface. This is a mutation that allows the virus to evade the immune response set out by vaccinations which could mean that they become less effective in preventing serious illness. The new mutation is then likely to become the dominant strain which could eventually find its way back to the shores of countries already vaccinated setting off a whole new set of infections.

The pharmaceutical companies could possibly 'tweak' their vaccines to combat any new variants, which may time even though it is still uncertain if the existing approved vaccines could actually stop the virus as opposed to a more effective immune response, that is say, less time for the virus to potentially mutate inside of its host. It is for that reason that a more coordinated and global response is needed. It is short-sighted and counterproductive to limit the vaccines to only those who can afford to pay since the virus is not confined to a single nation which makes it difficult to insulate or control. We live in a global village and no one could be considered safe unless the entire 'village' is safe.

There has been some developments both in terms of the supply and effectiveness of new vaccines on the market, the most recent being the Johnson and Johnson coronavirus single-shot vaccine. According to reports, the vaccine would be a cost-effective alternative to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and could be stored in a refrigerator instead of a freezer. Not only will the vaccines require fewer doses than its two-shot Pfizer and Moderna competitors, but it will also require fewer vaccine appointments and medical staff as well. This holds out some hope for underdeveloped nations both from the perspective of cost and effectiveness. In fact, Ghana has become the first country to receive vaccines through the Covax vaccine-sharing initiative.

Meanwhile, the distribution gap between the rich and poor nations remain staggeringly high. In the United States, over 65 million people have already been vaccinated with roughly 1.3 million doses being administered across the country every day. China has 40.5 million followed by the United Kingdom with 18.6 million. Guyana has 1.8 thousand which is still



President Mohamed Irfan Ali receiving the Covid-19 vaccine

ahead of several other countries which have not as yet administered a single dose of the vaccine. (Source: Our World, February 22, 2021)

According to UNICEF, there are still some 130 countries that are yet to administer a single dose which is equivalent to 2.5 billion people who so far have been completely shut out of the global vaccine campaign.

The Government of Guyana is stepping up measures to address the rising rate of infection. It is expected that 20,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine will be available from March and efforts are being made to source additional supplies of the Sputnik vaccines from Russia. This is in addition to a donation of 1,400 doses donated by Barbados. Guyana and several other Caribbean countries which will benefit from an initial donation of 500,000 Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccines by the Government of India. The vaccine is reportedly 62% effective but has a much higher level of efficacy with a lower dose than the required two doses by the other approved vaccines. Guyana, like most of the developing world have to confront challenges not only of vaccine

access but also vaccine administration, storage and supply chain logistics.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has exposed and exacerbated the disparities that currently exist between the rich and the poor countries. The less developed countries have much poorer health conditions and infrastructure that are less prepared to deal with the pandemic. Be that as it may, the harsh reality is that the pandemic cannot be effectively controlled everywhere and the economic downturn cannot be reversed until there is a robust global recovery. This is why it is so important for the developed countries to provide assistance to the developing economies. Without such assistance, the global pandemic will persist and global inequities will continue to grow. Regrettably, the assistance provided so far has been inadequate. What is required is the political will to do so. As mentioned earlier, resorting to vaccine nationalism is at best shortsighted.

It is not that the financial resources are not there to, as it were, level the playing field in terms of a coordinated and integrated global response. According to Joseph Stiglitz, Professor at Columbia University and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, the developed economies could utilize a part of their Special Drawing Rights and make roughly \$500 billion and make same available to the developing world. This could be of enormous assistance to developing economies with no or little cost to taxpayers of the developed economies. He suggested the need for those developed economies could contribute their SDRs to a trust fund to be used by developing economies to meet the exigencies of the pandemic. According to Professor Stiglitz, the pandemic is likely to deepen the debt crisis as poor countries will be left with little option but to borrow money and in so doing found themselves in a situation where they would be unable to service such debts given the economic downturn.

What is required is an action-oriented development programme along the lines of the Marshall Plan to lift poor countries out of their current state of Covid 19-induced economic downturn. And this must be done with a sense of urgency. Time is of the essence.



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Sugar's Renaissance

During the period of the APNU+AFC in office, the sugar industry became a symbol of its oppression and it appears it was specifically targeted for dismantling. During the May, 2015 to August, 2020 time period, the sugar industry was brought to its lowest ebb and production, productivity and morale hit all time lows. Prior to the Coalition's ascension to office, the industry was well on the path to recovery. Indeed, in 2015, when the industry surpassed its production target, a feat realized through hard work in the year prior, then Prime Minister, Moses Nagamootoo proclaimed the industry was on the rise. However, that burst of euphoria was short lived, as within weeks, the dismantling process begun.

In January, 2016, without any forewarning, the Coalition Government announced that it would close Wales Sugar Estate at the end of the year. The then Government, in my view, advanced spurious rationales to seek to convince Guyanese of its closure decision. There was a massive response of the people and communities of Wales, several marches, public activities and vigils were held to bring attention to the precarious plight should the decision be pursued. Attempts to have the matter discussed in the National Assembly were rebuffed by the then Speaker, the Coalition Government also shutdown any attempt to debate and/or discuss Wales' closure. At the end of it all, some 1,600 workers were made jobless. The Coalition's plan to re-engage the displaced

workforce in other agricultural pursuits never took off and unemployment and impoverishment stalked the villages.

No sooner had the Wales closure been finalised, the Coalition announced it wished to close East Demerara and Rose Hall Estates and to divest Skeldon Estate. The announcement of further closures came after then President David Granger, in an interview with the media, said Wales would have been the final closure of estates. But like many other commitments of the Coalition, that commitment was thrown by the wayside. On this occasion, the Government set up a high-level team to engage the sugar unions and the then political opposition - the PPP/C. At those engagements, the unions and the then opposition, stood together and opposed the position of the then Administration.

Calls for the Government to conduct a socio-economic study to determine the impact of the decision were simply ignored. The leader of the Government's team, then Vice President Khemraj Ramjattan was bold faced enough to tell the unions and opposition that if they desired such a study they should conduct it themselves. During those engagements, the GAWU advanced a worthwhile proposal to safeguard the industry. It is doubtful that the then powers-that-be ever really considered the suggestions advanced by the Union. It was



Cane being offloaded at a sugar factory

clear that the Government had one intention in mind, to dismantle the industry. In total some 5,600 workers lost their jobs when the three (3) estates were closed despite the strong disagreement expressed nationwide.

But the Coalition was not done yet. Despite its commitment to safeguard the still operable Albion, Blairmont and Uitvlugt estates, its actions spoke much louder than its words. In my view, there was a clear attempt to cripple the remaining estates into irrelevance. By May, 2020, then GuySuCo Chairman, John Dow in a letter to then President Granger said that the industry was weeks away from exhausting its finances. Dow warned the then President that the industry would be forced to padlock its gates and shutdown operations. The letter from the Chairman was seemingly ignored by the Coalition and was only addressed after it found its way into the public. During that time, the factories suffered immense and extended periods of breakdowns. Sugar production plummeted and there was little hope of the industry's sustenance. In my Budget 2021 address, I deemed the Coalition to having the reverse Midas Touch.

Today just a few months later, there is a sense of renewed optimism in the sugar industry. The Irfaan Ali-led Government has remained true to its commitment to revitalize the sugar industry and reopen the closed sugar estates at Skeldon, Rose Hall and East Demerara. At Wales, the damage was so severe that the possibilities of reopening are impossible though the Administration is seeking to establish a development authority to encourage agricultural diversification and agro-processing. Wales has also been selected as the site of the landing of the natural gas pipelines and this will encourage a host of spin off industries.

In the sugar industry, the Government has so far allocated some \$9B for investments in capital renewal and to erase the legacy of the Coalition. Rose Hall Estate is expected to recommence operations in the second half of 2022 and works are ongoing at the East Demerara and Skeldon Estates. At the operable estates, capital investment has

already begun to bear fruit. In the recent weeks, the estates have been able to surpass their weekly targets entitling the workers to certain incentives. A new Board and Management together with the Government have to hit the ground running and actively work to address the several maladies which have prevented the industry from realizing its potential.

The resurgence of the sugar industry will not be an overnight process and it is not a race for the swift, but it is a marathon. The industry will require substantial sums to put it right and a recent plan developed by the Corporation has indicated that a sustainable future is within reach with targeted investments and support. A major element of the industry's turnaround will be the workers who like the industry were badly battered during the term of the Coalition. The workers suffered the indignation of no pay rise and the suspension of hard-won benefits. Their efforts will play a sterling role in the new heights the industry is aimed at and therefore they should not be lost in the shuffle.

I believe that the sugar industry has a viable future. This sentiment is also shared by the Government which has demonstrated its commitment tangibly. There may be the need for partnerships to fully unlock the industry's potential in refined sugar, agro-energy and ethanol. We should not lose any time and momentum as the sugar industry is now in its renaissance.



A cane-cutter at work in the fields



Seepaul Narine is President of Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union. He is also Member of Parliament.

Vaccine Inequity and the Developing World



Highlighting global inequity in vaccine distribution

The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 (virus which causes COVID-19) has wreaked havoc on the world with over 110 million cases and 2.5 million deaths worldwide, to date, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The virus does not discriminate or distinguish borders but yet the resulting pandemic has exposed the inequity that the world faces as vaccine nationalism surfaces. Vaccine nationalism is where governments make agreements with pharmaceutical companies to supply their own population with vaccines ahead of others. "Vaccine Nationalism harms everyone and protects no one," warns Dr. Tedros Adhanom (the WHO Director General) in a statement emphasizing the necessity for a global, collaborative and inclusive effort in the fight against the virus with equitable vaccine distribution.

Vaccines were developed at an unprecedented pace via a major global collaborative effort by scientists in industry, academia and government institutions. This was aided by a significant input of funding, technological advances in genomic, proteomic and analytical technologies as well as fundamental scientific knowledge of viruses; we have had other coronavirus outbreaks before with severe acute respiratory syndrome (caused by SARS-CoV) in 2002 and

the Middle East respiratory syndrome (caused by MERS-CoV) in 2012. In fact, vaccines were developed much faster than manufacturing could keep up with current demands. This was highlighted by Ursula von der Leyen (President of the European Union (EU) commission) in an interview on Feb. 5 saying that mass vaccine production was underestimated by the EU. A statement made in consequence to the slow vaccination pace in the EU as they grappled with Pharma giant AstraZeneca over vaccine supply cuts. On the other side of the pond, the Canadian government (Canada has the world's 10th largest economy and no large-scale manufacturing vaccine facility) drew strong criticism, as a G7 country, from some when it announced in early February, it would take supplies from the COVAX initiative. This was a result of Canada's slow vaccination campaign for a wealthy country (2.38 % of the population was vaccinated at the time, a low for a developed nation), a consequence of supply delays (at the time) from BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna. COVAX is an initiative created to ensure equitable vaccine distribution throughout the globe but (to date) it is struggling to purchase enough vaccines to cover its goal - to deliver vaccines to 20% of the most vulnerable people in 91 countries by the end of 2021;



Covid-19 deaths in Brazil

countries predominantly in Africa, Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean. The Canadian government defended their decision by saying that half of their \$CAN440 million dollars invested in COVAX was for domestic supplies. This brought on accusations of double dipping in limited supplies as Canada had already made direct deals with pharmaceutical companies for supplies that is reported to be 5 times the Canadian population.

The unfortunate truth in the current vaccine access problem is that most of the developing world is at the mercy of the developed world; most of the developed world have adopted a policy of sharing vaccines after domestic needs are met. This 'every country for itself' attitude is short-sighted as the problem with vaccinating people only in rich countries is that it leaves a significant amount of the world's population unvaccinated and susceptible to infection as well as allow the virus time to develop mutations that lead to the emergence of more transmissible forms, and possibly virulent forms, which in turn will circulate globally. In addition, vaccines are effective against specific variants/subtypes/strains, therefore, the emergence of new strains may render current vaccines less effective or not effective at all. For example, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has 90% efficacy against the original SARS-CoV-2 strain when administered with a half-dose followed by a full-dose at least one month after however, in South Africa rollout of this vaccine was halted as it was ineffective against a new variant responsible for over 90% of new COVID-19 cases in the country. Therefore, its back to square one or significant delays as vaccines are altered and tested if current vaccines become ineffective against new strains and these strains are allow to circulate and become dominant.

As scientists have done in vaccine development, a strong collaborative effort to vaccinate everyone is necessary if we're going to beat this virus globally. It would not only be a moral stance from world leaders to ensure this but also an economic one. Rich nations can be reminded

that these actions would also be in their own interest as economist Adam Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), "*It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.*"

A study commissioned by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Research Foundation and published this year put forward an economic case in favour of ensuring equitable vaccine access to the developing world or risk losing trillions of dollars. The researchers used modelling to show that the global economy risk losing up to 9.2 trillion dollars because advanced economies are tightly connected to trading partners of which a large proportion are emerging markets and developing countries. Further, the study predicts that wealthy countries stand to lose between US\$203 billion to US\$5 trillion; the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator (COVAX is its vaccine pillar) costs US\$38 billion dollars. This further supports that it would be in the interest of advanced economies to invest in the ACT Accelerator which is a coordinated global effort to advance pandemic research and development and, ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines globally.

Another barrier to equitable access to not only vaccines and drugs but other COVID-19 medical products such as test kits, masks and ventilators are intellectual property (IP) rules/laws including patents. In October 2020, India and South Africa proposed to the World Trade Organization (WTO) a waiver from implementation, application and enforcement of patent and other IP rules for COVID-19 related drugs, vaccines and diagnostics until there is widespread global vaccination and immunization; WTO members can choose not to enforce IP rules under extraordinary circumstances. "A global pandemic is no time for business-as-usual, and there is no place for patents or corporate profiteering as long as the world is faced with the threat of COVID-19," said Leena Menghaney, South Asia Head of Médecins Sans Frontières' Access Campaign. To date, this proposal has had little success as developed countries, although being 'open' to discussion, argued that this waiver would not help as many developing countries lack vaccine manufacturing capabilities. Why not do it anyways and let those who can manufacture it, do it? For example, India has the capabilities as the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, producing more than half the world's drug supply. In addition, they have made free donations to poor countries (in contrast to the actions of rich countries in the developed world) and plan on supplying up to 200 million doses to the COVAX initiative. They manufacture the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine locally as Covishield as IP rules have been relaxed with technology transfer agreements allowing its manufacture in India and elsewhere, during the pandemic.

Most countries in the developing region don't possess vaccine manufacturing facilities however there are regional facilities that have the potential to produce vaccines to meet regional needs. One of the major lessons learned from this pandemic is the necessity for a robust strategy in preparing for future epidemics, pandemics or dealing with endemic viruses. Vaccination is the most effective means of controlling and preventing infectious diseases as exemplified by the elimination of smallpox and polio. Therefore, the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region should put forward a collaborative effort in vaccine development and/or manufacturing in a future preparedness plan (and COVID-19) to meet the region's need. Most LAC countries get vaccines through the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and United Nations led procurement where vaccine safety and efficacy are qualified by the WHO. Brazil and Cuba however have the potential to meet regional demands as they currently produce 54% and 73% of their own vaccine needs respectively (except for COVID-19); next are Mexico and Colombia with 25% and 7% respectively. The vaccine industry is a billion dollar one where manufacturing involves many steps including research and development, manufacturing, marketing, sales and distribution; throughout it all a regulatory system for review is necessary to ensure product quality which includes monitoring product safety and efficacy. Not all of these steps may be possible in a single country but its possible through collaborative efforts and technology transfer agreements with established pharmaceutical companies, locally and internationally. Brazil has the largest vaccine portfolio in the region producing thirteen of their own vaccines not including a COVID-19 vaccine candidate in pre-clinical development. Four of the thirteen vaccines (oral polio, MMR, rotavirus and pneumococcal) are a result of technology transfer agreements and partnerships with European Pharmaceutical companies where only the final stages of production are carried out in Brazil. In fact, as a result of a technology transfer and supply agreements with Oxford and AstraZeneca, Brazil will start producing the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine this year, as well as Mexico and Argentina in a joint venture - the main ingredient will be manufactured in Argentina then sent to Mexico for later production steps and distribution. Cuba has the second largest vaccine portfolio producing eight of its own and has a COVID-19 vaccine candidate, developed locally and currently in

late-stage clinical trials. Technology transfer agreements is a strategy that would allow sharing of part or the entire vaccine production process; a strategy that may shorten the time for equitable global vaccine access, or until countries or regions are more self sufficient. A great example of a successful South-South collaborative effort in the LAC region is that between the Finlay Institute in Cuba and the Institute of Technology in Immunobiology (Bio-Manguinhos) in Brazil for the production of the meningococcal polysaccharide A-C vaccine, a WHO qualified product. They not only developed enough for their local needs but also supplied countries in the meningitis belt of Africa. Production of the vaccine was done in Cuba while lyophilizing (freeze drying), filling and final steps were done in Brazil.

Overall, the ongoing pandemic has served to expose gross inequity in the world as the self-interest of rich countries surfaced with vaccine nationalism where some countries purchased enough doses to vaccinate their population multiple times while the developing world struggles to procure enough to vaccinate even 20% of their population. It is not only a huge moral dilemma but there is an economic argument that billions of dollars are stood to be lost from not vaccinating everyone in the world as global interdependence means equal access to vaccine is in everyone's best interest. Added to this, a delay in not vaccinating everyone allows the emergence of new virus mutations that could lead to vaccine resistance. While dealing with the current challenges the developing world must put into place robust strategies in pandemic, epidemic and endemic disease preparedness that ensures an adequate, continuous and equitable vaccine supply. Proposed are the use of technology transfer agreements and partnerships that would allow local manufacturing facilities to meet future regional needs. Certainly, the best way forward is a collaborative one.



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Black on Magenta

Black on Magenta is the story of how an unknown stamp became the holy grail of stamp collecting around the world and how a cent stamp appreciated to nearly one billion times its original face value, and it all started in British Guiana.

Britain introduced postage stamps on 1st May 1840. British Guiana was one of the early adopters with an inland postal service between Georgetown and Essequibo in January 1846. However, this arrangement was deemed illegal and had to be discontinued. Official permission was then sought to establish an inland postal service in 1850. On the 15th June 1850, the Royal Gazette of British Guiana announced that new daily inland service would be started, with postal rates of 4 cents an ounce, intermediate rate of 8 cents per ounce and a maximum of 12 cents per ounce. To be ready for the service, the postmaster Edward Thomas Evans Dalton commissioned the Royal Gazette of British Guiana, Joseph Baum and Williams Dallas to print stamps for the new postal service. The first stamps that were issued were circular in size and looked like labels found on the ends of spools of thread. For this reason, these early stamps earned the nickname "cotton reels". Each of these "cotton reels" stamps was initialled by the postmaster Dalton or one of his staff, James Belton Smith, H.A. Killikelly, W.H Lorimer or Edmond Dalzell Wight; this practice was to prevent counterfeiters.

In 1852, the local post office commissioned new stamps from the British publishing firm Waterlow and Sons. The stamps were printed by lithography. The stamps were of two denomination; the one-cent stamp was printed in black on magenta, while the four-cent stamps were in black on deep blue paper. The design featured a ship in a shield, with British Guiana and the colony's motto. However, the Latin motto was misspelt, and instead of *damus petimus que vicissim* (we give and seek in return) it had "*patimus*". These stamps stayed in circulation until 1953, when better quality stamps replaced them.

On the 25th November, 1854, Post Master Dalton placed an order for 100,000 stamps, comprising of 50,000 1-cent and 50,000 4-cent with Waterlow and Sons. The stamps arrived in British Guiana in September 1855 but contained only 5,000 stamps of each denomination. A request was sent to British printers to correct this shortfall; however, it would require another year before the stamps could be printed and sent to British Guiana.

By January 1856, stamps were in short supply, so to alleviate the problem, postmaster Dalton once again commissioned local printers Baum and Dallas to print 1-cent and 4-cent stamps. For this particular order the printers decided to mimic the 1852 Waterlow stamps. The printer most likely used either a stock wood or metal cut vignette of a ship and set it with the colony's motto, name and denomination of the stamp. The stamps were printed in pairs, one above the other; the top setting is Type one, while the bottom setting is known as Type two. The stamps were printed on a Columbian "Eagle" press, manufactured by Thomas Long & Co., Engineers, Edinburgh and is currently housed in the National Museum.

The stamps were duly printed and delivered to the postmaster. Upon receipt of the stamps, the postmaster instructed that his staff to initial the stamps before it was sold to prevent forgery. Edmund Datzell Wight initially initialed the surviving one-cent black on magenta sometime before 4th April 1856, the date of the postmark. It is believed that the stamp was attached to a newspaper wrapper sent to Mr Andrew Hunter. Mr Hunter's 12-year-old nephew, Louis Vernon Vaughan, found the stamp among family papers in British Guiana in 1873.

L.V. Vaughan sold one-cent blank on magenta to Neil Ross Mckinnon, a local collector, for six shillings. Mckinnon subsequently sent his entire collection to Britain for Edward Loines Pemberton, the leading British philatelic expert, to examine and the right to purchase it for 110 pounds. Edward Pemberton authenticated the one-cent blank on magenta as genuine but did not buy the collection. In September 1878, a significant art dealer Thomas Ridpath bought the McKinnon Collection for 120 pounds. After Ridpath acquired the set, he then visited Philipp de la Renotiere von Ferrary in Paris and sold the stamp to him.

In 1914, when the great war broke, Ferrary went into exile in Switzerland, where he died of a heart attack on the 20th May, 1917. When his will was made public, it stated that " the philatelic legacy to which I have dedicated my whole life with the utmost commitment, I leave with pride and joy to my German fatherland." Ferrary's intention was for the stamp collection to be sent to the Berlin Postal Museum. The French initially requested six million francs in taxes and related charges



The Historic Stamp

from the Berlin Postal Museum. When the money was not forthcoming, they seized the Ferrary's collection as enemy property under Versailles' Treaty. The French government announced that it would sell the stamp collection at an auction. There were fourteen auctions held from the 23rd June, 1921 to 26th November 1925. The collection of nearly 200,000 stamps was divided into 8,000 lots and yielded 27 million French francs.

The one-cent Black on Magenta appeared as lot 295 in the second session of the third sale on Thursday, 6th April 1922. Lot 295 was described in French as "Guyane Anglaise. 1856.1c.noir sur carmin, catalogue chez Yvert et Tellier sous le no.12 et sous le no.23 dans le catalogue de Stanley Gibbons. C'est le seul exemplaire connu,obl." It is said that the one-cent black on magenta is the only British colonial stamp missing from the Queen Elizabeth II stamp collection. So King George V of England had an agent at this auction. Unfortunately, Hugo Griebert, who represented the industrialist Arthur Hind won the bid at 352 500 francs or \$32,500 US.

On the 1st March, 1933, Mr Hind died from pneumonia at his home in Palm Beach, Florida. In his will, he left the " dwellings, furniture, painting but not my stamp collection" to his widow Ann Leeta Hind, who he married in 1928. Mrs Hind contested the will, claiming a third of

Arthur's estate and the British Guiana one-cent black on the magenta stamp. She claimed that Arthur had given the stamp to her before his death. The matter was eventually settled in her favour. On the 8th November 1933 Ann Leeta Hind remarried and became Ann Leeta Scala.

The London firm Harmer Rooke organised an auction for the British Guiana one-cent black on magenta stamp on 30th October 1935. Mrs Scala had set a reserved price at 42,500 dollars. She was perhaps hoping that the auction would have attracted King George V. However, this did not happen, and the final bid of 37,500 dollars was offered by Percy Liones Pemberton, the son of Edward Pemberton. The stamp was, however, withdrawn from the auction for failure to meet the reserve price. Another attempt was made to sell the stamp with a reserve price set at 37,500 dollars at a private sale in September 1938 by Ernest G Jarvis of the Kenwood Stamp Company, Buffalo, New York. But there were no takers.

In 1940, the Australian engineer Frederick "Poss" Trouton Small asked Finbar Kenny, the Stamp Department manager at Macy, to see if the stamp was available for purchase. On the 8th August 1940 Mrs. Scala sold the stamp for 45,000 dollars to an unnamed buyer. As it turned out, that buyer was Mr Small, but Finbar Kenny



A collection of Guyanese stamps

remained the stamp's public face. The Walt Disney comic book Donald Duck and the Guilded man featured the stamp when Donald Duck and his nephews travel to British Guiana looking for "one old, old stamp...that's worth more than fifty thousand dollars."

On the 24th March, 1970, Robert Siegel of New York auctioned the stamp on behalf of F.T. Small. The stamp sold for 280,000 dollars to an investment consortium headed by Irwin Weinberg with eight business people from Wilkes-Barre. On the 5th April, 1980 the stamp was once again placed on the auction block. It was sold to an anonymous bidder for \$935,000, as it turns out the buyer was John du Pont. John du Pont was convicted of murder and sentenced to thirty-three years in jail. In 2010 after Mr du Pont's death, his estate placed the British Guiana one-cent black on magenta stamp for auction by Sotheby on the 17th June 2014. The stamp was sold to Mr Stuart Weitzman bought the stamp for \$9,480,000.

Interestingly, the stamp's history of ownership can be gleaned from the markings on the reverse side. Over the years, owners have made various marks; for example, four-leaf clover and AH represents Arthur Hind; his wife Ann Leeta Hind then tried to obscure her husband's markings by adding a seventeen-pointed star. FK was initialled on the stamp by Finbar Kenny the manager

of Macy's stamp department who brokered the sale to Frederick T Small. For his part Mr Small inserted a comet. After the stamp was sold to Irwin Weinberg and Associates, the pencil initials IW was then added. And when it was acquired by Mr John Eleuthere du Pont bought it, the initials J.E.d.P was inserted. It seems that each of these owners followed postmaster Dalton instructions of placing their mark on the stamp to prevent forgery.

This simplicity of the stamp's obverse side with a three-masted sailing ship, initials of EDW, and the Roman poet Horace's words, "Damius petimus que vicissum" was typical to the stamps issued at the time. But what was relatively uncommon was why the rectangular edges of the stamp were clipped to form an octagon. This has certainly added to the mystique and uniqueness of this stamp.

In 1967, Guyana made two postage stamps, the first valued at five cents and the other at twenty-five cents, both of these stamps have the image of the 1856 black magenta printed on it. This might be the closest that most Guyanese might get to this treasure that originated from these shores.

As Allen Kane of the Director of the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum states, "the British Guiana is the rarest of the rare. Having recently sold for almost \$10 million, by the sheer size and weight, it may well be the most valuable single object in the world today."



Dr. Frank Anthony is currently Minister of Health. He is a graduate from the Russian Friendship University in Medicine and has a Master's Degree in Public Health from the Hebrew University in Israel. He is also a Member of Parliament and an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive Party.

Passing Of A Comrade: Feroze Mohamed



Comrade Mohamed addressing Parliament

On 24th February 2021, Comrade Sheikh Feroze Mohamed, had he been alive, would have been celebrating his 75th birth anniversary, but sadly, untimely and unfortunately, he passed away on 1st May, last year, after being hospitalized on 8th February. I visited him on 9th February and while speaking with him, Comrade Donald called to ask that I wait until he got to the hospital. That was the last time Donald and I spoke with Feroze, as after we left, he apparently had two events which left him unresponsive and unable to recognize persons, as he was in a state of almost complete coma. It was heart wrenching to look at a person with such extremely high capabilities just withering away. Comrade Feroze was born in Adelphi, Canje and was the eldest eight children of auntie Ayesha and Duncan Mohamed, the husband of Kamla and father of Avinash. Much of his childhood was spent with his grandfather and his grandfather's brother, Mannie and Johnnie Sheikh, who had a dispensary in Rosignol, West Coast Berbice, and where his political interest germinated. He returned to Canje in his early teens to attend Ramlochan High School, later renamed Berbice Educational Institute, during which he became a member of the PYO, the youth arm of the PPP. In addition to his secondary school classes, he started to read a wide range of political literature, which continued throughout his life. Those who visited him at home, could testify to the extent of his library, where he spent most of his waking time.

Comrade Feroze was known for having documents photocopied on almost every subject/topic and send them, not only to his comrades, but to professionals (when these documents related to their specific fields) as well as to those on the "other side of the aisle". I remember once the leader of the opposition showing his deputy one of these documents and afterwards thanking Feroze for sending it to him.

Towards the end of the 1960's, the PYO started to lose its reputation as the vanguard youth group in Guyana and the revolutionary and vibrant political arm of the PPP. Having recognized this, Comrade Cheddi, with advice from the Regional and District Committees and groups of the PPP throughout the country, put together a "Steering Committee" of the PYO. At the first meeting of that Committee, the need for a first secretary, as the person to function as the "desk and field officer" to formulate policies, programmes organizational and other structures, was discussed. Feroze's name was mentioned and although not having known him previously, what I heard about him from mostly Comrades from Berbice, caused me to support his appointment. His move to Freedom House started a friendship with me (and others) which lasted until his demise. Sheikh started out to live and work in a building situated at the back of Freedom House (which I doubt more than two or three of the current leadership of the Party know about) sleeping on his desk. This he did for a number of years, never complaining, then moved to live in at Acabre College, at Land of Canaan, until Cde Janet and others insisted that he find somewhere to rent. Comrade Boysie Ramkarran came to the rescue and found a house in Bel Air. Comrade Feroze then married Kamla and spent some years living there. The Comrade, through tireless studies of the Marxist-Leninist doctrines, was elected the Education Secretary of the Party around 1975, which position he held until voluntarily giving it up around 1998, after the death of Comrade Cheddi, and when his public political activism started to wane.

As Education Secretary, Comrade Feroze was instrumental in training thousands of PYO and Party cadres as well as GAWU members in the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist ideology and in other areas to assist them in their organizational, administrative, work, Party and Union related responsibilities.

In his lectures he would emphasize the Party's responsibility to the working class, and for it to remain rooted in the recognition of class struggles as against race baiting and race hate. Hundreds of Comrades mainly from these courses, and others academically qualified and politically inclined were selected for professional and political training overseas, by the Education Committee headed by Cde Feroze, who personally tutored and advised them on what their duties, responsibilities and obligations as Party members were, and having the privilege of sitting in at some of these sessions, I can attest to the

fact, that they were “no holds barred” discussions. Many of “his students” returned to serve Guyana admirably as doctors, economists (former President Jagdeo included) engineers, international lawyers, etc. and later to serve in many high level positions in government, some even while the PPP was not in office. He also represented the PYO and Party on numerous occasions at the international level where he delivered intellectual and ideological presentations. Comrade Feroze, even without tertiary education, was self taught to the extent that he could have debated political issues, with leading political commentators, locally, in the Caribbean and at international fora. He was so versed in the Party’s ideology and world affairs that Comrades Cheddi and Janet, consulted with him on almost every decision to be made by the Party, and respected immensely his counsel.

Comrade Feroze was always given the responsibility of “overseeing” the preparation of the General Secretary’s reports to Congresses, and did so up the the time he voluntarily gave up his seat on the Central and Executive Committees of the Party.

He was also the head of the Committee responsible for National and Regional Elections for every such election (and referendum) from 1978 to 2006, nearly three decades. His work on these occasions, was so outstanding that not in one instance did the Elections Commission find any fault with the Party’s submissions. He was credited with being largely responsible for the victories of the PPP in the elections between 1992 and 2006.

Comrade Feroze served the Party in Parliament between the years 1975 and 2006 where he first “shadowed” the Ministers of Education and subsequently as Minister of Home Affairs (1992 to 1997) the first term of the PPP’s return to the government, after being repeatedly “rigged” out of its rightful place in government. During his years in Parliament, his meticulous preparation and research were conspicuous in the manner he brilliantly presented his arguments. On one occasion, Burnham was so impressed with his presentation that he “threatened” Comrade Cheddi that he would “buy” Comrade Feroze, to which Comrade Cheddi smilingly replied that he could try but wouldn’t succeed.

To many, his most memorable speech was his Eulogy at the State funeral, delivered from Parliament building, of Comrade Cheddi Jagan who departed his life while he was President of Guyana. Many

regarded his, as usual, extremely well researched presentation as the best Eulogy they heard. In our personal interactions, there are innumerable occasions where Comrade Feroze’s character stood out. He dearly loved his family, comrades and friends. Having lost his father at an early age, when he was eighteen, he became the life line of his mother and siblings and other family, supporting them to the maximum he could. After their house was completely destroyed by fire his mother and siblings still residing in Guyana had to relocate to Canada. In our youthful days, when we took our beers and cheese (with pepper) at his preferred spots in Regent Street and later in Queenstown, he would be the first to insist on paying even though his earnings were less than those with him.

Regrettably, Comrades like Feroze who served his Party and country, honestly, tirelessly selflessly and at personal disadvantages, were not recognized in the way they deserved, nationally. Hopefully, a posthumous national award would now be considered.

Also, it is hoped that when the circumstances permit, the Party would see it necessary to recognize him (and his buddy, Komal Chand) in a fitting and deserving way. I am aware that on many occasions, Guyana’s Poet Laureate, and revolutionary in the early stages of the struggle for Guyana Independence, Martin Carter, had his poem, “Death of a Comrade” quoted in Eulogies, and I also find it fitting to repeat the first and last paragraphs from his Poems of Resistance, 1954, regarding Comrade Feroze’s life:

Death must not find us thinking that we die.
 Too soon, too soon
 Our banner draped for you.
 I would prefer
 The banner in the wind
 Not bound so tightly in a scarlet fold-
 Not sodden sodden
 With people’s tears
 But flashing on the pole
 We bear aloft
 down and beyond this dark dark lane of rags
 Now from the mourning vanguard moving on
 Dear Comrade I salute you and I say
 Death will not find us thinking that we die.

Comrade Feroze was, undoubtedly, one of THE THINKERS of our time and of the People’s Progressive Party.



Harry Narine Nawbatt was the Former Executive Director, Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP), Former Project Manager, Poor Rural Communities Social Services Project (PRCSSP), Former Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Communication & Minister of Housing and Water, Former Ambassador of Guyana to Brazil and High Commissioner of Guyana to Canada.

Dr. Walter Rodney: Revolutionary Intellectual

Dr. Walter Rodney was an internationally recognized revolutionary intellectual who was born in British Guiana in 1942. He was still very young when he was assassinated on June 13, 1980 by the dictatorial Burnham-led PNC regime. He was just thirty-eight years old.

Yet in that short life he made a great impact on the socio-political life in Guyana, the Caribbean and further afield, but specifically in Africa. He spent many years in Tanzania and travelled extensively on that continent. He wrote the book "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" which has become a classic.

His political life in Guyana was very short, a mere six years, from 1974 to 1980. Most of his adult life he lived abroad and developed a reputation as being a fighter for the poor and oppressed.

In his writings and speeches, Rodney displayed a remarkable knowledge of current and historical events. He linked history with events of his time and used it as a tool to channel the attention of the people as to the direction that the freedom struggle should take.

He was among the first generation of Caribbean intellectuals and leaders that emerged after the leaders of the independence movement.

He therefore had to deal with a neo-colonial position which replaced the direct rule of the European Colonial powers. It was a more complicated period since the new rulers were natives of the former colonies, many of whom sided with imperialism against the people of the former colonies.

Walter Rodney, who was clearly a Marxist, brought to bear the full creativity of Marxism to the conditions, mainly in the former colonies in the Caribbean and Africa.

The two most important issues that confronted the post-independence revolutionary movements were race and class. Both these issues were impacting strongly on the politics of the Developing World, which comprised mainly of the former colonies.

Many intellectuals lost their way in trying to deal with these issues. Some emphasized the racial issues as being the most important and ignored the class issues. On the other hand, there were those who emphasized class and neglected the race question when that question was the most pressing eg. in South Africa.

Rodney never displayed any dogmatism and was therefore able to link the issues of race and class in the struggle for liberation from neo-colonial conditions.

His analyses were not just generalised but in dealing with the issues in the various regions he emphasized what was the most important in a specific region or country while not losing sight of the main goal of national and social liberation.

This was seen clearly in his analysis of Black Power in relation to North America and Southern Africa on the one hand and the Caribbean on the other.

In the United States in the 1960s and in South Africa since early in the last century the main issue was freedom of the Black and Non-white sections of the population. While the class question was present it was not the main issue in those periods. Therefore, the racial issue had to take precedence in those countries since ending segregation and apartheid were the main tasks for the left wing parties.

Some Caribbean intellectuals sought to transpose the form of struggle, the analysis that was relevant to the US and South Africa to the Caribbean.

In the book "Walter Rodney Speaks" this point came up. Here is how he himself put it "...The whole history of the 1960s was a history in which our political choices were fundamentally directed not by any class position but by the ongoing race conflict..." (pg. 75). In dealing with the Caribbean scene he said that the term "black" in a "West Indian context must of necessity embrace the majority of African and Indian populations" (pg. 75)

This position of Rodney was correct as we saw sometime in late 1973 to early 1974 when, Stokely Carmichael came to Guyana and took the position that "Black"



Dr. Cheddi Jagan and Dr. Walter Rodney at Freedom House

meant only Africans. That caused some rejection of the concept of “Black Power” among some in the Indo-Guyanese community. Rodney thought that it was wrong and dogmatic to transpose situations from one country to another uncritically.

He was able to find the correct approach because of his deep understanding of Marxism. The Marxist scientific approach proved to be a powerful analytical tool to the problems of society when creatively applied. That is what distinguished him from many radical Black intellectuals. This was seen clearly after his assassination when most of his colleagues in the WPA over emphasized the Black issue and neglected the class questions. This led them into the arms of the PNC, the Party that murdered Rodney. The WPA stopped being progressive and began supporting the PNC dictatorial measures such as rigged elections in the country.

Even the most advanced among them continue to emphasize race at the expense of class and as a result they remain objectively opposed to the working class, the African working class included. This has made them, objectively opposed to Rodney and indistinguishable from the racist PNC.

That would never have happened to Rodney because of his scientific approach to issues. This was on full display from the time he returned home, to his assassination in 1980.

Walter Rodney returned to Guyana in 1974. It was a very interesting period in the history of our Country.

The year before the Burnham led People’s National Congress massively rigged the National Elections. Every measure was used to do so. The new feature of the 1973

rigging though was the use of the military to seize the ballot boxes and change the people’s votes. Moreover, they murdered two activists of the PPP Jagan Ramesar and Bhola Nauth Parmanand and imprisoned dozens of others. The regime leaders showed since then that they were capable and ready to slaughter people to hold on to power.

The fact that the rigging measures alone were not enough to give the PNC the majority and that it had to resort to using the army, reflected how unpopular the PNC regime had become by 1973.

This was due to the consistent, day in day out work of the PPP in the political arena. The PPP was relentless in exposing the regime’s corruption. It developed a strong organization and was the only force confronting the PNC regime up to that point.

As the socio-economic situation continued to worsen other forces joined the struggle at that time.

From the left wing we had the Ratoon Group which was an alliance of Progressive University of Guyana intellectuals, Clive Thomas, Josh Ramsammy and others, with the mainly unemployed, some declassed elements included from Tiger Bay, a depressed area in Georgetown. From the right wing there emerged the “Liberator Party”. This was mainly made up of the upper middle class section of the society, mainly Indo-Guyanese professionals.

The two main Christian churches, the Roman Catholic and Anglican with other religious leaders in the Hindu and Muslim communities also began taking a stand against the dictatorial regime. The balance of forces were shifting against the PNC.

It was in this environment that Rodney returned to his homeland.

He himself was in the news for his work in Jamaica in the late 1960s, and just before his arrival in Guyana the revocation of his appointment to the position of Head of the History Department of the University of Guyana created quite a stir. That appointment was made by the Academic Board of the University and was revoked by the PNC controlled Board of Governors.

Those developments highlighted and added to his popularity.

Many of the forces opposed to the PNC, outside of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) rallied around Rodney and that gave increased popularity to the “Working People’s Alliance”.

Some may ask why he did not join the Marxist PPP when he returned, since he himself was a Marxist and ideologically closest to Cheddi Jagan than any other leader, outside of the PPP, in Guyana.

I think that he was thinking about how the revolutionary movement developed in Cuba in the 1950s and the similarities in Guyana in the 1970's.

Fidel Castro, who was a Marxist, did not join the Communist Party of Cuba in the early stages of the Cuban Revolution because of the stigma that bourgeois propaganda had of communism. He created the 26th of July Movement and worked with the Communist Party. That opened for him a direct channel to that section of the masses that had negative views of communism, which the Communist Party could not penetrate.

In Guyana, the PNC, working with the British and the US, managed to similarly launch a strong anti-communist campaign at home. Moreover, that PNC/British colonialism and US imperialism alliance succeeded in dividing the working class by using race as the main tool to defeat the revolutionary PPP.

That alliance poisoned the minds of the African Guyanese working class and made them hostile to Socialism and the most advanced revolutionary wing of the working people itself, the sugar workers who were mainly Indo-Guyanese.

Rodney must have calculated also that joining the PPP would have allowed the PNC to malign him as a "coolie stooge" as they had done, and continues to do, towards African Guyanese supporters of the PPP. He was aware that the masses of Afro-Guyanese had been served a heavy dose of racism and he needed time to convince them that unity was the only way for their own liberation.

At that time not joining the PPP allowed Rodney to speak frankly to the African Guyanese working people on how the PNC was pauperizing the whole country including the African Guyanese working people.

He played an important part in mobilizing African Guyanese support for the freeing of Arnold Rampersaud, a PPP activist, who was framed on a murder charge and clearly the PNC wanted to hang him to intimidate the PPP in particular and the Guyanese people in general. He helped to promote working class solidarity.

It was in this period that we saw bauxite workers coming out strongly against the PNC. The most advanced sections formed the Organisation of Working People and were close to Rodney.

The PNC's plan was to use race to neutralize Afro

Guyanese discontent and to get them to be quiet. The PNC was counting on the racist propaganda to maintain some support in the society.

The Arnold Rampersad trials gave Rodney the opportunity to expose the PNC as being an anti-working class party. He rebelled against the PNC's abuse of African Guyanese for their murderous schemes.

During the trial in 1975, Rodney speaking at a meeting at the corner of Durban St and Louise Row, told the crowd he was rebelling against the racism of the PNC. He was rebelling at how the PNC was trying to destroy the dignity of the African masses by soliciting them in their crime to judicially murder Rampersaud.

He said "we came out of slavery with dignity...our people came out of slavery and we could stand tall" that is why he was rebelling, because the PNC was trying to destroy this dignity of Afro-Guyanese. He went on, "I'm rebelling as a Guyanese with this particular heritage, as an Afro-Guyanese...I have felt sick when I've seen one black man after another come to the witness box, lying his head off". It was a brutally frank discussion with the African Guyanese working class.

Only Rodney could have spoken to African Guyanese in that frank way since he had gained their confidences. The working people recognized him as one of their champions.

In the short six years he spent at home he did a lot to expose the real nature of the PNC as, what Cheddi Jagan called the "Bureaucratic Capitalist Elite". This was, and still is, a clique interested only in enriching themselves. They used race to obscure their real nature.

It was no doubt, his iron logic, his clear exposure of how the PNC state was going to make things worse for all working people, his advocacy of unity of the working people that ultimately led the PNC to murder him. It was a racist assassination, designed to silence this advocate of unity. The PNC fears unity of the working class more than anything else. Whenever that is achieved it would be the end of that Party.

While the PNC killed him to preserve and protect its dictatorship it also accelerated its own downfall.

Regionally and internationally the regime became more isolated. Progressive Black Organizations abroad began to see Burnham and the PNC in all their nakedness. In class terms the PNC was and remains an exploitative and oppressive organization against all working people. They have used race, to hide their real nature.

Walter Rodney's activities contributed to the return of

democracy in 1992, twelve years after his brutal murder. This was recognised by the PPP/C government by awarding him, posthumously the "Order of Excellence" Guyana's highest award.

Since his passing a lot has changed. This is more pronounced internationally. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries has tilted the balance of forces internationally heavily in favour of imperialism. The working class and the progressive movements have suffered greatly.

However, this should be seen as temporary since we are once more beginning to witness an upsurge among the working classes for equality, against climate change and the power of the corporate states.

What was unthinkable in Rodney's time is now occurring. Socialism which used to be seen as a dirty word is now taking centre stage even in the USA. The movement which was started by Bernie Sanders has been growing. It played a big role in the defeat of Donald Trump at the last presidential elections. Unbelievable as it sounds,

Socialism as a concept is becoming more acceptable, breaking through the reactionary propaganda against it.

Rodney's analysis remains relevant as Capitalism has heightened the contradiction in our world, has created enormous wealth and abject poverty. Inequality is at its worst in our times. Capitalism has been moving us from one crisis to another bigger one.

In his short life Rodney made a really important contribution towards unity of the working people in Guyana, the Caribbean, Africa and in North America.

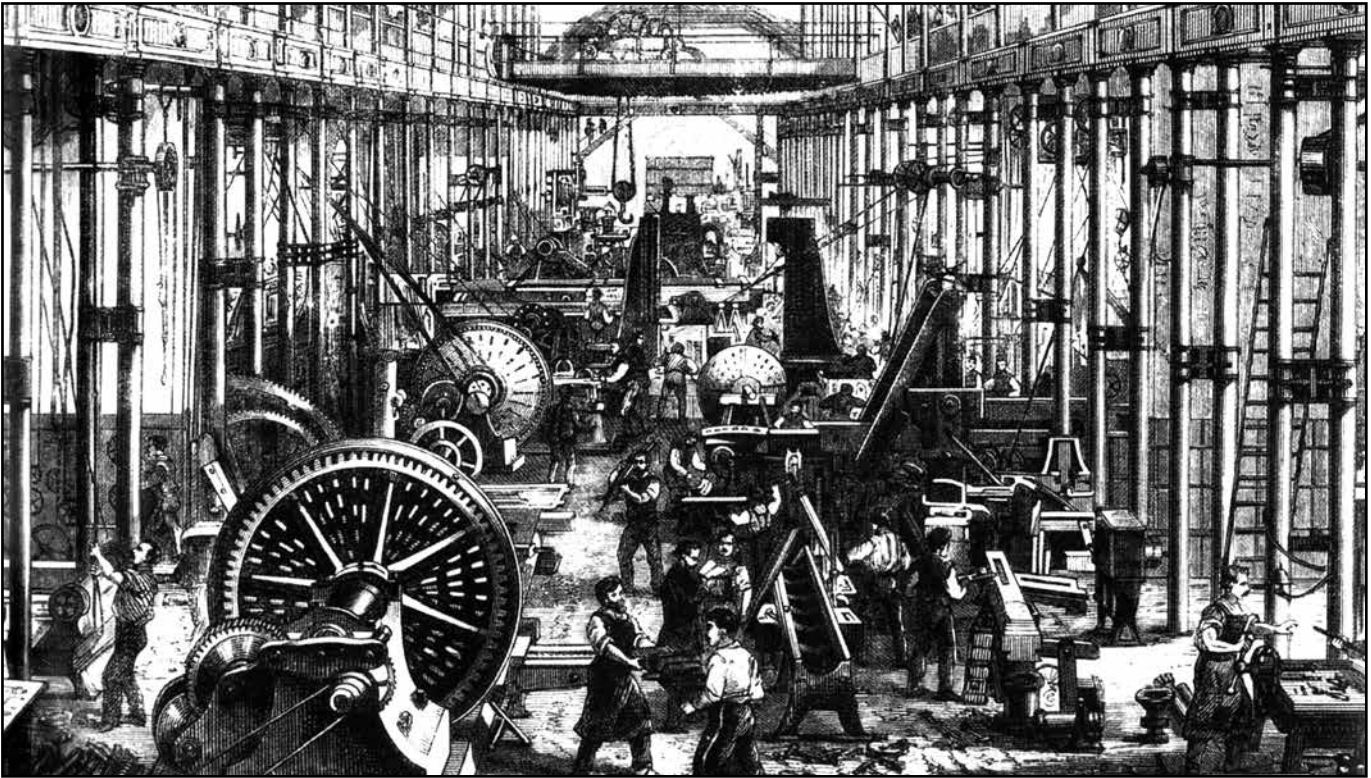
He will always be regarded among the leading freedom fighters in our country and further a field.



Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

Is it one or several ?



While we often speak of *The Industrial Revolution*, some authors speak of several industrial revolutions, the first of which is widely accepted to have begun with the invention of the coal powered steam engine in 1769 by James Watt in England. The steam engine was intended to be used to pump water out of British coal mines but quickly found application in the textile industry, powering cotton mills and propelling ships and locomotives. **Mechanisation of the production process began with the steam engine** and heralded a new era in the growth and development of human societies.

The rate of economic growth accelerated dramatically around 1800 with the takeoff of the Industrial Revolution. Prior to that moment much of the world lived under the conditions described by the English writer Thomas Malthus, whose 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population* painted a gloomy picture in which population growth will outstrip economic resources in the long run.

(Francis Fukuyama : *Political Order and Political Decay* , 2015)

The second industrial revolution began with the discovery and use of electricity and oil which enabled mass production and distribution. In 1831 the English scientist Michael Faraday discovered that electrical current can be induced in a copper wire by a moving magnetic field (electromagnetism). This led to two crucial inventions; the dynamo and the electric motor. A dynamo generates an electrical current by the relative motion of coils of copper wire and magnets and is the primary method employed today to generate electricity for domestic and industrial use. The electric motor uses the same principle - a current flowing in a magnetic field produces motion.

In the 1890s the American inventor, Thomas Edison discovered Direct Current. In 1900 the Serbian American engineer Nikola Tesla invented Alternating Current, which largely powers the world today.

Oil : The first ever oil well was drilled in 1846 in Baku, Azerbaijan, using percussion tools to a depth of 21 metres.

Meerzoeff built the first modern Russian oil refinery in the mature oil fields of Baku in 1861. At that time Baku produced about 90% of the world's oil.

Wikipedia

Coming on towards the end of the 19th century the USA became the leading oil producer. With the lead in the production and use of electricity and oil Europe and America became the global economic powerhouse in the 20th century.

From 1900 to 1980, 70 - 80 percent of global production of goods and services were concentrated in Europe and America, which incontestably dominated the rest of the world.

...the lead that Europe and America achieved during the Industrial Revolution allowed these two regions to claim a share of global output that was two to three times greater than their share of the world's population simply because their output per capita was two to three times greater than the global average.

(Thomas Piketty : CAPITAL in the Twenty-First Century, 2014)

The third industrial revolution was ushered in some time around the mid 20th century with the dawn of the Digital Era ; the use of electronic software to enable automation of the production process and led to improved productivity and efficiency. Automation is the application of technology, programs, robotics and procedures to achieve outcomes with minimal human input. While the term mechanisation is used to refer to the simple replacement of human labour by machines, automation generally implies the integration of electronic technology into a self-governing system. Alan Turing, the English mathematician and computer scientist is widely considered the father of theoretical computer science. He is credited with coming up with the theory for software in 1935 which led to two academic fields of *computer science* and *software engineering*.

The fourth industrial revolution is currently ongoing with the convergence of the Physical, Digital and Biological sciences, developing Artificial Intelligence. In the mid 1950s John Mc Carthy coined the term Artificial

Intelligence (AI), which he defined as *the science and engineering of making intelligent machines*. John Mc Carthy was an American computer scientist and cognitive scientist and is considered the father of the discipline of Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence is the brains bringing together quantum computing, nanotechnology, medical technology, brain-machine interface, robotics, aerospace, and more. It is amplifying human ingenuity and disrupting the foundations of healthcare, military, entertainment, marketing and manufacturing. Rajiv Malhotra in his book, *Artificial Intelligence and The Future of Power*, argues that the AI-driven revolution will have unequal impact on different segments of humanity. There will be new winners and losers, new haves and have-nots resulting in an unprecedented concentration of wealth.

Recent results from a large survey of machine learning researchers predict that AI will outperform humans in many activities in the next ten years such as translating languages (by 2024) and working as surgeons (by 2053). Researchers also believe that there is a 50% chance of AI outperforming humans in all tasks in 45 years and automating all human jobs in 120 years.



Badrie Persaud, MSc. Eng, MBA was the former Managing Director of the Guyana Oil Company, Former Chairman of the Guyana Rice Development Board, Former Director of the Guyana Energy Agency and Former Commissioner of the Public Utilities Commission.

The 'Mystique of Mustique'

Another Unsolved Caribbean Mystery?

“The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.”

— Albert Einstein

It was January 1986. The venue was the beautiful Caribbean island of Mustique known for its breathtaking scenery and warm Caribbean climate. Was there something unusual when six Caribbean leaders decided to meet on this remote, secluded Caribbean island?

This meeting initiated by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, James Mitchell, later knighted by the Queen of England was shrouded in secrecy. There certainly was an aura of mystery surrounding such a meeting at the time.

It was not business as usual. Was a significant shift in the politics of the Caribbean in the making? This is what we are about to find out.

Upfront, the meeting focused primarily on the blatantly rigged elections of 1985. The leaders present did not fail to confront the 'de facto' President, Hugh Desmond Hoyte of Guyana on this troubling issue. Not that they were not aware of the consistently fraudulent polls before, but this time it was somewhat different.

The world at the time was changing dramatically. Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) had ushered in a new climate of international relations in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Caribbean was not immune from such global changes either. It was the time when the 'cold war' was thawing out and peaceful coexistence, the policy of 'live and let live,' as proposed by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was fast becoming the new reality in the global issues of the present times.

But it was the time also of a major event in the Caribbean—the Grenada Revolution. March 13, 1979 the New Jewel Movement led by Maurice Bishop seized power in the 'spice isle' of the Caribbean. The achievements of the revolution were remarkable. Within a short space of time Grenada was being transformed to a shining example of how poverty and illiteracy can be wiped out in a former

backward state in the Caribbean by revolutionary changes.

Significant changes were made in the sphere of health, education and the delivery of social services. The Grenadian people particularly the youth were on the march armed with the idea that it was the people who make change possible. The slogan 'each one teach one' was implemented throughout an island where illiteracy was once previously the norm. A different developmental model began to take shape. A brand new airport was under construction at 'Point Salines' with the help of the Cuban workers. This would open up the country to tourism and unprecedented development. But this was not to happen.

Just four years after the revolution, the 82nd Airborne Division of the United States swooped down on the little speck in the Caribbean Sea in a show of force that shocked the Caribbean and the rest of the world. Prime Minister Bishop and members of his cabinet were murdered in mysterious circumstances and the achievements of the revolution arrested.

It was Oct. 25, 1983 the revolutionary forces were defeated only four years after the revolution had begun. Grenada a former colony of Great Britain was invaded by a foreign force without even the former colonial power consulted. This led to a strained relationship between President Ronald Reagan of the USA and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of England.

'The Eagle has landed' is how the invasion of a small Caribbean country by a great superpower was described at the time. The peace loving people of Grenada watched in horror as a mighty imperial power swooped on their island killing and imprisoning those who resisted the invasion.

Why this travesty of democracy in the Caribbean? This is the mystery that need to be unveiled. People have a

right to know.

It was not the first time such injustice was meted out to the people in the Caribbean. It was in 1953 after 133 days of the democratically elected PPP Government had assumed Office that British gun boats landed on the shores of British Guiana then a colony of Great Britain, suspended the Constitution, jailed its leaders, fired the legislators and installed an interim Government headed by a British Governor. The interim Government lasted for the next four years until new elections were scheduled to be held. It was a period of marking time. Several years later, only this time October 1983 this experience was repeated. This time it was Grenada. Is history repeating itself?

It is in this context that the meeting in Mustique is significant. Summoned to discuss the political crisis in Guyana resulting from the blatantly rigged 1985 polls, as this would pose, it seemed, an impending threat to democracy in the Region.

The leaders though concerned never actually condemned the massively rigged polls of 1985. After all, the PPP was still a force to reckon with both inside Guyana and the Caribbean, as well as internationally. The PPP it appeared had not lost its sting. As one of the oldest, experienced political Parties in the Caribbean with a visionary leadership it led the way tried, tested and trusted by the people.

With this background in mind the leaders at the Mustique meeting opted to strike a deal with the 'de facto' President of Guyana, as the means to resolve the impending political crisis and fear of the future which had gripped the nation at the time. A mutual agreement was hammered out, one which everyone present felt they could live with for the time being. The proposal from former Prime Minister Eugenia Charles who called for Guyana to be expelled from CARICOM was too much to even contemplate. Guyana being one of the chief architects advocating for Caribbean unity, this threat was unthinkable should it be carried out. The CARICOM headquarters is even located in Georgetown the capital city of Guyana.

President Hoyte under intense pressure from CARICOM agreed to basic electoral reform. Observers, he reluctantly conceded to will be allowed to observe and monitor future elections. President Hoyte also agreed to reverse many of the unpopular measures of the former Burnham's regime. The banning of essential food items proved to be highly unpopular especially the ban on flour. The restriction of wheaten flour considered to be an essential ingredient to make certain food used by the large Indo-Guyanese population as part of their cultural heritage was perceived to be an attack on their cultural

values and way of life.

The Economic Recovery Program or ERP proposed by President Hoyte as the means of reversing the economic decline which had gripped the economy was dubbed as 'the empty rice pot'. The economy was in shambles. President Hoyte's domestic policy did not fare any better than his predecessor. 'Slow fyah, mo fyah, was used to intimidate opponents of the regime. Coupled with such talk, of the police being 'kith and kin' and referring to the 'Putagee mafia' smacked not only of racism but only aggravated an already explosive situation internally.

The PPP remained resilient and a formidable force to be reckoned with as the tried, tested and trusted Party of the people. Frustration stalked the land and Guyanese left in droves for foreign lands hoping for a better life away from home as a sense of hopelessness pervaded the land.

Faced with mounting pressures from abroad and internal turmoil at home, President Hoyte did not have much of a choice either. It is under such intense pressure, that the meeting at Mustique was held.

The meeting in Mustique is unique since for the first time Caribbean leaders were prepared to speak out on the question of rigged elections in Guyana. The perceived fear of reprisals from the West for speaking out on radical social issues was not as acute as before, since times and circumstances had changed dramatically.

The PNC, however, lacked vision. Pursuing the Machiavellian policy of the end justifying the means it continued along the narrow and dangerous path of undemocratic, and authoritarian rule intent on holding on to power whatever the cost.

But how can the means be justified when the end itself is immoral and unjustified? The PNC it must not be forgotten lacked vision. For those who would have experienced the massively rigged 1968 polls, the martyrdom of the two young PPP activists during the 1973 elections, as well as, the blatantly rigged referendum of 1978, they would soon realize that the threat to democracy and development was very real.

The PNC it seems, unable to win in a free and fair election anytime or in the near future reverted to what it knew best- deception. Dr. Jagan loved the quote the words from Sir Walter Scott, the Scottish playwright, advocate and judge who once wrote, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!" This has come to symbolize the 'modus operandi' of the PNC, ever since.

A new Constitution promulgated through a rigged

referendum in 1980 cleared the way for the PNC to effectively remain in power for a long, long time. The concept of the vanguard Party and the principle of 'paramountcy of the Party' was now institutionalized.

How else can it be explained that the flag of the PNC Party was hoisted at the Court of Appeal, the highest Court of the land, at the time?

As the famous English playwright once wrote, "now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot, take thou what course thou wilt!" The hitherto classified documents of the CIA and the British M-I-5 many of which are declassified after many years are now coming to light. It is claimed that somethings remain unclassified as it would be embarrassing to the foreign powers who intervened in the destabilization of the popular, legally elected, PPP Government.

During these years many Guyanese fled the country to avoid PNC authoritarian rule. More Guyanese are now living and working in the 'diaspora' than residing at home. This is the sad legacy of the PNC.

Background to the Meeting in Mustique

With Desmond Hoyte ascending to the Presidency following the demise of its founder Leader, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham in 1985, cracks began to appear and widen in the body politic of the country. A virtual coup resulted in 1980. This was followed by massive rigging in the 1985 elections to ensure the PNC remained in power following the demise of Forbes Burnham, the founder leader of the PNC.

It was in 1980 that a top ranking British Human Rights advocate Lord Avebury witnessed electoral rigging first hand. His report condemning the results of the 1980 polls was nothing less than damning. Describing the elections of 1980 as 'crooked as a barbed wire' made the headlines. But it was Dr. Jagan who stole the limelight as he declared, 'when the 'Lord' speaks the whole world listens.' How prophetic?

Criticized for participating in a rigged elections Dr. Jagan was vindicated by winning the 1992 polls, the first free and democratic elections following the intervention of the Internationally recognized Carter Center from the United States. Cheddi Jagan was elected and became the first democratically elected Executive President of Guyana.

Hamilton Green the former Prime Minister of the PNC Regime resigned from the PNC in protest after the 1985 elections that saw Desmond Hoyte rise to the Presidency. Accusing Hoyte of being a 'limbo dancer', Green never forgave Hoyte for making electoral concessions for free

and fair elections. A grave historical electoral injustice was corrected?

Green an old Party stalwart, it seemed wanted the Presidency. After all Hoyte was not very well known. The same can be said of another Presidential hopeful David Arthur Granger in 2015 who like Desmond Hoyte was not too well known either.

Groomed in the US to return to rule a politically and racially divided nation he swiftly took control of the leadership of the PNC at a Party Congress held at Congress Place, headquarters of the PNC. The event proved troubling. The other contender Carl Greenidge was later posted as Ambassador abroad by the Granger Administration. The three G's, Green, Greenidge and Granger have come to dominate PNC politics ever since. In order to refurbish its tainted image the PNC-reform or PNC-R for short transformed itself into what it called 'A partnership for National Unity' (APNU). Together with the 'Alliance for Change' (AFC), a dissident faction from the two major Parties, the PPP and the PNC, it chose to join forces reminiscent of the earlier PNC-UF Coalition to defeat and remove the PPP from Government after 23 years of the PPP in Government. These years were characterized by violent reprisals from criminal elements opposed to National unity and democracy. Fear and violence became the order of the day.

Imperialism won again, without firing a single shot. A new dispensation in Guyanese politics began. But it did not last. Unable to deliver on its promises and through its misguided policies, the PNC- led APNU Government fell after only three years in Office to a successful 'No Confidence Vote' in the National Assembly.

But was it Dr. Jagan who had sealed the deal with his advocacy for votes to be counted at the place of poll?

President Desmond Hoyte and the PNC initially vehemently resisted referring to this as a 'logistical nightmare'. Forced to recant his earlier position under intense pressure internationally, as well as, locally was former President Hoyte right? His words proved to be prophetic.

The counting of votes after March 2nd 2020 elections was 'the straw that finally broke the camel's back'. It became the living nightmare for the PNC-led Coalition, so much so, that the 'Statements of Polls' (SOPs) mysteriously disappeared at the close of polls. The bubble of consistently rigged polls beginning in 1968 effectively burst.

The PPP it seemed tried, tested and trusted withstood the test of time weathering the storm at every turn while the PNCs misguided policies of the 70s and 80's

never did seem to find favor with the US International Relations.

The Jonestown massacre of 1979 with over 900 lives including women and children, mostly American, together with the murder of a US Senator was not, it seemed, to be taken lightly by the US, State Department. Subsequent events proved disastrous for PNC, US relations. Dr. Walter Rodney the brilliant Marxist historian and a chief critic of the Burnham regime was mysteriously assassinated in a bomb blast in January 1980 while a terrorist convicted in the US for involvement in a plot to bomb the JFK Airport honored by the PNC proved disastrous. The PNC once considered, 'the lesser of the two evils' were now regarded as 'the greater of the two evils'. Like the emperor with no clothes it stood naked before the eyes of the world.

One notable event at the time of the 1985 polls was the assault of a young British journalist who was assaulted while videoing the stuffing of ballot boxes at Haslington on the East Coast of Demerara in 1985. It was a virtual Coup in the making, with total disregard for the Constitution and the rule of Law. An attempt was even made on the life of the leader of the Opposition, Dr. Cheddi Jagan who went to investigate the complaints of rigging at the time.



As the top ranking police officer known to many by the name 'Idi Amin' briskly strode up the long winding stairs of Freedom House, he was overheard to remark, 'I smell the spirit of the Kabaka' obviously referring to former President Forbes Burnham. I simply could not figure out what must have been going through the minds of these two great leaders at the time, as I stood at the foot of the stairs silently witnessing this event as the seized items were handed over.

It slowly dawned on me that a 'fledgling dictatorship' was in the making.

Was the return of the video cameras aimed to hide the involvement of the state in the rigging process? It reminded me of the three proverbial monkeys, 'see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil'. Hopes were dashed after the 1985 election rigging but the 'die was cast'. There was no turning back. The countdown to the return of democracy had begun.

This attack on a young British journalist was yet another shameful episode in the PNC arsenal of rigged elections. This event should serve as a grim reminder for all those young journalists unaware of the sacrifices of those in the past whose actions would have helped to shape the present freedoms we take for granted and enjoy today. Fast Forward to March 2nd 2020. The failed attempt to remove the ambassadors of the US, Britain and Canada, among other diplomats and accredited observers from observing the declaration of the results of the polls using non-existing bomb threats hoping for them to vacate the premise proved to be another of the blunders of a regime that had dismally failed to deliver on its promises. A virtual nightmare was in the making. The International Community had no doubts the PNC-led Coalition had outlived its usefulness. President Granger and the PNC cabal, as expected, would have felt differently as they desperately tried to cling to power.

Did the PNC-led APNU + AFC Coalition eventually rig itself out of power? Rig, rig and more rig leads to rigmarole. As the great thinker and revolutionary wrote, 'history repeats itself first as a tragedy and later as a farce'. Farce is something of a comedy reminiscent of Shakespeare's 'comedy of errors'.

Many believe if Dr. Jagan and the PPP had not taken up the fight for democracy and the rule of law, the PNC would have continued its rigging spree dominating the political arena with impunity and massive reprisals on the forces for peace and democracy. It's as if it is in their DNA, someone once remarked. The 'Burnhamites' in the PNC it seemed was determined to maintain power, whatever the cost. Others in the PNC, it seemed verily believe it is destined for them to rule come what may.

The promulgation of the new Constitution provided an excuse through its extensive powers to the incumbent President of the PNC to remain in power for a long, long time and the PNC knew it. There was no need for accountability and transparency as elections would be under the control of an illegal regime. The promise of an emerging oil and gas sector for unlimited wealth and power was too good to ever give up the grip on power and unlimited privileges many felt. But again this was not to happen.

The balance of forces were shifting in favor of peace, progress and democracy globally. Dialogue, discussion

and debate it seemed replaced the chaos, confusion and coups that previously prevailed. The world was rapidly changing before our very eyes but many could not see it. They lacked Vision. The desperate attempt to invoke the 'red herring' of anti-communism by resorting to a mysterious 'dossier' demonizing and denigrating the PPP as communist is the case in the red herring that just didn't work.

The attempted rigging of the March 2nd 2020 polls witnessed by over 130 countries was revealing. The US was forced to take a stand forcing the PNC-led Coalition to finally concede. It took some harrowing five months, unprecedented in electoral history before this objective was finally achieved. On record is the US Ambassador remarks, 'democracy, is work in progress in both our countries'. Who could have said it better?

Democracy, the rule of law and common sense prevailed in the end.

Dr. Jagan's passionate appeal for a New Global Human Order (NGHO) in a resolution to the United Nations is now more relevant than ever as a New Democratic World Order is emerging gaining momentum globally. Will the recent events leading to a military coup in Myanmar where the democratically elected Nobel Peace Prize winning President of Aung Si Sun Kyi whose Party won the election with 70% of the votes cast be the test of the present times?

Flashback to Mustique. Why Mustique in 1986? The luxurious holiday home of such celebrities as Princess Margaret and other elites, it must have been quite a costly event by any standards for the poor nations of the Caribbean. Who would have financed such an extravagant meeting in the first place?

Somethings, it is said, are better left unsaid. But people do have a right to know. Don't you agree?

The role of those six CARICOM leaders meeting in Mustique must have been guided by some unseen force. Was the changing International Climate the real reason behind this meeting aimed at correcting the historical injustice perpetuated by the Western powers?

What do you think?

This year marks thirty eight years since the demise of the Grenadian Revolution which had begun on March 13th 1979. March 2nd 2020 the PPP/C won again. The lessons of history must never be forgotten otherwise we may be condemned to repeat it. (George Santayana).

Guyana like Grenada posed no threat to anyone. The invaders triumphed momentarily. But as Dr. Jagan would have written many years ago, history and time is on our side. It is only a matter of time that the Caribbean is transformed as a 'Zone of Peace', as the people of the Caribbean refuse to be anyone's backyard.

It is the secret meeting in Mustique that signals the turning point in Caribbean politics. Now that the veil has been lifted, the mystery unraveled who would not agree that the meeting in Mustique is the prelude to events that followed. Together we are stronger. Who can disagree?

By Kami Karma. February 17, 2021

Note: (It was in 1983 that the writer participated in the National Youth Camp of the NYO, youth arm of the New Jewel Movement (NJM). The enthusiasm and zeal unleashed by the revolution was witnessed first-hand, a most unforgettable experience. The airport at 'Point Saline' in St. George's constructed with the help and through the International solidarity of the Cuban people, later renamed the Maurice Bishop International Airport is perhaps one of the finest tributes that can be paid to one of the most courageous revolutionary Caribbean leader, a man who defied foreign control and domination sacrificing his life in the act of transforming the lives of his people.

A shining star hovers over the Caribbean).



Mr. Khome Sharma is the former Deputy Director of Government Analyst – Food and Drug Department (GAFDD) Ministry of Health and former Councilor of the Mayor and City Council of Georgetown.

Guyana became an independent country on May 26, 1966, after a long and difficult struggle. However, independence did not bring the freedom that the People's Progressive Party so gallantly fought for.

It was the first time the British Empire granted independence to one of its colonies while a State of Emergency was in effect. At the granting of independence in 1966, there were political prisoners incarcerated at Sibley Hall, Mazaruni.

At a sitting of parliament, the PPP Members of Parliament walked into the chamber with placards hung around their necks. The front of the placard read 'End Emergency' and the back had 'Release the Detainees Now'.

Below is Dr Cheddi Jagan's speech in Parliament on Independence Day, May 26, 1966 as carried by the Mirror newspaper.

MIRROR; TUESDAY, MAY 31, 1966 3

A prize still to be won

Speech by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, seconding vote of thanks to His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent.

The severing of the British colonial tie in Guyana and the attainment of political independence are welcome features of the struggle of this country and its people for a better life. These features in today's context, do not however guarantee the realization of the better life we all seek; they merely represent a further stage — an advance — in the continuing struggle.


I wish to thank their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Kent as representatives of Her Majesty for their presence in this House to hand over the new constitutional instruments.

But lest our position at this historic ceremony be misunderstood, it is necessary for me to observe that the people whom my party represents hold considerable reservations.

The form of the constitution being handed down at this time is one which perpetuates divisions in our society and entrenches minority rule. The Constitution has failed to lay the foundation for national unity. The fundamental rights which the constitution seeks to safeguard are in great measures non-existent, and the government has provided evidence in great abundance of its intention to render all safeguards nugatory.

Detention without trial has plagued the country since June, 1964, when by a constitutional amendment the United Kingdom Government gave to the Governor, acting without advice, powers of detention without trial. This power was made to appear, by the world press and radio, to have been exercised by the government of which I was the head. The powers were in fact arbitrarily exercised by the Governor to the detriment of the members and supporters of the People's Progressive Party. The abuse of these powers now transferred to the government and the extension of the state of emergency beyond the date for the attainment of independence have generated fear in our land and have frustrated the efforts of many of our people in their struggle for peace and security.

As Leader of the Opposition, I have accepted



invitations to consult with the Honourable Prime Minister on the making of appointments to those important public offices which form the pillars of constitutional government; but on no occasion has there been any measure of agreement. The result is that the people whom my Party represents are denied any significant participation in the governmental process. Consultations has amounted, in practice, to no more than an intimation on every occasion of the names of persons whom the inflexible government wished to prefer to high offices in this land.

Besides, political independence has been attained under the continuation and consolidation of foreign economic control and the maintenance of the colonial type of economy based on primary production and extraction. This has already resulted in the relative deterioration of the living standards of the working people.

Debt burdens are also increasing with resulting pressure upon the economy. And annually recurring budgetary deficits will mean inevitable dependence upon other governments for budgetary support.

In these circumstances there is no prospect of real independence in external affairs; and the protestations of the government of pursuing a 'neutral' policy are illusory.

The People's Progressive Party has been the victim of repeated constitutional manipulations designed to keep it out of public office.

We are nonetheless confident that despite these manipulations the PPP can be triumphant at future elections if they are fairly held. Parliamentary democracy has an important place in this country and a heavy onus lies on us all, but more particularly on the government, to see that it works.

The PPP, the vanguard of Guyana's struggle for national liberation is convinced that liberty is achieved only after it has been struggled for and won. It cannot be the gift of charity. For the people of Guyana, real freedom is a prize still to be won. And win it we will — as a reunited people.

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (CJRC) was officially opened on March 22, 2000 which was the 82nd birthday anniversary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. The CJRC is dedicated to making available to Guyana and the world, the very rich collection of materials which captures the visionary thoughts and revolutionary ideas of the late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan (1918-1997)

The centre houses a large archival collection of papers, documents, photographs, audio and DVDs related to Dr. Jagan's long and enduring involvement in leading the political struggle in Guyana and at the global level. Dr. Cheddi Jagan is the Father of the Guyanese nation and a renowned and respected statesman. His immense stature in Guyana the Caribbean and the world at large stems from his ground-breaking contributions in numerous stages of the struggle for a better life for the people of Guyana and the world at large.

These include:

1. The struggle against the British to end colonial rule through political independence.
2. Governing for the benefit of the Guyanese people in the colonial period in 1953 and 1957 to 1964 and as the first democratically elected President of independent Guyana from 1992-1997.
3. The international struggle for an end to poverty and inequality through a New Global Human Order.

The CJRC's aims and objectives are to publish material and promote research on the life, work and ideas of Dr. Jagan which is intertwined with the history of Guyana as a whole from the early 1940's to the late 1990's.

Moreover, the collection is indispensable to any analysis of Guyana's post-war social, economic and political development, since Dr. Jagan's work and thoughts have had such a powerful resonance with his country and beyond.

Conference Room Rental

The Conference room is available for rental to host meetings, seminars and workshops

CONTACT US

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Website: <http://jagan.org>

Opening hours: Monday – Friday (9:00 am – 4:00pm)

Admission – FREE!

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre is dedicated to making available to the Guyanese and international communities the Legacy and Work of the Late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, through research and education.

The Centre is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation located at the Red House.

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