

# THE THINKER

Volume 6

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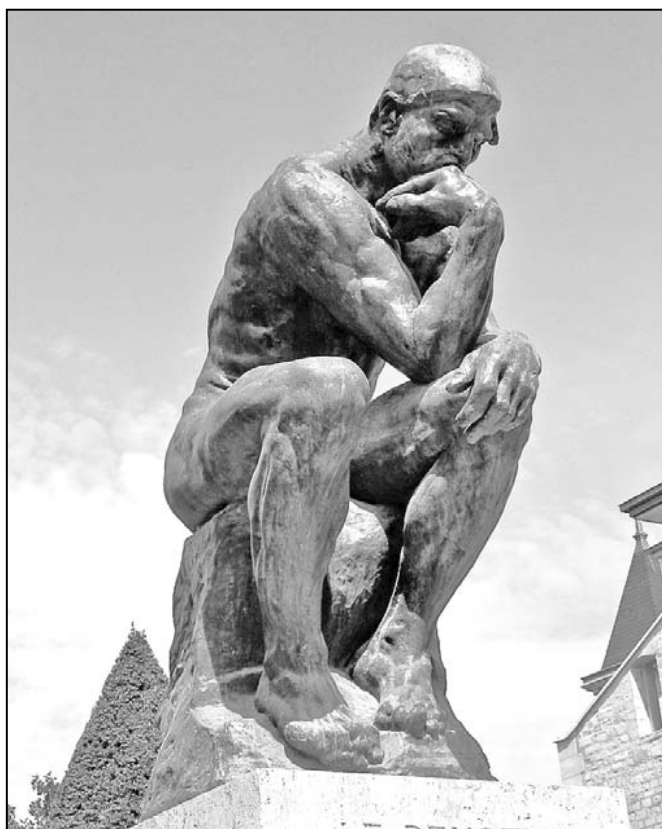
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*The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin.*

# EDITORIAL

The first half of 2022 is noted for several major world events, the most significant of which is the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war which has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, millions of displaced people not to mention the billions in infrastructural and residential destruction.

This edition of The Thinker provides readers with perspectives on the war based on a panel discussion organized by the Guyana Peace Council held at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre. Since then, the situation had further escalated with no end in sight.

This year also marked the 104th birth, and 25th death anniversaries of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, former President and founder member of the People's Progressive Party (PPP). It also marks the 54th independence anniversary of Guyana; the 74th anniversary of the Enmore Martyrs and the 50th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Guyana and the People's Republic of China. This year also marks the 204th birth anniversary of Karl Marx, the German revolutionary and thinker.

Several articles in this edition focus on these broad thematic areas. We feature in this edition of the Thinker an article by Shasi Tharoor, former Foreign Indian Diplomat and Member of Parliament on the legacy of former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

As is customary, we publish an obituary on an outstanding Guyanese, the late Komal Chand who made a significant contribution in the fields of politics and trade unionism.

We thank all our contributors and readers for their continued patronage to this magazine.

**Editorial Committee**

**June 19, 2022**

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# Dr. Cheddi Jagan and the PPP's Contribution to Electoral Democracy in Guyana



Mr. Anil Nandlall, SC MP delivering the Cheddi Jagan Annual Lecture at Red House

Much has been written and said about Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the avowed Marxist theoretician and practitioner. This has evoked as much commendation as it has evoked controversy. However, what is not often written nor said of and about Dr. Jagan, is that his was a Marxist orientation and outlook with a unique difference from others of a similar ideological mold: Dr. Jagan passionately embraced the concept of a constitutional democracy constructed upon the axis of separation of powers, respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizen, a government elected by fair, free and transparent elections at periodic intervals, an independent judiciary and a deliberative Parliament with a multi-party system.

Indeed, almost the entirety of his political life was dedicated to the pursuit of these objectives. This singular attribute puts him in a class and category of his own, in the kingdom of the Marxists of his and even prior generation. It is this facet of Dr. Jagan's politics that will be the focus of this discourse, with particular emphasis on his and his party's contribution to electoral democracy in Guyana through the vehicle of the law and litigation.

The greatest legacy of Dr. Jagan, in my view, remains the political party that he birthed on the 1st January 1950,

the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP). It is this party that became the vehicle used in the traverse of his almost every pursuit, including, the area that is the subject of my presentation.

Electoral irregularities of a formidable nature raised its ugly head for the first time in independent Guyana at the 1968 General Elections. The shrewd and Machiavellian political animal that he was, after ousting the United Force as a coalition partner in Government, Prime Minister Forbes Burnham formed the opinion and rightfully so, that he could not have won a free and fair election at the 1968 polls. Thus commenced the nefarious and destructive journey of rigged elections in independent Guyana: a journey, as history has recorded it, that became the most destructive course of action in the modern history of Guyana.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the political directorate in the government of the day decided to use the voters' list as the mechanism to corrupt the 1968 elections. Shortly after the Governor-General's proclamation dissolving Parliament, and fixing a date for those elections (a power now resident in the Executive President), the Chief Elections Officer promulgated a number of regulations under the National Registration Act 1967 to permit the registration of overseas Guyanese

on the electoral roll for the purpose of voting in the 1968 election.

The intended mischief of these regulations was quickly identified and a legal challenge was launched. At this juncture, it is apposite to observe that the Election Commission of that time comprised of three members, including the Chairman. The appointment mechanism was as follows:

The Chairperson was appointed by the Governor-General upon the advice of the Prime Minister;

One member was appointed by the Governor-General upon the advice of the Head of the List that commanded the most seats in the National Assembly in the last held elections; and

The third member was appointed upon the advice of the party that secured five (5) or more seats in the National Assembly.

In that configuration, the Government of the day was responsible for the appointment of two members on that Commission, and the third person would have been a nominee of the PPP. Coincidentally, for the 1968 elections, the nominee was Comrade Janet Jagan, the wife of Dr. Jagan and a leader of the PPP.

The aforementioned legal challenge was launched by an elector, Gladys Petrie. The case is reported in 1968 14 West Indian Reports (WIR). This case, in my humble view begun the evolution of modern election case law in Guyana and the Caribbean. Today, half a century later, this case continues to be cited with amazing but predictable frequency in almost every court in the Commonwealth Caribbean whenever there is a challenge to elections.

The case was launched by the United Force, obviously aggrieved by its recent expulsion from the then government. Significantly, however, though there must have been strained relations between Dr. Jagan and the leadership of the United Force for obvious political reasons, Dr. Jagan and the PPP supported TUF in this litigation, recognising that it was in the nation's best interest to do so. Apart from the Chief Election Officer, every member of the Election Commission, along with the Attorney General were named as Respondents. Janet Jagan was represented by Derek Jagan, the brother of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. Derek supported the case filed, which was being presented by Mr. Joey King, of Cameron and Shepherd. Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Attorney General at the time, appeared, along with Dr. Mohammed Shahabuddeen, the Solicitor General.

Chief Justice Bollers chose to hear this case. With the hindsight of history, it is quickly realised that this was an impenetrable combination of forces, aligned. The litigation launched was in the nature of a civil claim. At that time, the law was already settled in jurisdictions such as India that the challenge to an election must be done by an election petition since the jurisdiction to hear the settlement of an election dispute was a jurisdiction once held by the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, which was transferred to the High Court. As a result of this special historical evolution of this jurisdiction in the High Court, specific rules were handed down in terms of how this jurisdiction should be exercised. In Guyana, this dispensation found expression in the then Guyana Constitution, the House of Assembly (Validity of Election) Regulations 1964 (No. 40). In Petrie, Bollers CJ noted the following:

"In Erskine May's PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICE (17th Edn) p 184, the learned author points out that before the year 1770, controverted elections were tried and determined by the whole House of Commons as mere party questions upon which the strength by contending factions might be tested. In order to prevent, however, a perversion of justice, the House consented to submit the exercise of its privilege to a tribunal constituted by law which, though composed of its own members, should be appointed to secure impartiality and the administration of justice according to the laws of the land and under the sanction of oath. Subsequently, there was a system of selection by lot, of committees for the trial of election petitions. Partiality and incompetence, however, continued in the constitution of these committees, and in 1839 an Act was passed establishing a new system whereby the responsibility of individual members was increased. Eventually, in 1866 the jurisdiction of the House in the trial of controverted elections was transferred by statute to the courts of law. Blackstone in his commentaries speaking of the unwritten or common law, distinguished that law into three kinds, the third category of which was certain particular laws which by custom are adopted and used by some particular courts of pretty general and extensive jurisdiction. The history of the laws relating to controverted elections however, reveals that these were administered by the House of Commons in the exercise of its privilege and were not considered by the courts, far less adopted, until this jurisdiction was transferred by statute to them. It will thus be seen that from ancient times the courts exercised no common law jurisdiction in relation to election petitions, these being dealt with by committees selected from the members of the House

of Commons, and when the courts did commence to exercise jurisdiction in these matters, it was conferred on the courts by statute passed in the legislature.”

More on the special nature of this jurisdiction will be elucidated later, but at this stage, it would be fair to say that the method of challenging an election, the special nature of the court’s jurisdiction to determine such a challenge, and the rationale for the special nature of the jurisdiction were all, by that time, matters of settled law. In this regard, the following sentiments were also expressed by Bollers CJ:

“ In conclusion, I would refer to the judgment of the Indian case and endorse the view therein expressed, that having regard to the important functions which the legislatures have to perform in democratic countries, it has always been recognised to be a matter of first importance that elections should be concluded as early as possible according to time schedule, and all controversial matters and all disputes arising out of elections should be postponed till after the elections are over, so that the elections proceedings may not be unduly retarded or protracted. I hold that the preliminary objection taken the Attorney-General is sound, and I would decline jurisdiction.”

So far so good. Where the controversy arises is what acts or omissions are so proximate to the elections themselves that would constitute a challenge to those elections. Here, the date for the elections were already fixed. This case was a civil case filed at a minimum, two months prior to the election. The thrust of the challenge was directed to the manner in which the voters list was being compiled. The complaint was that the compilation of this list was done fraudulently as there were no checks and balances in relation to overseas voters. Injunctions were sought to restrain the elections from being held until the challenge to the regulations that authorised the compilation of the list was heard by the Court.

In my view, it was open for a court to determine this dispute before elections day, as it was more a matter of law than evidence or to recognise that the issues raised are so fundamental to a fair election that its determination would have been the sine qua non to a fair election. Rather than confront the proverbial bull by the horn and determine these issues, the Court accepted the arguments of Dr. Shahabuddeen and determined the matter to be an election dispute, thus, laying down the law perhaps for the first time in the Caribbean, that any challenge to anything done in the electoral process



from the date of the proclamation to the declaration of the final results of an election, constitutes an election challenge, and must be brought by an election petition, invoking the court’s special jurisdiction and, after the declaration of the final results of those elections, but not before. It is the pronouncements from this case, refined and enlarged in the next case to which I will refer, that today form the foundation of modern election laws, as interpreted by the courts, not only in Guyana, but the entire Caribbean. As a result, the legal challenge was dismissed. It is important to note that this, being a civil case, was appealable all the way to the Privy Council, at that time Guyana’s apex court. This legal reality would not have eluded the crafty legal minds of Messrs Burnham, Ramphal, and Shahabuddeen. It is my considered view that it is as a result of a fear of an appeal traveling to that Court with the possibility of blocking rigged elections in Guyana, that ultimately resulted in the abolition of the Privy Council from Guyana’s legal system in 1970.

It is now a fact of public notoriety, supported by indisputable empirical evidence that the 1968 elections were massively rigged by use of the very regulations intended to register overseas voter, which were the subject of challenge in the Petrie case. We have seen the documentary showing that thousands of persons purportedly voted in the United Kingdom, whose identity could not have not been verified, and whose addresses were actually cemeteries in various parts of England. This marked the beginning of 28 years of rigged elections thereafter. This horrendous and destructive tragedy could have been avoided if the legal challenge was successful. The legal challenge would have succeeded if it was not deemed to be an electoral dispute. The Regulations which were the subject of the challenge was sufficiently distanced from the actual elections to

be severed from the elections themselves, thereby facilitating a challenge which could have concluded before the elections themselves.

### **Seecomar Singh**

This litigious journey, commenced at the 1968 elections resumed on the eve of the 1973 election. This time, Dr. Jagan and the PPP took the lead in the legal challenge. Seecomar Singh was a member of the PPP from the Campbellville PPP group at the time. Again, the challenge was against the Chief Elections Officer, RC Butler. Again, it related to a challenge against the laws and regulations that permitted postal votes in Guyana, overseas voting, and the counting of these votes at places different from the places designated by the law. It is clear that as a result of the public exposure of the fraud perpetrated by alleged overseas voting in the 1968 elections, new strategies were now being pursued for the 1973 elections, namely local postal voting, counting of the votes at places that were not legally designated as counting stations, and the persistence with overseas voting. To the legal challenge, Dr. Shahabuddeen appeared as Solicitor General, and again, Chief Justice Bollers was the judge. Again, these offensive regulations were promulgated after a date was fixed for those elections by a Proclamation. By this time, appeals to the Privy Council were already abolished. Now, with the benefit of experience, supposedly greater research conducted, and in a judicial environment from which the Privy Council is absent, the legal excursion that commenced in the Petrie case five years' prior, enjoyed greater amplification and bravado; and it was authoritatively settled that no aspect electoral process may be legally challenged once the day has been set for elections, other than by way of an election petition filed after the declaration of the results of those elections.

Further, the peculiar rules and regulations and the strictness of their adherence were elaborately set out. It is this corpus of judicial pronouncements coming from these two landmark cases that authoritatively settled the law in Guyana in relation to the challenge of an election. They have been invoked and applied in every challenge filed against an election in Guyana since. Expectedly, the legal challenge was dismissed.

Again, with the hindsight of history, I can assert that with certainty that the 1973 elections were massively rigged using these very regulations and laws that were the subject of the legal challenge by Dr. Jagan and the PPP.

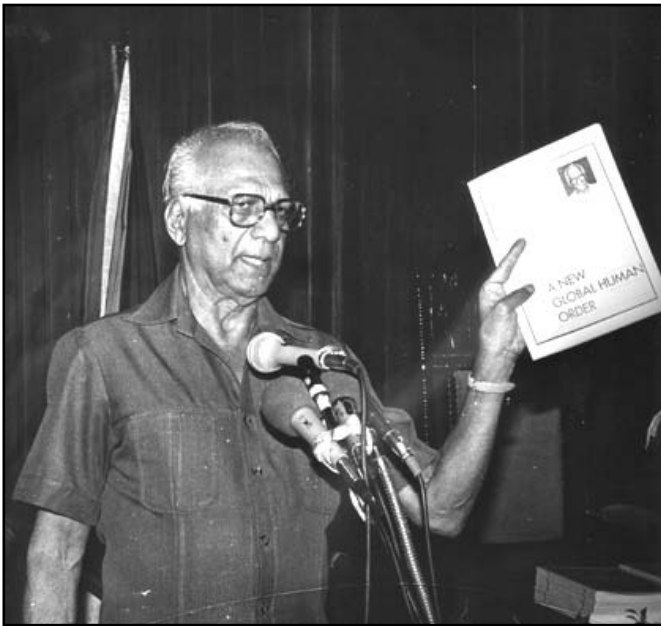
We know that in the 1973 elections, the Guyana Defence

Force descended upon the polling stations, and took away ballot boxes. Some were later found floating down various rivers in Guyana. Of course, the PNC declared themselves the winner of those elections by a significant margin. At number 64 Village, Corentyne, two activists of the PPP, Jagan Ramessar, and Bholanauth Parmanand were shot and killed by army officers as they attempted to prevent the removal of ballot boxes from a polling station by officers of the Guyana Defence Force.

In 1985, there is no doubt, again, that the Desmond Hoyte Administration massively rigged those elections. The PPP obtained a mere eight (8) seats. Indeed, the fraud that tainted those elections was greater than any of the previous elections. Again, these elections were challenged this time by way of an election petition. The PPP was at the forefront of this challenge. Applying the cases of Petrie and Seecomar Singh, and the learning expounded thereof in relation to the rigidity of the procedural requirements touching and concerning an election petition, this petition was dismissed for non-compliance with those technical requirements. The case to which I refer is *Payne v Hammond and Other* No 206 of 1986. On the approach to the 1992 elections, it is Dr. Jagan and the PPP that led the struggle for the democratic reforms eventually implemented, and which brought free and fair elections to Guyana on 5th October 1992, after 28 years of perverted elections. Capitalising on the valuable lessons learned over the years of struggle, including actions in the court system, Dr. Jagan and the PPP successfully canvassed for a reconstituted Elections Commission, the presence of international observer teams to observe elections, and counting of the ballots at the place of polls, among other things. Statutory and constitutional reforms were effected to bring about these changes. Those elections were observed by the national observers and declared to have been free and fair. The rest is well traversed history.

So, at every step of the way, Dr. Jagan and the PPP were the juggernauts of modern electoral democracy in Guyana. Democratic electoral reforms continued progressively both at the level of the Constitution and moreso on the legislation under successive PPP governments.

Election related litigation did not cease, despite the restoration of electoral democracy. An elector, Esther Pereira filed an election petition challenge the 1997 election. The challenge was on two grounds: that there were massive irregularities on election day denying voters the right to vote, and secondly, there was the challenge to a law which mandated the use of an ID



card as a qualification to vote. This challenge was filed by the PNC. The law that they challenged was one with which they agreed and supported when it was passed in the National Assembly. The Petition was heard and determined in its entirety. It was the first petition ever fully tried and determined in Guyana. Every other petition was dismissed without a trial. It is no coincidence that the PPP was the Government of the day.

The challenge relating to electoral irregularities was dismissed. The argument that the law was unconstitutional was upheld. So, though the electoral process was not impugned, the elections were set aside by the judge and fresh elections were ordered. This would constitute the first time in Guyana that an election related litigation was determined by the Judiciary against the Government of the day. That, in my view, is to the credit of the PPP. It demonstrates the existence of an independent Judiciary and respect for the rule of law and the separation of powers doctrine. The judge who determined this petition was subsequently promoted to the Court of Appeal during the tenure of a PPP government, and upon retirement, held two posts under PPP governments. This judge was eventually appointed as Chairperson of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) with the support of the PPP and still holds this post.

This entire narrative augments the democratic credentials of the PPP, and illustrates its role in Guyana's evolving democracy. This must be compared with an elections petition filed by the PPP against the 2015 elections of which the APNU/AFC was declared the winner, and formed the government. Without attributing

any ulterior motive to any person, the fact is that to date, that election petition never made it to trial during the tenure of the government whose purported victory it challenged. Now, it is dead and buried, having been overtaken by time, and events.

Between 2015 to August 2020, once again, electoral democracy, the constitution, and the rule of law were placed on trial. No one can dispute that the PPP led the struggle defending, preserving, and advancing these concepts so vital for economic progress and social advancement in any society. Apart from political agitations in the National Assembly, and across the country, the Court became a political battle ground as never before. Dozens of challenges were filed to protect the constitutional rights and freedoms of our people. Almost every one of them successful. The Red House was the subject of an unlawful edict by President David Granger to confiscate it by the unlawful termination of a 99-year lease. It was successfully challenged. The cases filed are too numerous to mention. My focus will only be on those of an electoral nature.

Not unexpected, a plan was hatched to rig the 2020 elections. The Guyana Elections Commission was identified as the vehicle to do so. President Granger, in an unprecedented occurrence, rejected 18 names of outstanding Guyanese submitted to him by the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharat Jagdeo, for consideration to become Chairperson of GECOM, in accordance with Article 162 of the Constitution. He then proceeded to unilaterally appoint one of his own liking. The reason was painfully obvious. By so doing, a formulae that had worked for over three decades, and birthed out of an arrangement between then President Desmond Hoyte and Dr. Jagan, and brokered by former US President Jimmy Carter was subverted. I challenged the appointment in the name of the Executive Secretary of the PPP, Zulficar Mustapha. We lost in the High Court, and the Court of Appeal. The Caribbean Court of Justice, however, declared the appointment illegal, and unconstitutional. In doing so, they brought necessary clarity to that appointment process. However, before the Chairman departed, he started an unlawful house to house registration exercise. The purpose was to create a defective Voters' List. The intention was to scrap the existing database and to implement a new one based upon this registration exercise. Again, the PPP challenged this process in the Court. Again, we were vindicated. The Court held that persons already registered and whose names were on the list, cannot be removed from that list.



Then came the no confidence motion. It was passed on the 21st December 2019 in the National Assembly against the APNU/AFC Government. The Government using taxpayers' dollars, hired lawyers at the private Bar to represent a citizen to challenge its legality on two grounds:

Firstly, that it was not properly passed because 33 votes used to pass it does not constitute a majority required for passing such a motion in a 65 seat National Assembly; and,

Secondly, that Charandass Persaud, who voted from the Government benches in support of the motion moved by the Opposition Leader, was disqualified from being elected to the National Assembly under the Constitution, as he was a citizen of Canada, and therefore, his vote was an invalid one.

The then Attorney General paid the two lawyers who filed the challenge in the name of a citizen against himself. The plan was the Attorney General would have appeared in the Court and consented to the challenge. The PPP, in the name of its General Secretary intervened, and so did other citizens. The case went all the way to the CCJ. The challenge was upheld. The very principles enunciated in Petrie and Seecomar Singh 50 years earlier were invoked to preclude a challenge to Charandass' election to the National Assembly. Adopting the principles in those cases, the CCJ held that his election ought to have been challenged by an election petition within the time prescribed for filing such a petition after the election in which he was elected. So, we have come full circle. Indeed, the very principles used by the PNC against the PPP in those two cases are the principles that defeated them over five (5) decades later. It was simply administered a dose of their own medicine.

Fast-forward now to the elections held on 2nd March 2020. After realising that they lost those elections within 24 hours after the close of polls, the APNU/AFC in conspiracy with functionaries of GECOM, proceeded to execute one of the most bizarre series of attempts intended to pervert the results of those elections.

They first attempted to get the Returning Office of Region 4 to declare false results from a spreadsheet rather than from the Statements of Poll which contain a summary of the ballots cast. The PPP rushed to the High Court and obtained orders directing the Returning Officer to use only the Statements of Polls (SoPs) as the basis for the tabulation of the votes. The directions of the judge were ignored. The Returning Officer proceeded with his

fraudulent design to declare falsified results. Another legal challenge was filed. As it was being heard, through a decision brokered by CARICOM between the Leader of the Opposition and the then President, a national recount of the ballots was agreed upon. Despite this agreement, the APNU challenged the national recount through their candidate, Ms. Ulita Moore. They lost in the High Court, and the Court of Appeal. Again, the PPP was at the forefront of this litigation. The dismissal of the appeal by the Court of Appeal paved the way for the recount.

The recount was conducted. It was observed by a CARICOM team, the only observer team permitted by the Government. The results coincided with the PPP Statements of Poll and confirmed that the PPP had won the election. The APNU/AFC refused to accept the results. Instead, they made baseless and reckless accusations of irregularities and illegalities. The CARICOM team, however, in its report, certified the recount, and the results flowing therefrom as credible, accurate, and reflective of the will of the people.

The APNU/AFC through Eslyn David challenged the results of the recount on several grounds, including a contention that the result included invalid votes. In this case, the intent was to exclude approximately 160, 000 votes from being counted. Again, the PPP intervened and led in the defence of the recount process. Again, the matter ended up at the CCJ. Again the CCJ upheld the PPP's arguments. Again the CCJ invoked the pronouncements made over five decades ago in Petrie and Seecomar Singh to the effect that such a challenge can only be made by way of an election petition after the declaration of the final results. Again, the very cases that they won five decades ago, were used to defeat them. Despite these clear pronouncements, the Chief Elections Officer refused to use the recount results as the basis to tabulate the final results. APNU/AFC went to the court again in the name of Misenga Jones to challenge the validity of the very order which their Commissioners at GECOM had a hand in drafting, and whose validity they accepted in the Eslyn David case. Again, they lost, both in the High Court, and the Court of Appeal. Again, the cases of Petrie and Seecomar Singh, among a host of others, came back to haunt them. Both courts ruled that they must make such a challenge by election petition after the declaration of the final results.

After five long and torturous months, and after a tremendous amount of national, regional, and international pressure, and a series of court decisions in

which the PPP, with others, led the struggle, the elections results were finally declared and a lawful President sworn in on the 2nd August 2020. In the end, democracy and the will of the people prevailed. The rule of law, and the people won. While the outstanding contributions of so many persons and organisations must be acknowledged, it cannot be disputed that it was Dr. Jagan's PPP that was the vanguard of the struggle.

Two elections petitions were filed thereafter. Both were dismissed. The grounds for dismissal were based upon the very principles stated in cases such as *Petrie*, *Seecomar Singh*, and *Payne v Hammond* – cases decided in the favour of the PNC in bygone years. In *Payne v Hammond* for example, the election petition was dismissed on the ground of failure to comply with procedure. The PNC benefitted from this ruling. It is this identical ground upon which their Petition filed by Monica Thomas and another, Election Petition 99 of 2020, was dismissed. Again, we come a full circle.

I hope that I have painted a clear enough picture to represent the role that Dr. Jagan played, and through

his party, the PPP, continues to play in the evolution and development of our elections law with particular emphasis on litigation. It is frightening to imagine what the future of Guyana would have been, were it not for the inspirational leadership, incomparable tenacity and the indomitable fighting spirit of Dr. Jagan and the remarkable army of cadres of leaders, activists and supporters of the glorious PPP.

The learnings that have emanated from the cases to which I have referred, represent the modern jurisprudence in this area of the law, not only in Guyana and the Caribbean, but indeed the Commonwealth. Most of these cases are reported in the *Guyana Law Reports*, the *West Indian Law Reports*, and the *Commonwealth Law Reports*. They will continue to guide judges, legal practitioners, and indeed citizens of Guyana and these various territories whenever electoral legal challenges arise. In this regard Dr. Jagan and the PPP's contributions are forever etched in the jurisprudential and democratic annals of this Hemisphere and indeed, her Majesty's entire Commonwealth.



*Mohabir Anil Nandlall is an attorney at law by training and is the current Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. He is a member of both the Executive and Central committees of the People's Progressive Party and a Member of Parliament.*

# Guyana-China: 50 Years of Diplomatic Relations



President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Chinese Ambassador to Guyana, Guo Haiyan exchanging greetings.

On June 27, 2022 Guyana and the People's Republic of China will observe 50 years of diplomatic relations. These were fifty very fruitful years and our relations have been mutually enriching for both countries.

Even though it is fifty years of diplomatic relations Guyana and China's relations have gone back to almost two hundred years. Guyana is often described as a land of six peoples. Among these peoples are Chinese who came here as laborers for the sugar industry.

The Guyanese-Chinese have contributed greatly to the socio-economic-political and cultural life in Guyana.

Moreover, the Guyanese revolutionaries also established relations with their Chinese counter-parts as far back as the 1940s. Cheddi Jagan and his comrades who formed the Political Affairs Committee in 1946 did a lot of work to educate the Guyanese people of the national liberation struggle that was being waged in China, led by the Communist Party of China. The PPP was the only party in the English speaking Caribbean that supported the struggles of the Chinese people against semi-colonial domination that had ruled China for a century.

At the formation of the PPP on January 1, 1950 one of its main functions was to organize solidarity activities to support the oppressed throughout the world. One of these was to give support and solidarity to the struggles of the CPC in building a free China.

The PPP had in its ranks and leadership comrades who were prominent in the Guyanese-Chinese community. One of the most prominent was Comrade Joseph Rudolph Spencer Luck a brilliant educator and lawyer. Rudy, as he was affectionately known contributed several articles on the heroic struggles of the Chinese people. He served as a PPP Member of Parliament in the 1960s and was even imprisoned in the 1950s.

After the victory of the Chinese people in October 1949 the struggle against imperialism took center stage. Led by the United States, strong attempts were made to isolate China from the rest of the international community.

At that time the US and other Western powers controlled the United Nations. Moreover, most of the countries of today were not represented in the UN, they were colonies of the UK and France mainly but also of the Netherlands, Spain and Belgium.

From 1949 the struggle to seat the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the representatives of the Chinese people defined the nature of countries and political parties within countries. However, long before the recognition by the UN China, had established diplomatic relations with all the Socialist countries in Europe and other countries in Asia. India was one of the first countries to recognize the PRC since 1949.

That struggle was concluded in 1971 when the PRC

finally took its rightful place in that premier international organization. This was a major victory of the democratic forces in the world at that period.

By then much had changed in the world. A lot of colonies threw off the colonial yoke and China got more and more support. The growing support led to the US using its enormous influence to change the rule of the UN in relation to its membership. Before a new country was seated it had to obtain at least a two-thirds majority vote of the UN General Assembly. That could not stop the march of history but it did slow down the process.

Guyana became independent in 1966. The government at that time, a PNC/UF coalition, was installed by the US/UK machinations and our country became a neo-colonial state.

One of the features of such a state was its attitude to the seating of the PRC at the UN. In 1966 and 1967, Guyana voted against the seating of the PRC.

That evoked great opposition from the PPP. The PPP fought in and out of Parliament to force the coalition to support the Albanian Resolution to seat the PRC. It organized demonstrations and picketing exercises to force the PNC regime to abandon its anti-China stance and to adopt a "One China" policy.

This struggle was possibly one of the reasons that Guyana's first ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Edward Braithwaite, author of the famous book that was made into a film (*To Sir with Love*), was removed from his post in 1969 and reassigned to Venezuela. He then resigned from Government service that same year. In an interview he gave after his resignation he stated that while he was at the UN pursuing matters he thought were in the best interest of Guyana and the developing countries, the US Ambassador in Georgetown was telling his Prime Minister what position to take and the posture he should assume at the UN. That was too much for him. He refused to be a puppet ambassador.

However, by 1971, a lot had changed internationally. Alignments of forces were changing in a very profound way. The Non-Align Movement which came on the scene due to the polarization of the world by the US led NATO and the Soviet led Warsaw pact had grown in importance as an anti-imperialist organization. It supported the seating of the PRC.

In the meantime, China was establishing diplomatic relations with a growing number of countries in the world. Its prestige was high and its disinterested assistance to poor Third World countries was having significant impact in the colonial, semi-colonial and recently liberated countries. The Railway from Zambia to Tanzania helped to deliver a severe blow to the imperialist backed South

African Apartheid regime and allowed Zambia to sustain its support for the African National Congress (ANC).

China was displaying an independence in the conduct of its international affairs. Keeping China out of the UN was becoming an anachronism as it gained recognition from more and more member states of the UN. So the inevitable occurred on November 15, 1971 when the General Assembly Resolution No. 2758 was passed overwhelmingly.

Less than a year later, on June 27, 1972, Guyana and China established Diplomatic relations.

This was a very big victory for the People's Progressive Party (PPP) which supported China since the victory the Chinese Revolution on October 1, 1949. It was a defeat for the American/PNC anti-communism that was used against the PPP for many years.

That support of the PPP was not confined to solidarity in the political and international arena but, even though in a small way, in the economic and trade relations. It was a relationship that was another example of mutual beneficial relations for Guyana and China.

In order to break the economic blockade placed on the then British Guiana, the PPP established a company which traded with the socialist countries. Among those was China. The PPP's company, Guyana Import and Export Co. Ltd (GIMPEX) bought goods from China clothes, electrical equipment, bicycles (the main form of transportation in that period) among other items to be sold to our population.

This no doubt made a contribution in the breaking the isolation that imperialism had imposed on China and it allowed the PPP to keep the cost of living down for the consumers. It was important in breaking the economic pressures, including a blockade against the PPP government in that epic anti-colonial struggles which it led in the then British Guiana.

When in 1972 China established diplomatic relations with Guyana it was still very underdeveloped. Guyana's per capita GDP was higher than that of the PRC.

Yet China helped our country to try to lessen its dependence on a few big capitalist states and the unequal trade relations inherent in capitalist relations.

We recall the assistance with the establishment of the Sanata Textile Mill in Georgetown and the Clay Brick Factory in the Canal's Polder. In that time these were significant investments in the state. Many houses are still standing made from materials produced from the Clay Brick factory. Those remain monuments to Guyana/

China friendship.

Since that time the People's Republic of China has changed dramatically. From being a poor developing country it is now the second largest economy in the world and its prestige has soared through to every corner of the globe. It leads the world in many spheres of the scientific and technological revolution that has impacted almost every country. It is recognized for its innovation and progress in cutting edge techniques.

China has become the greatest builder of the world. This is both physical structures that they have created and in advocating a new type of international relations. This is one that promotes true equality and independence of states. They correctly describe it as "a win-win relationship." This policy gives dignity to every country. For the first time many small and middle-income developing countries have the belief that they are equal to all other states.

We in Guyana, like so many other states, have benefitted greatly from cooperation with the P.R.C over the years. Some of our most important structures have been built by Chinese contractors.

The National Convention Center and the Marriot Hotel stands out in Georgetown and evoke pride in our people.

Our airport is being modernized by another contractor from China.

China has also become reknown for its boldness and bold initiatives. In 2013, President Xi Jin Ping proposed the belt and road project. This has the great potential of really uniting the world and creating new wealth and prosperity for all the participants.

Guyana has signed up with the PRC to be part of this historic project which would unite millions of people from all continents.

This initiative has also prompted the west to react. Not so long ago the US and the European Union, still unable to shed their old habits of purely national interest have announced their own initiative to help build up

the world infrastructure. They have voted millions to begin this work. This time we cannot evaluate the performance since it is at an embryo stage.

What is very significant about this Western project though is that it has come about not primarily to assist less wealthy Third World countries but to counter the bold move of the People's Republic of China and to try to limit China's great influence in the world. That, of course, is not a good premise to start from.

Be that as it may, it would be good if the poorer countries would benefit even more from the availability of more resources. However, for promises to be a larger sum of resources for our development we have to thank President Xi and the PRC for forcing the West to respond.

In the just over fifty years since China joined the UN, it has become, in 2019, the country with the most diplomatic relations with these countries than any other. It has become the largest trading partner for most of the states on the globe as well. Its contribution to global economic growth is now the largest in the world.

These are remarkable feats never before experienced.

The People's Republic of China has become a great example. It is one of the most studied countries as mankind looks to build a better future.

Fifty years of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Guyana have been very beneficial cooperation and a demonstration of support without strings attached. It is not unique because this is how China relates with all countries it has relations with, the win-win approach promotes friendship, solidarity and peace.

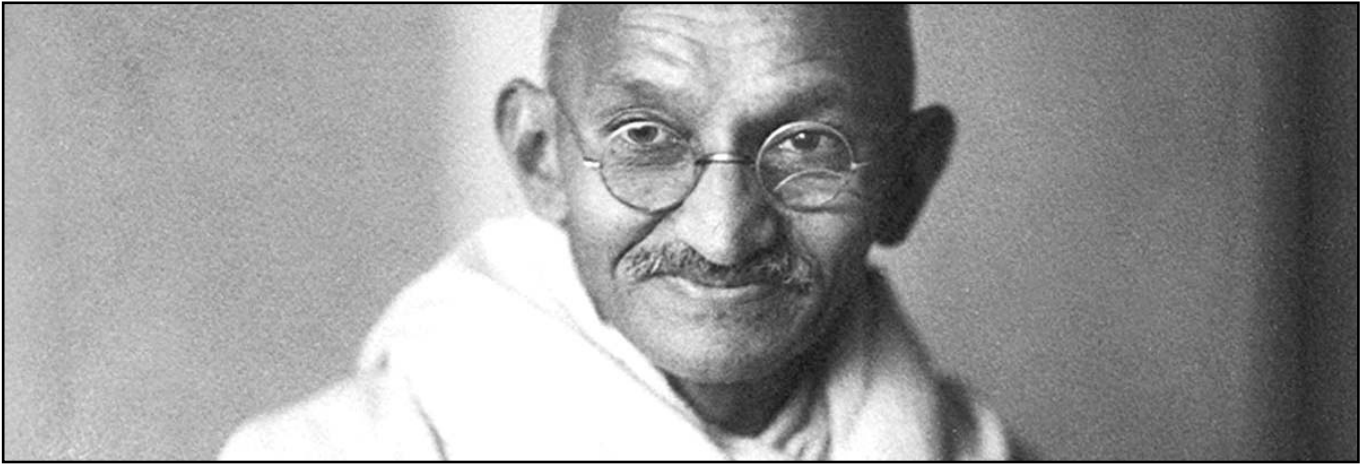
In evaluating this period we must give it the highest marks and further deepen our ties with the PRC.

Most important though, the past fifty years of diplomatic relations has strengthened the close friendship between our peoples which began with the solidarity between the PPP and the CPC.



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# Nehru's Relevance in India Today



As India celebrates the 75th anniversary of its Independence, it is time to look back and pay tribute to the four men who embodied the vision of free India in 1947 – Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Ambedkar. Gandhi's moral rectitude, allied to Jawaharlal Nehru's political passion, fashioned both the strategy and tactics for the struggle against British rule. Sardar Patel's firm hand on the administration integrated the nation and established peace and stability. Ambedkar's erudition and legal acumen helped translate the dreams of a generation into a working legal document that laid the foundations for an enduring democracy.

While the world was disintegrating into fascism, violence, and war, Gandhi taught the virtues of truth, nonviolence, and peace. While the nation reeled from bloodshed and communal carnage, Ambedkar preached the values of constitutionalism and the rule of law. While parochial ambitions threatened national unity, Patel led the nation to a vision of unity and common purpose. While mobs marched the streets baying for revenge, Nehru's humane and non-sectarian vision inspired India to yearn again for the glory that had once been hers.

Of the four, Gandhi and Nehru stood out. Despite differences over both tactics (Nehru wanted independence immediately whereas Gandhi believed Indians had to be made ready for their own freedom) and philosophy (the agnostic Nehru had little patience for the Mahatma's spirituality), the two men proved a formidable combination. Gandhi guided Nehru to his political pinnacle; Nehru in turn proved an inspirational campaigner as President of the Indian National Congress, electrifying the nation with his speeches and tireless travel.

Upon the Mahatma's assassination in 1948, just

five months after independence, Nehru, the country's first prime minister, became the keeper of the national flame, the most visible embodiment of India's struggle for freedom. Gandhi's death could have led Nehru to assume untrammelled power. Instead, he spent a lifetime immersed in the democratic values Ambedkar had codified, trying to instill the habits of democracy in his people—a disdain for dictators, a respect for parliamentary procedures, an abiding faith in the constitutional system. Till the end of the decade, his staunch ally Patel provided the firm hand on the tiller without which India might yet have split asunder.

For the first seventeen years of India's independence, the paradox-ridden Jawaharlal Nehru — a moody, idealist intellectual who felt an almost mystical empathy with the toiling peasant masses; an aristocrat, accustomed to privilege, who had passionate socialist convictions; an Anglicized product of Harrow and Cambridge who spent over ten years in British jails; an agnostic radical who became an unlikely protégé of the saintly Mahatma Gandhi — was India. Incorruptible, visionary, ecumenical, a politician above politics, Nehru's stature was so great that the country he led seemed inconceivable without him. A year before his death a leading American journalist, Welles Hagen, published a book entitled *After Nehru, Who?* The unspoken question around the world was: "after Nehru, what?"

Today, five and a half decades after his death, we have something of an answer to the latter question. As an India still seemingly clad in many of the trappings of Nehruvianism steps out into the twenty-first century, a good deal of Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy appears intact – and yet hotly contested. India has moved away from much of Nehru's beliefs, and so (in different ways) has

the rest of the developing world for which Nehruvianism once spoke. As India nears its 75th anniversary of independence from the British Raj, a transformation — still incomplete — has taken place that, in its essentials, has changed the basic Nehruvian assumptions of postcolonial nationhood. Nehru himself, as a man with an open and questing mind, would have allowed his practical thinking to evolve with the times, even while remaining anchored to his core beliefs. So have we.

That is why I undertook my 2003 biography, *Nehru: The Invention of India*. I sought to examine this great figure of twentieth-century nationalism from the vantage point of the beginning of the twenty-first. Jawaharlal Nehru's life is a fascinating story in its own right, and I tried to tell it whole, because the privileged child, the unremarkable youth, the posturing young nationalist, and the heroic fighter for independence are all inextricable from the unchallengeable prime minister and peerless global statesman. At the same time I sought to analyse critically the four principal pillars of Nehru's legacy to India — democratic institution-building, staunch pan-Indian secularism, socialist economics at home, and a foreign policy of non-alignment — all of which were integral to a vision of Indianness that is fundamentally challenged today.

How did Nehru construct these four pillars and what do they mean today?

First, democracy. It was by no means axiomatic that a country like India, riven by so many internal differences and diversities, beset by acute poverty and torn apart by Partition, would be or remain democratic. Many developing countries found themselves turning in the opposite direction soon after independence, arguing that a firm hand was necessary to promote national unity and guide development. With Gandhi's death, Nehru could have very well assumed unlimited power within the country. And yet, he himself was such a convinced democrat, profoundly wary of the risks of autocracy, that, at the crest of his rise, he authored an anonymous article warning Indians of the dangers of giving dictatorial temptations to Jawaharlal Nehru. "He must be checked," he wrote of himself. "We want no Caesars." And indeed, his practice when challenged within his own party was to offer his resignation; he usually got his way, but it was hardly the instinct of a Caesar.

As prime minister, Nehru carefully nurtured the country's infant democratic institutions. He paid deference to the country's ceremonial presidency and even to its largely otiose vice-presidency; he never let the public forget that these notables outranked him in protocol terms. He wrote regular letters to the chief ministers of the states, explaining his policies and seeking their feedback. He subjected himself and his government to cross-examination in Parliament by the small, fractious but undoubtedly talented Opposition, allowing them an importance out of all proportion to their numerical strength, because he was convinced

that a strong Opposition was essential for a healthy democracy. He took care not to interfere with the judicial system; on the one occasion that he publicly criticized a judge, he apologized the next day and wrote an abject letter to the Chief Justice, regretting having slighted the judiciary. And he never forgot that he derived his authority from the people of India; not only was he astonishingly accessible for a person in his position, but he started the practice of offering a daily darshan at home for an hour each morning to anyone coming in off the street without an appointment, a practice that continued until the dictates of security finally overcame the populism of his successors.

It was Nehru who, by his scrupulous regard for both the form and the substance of democracy, instilled democratic habits in our country. His respect for Parliament, his regard for the independence of the judiciary, his courtesy to those of different political convictions, his commitment to free elections, and his deference to institutions over individuals, all left us a precious legacy of freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru's opening remarks when he moved the motion at the newly established Constituent Assembly on December 13, 1946 gives us a view of the immense pressure and responsibility he placed on himself to ensure that the embodiment of his democratic vision for the country responded fittingly to the situation and did justice to its enshrinement in the process of Constitution-making. He had to preserve the "past" idea of India and march towards the "future" idea of India.

Nehru said, "As I stand here, Sir, I feel the weight of all manner of things crowding around me. We are at the end of an era and possibly very soon we shall embark upon a new age; and my mind goes back to the great past of India to the five thousand years of India's history, from the very dawn of that history which might be considered almost the dawn of human history, till today. All that past crowds around me and exhilarates me and, at the same time, somewhat oppresses me. Am I worthy of that past? When I think also of the future, the greater future I hope, standing on this sword's edge of the present between this mighty past and the mightier future, I tremble a little and feel overwhelmed by this mighty task. We have come here at a strange moment in India's history. I do not know but I do feel that there is some magic in this moment of transition from the old to the new, something of that magic which one sees when the night turns into day and even though the day may be a cloudy one, it is day after all, for when the clouds move away we can see the sun later on."

The American editor Norman Cousins once asked Nehru what he hoped his legacy to India would be. "Four hundred million people capable of governing themselves," Nehru replied. The numbers have grown, but the very fact that each day over a billion Indians govern themselves in a pluralist democracy is testimony to the deeds and words of these two men and the giants



who accompanied them in the march to freedom.

Second, secularism. Nehru strived to prevent Partition but when it occurred, he never accepted the logic that since Pakistan had ostensibly been created for India's Muslims, what remained was a state for Hindus. He lived up to his lifelong conviction that India belonged to all who had contributed to its history and civilization, and that the majority community had a special obligation to protect the rights, and promote the well-being, of India's minorities. In both governmental policy and personal practice, Nehru stood for an idea of India that embraced those of every religion, caste, ethnicity or language.

Nehru saw our country as an "ancient palimpsest" on which successive rulers and subjects had inscribed their visions without erasing what had been asserted previously—we not only coexist, but thrive in our diversity which is our strength. He was followed by a generation of secular nationalists who echoed this tradition, making "unity in diversity" the most hallowed of independent India's self-defining slogans. It is this secularism that is being questioned today in an effort to redefine nationalism in more sectarian terms, limited as its architects are by a lack of vision and an absence of depth that prevents them from seeing the larger principle that India has always defined for the world, then and today. As dutiful citizens of the country we must resist any attempts to reduce India to a Hindu version of Pakistan. That would be a betrayal of Nehru's vision and of his life as well as of the very essence of what it means to be Indian.

Even with caste and social relations, the country has moved forward significantly since Nehru's time. We have witnessed convulsive changes: who could have

imagined, for three thousand years, that a woman from the Dalit community, once considered outcasts, would rule India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, as Mayawati has done three times? It's still true that in many parts of India, when you cast your vote, you vote your caste. But that too has brought about profound alterations in the country, as the so-called "lower" castes have taken advantage of the ballot to seize electoral power. And in cultural affairs, with the notion of Hindutva being proclaimed, and argued and debated from the rooftops in recent times, we have had a searching re-examination of identity.

Third, socialism. It is fashionable today to decry Nehruvian socialism as a corrupt and inefficient system that condemned India to many years of modest growth levels. We do not deny, as Nehru's own grandson said three decades ago, that over time the socialist model as practised in India developed many flaws. But at the core of Nehru's socialism lay his conviction that in a land of extreme poverty and inequality, the objective of government policy must be the welfare of the poorest, most deprived and most marginalized of our people. In his day, the best way to accomplish that was by building up structures of public ownership and state control of national resources, as well as enhancing the nation's economic capacity through government intervention.

Today Nehru's own Indian National Congress, of which I am a member, welcomes, indeed encourages, the involvement of the private sector in the generation and distribution of wealth. We are proud of our own role in liberalizing our country's economy and in making possible so many new opportunities for our young to succeed in a globalizing world. But we remain profoundly wedded to Nehru's concern for the weakest sections of our society. This is why we can still claim to be socialist today. Our socialism is not anti-growth; rather, it aims to ensure that the benefits of our country's growth are given principally to the deprived masses, who need it most. Whether we grow by 9 percent, as we once did, or by just about 6 percent, as we are doing now, our fundamental commitment must be to the bottom 25 percent of our society. In the long run, I am certain that Nehru will be remembered for not abandoning vast sections of society to hanker after a notion of growth that only favours a select few, at the cost of everybody else.

It is a commitment to this that allowed for an updated version of Nehru's idea of India to develop in the twenty-first century – one that has widened the scope of its democracy through such innovations as the Right to Information Act; one that has defended secularism in the face of violent threats to our nation's diversity; one that has deepened socialism through the creation of a framework of rights, including the right to work, the right to food, the right to education and the right to fair compensation for land, all of which have strengthened and empowered the poorest of our people; and one



that has remained a proud and independent nation in the community of nations. It was Nehru who built the scientific base for India's space and engineering triumphs today. Without his establishment of what is now the Indian Space Research Organization, there would be no Mangalyaan and Chandrayaan space probes; without the Indian Institutes of Technology he established, Indians would not have a worldwide reputation for engineering excellence or have established 40 percent of the startups in Silicon Valley. Today, we are world leaders in Information Technology, the provision of digital services and in the launching of rockets and satellites. In all this, we are upholding and continuing the legacy of a remarkable human being whose vision soared well above the poverty and misery that colonialism had reduced his country to.

Finally, foreign policy. Nehru was a convinced internationalist. For him, non-alignment was the only response to the bipolar divisions of the Cold War era. After two centuries of colonial exclusion from the global system, Nehru was determined to protect its strategic autonomy; his India was not about to mortgage its independence by aligning itself to either superpower in the Cold War. In that form, it might be argued that his vision is no longer relevant in the changed circumstances of the twenty-first century. Today, there are no longer two superpowers to be non-aligned between. But in its essence, the power of non-alignment was to ensure that India was free to take its own positions without allowing others to decide for it; the Nehruvian vision was about our "strategic autonomy", safeguarding India's independence and self-respect against potential encroachments on its sovereignty. Thanks to him, all Indians can be proud of the role we play in the international community. We are non-aligned in the sense that we are aligned with no one nation or bloc, and we remain free to conduct our foreign relations according to our own lights and according to our national interest.

Nehru was also a skilled exponent of soft power, much before the term was even coined: he developed a role for India in the world based entirely on its civilizational history and its moral standing, making India the voice of the oppressed and the marginalized against the big power hegemons of the day. This gave our country enormous standing and prestige across the world for years, and strengthened our own self-respect as we stood, proud and independent, on the global stage.

Indeed, we are still drawing from these traditions. After all, in the information age, it is not the side with the bigger army that wins, but the side which tells the better story. India must remain the "land of the better story". As a society with a free press and a thriving mass media, with a people whose creative energies are daily encouraged to express themselves in a variety of appealing ways, India has an extraordinary ability to tell stories that are more persuasive and attractive than

those of its rivals. This is not about propaganda; indeed, it will not work if it is directed from above, least of all by Government. But its impact, though intangible, can be huge. This soft power, too, is Nehru's legacy; he created a standing for India out of all proportion to our military strength or economic might.

Yet soft power is not just what we can deliberately and consciously exhibit or put on display; it is rather how others see what we are, whether or not we are trying to show it to the world. It is not just material accomplishments that enhance India's soft power. Even more important are the values and principles for which India stands, and I do believe Nehru would have applauded this evolution of his own approach to world affairs.

India has in recent years undergone profound transformations in its politics (from the dominant Congress system to a proliferation to regional parties to the dominance of the now-ascendant Bharatiya Janata Party), its economics (from a controlled "socialist" economy to a thriving free-enterprise system), its trade (from protectionism to globalisation), and its social relations (from a rigidly hierarchical caste system to a more egalitarian policy affirming opportunities and outcomes for the "lowest" castes, and from a secular political culture to one in which a party of the Hindu majority is overtly asserting its strength). Now, any of these transformations could have been enough to throw another country into a turbulent revolution. But we have had all four in India and yet we have absorbed them, and made all the changes work, because the Indian revolution is a democratic one, sustained by a larger idea of India, an India which safeguards the common space available to each identity, an India that remains safe for diversity. That was Nehru's vision, and this is his vindication.

The truth is that Nehru's extraordinary life and career is part of the inheritance of every Indian. The very term "Indian" was imbued with such meaning by Nehru that it is impossible to use it without acknowledging a debt: our passports incarnate his ideals. Where those ideals came from, whether they were brought to fulfilment by their own progenitor, and to what degree they remain viable today are all legitimate issues for debate. Jawaharlal Nehru's impact on India is too great not to be re-examined periodically. His legacy is ours, whether we agree with everything he stood for or not. What we are today, both for good and for ill, we owe in great measure to one man. That is why his story is not simply history.

Today, both Gandhi's and Nehru's legacies are fundamentally contested, and many Indians have strayed from the ideals bequeathed to them by Gandhi and Nehru, Ambedkar and Patel. Yet they, in their very different ways, each represented that rare kind of leader who is not diminished by the inadequacies of his followers. Today the ruling BJP and its followers lose no opportunity to denigrate Nehru, especially on social media, accusing him of every conceivable sin of both

commission and omission. It is like throwing pebbles at a mountain. They cannot even begin to dent the scale of his contributions to India.

Even the most distinguished leader of the Prime Minister's own BJP party has in the past – despite many areas of disagreement – acknowledged the legacy of Nehru as a champion of the country. Speaking in Parliament on Nehru's death, Atal Behari Vajpayee declared emotionally – and poetically – that with the Prime Minister's passing "a dream has remained half-fulfilled, a song has become silent, and a flame has vanished into the Unknown. The dream was of a world free of fear and hunger; the song a great epic resonant with the spirit of the Gita and as fragrant as a rose, the flame a candle which burnt all night long, showing us the way". The loss, Vajpayee averred, was not merely that of a family or even of a party. Mother India, he said, was in mourning because "her beloved Prince has gone to sleep"; even humanity was sad because its servant and worshipper had left it forever. Vajpayee went on to describe the departed Prime Minister as a "benefactor of the downtrodden" and the "chief actor of the world stage" whom he compared to none less than Lord Ram, for like Valmiki's (and the Hindutvawadis's)

hero, Nehru was "the orchestrator of the impossible and inconceivable". He too (I'm still quoting Vajpayeeji) "was not afraid of compromise but would never compromise under duress".

One might say that these words were only to be expected from a gracious adversary in tribute to a deceased Prime Minister. But Vajpayeeji's statements went far beyond the claims of ritual. He called on the nation to rededicate itself to Nehru's ideals. "With unity, discipline and self-confidence," Vajpayeeji said, in words that could have been yours, "we must make this Republic of ours flourish. The leader has gone, but the followers remain. The sun has set, yet by the shadow of stars we must find our way. These are testing times, but we must dedicate ourselves to his great aim, so that India can become strong, capable and prosperous..."

This remains the cherished goal of all Indians. As we make our political choices, we would do well to recall the first leader of independent India and the values and principles on which he built our democratic polity.

Thank you, and Jai Hind.



Cheddi Jagan addressing the Indian Parliament, seated next to him is Jawaharlal Nehru



*Shashi Tharoor is a former Indian Diplomat, politician, writer and Member of Parliament. He was a former Under Secretary General of the United Nations and author of several books.*

# TESTING THE WATERS: POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN GUYANA, 1935-1947

## **The Colonial Tinderbox: People, Postures, Politics**

As a consequence of labour unrests throughout the 1930s and the early years of the 1940s there was a continuing restiveness abroad in the colony. At the same time and because of these developments the politically disadvantaged entered into a new state of social and political awakening. This is not to suggest a sudden evolution of social awareness or the sudden appearance of a completely new political consciousness. Different groups, at different times had individually or collectively challenged the socio-economic and political formation in British Guiana. They articulated, sensitised and mobilised support within their ranks and across social boundaries to effect changes in the social system and the body politic.

Both prior to 1918, and between the two great wars, the quest for change had involved a demand for constitutional

reform and economic development. After 1935 these demands not only became more liberal and urgent, they also came from a wider cross section of the population. The combination of interest in, and enthusiasm for change, ignored the long entrenched barriers of social class and ethnicity, reflecting a new consciousness of the disaffected Guianese in opposition to expatriate interests and Imperial impositions. Conservative middle class politicians and their leaders were accused of being in alliance with imperial interests.

There were demands from liberals, trade unionists and a small group of nationalists for the nationalisation of foreign interests, tax reforms, land preparation and redistribution, universal adult suffrage, economic development, interior development, social welfare and self-government. These demands emphasised a reversal of the trend of exploitation and appropriation in favour of colonial development and greater self-determination.



British Soldiers marching in the streets of Georgetown, 1953

The popularity of the anti-colonial platform derived from the depressed conditions in which the bulk of the population existed. It drew its popular appeal from a greater understanding of the connection between the impoverishment of the environment, the oppression of the people and their status as colonists.

After 1945 the struggle was, in the first place, aimed at ensuring a greater measure of participatory democracy and an accelerated pace of constitutional advance. This struggle entered a more critical stage becoming decidedly more urgent and more militant. Prior to this stage, the few elected representatives were prepared to accept their colonial status in return for a certain measure of constitutional and political flexibility and a greater degree of economic development. After 1945, the anti colonial advocates sought economic reforms, internal self government followed by complete political freedom.

Colonial demands coalesced around a number of issues: the urgent desire to have liberal franchise and representative qualifications, the need to have elected representatives enjoy a greater degree of authority in the Legislative Council and representation in the Executive Council, and a speedy passage to self government. These concerns were perceived as the prerequisites to attaining the fourth concern, economic development.

At the core of the first were the contentious issues of universal adult suffrage and the property qualification while, at the heart of the second was the vexed question of the nominated unofficial in the legislature. Complete political emancipation was the essence of the third while the fourth derived its prominence from the structural malformation of the colonial economy, the growing spectre of unemployment and underemployment, the increasing impoverishment of the working people and the slow pace of colonial development.

In its attack on the constitution, dissenting opinion exploited the 1939 Royal Commission Report which recommended the introduction of more representative organs. The 1943-45 reforms were significant steps in the desired direction but the nationalist consensus was that they had not gone far enough. There was considerable disquiet about the failure of the Franchise Commission to recommend the immediate adoption of universal suffrage. Because of wartime extensions, the life of the Legislature as constituted after the 1935 election was extended and there was a clamour for a general election immediately after the war. But since the last census

had been in 1931 and in view of the 1944 Franchise Commission Report and the growth in population, the electoral roll was considered out of date. Taking all the factors into consideration, the colonial administration decided that elections would be held in 1947.

### **Content and Context: the 1947 Election Campaign**

Two political parties contested the elections which were scheduled for November 24, 1947. The first was the British Guiana Labour Party, led by two medical practitioners Drs. J.B. Singh and J.A. Nicholson alongside trade union leaders, H.N. Critchlow and Ashton Chase.

The BGLP was formed in June 1946 primarily to contest the election. Exploiting the trade union credentials of a few of its leaders, it claimed to represent the working people. The Party was, at best, a broad and fragile coalition of forces professing opposition to both British colonial policy and the liberal conservatives who served in the legislature since 1935

Those conservative politicians had over the period 1935-1947 consistently criticised British policy of benign neglect and constitutional gradualism. They had nevertheless alienated popular sympathy by failing to persuade Whitehall to initiate development. Their reluctance to engage in confrontational politics persuaded the gradually expanding working class electorate of their inability to challenge British colonialism. This perception was reinforced by popular awareness of conservative fears of, and opposition to universal adult suffrage. It was this failure, more than any other, which alienated the respect and sympathy of the progressives and the working people. The old brigade, as they had come to be regarded, was therefore deprived of a persuasive platform and a meaningful constituency.

The second party contesting the election, The Manpower Citizen's Association Party was formed in February 1947. Named after the sugar union from which it drew its leadership, and depending primarily on the support of the sugar workers it represented, this Party also touted claims to be representative of the working people. It professed support for the nationalisation of the key industries, the expansion and improvement of the domestic transportation and communication systems and the Governor's development initiatives, especially drainage, irrigation and land settlement.

The Party promised reasonable inducements to industry for the development of agriculture, timber, mineral and

other resources of both the interior and the coastland and opposed the implied threat from administrative circles, both local and imperial, to partition the colony separating the coast from the interior.

The MPCA Party pledged to struggle for full self-government by 1951 on the basis of thirty six elected seats, and a single chamber legislature. It therefore opposed the idea, which was beginning to be discussed, of a West Indian federation, unless self-government for the unit territories was declared a binding precondition.

There was, as well, a small group of political activists, not represented by either of these political parties. This group had its origin in the recent interventionist politics of Cheddi Jagan. Jagan attracted the disfavour of the colonial administration, British authorities and the American intelligence service when he exposed the relationship between colonial underdevelopment and colonialism and between European colonialism and international capitalism. The colonial authorities were disturbed by the robust nature of his analysis. Public forums were rapidly closed to him while invitations to participate in speaking engagements dwindled.

While the focus of his attacks and the nature of his arguments disconcerted many of the local establishment they attracted a band of young intellectuals and articulate political aspirants and Jagan soon found himself the leader of an informal group of young firebrands obsessed with discovering the solution to the many problems affecting the colony.

Jagan benefited from the exposure and contacts which the Public Free Library discussion group had afforded him prior to his disconnect. It was here that he met such middle class liberals as the Gaskin girls, Winifred and Thelma, and Frances Stafford, who along with his wife Janet would subsequently form the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO) in 1946. It was also at these discussions that he cemented relations with trade unionists, Ashton Chase and H.J.M. Hubbard, and the

Anglican clergyman, and radical thinker, Canon Worlidge. According to Jagan they collectively exercised a profound influence on his political socialisation.

In the years following his return from overseas studies Jagan encountered a lack of basic commitment in several organisations around the colony. He discovered a transparent dishonesty among the leadership which divided the Guianese people into competing sections

of race, class and region. This tendency to competing particularism in the face of social and economic retrogression forced Jagan to consider an organisation committed to the honest articulation of the real problems of the people. This resulted in the formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) in 1946.

The PAC, while not deliberately divorcing itself from the urban middle class dialogue, undertook the organisation and political education of the working people. It established political discussion groups throughout the colony but was best organised and strongest on the east coast of Demerara, a densely populated area extending for about thirty miles east of Georgetown, the capital city. The area, though dominated by the sugar industry, contained a number of agricultural villages in which rural peasants nursed their peculiar grievances. Significantly, the population was an almost balanced mix of Indians and Blacks.

The attempt to mobilise the sugar workers and raise their consciousness generated the ire of the Sugar Producers' Association {SPA} which was convinced that a docile, illiterate work force was the best recipe for stable industrial relations. The activities of the PAC were brought to the attention of the Governor, discussed at the Executive Council and duly reported to the Colonial Office.

The second concern derived from the nature of the organisation's programme. The PAC's programme brought Blacks and Indians together as a common constituency to explore the plight of the colony, to examine how similar problems were resolved in various parts of the colonial world and to isolate some of these experiences as starting points and founding principles for collective action in Guiana.

It is important to bear in mind that the 1947 election was the first in the colony for twelve years and as a result, local interest was very high. The furore over the 1944 Report of the Franchise Commission also contributed to the heightened interest, but undoubtedly a very significant factor was the mobilising initiatives of the PAC and the WPEO.

As a consequence of the further liberalisation of the franchise qualifications the electorate grew from twenty nine thousand in 1935 to 59,193 in 1947. The majority of the new voters were wage earners. There were, in the fourteen constituencies, forty eight candidates of whom twenty eight were independents. The large number of

independents illustrated the embryonic stage of party politics in the colony. The measure of each candidate was his ability to represent himself as a respectable colonist capable of influencing the colonial administration in the interest of his constituency. His ability to articulate policy was subordinate to his ability to persuade the colonial administration of the primacy of the interest of his constituency. Additionally, the constitution did not provide for group representation or the formation of a government and there was therefore no compelling reason to organise at the level of the group. Further, the narrow franchise so delimited the electorate that personal contact was the preferred approach to electoral campaigning. Finally since the electorate was small and tending to belong to the same social group there was little need for the elaborate machinery represented in the political party.

The Labour Party contested thirteen of the fourteen seats while the MPCA Party fielded seven candidates, most of them members of the union's executive. Since neither the PAC nor the WPEO conceived of itself as a fully fledged political party neither contested the elections. They did however support the independent candidacy of Cheddi and Janet Jagan, H.J.M. Hubbard and Frances Stafford.

Jagan's wife contested a Georgetown constituency and initially opposed the white conservative businessman Percy White. Fearing the success of Mrs Jagan, the popular liberal John Fernandes was encouraged to stand in the constituency. Using the East Coast base as his constituency, Cheddi confronted another liberal businessman, John D'Aguiar. Stafford opposed Critchlow, an oversight which created moments of embarrassment for the PAC and the WPEO, while Hubbard faced the League of Coloured People [LCP] moderate Nicholson. The main theme of this small group of individuals was self government, economic development and the creation of a socialist society in Guiana.

Of the fourteen members elected, five were successful Labour Party candidates, one from the MPCA and the rest were Independents one of whom was Cheddi Jagan. The success of the Labour Party was attributed to the assistance given by the Grenadian anti-colonial fighter, T.A. Maryshow, who travelled to Guiana to canvas on behalf of the Labour Party; but they were the better organised group and appeared to the electorate to be the more militant and concerned.

Ten of the prospective representatives lost their two

hundred dollar deposits on failing to win fifteen per cent of the votes cast as the electorate seized the opportunity to dispose of the old guard. Only five of them were returned and of these only one had been a nominated representative.

### **The Political Awakening**

The electorate was accused of being uncharitable to those who had given long service during the challenging twelve year period. Others were happy that those who had for so long treated the electorate with contempt and took access to the constitutional organs for granted had at last been deposed. The top layer of the colonial dispossessed was beginning to impact on electoral politics and was expressing its impatience with those unprepared to confront British policy.

The four candidates affiliated to the PAC all made inroads upon the sectional voting pattern but with the exception of Jagan, their gains were not sufficient, given the absence of universal suffrage, to win a victory on that basis. The nature of Dr Jagan's victory surprised those who believed that there were persons in the colony with an unchallenged right to sit in the Legislative Council. Janet Jagan lost a straight contest with Mr John Fernandes, one of the more substantial members of the Roman Catholic community in Guiana.

Nevertheless two important developments followed firstly, the working people acquired an appreciation of their circumstance that was rooted in the realities of the colonial relationship in general and, specifically, in the underdevelopment and neglect in their own colonial environment. They acquired an understanding of the process of their impoverishment, its genesis, unfolding and consequences. They came to recognise its prosecutors and their collaborators. They also acquired a simple but an effective appreciation of their circumstances within the context of regional poverty and discontent and its relatedness to similar conditions in Africa and South East Asia.

Secondly, the working people's consciousness which was constantly evolving, achieved an understanding, focus and unity of purpose which could not easily be persuaded or rebutted by colonial and plantation officials alike. It was not unusual for some of these so-called illiterate working people to possess a more profound explanation of colonial affairs than their overseers in the fields and their supervisors in the factories and in the offices.

This was one of the factors which explain the difficulties which Colonial Office political manoeuvring encountered in Guiana for the rest of the colonial period. Significantly, it helps to explain the adoption of radical anti-colonial postures by the political moderates in receipt of Colonial Office sponsorship and patronage. The tolerance with which the Colonial Office was forced to accept this conflicting behaviour in the organisations it sponsored indicated a profound awareness of the realities of the political consciousness of the Guianese working people.

In order therefore to understand the kinds of advocacy with which the 1951 Waddington Constitutional Commission, was faced it is necessary to appreciate the impact which the PAC and the WPEO mobilisation had on the people and the socio-cultural organisations to which they belonged. The new perception of the Guianese electorate created problems for leaders of conservative organisations such as the BGEIA, LCP, BGLU, the BGTUC and the MPCA. These organisations

could no longer sustain their manifold excuses for colonial impoverishment. Simultaneously they were also deprived of the old ethnic arguments which they exploited for sectional support and the creation of antagonisms or conflict. They were now confronted with meaningful explanations from the rank and file and were forced to up their game or become meaningless. Social change is, more often than not, gradual and uneven and so it was in Guiana but at its least it produced a new perception of self, a new understanding of the living environment and its current circumstance, a new awareness of the role of the political administration and its overseas source of authority and in sum, an entirely new consciousness of the people as victims; a disadvantaged class with a voice. A few years later agents of the colonial power would deem them 'politically precocious'

The seed of the anti colonial movement had been sowed and would bear generous fruit.



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# Oil And Gas: A Catalyst For Transformation



Guyana is home to the world's largest oil discovery of the past decade. Guyana's economy will grow 47% this year, on top of 20% in 2021 and 43% in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The People's Progressive Party / Civic (PPP/C) government is keen to quickly diversify the economy to avoid the fate of other developing countries that have fallen victim to the Dutch disease and the resource-curse effect; whereby a natural-resources boom triggers a decline in other key sectors.

In Guyana, crude oil production began in December 2019 and ramped up during 2020. Revenues derived from oil production, currently royalties and profit oil, are deposited in the Natural Resource Fund, a sovereign wealth fund that was established to manage the country's natural resource wealth and that can be tapped into to support certain national interests.

Activities, such as national development investments, especially those targeting an inclusive green economy, and to finance natural disaster relief efforts. The 2021 Natural Resource Fund Act, which included several modifications to the original enabling legislation adopted in 2019, stipulates that all petroleum-related revenues – including, but not limited to, royalties, profit oil, income tax and signature bonuses – must be deposited in the fund. By the end of 2020, hydrocarbon revenues deposited in the fund were equivalent to 3.6% of GDP.

While for 2021, the deposits were equivalent to 5.6% of the country's GDP.

The PPP/C government is working to have a major deep-water port to handle a "Panamax" ship. The port would handle agricultural produce, linking not just Guyana but also neighbouring Suriname and northern Brazil with the world market.

## **Offshore Development**

The Liza Destiny FPSO recently completed production optimization work initiated in March that expanded its production capacity to more than 140,000 gross bopd from 120,000 gross bopd previously. It is currently producing 130,000 gross bopd and is expected to reach its full capacity in the second quarter. The Liza Unity FPSO is expected to reach its production capacity of approximately 220,000 gross bopd by the third quarter.

The third development, Payara, will utilize the Prosperity FPSO with an expected capacity of 220,000 gross bopd, with first production now expected in late 2023. In April 2022, Stabroek partners announced it had made the final investment decision to proceed with the Yellowtail development on the Stabroek Block after the development plan received approval from the government of Guyana. Yellowtail, the largest development thus far on the Block, will utilize the ONE GUYANA FPSO, which will develop an estimated gross



resource base of approximately 925 million barrels of oil. The ONE GUYANA FPSO is expected to have a capacity of up to 250,000 gross bopd, with first production expected in 2025. Six drill centres are planned with up to 26 production wells and 25 injection wells.

### **Aligning with Global Climate Goals: Oil and Gas**

a) The PPP/C government intends to use oil and gas revenues to fund increased social and economic investments, most notably in health and education, to enable all Guyanese to reach higher standards of living and wellbeing, as was committed to in the PPP/C Manifesto. In the short-term, education investments will be key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Then over time, while basic education provision will be strengthened, it will be augmented by new support for technical and vocational skills, with a particular focus on strengthening digital skills. Investment in healthcare not only saves lives, but it also helps with investment in the wider economy, so hospitals will be improved, and new staff capabilities will be developed.

Support for diversification of the economy by supporting non-oil sectors and supporting development all across Guyana. This will involve support for physical infrastructure – including river, road, and air transport networks; the national digital connectivity network; and repairing coastal and Hinterland climate protection infrastructure. It will also involve targeted support for agricultural expansion in non-forested parts of Guyana to enable the country to become self-sufficient in key agricultural products, as well as an exporter to the region and beyond.

In ensuring a domestic low-carbon transition, this PPP/C government intends to achieve ambitious domestic targets to maintain its position as a net-zero economy, prioritising action on forests, low-carbon energy, and transportation. In summary, Guyana's non-forest emissions can continue to stay low as the country grows its economy, while the forest will continue to sequester carbon and sustain the country's status as a net absorber of carbon. With the right economic incentives, ecosystem services can provide an at-scale diversification opportunity for Guyana, reducing the need to pursue high-carbon economic pathways.

Participating in a global low-carbon transition: The majority of Guyana's oil and gas will be sold in the global marketplace. The Government believes that this market needs to develop in alignment with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, specifically, to stabilise global

temperature increases at less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

### **Tax on Flaring**

Globally, gas flaring – which results from the burning of gas in connection with oil production – causes more than 300 million tonnes of carbon dioxide to be emitted every year. If this was used to produce energy, it would generate enough electricity to supply the entirety of the African continent's current annual demand. The PPP/C government is implementing a "no flaring" policy, except in the case of commissioning of new FPSOs and genuine emergencies. This will be done in a phased way.

When the current Government took office in 2020, there were no safeguards in place to disallow flaring. As a result, the Government implemented one of the very few taxes on flaring in the world – where beyond the commissioning period, all flaring will be taxed at US\$45 per tonne of carbon, along with a payment for the actual gas lost.

In parallel, new measures have been introduced to ensure that all waste management is the responsibility of the oil producer, from "cradle to grave".

### **Guyana's Policy Position**

Guyana supports the achievement of Net Zero by the 2050 target, including the more short-term target of a 28% reduction in global oil demand by 2030. To be effective, global policies to achieve these targets need to be fair, economically rational and based on science.

Fairness requires that the oil industry – which is worth US\$3-4 trillion every year - should not just be for the benefit of incumbents, particularly when those incumbents are already very wealthy. The world's largest oil producer – the United States of America - has a per capital income of US\$65,000 – about ten times that of Guyana. If Guyana were to prematurely forego oil and gas revenues, it would simply mean a continuation of a de facto monopoly where incumbents would meet demand and benefit from the industry which will be worth trillions of dollars for decades to come. It would also mean that Guyana would remain poor and unable to invest in lifting the living standards of its people. Rather than expecting supplier countries to forego opportunities by leaving to incumbents, predictable global policies are needed.



### **Guyana's Energy Transition – Sustainable Energy Mix Natural Gas**

To use natural gas for power generation, the following investments are needed: a pipeline to bring the natural gas to shore, a processing plant to separate the Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) and the natural gas, and a gas-fired power plant. Several studies have confirmed that the natural gas option would reduce the cost of generation. The Government is currently undertaking the detailed studies and the financing structuring for the Power Plant. It is anticipated that a 250MW gas-fired power plant will be constructed and in operation in 2024.

Additionally, the planned offshore pipeline is designed to provide larger amounts of gas. In case new discoveries are made, the natural gas could be used for other industrial activities. In the short term, the natural gas will provide the needed firm capacity at a lower generation cost compared to the other indigenous renewable energy options in Guyana which are available and to the DBIS area. The development of the solar, wind, hydropower and biomass technologies is a key priority for the future energy sector in Guyana.

### **Renewable Energy**

Solar and wind are intermittent energy resources, which cannot provide firm capacity unless battery storage is added. Hydropower and biomass resources are variable throughout the year, but in both cases the resource can be stored; and with good planning, batteries are not needed to consider the output as firm.

In Guyana, solar energy, wind, and hydropower are good complementary resources. Solar energy is available during daylight hours, peaking at noon, while wind is stronger during evening hours and at nights. Wind is lower during the wet seasons, while hydropower is fully available.

### **Utility-Scale Hydropower**

Hydropower has the potential to provide Guyana with both utility-scale and small-scale capacity. While natural gas provides a solution, over the medium and long term the most sustainable and resilient energy mix in Guyana would be formed by solar, wind, hydro, and biomass power plants. Within the renewable energy resources available in Guyana, hydro will be important to provide firm capacity and short-term energy storage to compensate for daily and weekly fluctuations from solar and wind. Hydro power will provide, in the long-term, a cheaper solution than any other technology, due to its long lifespan.

Guyana has a potential for 8.5 Gigawatt (GW) of hydropower on 33 hydropower plants (including storage capacity and run-of-river). It is anticipated that Guyana will build two hydro plants over the next 20 years: Amaila Falls and another which is still to be identified. Of the potential 33 sites, many were assessed in the 70s and 80s, when environmental and social standards were lower. It is anticipated that the new site will be identified by 2025, with the goal of providing 370MW of capacity by 2035 and a further 150MW of capacity by 2040. In the meantime, Amaila Falls will be the focus of the hydropower programme.

### **Solar Photovoltaic (PV)**

Solar photovoltaic (PV) is close to being established as a mature technology in the country. Local prices are in-line with developed countries and local technology providers have the capacity to supply, install and operate on-grid and off-grid.

By 2023, the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated will have its first solar on-grid PV farm in the county of Berbice with a total capacity of 10 megawatts-peak (MWp) financed by the Guyana-Norway Partnership. This solar PV farm will generate one percent of the total energy demand in DBIS. The Government has secured US\$75 million funding – including US\$63 million from the Guyana-Norway partnership - to implement 27.8MWp capacity of solar PV farms in eight different grids to convert those grids in hybrid systems. Those systems will

be in operation by 2023 and by then Essequibo coast, Linden, Bartica, Lethem, Mabaruma, Mahdia, Leguan and Wakenaam grids will have an average of 30 percent of their electricity consumed generated by solar PV.

In a second phase of the programme for the Hinterland grids, there is a planned increase of the Renewable Energy share to an average of 50 percent. Solar PV with battery storage will be the main renewable energy resource on the regional grids.

### **Wind**

Guyana's coast is exposed to the steady Northeast trade winds. A private developer has installed a tower with a wind speed data logger to measure the potential to install large wind turbines. The project is expected to provide 25MW of power.

Plans are in place to conduct wind measurements along the coast and at Leguan. The measures taken in the other locations together with the practical experience from the 25MW wind farm installation will inform the design of the future wind programme.

### **Small Hydro – Isolated Grids**

Guyana is currently implementing three small hydropower projects: a 150kW in Kato, the rehabilitation of Moco-Moco hydropower site, which would increase

the capacity up to 0.7MW and a new 1.5MW hydropower plant in Kumu. Moco-Moco and Kumu hydropower projects will provide energy to the Lethem grid. It is expected those two projects, in combination with an ongoing solar PV project, will provide the Lethem grid with 100% renewable energy in 2023. Other small hydro projects will be pursued to provide energy to the regional grids as well as Hinterland villages.

### **Support for New Technology**

The PPP/C government will continue dialogue with oil producers to ensure that, alongside the above measures, exploration and production operations continue to explore all possibilities for lower carbon technological innovation – including the use of renewable energy in oil production, Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) and, – when technologically viable – green hydrogen.

In moving forward, the Government of Guyana remains vigilant and committed to ensuring the benefits of Guyana's petroleum resources benefit all Guyanese paving the way for a thriving future for generations ahead. This PPP/C government will continue to strengthen Guyana as a petroleum-producing country, while at the same time be guided by good international oil field practices for effective and efficient governance.



*Vickram Bharrat, MP is the Minister of Natural Resources. He is a graduate of the University of Guyana in Computer Science and Public Management. He is also a member of the Central and Executive Committees of the People's Progressive Party.*

# Guyana's Independence in Perspective



Guyanese recently observed 56 years as an independent state, after over 150 years of British colonial rule. It is important to put the independence struggle in its historical context especially in light of divergent, and in some cases conflicting narratives of the contributions made by our political leaders, both prior to and during the course of the conferral of independence status by Britain.

It is true that political independence was granted to the country under the PNC-UF coalition headed by Forbes Burnham but that did not in any way negate the reactionary role he played, in collaboration with western vested interests, to deny political independence to the then colony under the Jagan-led PPP administration. Indeed, the records will show that Britain, under pressure from the United States, deliberately denied independence to the colony, despite an undertaking by the British Government to grant independence to whichever party became victorious in the 1961 general elections. The PPP won that election with a clear parliamentary majority but the British Government reneged on its promise.

Although winning the 1961 elections with a comfortable majority (20 out of 35 seats) the PPP was denied the opportunity of leading the country to independence status on the grounds of political instability and violence. It must be mentioned that immediately after the PPP victory, a campaign of hostility was launched by the opposition. The PNC filed a series of petitions against PPP candidates. Burnham refused to take up two senate seats allocated to the PNC by the then Governor.

According to the constitution, three of the eight seats were to be allocated to the opposition. Burnham insisted on his party being allocated all three seats

and objected vigorously to the allocation of one to the United Force. At a meeting held at the Parade Ground, he attacked the Governor, using uncomplimentary language. A resolution was later passed calling for the Governor's recall. In a show of defiance, Burnham and other legislators squatted in front of the Public Buildings and had to be bodily lifted out of the way before the Governor could make his entry. All of that, however, paled into insignificance when compared to the rioting, looting and destruction of lives and property that took place during that period.

The 1962 Report of a Riot Commission found that 'the political professions of the PNC were somewhat vague and amorphous. The real motive force behind Mr. Burnham's assault...was a desire to assert himself in public life and establish a more important and rewarding position for himself.'

The disturbances and violence failed to bring down the PPP government but it did result in the forestalling of independence and provided the basis for the imposition of a constitutional and electoral formula designed to bring the opposition to power which correlated with an Anglo-American plan to prevent the PPP from continuing in office. This was corroborated by columnist Drew Pearson who wrote:

"The United States permitted Cuba to go communist through default and diplomatic bungling. The problem now is to look ahead and make sure we don't make the same mistake again. We are already on the way to making it in Haiti. But in British Guiana, President Kennedy having been badly burnt in the Bay of Pigs operation, did look head'. According to Pearson, President Kennedy was to visit Rome and Bonn in the summer of 1963 but London was added to the itinerary because of Kennedy's haunting worry that British Guiana will get its independence from England in July 1963 and set up another communist government under the guidance of Fidel Castro.'

Pearson went on to state that 'it wasn't in the communique issued by the United States and England after the Kennedy-Macmillan meeting but the main thing they agreed on was that the British would refuse to grant independence to Guiana because of the general strike against pro-communist Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan.'

It is now a historical fact that the disturbances and strikes were secretly inspired by a combination of US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and British intelligence in collaboration with local reactionary forces to forestall a Jagan-led PPP government from leading the country to political independence. In an article published by the Insight Team (Sunday Times, London, April 1967) it was reported: "As coups go, it was not expensive; over five years the CIA paid out something like 250,000 pounds. For the colony of British Guiana, the result was about 150 dead, untold hundreds wounded, roughly 10 million pounds worth in damages to the economy and a legacy of racial bitterness."

The team implicated former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, former Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys and other British officials working in the colony. It was observed that not all British officials were happy with what the British were doing regarding the manipulation of the local political situation.

Actually, Britain was caught in a dilemma. It had agreed in principle to grant political independence to the colony at the 1960 Constitutional Conference within two years of the holding of general elections. Not wanting to dishonor its pledge, and faced with US pressure to withhold independence, it teamed up with the CIA in fermenting strikes and disturbances in order to create the impression that Guiana, torn by racial strife, was not ready for independence.

That the British succumbed to US arm-twisting to deny independence to British Guiana was highlighted by a report of the New York Times when it reported that the British Government, bowing to United States wishes, had ruled out early independence for British Guiana and was going ahead with the Proportional Representation (PR) system of election fixed for December. This development, the paper said, came after high-level British-American exchanges on how to check the spread of Castroism in the western hemisphere.

It is against the background of the Cold War that internal political processes assumed meaning and significance, especially from an Anglo-American perspective. Put differently, the characteristics of the exercise of power in what was perceived to be a US sphere of influence, together with the susceptibility of US policy processes to anti-communism enabled the opposition forces to externalize an essentially internal conflict with a view to destabilizing and ultimately preventing the democratically elected PPP government from continuing



in office.

There was no concealing the fact that the United States, and Britain, had displayed a preference to the PNC over the PPP because of perceived political and ideological reasons. This was spelt out by Arthur Schlesinger (Jr.) presidential advisor to President Kennedy in his book "A Thousand Days" when he wrote:

"Then in May 1962 Burnham came to Washington. He appeared an intelligent self-possessed reasonable man, insisting quite firmly on his "socialism" and "neutralism" but stoutly anti-communist...In the meantime, events had convinced us that Jagan, though perhaps not a disciplined communist, had that kind of deep pro-communist emotion which only sustained experience with communism could cure; and the United States could not afford the Sekou Toure therapy when it involved a quasi-communist regime on the mainland of Latin America. Burnham's visit left the feeling, as I reported to the President, that "an independent British Guiana under Burnham (if Burnham would commit himself to a multi-racial policy) would cause us many fewer problems than an independent British Guiana under Jagan. And the way was open to bring it about because Jagan's parliamentary strength was larger than his popular strength. He had won 57% of the seats on the basis of 42.7% of the votes. An obvious solution would be to establish a system of proportional representation."

It was not by accident, therefore, that elections announced for 1964 were held under a new system of proportional representation. Commenting on the matter, the New York Daily News (October 31, 1964) wrote as follows; " Britain's government cagily fixed up a system of voting by proportional representation with a view to butchering the Jagan's out of power and put their pro-western political opponents in before Guiana is granted full independence by Britain. The plan seems to have worked'.

The change in the electoral system from the conventional

first-past-the post constituency system to the list system was widely criticized. In a debate in the House of Commons, in June 1964, Mr. Harold Wilson, then Leader of the Opposition Labour Party, described the electoral change as a "fiddled constitutional arrangement" and urged a review by a Commonwealth Team. And Arthur Bottomley, Shadow Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary described the move as one "riddled with disadvantages which is quite unknown in any other Commonwealth country".

It would not be possible in this short article to deal adequately with all the nuances and intrigues that led to the deferral of political independence except to say that the period antecedent to the granting of independence was marked by political and ethnic disturbances engineered by the then political opposition, aided and abetted by foreign vested interests. According to Arthur Schlesinger Jnr. then presidential advisor to President Kennedy, the United States blundered when it proceeded on the assumption that an independent Guyana under Forbes Burnham would cause the United States fewer problems than an independent Guyana under Cheddi Jagan who was perceived as a 'leftist' with strong 'communist' leanings. He later apologized to Dr. Jagan and acknowledged that an injustice was done to Dr. Jagan and the Guyanese people.

To say that the United States miscalculated on their assessment of Dr. Jagan and the PPP is to put it mildly. Whatever else can be said about Dr. Jagan, he was essentially a democrat with a strong passion for independence and national development. Indeed, it was that unyielding passion for an independent Guyana that led him to place his trust in the British government to come up with an electoral formula after a deadlock had been reached by the three main political parties, the PPP, the PNC and the United Force. The hope was that the British government would have abided with the constituency model as obtained in Great Britain and the other colonies that constituted the British Commonwealth.

In the end, the British Government went along with

the opposition demands and imposed a system of proportional representation. Elections held in 1964 under the PR model saw a PNC-UF coalition government despite the fact that the PPP won the plurality of votes and in keeping with parliamentary norms should have been asked to form the government.

All of that is now, as it were, water under the bridge, and after twenty-eight years of PNC dictatorial rule, democracy was finally restored to Guyana and Dr. Jagan and the PPP/C was duly elected to office on October 5, 1992. In a real sense, Guyana for the first time since national independence began to breathe the fresh air of democracy and freedom.

In an interesting twist of history, it was the United States that was instrumental in the return of democracy through the Carter Centre, a role it again felt compelled to repeat some three decades later after the APNU+AFC again attempted, unsuccessfully, to subvert democracy in the country in the March 2, 2020 general and regional elections

Regardless of what some opposition elements may wish to say, Dr. Jagan has been widely regarded as the main architect of the independence struggle in Guyana. He has been credited as the first and only colonial leader to have been granted permission to address the United Nations Committee on De-colonization, an indication of his grit, determination and passion for a free, united and independent Guyana.

As we pay tribute to our leaders who rallied around the cause for independence, we owe a special debt of gratitude to our heroes in particular Dr. Jagan. The country has come a far way in terms of political and economic independence but we have to continue to be vigilant and watchful in order to ensure that our hard-won gains are not put at risk at the hands of political opportunists and those intent on obtaining political power by undemocratic and fraudulent means.



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# Areas for investment in Guyana's Agriculture Sector - The Journey to 'Vision 25 by 2025'

With the enormous and unwavering support and participation from CARICOM Heads of State, Regional policymakers, and investors from across the world, for the recently concluded Agri Investment Forum and Expo which was held in Georgetown, Guyana from May 19 to 21, at the Arthur Chung Conference Center, one thing is clear; Guyana is ripe and ready to catapult its agriculture sector.

Guyana has always been keen on promoting agricultural development in the region. These aspirations were however given a backseat with the discovery of oil and gas and a change in political rule. Fast forward to 2022 and yet another change in political leadership, Guyana is once again sounding the call for agricultural development across the region.

Global leaders and policymakers have been working to achieve and maintain global food and nutrition security mostly through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal Two – Zero Hunger.

More recently in the region, Caribbean leaders have also been working assiduously to utilize their resources

to develop their agriculture sectors. These efforts were bolstered by the energetic action of Guyana's President, His Excellency, Dr. Irfaan Ali, who also serves as the lead spokesperson for agriculture in CARICOM in his address at the 32nd CARICOM Heads of Government meeting last February. At that meeting he spoke to the urgent need for CARICOM leaders to prioritize regional food production and food security.

The Head of State also underscored the need for all of CARICOM to collectively take steps to reduce the growing food import bill by facilitating agricultural development, investment, and the removal of barriers to trade in the region.

This call by President Ali, was supported by the member states and gave birth to the 'Vision 25 by 2025' Initiative. The 'Vision 25 by 2025' Initiative seeks to reduce the almost US \$5 billion CARICOM food import bill by 25% by the year 2025. A Special Ministerial Taskforce which is headed by Guyana's Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Zulfikar Mustapha, was subsequently established to guide the regional position towards the transformation



Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha (left) and FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean Dr. Julio A. Berdegue after signing the agreement

of the agri-food system allowing for a significantly more resilient, wealth-generating, and food secure region.

With a fresh outlook on what is needed to further develop Guyana and the role agriculture plays in securing the future of its citizens, the government through the Ministry of Agriculture has outlined several areas for investment in the agriculture sector.

Already, the government has invested in opening new farm-to-market roads; clearing and preparation of new lands; expanding the infrastructure in the intermediate savannahs; expanding drainage and irrigation networks to make new land available for small, medium, and mega-farms; strengthening extension services through additional and improved facilities; enhancing traceability and certification services to reduce existing trade barriers; research and development; and coordinating and facilitating private sector participation in agriculture-based tourism.

Specifically, several incentives are being offered for investing in agriculture businesses such as waivers of import duty and Value Added Tax (VAT) on a wide range of machinery and equipment for land preparation and cultivation including agricultural hand tools; tax concessions on Investment in agro-processing facilities, cold storage, and packaging; waivers of import duty and VAT on agro-processing equipment; waivers of import duty on a wide range of agrochemicals (e.g. insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, etc.) and; tax-deductible allowances for expenditures incurred for development and cultivation purposes.

### **Areas for Investment in Guyana's Agriculture Sector**

With its vast tracts of arable lands – both on its coastal

plains as well as its intermediate and hinterland savannah, Guyana offers the unique opportunity for large-scale agriculture undertakings in every area of endeavor, be it crops or livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, agro-processing and other forms of value-added production, etc.

The lush tropical climate coupled with thousands of acres of fertile virgin lands offers the perfect environment for sustainable agriculture.

Guyana has managed to maintain the status of an agriculture powerhouse across the region and now that the government has plans to expand, investors are now being invited to take advantage of all there is to offer from Guyana's very lucrative agriculture sector.

### **Rice**

Rice production has been at the helm of Guyana's agriculture sector for decades. As time passed, the government has been taking the necessary steps to ensure advances are made in this sector. Over the years new varieties with improved qualities have been developed and put into cultivation. These varieties have been specially developed to be more resistant to pests and diseases and produce higher yields. Investments in critical research in this area have so far resulted in the national average moving from 35 bags per acre to as much as 55 bags per acre.

Guyana has also partnered with IICA on the cultivation of a biofortified rice variety. Although still in the trial phase, this variety promises to be a game-changer as it has a higher percentage of zinc – one of the only trace minerals considered a major player in the creation of DNA, growth of cells, building proteins, healing of damaged tissue and







supporting a healthy immune system. Once commercial production commences, this variety will attract premium prices on the world market.

### **High-value crops**

On returning to office in 2020, the government, in examining what were some of the main commodities being imported into Guyana and the need to make agriculture attractive to the younger population, began working on a plan. In January, President Ali launched the 'Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Initiative'. This Initiative targets youths from across the country and creates an enabling environment for them to cultivate high-value crops such as carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower and utilizes climate-smart agricultural practices such as the use of shadehouses. To date, 54 shadehouses have been constructed. Markets for these commodities are also readily available and the programme has been extremely successful.

### **Corn and Soya Bean**

Corn and soya beans are two of the main sources of protein found in animal feed. As Guyana moves forward with the development of its livestock sector, steps have been taken to be able to produce most if not all of the feed needed to support this sector locally by 2025.

A successful project is currently underway in the Tacama Savannahs in Region 10 – with a local conglomerate realizing a successful harvest from its first trial.

In its efforts to support this project, the government has allocated 887 million dollars to upgrade the infrastructure such as roads, storage, and drying facilities to support the efforts of the investors in the intermediate savannahs.

### **Livestock**

Great advances have also been made in Guyana's livestock sector. More emphasis is now being placed on the production of improved breeds of cattle to supply the local and regional markets with required cuts of meats,

milk, and other dairy products. Attention is also being placed on improved breeds of poultry, swine, sheep, and goat given the growing demand for chicken, duck, pork, mutton, and goat meats.

The government continues to support these efforts through the provision of artificial insemination services and other genetic material.

Government has also advanced plans for the construction of state-of-the-art abattoirs in three regions of the country to support the development of the sector and meet the quality standards expected.

### **Coconuts**

In 2022, Guyana exported more than \$2.5 billion worth of coconuts and coconut by-products. This represents a 600 million dollar increase over the year 2020.

The Hope Coconut Industries Ltd is tasked with spearheading the advancement of the sector by providing farmers across the country with quality planting materials mainly through the decentralization of its coconut seedling programme. Already, seven nurseries have been established and by the end of 2022, an additional three nurseries will be built, bringing HCIL's annual production capacity to 206,000 seedlings.

Other non-traditional crops such as cocoa and coffee, ginger, and turmeric are grown in Guyana's hinterland and are also being targeted for expansion.

### **Agro-processing**

A relatively new and thriving sub-sector focused on extending the shelf-life and adding value to traditional agricultural produce and providing local alternatives to products that were previously imported, Guyana's agro-processing sector has the potential to be one of the largest and most prominent in the region.

In 2022, an amount of 96 million dollars will be spent to establish a number of agro-processing and packaging facilities across the country, in providing critical post-harvest and handling facilities for produce, be it fruits, vegetables, sauces, or cosmetics.

### **Fisheries and Aquaculture**

The expanding aquaculture industry has also been taking center stage given the growing demand for seafood native to Guyana's waters in the diaspora. Brackish water shrimp farming has been given a major boost with the establishment of large shrimp ponds as part of phase one of a government-supported initiative to increase the production of this species.

Through this intervention, brackish water shrimp production has moved from 250,000 kilograms mid last year to more than 500,000 kilograms currently.

Plans are moving apace for the introduction of deep-sea aquaculture, through the use of marine cages as a climate change adaptation strategy, to the reported decrease in catches experienced both locally and globally.

Because of the international demand for shrimp and prawns, work is also underway to identify and develop some 2,000 acres of land for shrimp farming.

Several large local farmers have already started work on the establishment of processing facilities to bring even more value to the sector.

### Sugar

Unlike other countries in the region, Guyana continues to work towards the revitalization of its sugar industry – investing heavily in the re-fitting and re-opening of closed sugar factories – with the aim of not only producing raw brown sugar, but expanding in the direction of value-added production – packaged sugar and later refined white sugar – a lucrative opportunity for partnership is on offer in this sector especially as it relates to the white sugar production.

### Creating an enabling environment

The Government of Guyana, cognizant that Private Sector buy-in is paramount to developing any sector, declared the country open for business in areas such as agriculture. Apart from investing in critical infrastructure, research, and development to complement the growth of the agriculture sector, the President Ali-led government has also worked to reduce red tapes which have, for years, deterred investments in Guyana. Steps have since been taken to simplify the business registration, licensing, and land titling processes, with more information being made available online along with certain services being decentralized.

Many red tapes and other hurdles that were in place prior to August 2020 have been removed thus creating an enabling environment for doing business in Guyana. Through the Guyana Office for Investment, public-private dialogue has also been enhanced. The Guyana National Bureau of Standards, an ISO 9001:2015 certified agency, has also worked to promote and develop appropriate quality standards. Improvements have also been made to tax policies and CARICOM heads of state are currently working to develop a regional system to facilitate better access to financing.

With the government taking the first steps towards expanding the industry, the time to invest in Guyana's agriculture sector is now.



A local farmer engages Agriculture Minister, Zulfikar Mustapha, at a farm in Laluni



*Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha, MP is currently the Minister of Agriculture and the Executive Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. He has a degree in Management from the University of the West Indies. He is also a member of the Central and Executive Committees of the PPP.*

# The Russia/Ukraine War: What Will Its End Look Like?



The world is on the cusp of a transition to a new world order.

The event that has triggered movement in the direction of the transition is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Russia/Ukraine war.

That war is not just a war between two countries, nor is it simply a European war. To take that view, is to do so from a narrow and not holistic perspective. All thirty NATO countries including the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada are involved, one way or another in that war. The war between Russia/Ukraine has all the features of a proxy world war. The principal aim is to punish, and if possible, defeat Russia militarily, weaken it financially and destroy it economically in the light of its invasion of Ukraine.

The stark objectives of Russia's enemies aside, because of the nature of the war, it has the potential to change the course of history ushering in a new world order. But the fundamental question is; what will this new world order look like?

Will it be an order that will see the continued

domination, if not the strengthening of monopoly capitalism and liberal democracy world-wide?

Or will we see the emergence of a new global human order where the extant world order, characterized by a NATO-driven military industrial complex with all its attendant features, replaced by a more humane order with certain socialist features as well as with key elements of people-centered development, a greater concentration of efforts to bring an end to poverty, hunger and underdevelopment and the ushering in of prosperity for all and not a few?

Many of us have called for an end to the Russia/Ukraine war and for a return to diplomatic efforts to bring about a political/diplomatic solution to the conflict. But what will be the nature of this 'end' we are calling for? What will be the outcome of the diplomatic solution we so fervently seek? We have not made clear the answer to that question.

The point is, we should not stop there. The worlds' progressive, democratic forces, possess both the intellectual, visionary, political and ideological tools to define and articulate what is this end to the war that we seek and what its characteristic features should be like.

We should not find ourselves calling for an end to the war just for the sake of calling its end. Nor should we seek its end merely as a means to another unknown end where we will end up jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Our task must be to seek an end as a means to the establishment of a new global human order. The end we seek, must be an end to open up vistas to serve a just cause for the oppressed, stateless, hungry and malnourished children and peoples around the world.

Many of us might not live to see the what this new global human order would look like, but the least we can do is to articulate a vision of what the new global human would look like. Our lofty aspirations aside, it is to be regretted that today, world peace is threatened by a new breed of 'peace fighters' who, because of their anti-Russia and inherent anti-communist positions, they have the potential to lose their way in the wave of anti-Russia peace demonstrations taking place around the world. In this way, the newly-minted peace fighters may end up losing whatever remains of their influence and credibility in the peace movement and eventually, on the wrong side of history.

The peace movement of today is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from what it was during the period 1940's to 1970's. In this connection, the struggle for peace has been significantly weakened with the decline of national peace committees as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic and the penetration of liberal democratic values within national peace organizations.

Today, the concept of peace has assumed a sharp anti-communist edge. In other words, nowadays, anything or anyone spouting anti-Russian or anti-communist sentiments against Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be considered a peace fighter. Therefore, in the context of the current global dispensation, this appears to be the new qualification to be a peace fighter.

It will be interesting to see how the aforementioned dynamics will play out at the next NATO Summit scheduled to be held in June this year in Madrid, Spain as well as at the next G20 Summit scheduled to be held in Bali, Indonesia in October this year.

The peace-loving, progressive and democratic forces the world over view the anti-Russia/anti-communist anti-war narrative with deep suspicion. They should not be blamed for adopting such positions.

The struggle against this narrative at home and abroad must be fought on several fronts. In the meanwhile, we must continue to advocate in favour of the struggle for freedom, development and world peace. We must exert every effort to link these questions to our own national peculiarities and interests. Efforts must be made to encourage others in mass organizations as well as outstanding Guyanese personalities belonging to academia, trade unions, environmentalists, journalists, artists and retired diplomats to join in the struggle.

We must remain committed to the struggle to ensure that the Caribbean remain a Zone of Peace.



*Clement J. Rohee was former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Foreign Trade and then Minister of Home Affairs. Mr. Rohee is an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive and was a former General Secretary. He is the President of the Guyana Peace Council.*

# The struggle of the Enmore Martyrs revisited



June 16th marks 74 years since the events of Enmore in which 5 sugar workers lost their lives. The struggle has been well documented and ever since had become a rallying point for workers in the sugar industry, reminding them and others about the sacrifice of those workers for better working and living conditions.

The Enmore Martyrs struggle became a catalyst for the Jagans and the PAC in the period of the 40's, in which the people of the former British Guiana was reeling under the effects of the 2nd World War and the harsh conditions under which they were living.

Trade Unionists such as Ashton Chase, Cheddi Jagan, historians C.F.Andrews and Basdeo Mangru among others have written extensively about the conditions of the working class and the numerous actions taken by them to wrest concessions from the sugar plantocracy.

The rise and fall of industries and economies will continue to occur bringing with its demise tremendous upheaval and displacement in the lives of those who have depended on that source of income. Bookers Guyana and British Guiana were synonymous with the production of sugar for export. Those who were brought to this country either as slaves or indentured workers came for that purpose. How they worked and lived were not the immediate concern of the plantocracy. The workers had to engage in continuous struggle for improved conditions.

When slavery was abolished in 1834 a number of slaves left the estates to begin a new life in the villages. However, many stayed on the estates and worked for wages as cane cutters, fork men and the creole gangs among other tasks.

In his book "A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana" Ashton Chase traced the difficulties which emerged when the freed slaves and the new wage earners who were brought to the plantations as indentured servants from India were used as a ploy by the plantocracy. While the relationship may not have been a good one in the beginning; over time both groups started to realize that they need to work together in order to get better conditions at work.

The workers resistance to their harsh conditions, along with the involvement of trade unionists and politicians, helped to promote their cause in and out of Guyana.

The massacre of Enmore in 1948 was the catalyst for change. It was a red letter day in the struggle of sugar workers to win respect from the sugar producers to recognize a trade union in which the sugar workers had confidence; and to bring about substantial changes in housing and other social and working conditions in the sugar industry.

According to Ashton Chase "the Enmore Martyrs did not die in vain. The glorious struggle of the East Coast sugar

workers under the inspiring leadership of Dr & Mrs. Jagan and Dr. Latchman Singh was still to be crowned with important advances on several fronts. It is the heroic struggle of these workers that sugar workers everywhere owe so much. The vast improvement in housing in the sugar estates and other social amenities, and certain changes in the working conditions owe their derivation to the Enmore strike”.

In October, 1948 the Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed a Commission to enquire into and report on the organization of the sugar industry in British Guiana. The Commission was known as the Venn Commission. The Commission recommended the following:

That crèches should be provided on each estate and tasks in the field so arranged that the women have the opportunity of returning home to prepare meals and look after their children.

That women and girls should as soon as possible, be prevented by Ordinance from working in water; and that so long as a considerable number of women were employed in field work, their gangs should be placed under the charge of women.

That fresh water be supplied aback, and that shelters be built at the back dams for protection against rain and to provide a place where the workers could take their meals. Hitherto, such shelters only existed for overseers.

That roads be constructed on which the workers would comfortably travel to the fields that were several miles back; “Slushy dams” were criticized. The drudgery of walking several miles impaired the workers freshness for work and their readiness for recreation when the day’s work was over.

That better social amenities for Factory workers be provided. For example the provision of bathrooms. Some of the factory workers used to bathe in the canals. The latrines were used for both men and women.

That there be adequate inspection of factories and that machines be properly guarded.

That the Workmen’s Compensation Ordinance be amended so as to specifically accord recognition to the claims of unmarried wives and of illegitimate children. In marital conditions prevailing here where the majority of partnerships lacked official or religious sanction, the existing practice constituted an extreme hardship. (The Workmen’s Compensation Ordinance was amended by Ordinance No 14 of 1947 effective from January 1948 to bring agricultural workers within its provisions. The specific recommendation as to illegimates made by this Commission was brought into force by Ordinance No. 11 of 1960 by the PPP government).

That notwithstanding that the Education Ordinance of 1946 had prohibited child labour, further measures should be taken to prevent the unemployment of child labour in the sugar industry.

That the title “Drivers” be changed to “Headmen” all of whom should be recruited from workers ranks and should be educationally capable of controlling and instructing a Labour Force, with opportunity to qualify for higher positions.

That regular inspections should be undertaken by the Medical Department. Their inspectors should investigate and report upon housing, water supply and sanitation.

That plots of land be provided for regular workers for ground provisions and rice growing, - the former to be not too close to the houses and the latter at least once acre in extent.

That the Imperial Government give a subsidy of a pound per ton of sugar produced in this country, guaranteed for a period of 15 years subject to reviews. This recommendation was based on the relative cost of production.

That there be a clearance of all “ranges” and rehousing of sugar workers by the end of 1953.

That pending demolition, the ranges should be made weather proof.

On the issues of “cut and Load” versus “cut and drop” the Commission favoured the former but conceded that the system of “cut and drop” where there was an insufficient supply of punts.

For all these and other recommendations which when put in force improved the lot of sugar workers, it is to the GIWU that credit must be given.

Growing up in a sugar estate where both parents worked in the estate, I can attest to some of the measures which were put in place. The crèche helped to alleviate the suffering and plight of the children of the sugar workers who left their children unattended. I recall the one in Enmore where our elder brothers took us and we were left in charge of the house mother who made sure that we all had to do a lot of the menial work in the facility. Nonetheless, it was a bit more comforting for the parents.

Some workers who were allocated land after the Venn Commission benefitted from the plot of land for housing and an acre for farm land and rice cultivation. In Enmore only 60 workers in Haslington benefitted at that time for the arrangement.

Housing was a big problem for the workers and some of

them benefitted from the SILWF loan of \$3000 dollars which were deducted from their weekly wages. Only two person out of the 60 were recipient of that loan.

The formation of the PPP in 1950 and the winning of Adult Suffrage in 1953 became the turning point for the whole country. The PPP Manifesto of 1953 was one that promised to undertake a whole new set of measures which were intended to improve the lives of the people.

were still a British colony and there were many battles which had to be waged. However, the sacrifice of the Enmore Martyrs and the recommendations of the Venn Commission helped to improve the conditions of the workers.

Even though the majority of workers wanted a change of their unions, the PNC regime dragged its feet and used every trick in the book to delay that recognition and it



Unfortunately, even though the PPP won 18 out of 24 seats in the National Assembly they were only allowed to stay in power for 133 days after which the government was removed, the leaders jailed and an interim goverment was installed from 1953 until 1957.

National elections were held in 1957 which was won by the PPP and Mrs. Jagan became the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing. The establishment of a Contributory Pension Scheme was further recommended by the Venn Commission which should have been introduced one year after the Wages Board but by 1961 it had not materialized.

Although the PPP was in office the power resided with the Governor General and Her Majesty Government. We

was only through strike action when negotiations failed that the government gave some concessions.

Sugar, once the backbone of the economy and the largest provider of jobs began to whittle away because of the closure of some factories. The workers who had depended on sugar for their livelihood were forced to eke out a living by undertaking whatever jobs are available even away from their homes. The lesson for us all is that we should never be dependent on one source of livelihood only but always look for alternatives early enough so that workers do not have to go on the proverbial "bread line" A new chapter in the lives of sugar workers is being written 74 years after the Enmore Martyrs.



*Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal is the President of the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) and a member of the Central Committee of the People's Progressive Party. She is also the Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission and the Administrator of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.*



# Constitutional Developments In Colonial British Guiana: From Dutch Inherited System To Crown Colony Government



## INTRODUCTION

*Articles of Capitulation on which a country is surrendered, and the peace by which it is ceded, are sacred and inviolable according to their true interest and meaning.*

The former Dutch Colonies of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice were finally ceded to the British through conquest in 1803. Formal cession was effected by the 1814 Treaty of Paris and in 1831 the three colonies were united into the "Colony of British Guiana" with Sir Benjamin Durban as its first Governor.

As a consequence, the British inherited the Dutch System of government - a system which was to remain in force for a long time. Such a situation was allowed to persist largely through Article One of the 1803 Capitulation Treaty which stated that the colonists were to retain the existing laws, customs and political institutions. This in effect meant that "the laws and usages of the Colony shall remain in force and be respected, the mode of taxation be adhered to and that no new establishments should be introduced without the consent of the Court of Policy as the Legislature of the Colony."

A rather strict interpretation of this peculiar provision leads to the conclusion that the Crown "had precluded itself from exercising any right, which under English law she was entitled to exercise, in relation to conquered territories, and that the Crown had no authority to legislate for Guyana.' No doubt, it was the very nature of the inheritance that assured planter class dominance of

political power and which led to our constitution being referred to as " unique in the Empire."

For the most part, only minor amendments in governmental structure and administration were made and these came mainly through various Orders-in-Council. It was not until 1891 that some significant change was made to the constitution of British Guiana.

## GOVERNMENT

Prior to 1891 the main governmental institutions which were in existence during almost the entire nineteenth century were as follows:-

(a) The Court of Policy. This was the oldest political institution in the colony and was made up of both official and unofficial members and presided over by the Governor. The official members were the Chief Justice, Attorney-General, Colonial Receiver's General, Government Secretary and the Immigration Agent General. There were five (5) unofficials and these came from the plantocracy through indirect elections.

(b) The College of Electors or Kiezers. This body consisted of seven members who were elected for life. It was dominated by the planter class because of the very high property qualification for voting. The principal objective was to nominate members to fill vacancies in the Court of Policy.

(c) The College of Financial Representatives. This body



was elected by direct ballot every two years. Its primary function was to raise taxes in conjunction with the Court of Policy to meet the annual estimates and to examine the accounts of the Colonial Receiver's General for the preceding year.

(d) The Combined Court. This institution exercised control over the finances of the colony and it comprised of members of the College of Financial Representatives and the Court of Policy.

With planter power firmly established in the College of Financial Representatives and the College of Kiezers, it clearly meant that the plantocracy of the day had over whelming majority in the Combined Court. Hence, one could obviously realize the extent of influence this prestigious group exercised over colonial affairs. The late distinguished historian, Dr. Walter Rodney highlights t'his fact when he aptly describes the Combined Court as the " political fulcrum of pfanter power". In even more general terms, historian Brian Moore rightly sees the political constitution as the medium through which that immense power was institutionalized within the society.

The high degree of power enjoyed by the plantocracy inevitably led to abuses controversies and political stalemate in the nineteenth century and all of these contributed to the numerous calls for constitutional reforms.

### **REFORM BILL**

In the end the Reform Bill of 1891 entitled 'Ordinance Number One of 1891 - An Ordinance to Alter and Amend the Political Constitution of the Colony' was read and passed for the final time on February 3, 1891.

This reform had come at long last and was the result of prolonged struggle. In particular, a pro-reform Governor in Henry Irving and a number of complementary factors including a tolerant and responsive Colonial Office, a depressed sugar industry economic diversification, village development, a keen and vibrant reform group, a demanding and sympathetic public, a growing middle class, a somewhat radical professional and commercial class, an adventurous group of prospectors and a partly encouraging press all contributed to constitutional change in 1891.

In the main, some of the material changes which were embodied in the 1891 Constitution Bill were the enlargement of the Court of Policy, the abolition of the College of Electors, direct election of the unofficial section of the Court of Policy in the respective constituencies, the widening of the franchise, an additional property qualification for electives of the Court of Policy, the right of the Governor to dissolve the Court of Policy at any time and a specified quorum.

There are various responses to the reforms of 1891. For example, Will sees them as " very moderate" and asserts that: " The planters had shown strong powers of survival, their political ascendancy had been weakened but not destroyed." According to Lutchman, the changes 'resulted in a situation in which the planters had lost the stranglehold which they possessed in the nineteenth century" Harper Smith shares a similar view when he said that the reforms "resulted in a virtual decline of the planters from the political field." A fairly balanced view was given by Carmen Reid when she stated." The Constitutional Reforms did not bring about any immediate or spectacular changes. The Legislature in the period immediately following the reforms still continued to be dominated by white planters but the reforms marked a definite turning point in Guyanese constitutional history. They laid the ground work for the inclusion into the system of government of the new urban middle class group consisting primarily of mixed and African professionals and Portuguese businessmen.

### **POST 1891 YEARS**

In any event there was some manifestation of the decline of planter class power at the 1892 elections. Of the fourteen elected members of the Court of Policy, a classification shows seven (7) planters, five (5) merchants and two (2) barristers. This was of considerable importance as it indicates that interest groups other than that of the plantocracy were gradually entering the political arena at the highest level - a far cry from that of earlier decades in the nineteenth century.

The Court of Policy continued to exercise control of legislation in all non-fiscal matters while the Combined Court attended to fiscal matters including the imposition of taxes, and inpractice, the right to control the appropriation of public funds.

The expanded Court of Policy consisted of seven (7) official and eight (8) unofficial or elected members along with the Governor who had the casting vote in order to secure an official majority. This majority however, in a real sense was more or less theoretical as it was subjected to a political veto at any time on the part of the elected members. For example, if as much as seven elected members abstained from attending any meeting they could effectively prevent the formation of the required "quorum of nine (9)".

The Combined Court consisted of the Court of Policy along with six (6) Financial Representatives. Interestingly this body was still decisively controlled by the elected section who numbered fourteen (14) as against the official section comprising seven officials and the Governor. The post 1891 years witnessed a growing political consciousness among the populace and in particular the middle class. The introduction of

secret ballot in 1896 further enhanced the situation. This was very evident at the 1897 election when black and coloured sections of the community were able to capture a considerable portion of the elective seats of both the Court of Policy and the Combined Court and in effect altered the political balance from a previous almost exclusively white domination. This was the start of a progressive transfer of power from Europeans to the natural leaders of the people.

At the turn of the twentieth century defects in the constitution continued to surface.

While the franchise was again extended in 1908 the constitutional system rested on a very "narrow popular basis". Moreover, there was a gradual exclusion of the elected members from participating in executive functions. The financial system was also clouded in controversy and elected members of the Combined Court could impose their will on matters of taxation and expenditure. Commenting on the latter situation Clementi was of the view that an executive which could not command a majority in the chief body politic "might reign but could not rule". This view was supported by Professor Hume Wong when he stated "it is not a satisfactory solution of the problem of government, for responsibility is openly and obviously separated from power in the realm of finance"

### MAJOR WOOD'S REPORT

There was a major review of the constitutional system of British Guiana when Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Major E.F.L. Wood visited the colony in 1922 as part of his extensive investigation of Government of the British West Indies. Elected members of the Combined Court in particular highlighted a number of issues including the Governor's casting vote, the filling of vacancies among elected members of the Court of Policy, the exclusion of elected members from the Executive Council and the right of unofficial members to initiate agenda

In spite of these calls Major Wood did not see an immediate need to overhaul the existing constitution. In his report he explained:-

*The Constitution of British Guiana is unique in the Empire. It provides for a bare official majority in matters of legislation, but in questions involving finance there is an elective majority of fourteen elected members against eight officials. This constitution is founded upon the articles of capitulation when Britain took over the country from the Dutch and any attempt to change it now without adequate cause would excite no little hostility.*

*There seemed to be some apprehension when we arrived in the colony that I was anxious to recommend some change forthwith. I do and think that at present there is any ground for suggesting any material changes.*

The constitution was the subject of further discussion in the 1920s. There was a great deal of friction especially on: financial matters between elected members of the legislature on the one hand and, the Colonial Government and the Executive Council on the other hand. The elected members of the Legislature were predominantly "professionals and businessmen of African, Indian, Portuguese, Chinese and Mixed descent while the Executive Council was dominated by planters of European descent."

In October 1926 Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. L.S. Amery appointed a Parliamentary Commission to visit British Guiana and "to consider and report on the economic position of the colony, the causes which have hitherto retarded and the measures which could be taken to promote development and any facts which they may consider to have a bearing on the above matters."

The eventual Snell-Wilson Report offered a critique of the general constitutional issue and made some important suggestions on reform. It contended "Under the new order the practical difficulty of working the old constitution is increased. The Government of British Guiana has never been able to govern. It is a moral and necessary feature of the political system that power, in the last resort, should reside in the Governor under the control and direction of the Secretary of State ;"

Of added significance is the fact that the Report criticized the division of the legislature into the Court of Policy and the Combined Court thus: " This peculiar constitution is the result of the accident of history and not of logic or sound theory. There seemed nothing to be gained by the existence of two classes of elected members, one of which is precluded from dealing with all matters not relating to taxation and expenditure. The mere existence of this distinction constitutes in itself a potential source of friction and there is much to be said for merging the functions of the two bodies into a single Legislative Council." With these recent developments it was obviously clear that further constitutional change was in the making.

### THE 1928 REFORM

A local Commission was subsequently appointed to examine the existing constitution. It made several recommendations which became the basis of the 1928 Constitution. In particular it recommended the abolition of the existing Court of Policy and Combined Court and the substitution of a single legislature body.

The British Parliament proceeded on March 28, 1928 to enact the British Guiana Act, 1928 "to create and constitute, in substitution for the existing Legislature, a legislature for the colony in such form and with such powers as His Majesty in Council may determine and from time to time to alter and amend the constitution of the legislature and any powers thereof....". Under this Act the King in Council effected the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council on July 13, 1928. With effect from July 18, 1928 the Order in Council abolished the old, Dutch inherited Court of Policy and Combined Court and substituting for them the following:-

(a) A Legislative Council consisting of the Governor plus twenty nine (29) members of whom the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General were ex officio members, eight (8) nominated official members, five (5) nominated unofficial members and fourteen (14) elected members .

(b) An Executive Council or policy making body comprising the Governor as Chairman and eleven (11) members of whom the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General were ex-officio members, four (4) nominated officials, three (3) nominated and two (2) elected from the Legislative Council.

It would seem that the 1928 Constitution achieved what it set out to do. It was " an advanced form of Crown Colony Government". It transferred all power from the hands of elected members to the Governor and the Colonial Office. It reversed the trend of greater political democracy that had started with the 1891 reforms. It tended towards the consolidation of Imperial Government as an effective instrument of stability and political control over its colony, the then British Guiana.



*Tota Mangar was a former Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Guyana and Senior Lecturer, Department of History.*

# From Garden City to Garbage City



I have a dear friend for many years, who due to circumstances in Guyana in the eighties, was forced to emigrate, and who has now developed an interest in returning “home” to retire in leisure. However, before making a final decision, she asked me to “check out” her old neighborhood, in New Market Street, directly opposite the Georgetown Public Hospital.

Some of us still among the living, would fondly remember when Georgetown was referred to as the GARDEN CITY. Disappointedly this appellation for Georgetown has now become the GARBAGE CITY.

I vividly remember the days when the drains on Regent Street, where I grew up, being cleaned at least once a week, allowing for rain water to flow freely. Now it is difficult to determine drain from road.

The condition of the area shocked me to such an extent that I was encouraged to write about my observations in the daily print media, parts of which I’ll repeat here.

Those who are familiar with the geography of Georgetown would immediately be familiar with the area I’m referring to. This section of New Market Street, particularly on the southern side is riddled with stalls, makeshift and permanent, selling from toiletries to

hospital needs to food and anything else in between, to make a quick dollar, and anyone can use their imagination to determine what that can include. Those who can still live and work in the vicinity have to suffer from the stench emanating from the garbage dumped in vacant yards, on the street and any available space. Businesses are forced to close due to lack of sales occasioned by the stands and stalls encumbering the entrances of legal business structures.

My concern in the letter, referred to above, centered around the commendable City clean up campaign spearheaded by no less an official than His Excellency the President, inexplicably criticised and boycotted by the Pandit Mayor and his ilk in the PNC, soon after to be followed by their own “pappy show”. No sooner than the President’s efforts were concluded, the City began to be splattered and swamped again with garbage. A few who were caught were photographed and shamed in the press, taken before the courts and those found culpable were fined. Bingo, the campaign was forgotten, went to waste (pun definitely intended) apprehension stopped and the madness resumed and continues unabated.

One wonders here if it is the City Constabulary or the Police Force who have responsibility for this particular aspect of Law and Order. My opinion is that the ranks



of the Police Force have bigger “fish to fry” and the cleanliness of the City is definitely within the domain of the Mayor and City Councillors. History has confirmed that this group as presently constituted, and since the time of the “ELDER” Hamilton Green, is incapable of cleaning up the mess they have created and more likely than not encouraged, for their own agendas.

I remember during the early days of the PPP’s return to government in 1992, these same suspects, allegedly led by the same “ELDER” actively encouraged squatting by their supporters in Sophia and other areas. This was despite their shameful record in the portfolio of Housing, even when they proclaimed and celebrated for years their failed slogan (which remained just that, a slogan) of “feeding, housing and clothing” the nation. They went as far as scrapping the Ministry of Housing. Enough said about their care and concern for the people of Guyana, particularly those who they claimed to be their supporters.

TherecentssquattinginLinden,andthenotsorecentevents in the Success area on GUYSUCO’S lands immediately revived memories of squatting encouraged by the PNC, to ostensibly force confrontations with the Government.

I can’t remember if it was before the president’s clean up campaign or after that I read the Attorney General’s

declaration that the scourge of squatting/selling on the side walks , pavements, streets and almost every available space, not only in Georgetown, but in other parts of the country, would be addressed.

I’ve waited for decades for the AG’s declaration to become a reality and sincerely look forward to this lawlessness finally being brought to an end. The AG even reminded us of squatting in front of a particular business place on Regent Street, which the court ruled was illegal (as if the court had to tell us the obvious) and that those selling illegally there were to be immediately removed. I assume non compliance would be “contempt” of the court’s ruling with consequential remedies and wonder if such contempt would also be applied to the Mayor and City Council. My fear is that the currently constituted opposition would once again encourage confrontation as they did with the Linden protests related to the electricity issue a number of years ago, when regrettably, three protestors were fatally shot.

In addition to these instances of the failure of the Mayor and City Council to create an environment conducive for legal and structured/established businesses, housing, leisure, recreation and healthy living in Georgetown, the existing environment encourages lawlessness and criminal activities including robbery and mugging of anyone and everyone daring to be in the City, be it students, children, visitors, tourists and decent law abiding persons of any race, gender or social class. Two students were recently robbed at knife point while waiting on transportation after attending classes on Woolford avenue. Multiple snatching of mobile phones, hand bags and gold jewelry (from those bold enough to have these on) take place daily in Georgetown, the majority being unreported, as a result of the lack of confidence in those responsible for the maintenance of Law and Order.

Can anyone who is law abiding and of necessity have to frequent the Stabroek market area, really admit to not being scared, even during daylight hours? Can anyone dare to put up resistance to a robbery? Is it possible to complain about harassment by touts, pulling, pushing and tugging at bus parks in Georgetown? Can I take the chance to enjoy a walk or to simply jog on the sea walls alone or in the company of my partner OR a stroll down Main Street either before sunrise or after dark? Can I avoid using the streets as a side walk, and face the increasing “road hogs” because of the encumbrances on the pavements?

In the new economy, now called the “oil and gas” economy, Guyana is having an influx of every nationality. I recently travelled from Miami to Guyana and was surprised at the number of persons on board the aircraft who were speaking a language other than English. An

EXXON consultant sitting next to me made this exact comment. How do we answer the questions in the previous paragraph, when posed by these visitors?

I say emphatically, it is now for the Mayor and City Council to “shape up” or “ship out”. Since I have little or no confidence that they can do the former, then I suggest they voluntarily do the latter, or be made to do so, with the alternative being the appointment of an “Interim Management Council” (IMC) for the City. I recommend a Non Partisan IMC, comprising citizens of Georgetown (and if possible residents outside of Georgetown) of good standing be allowed to manage the City for a period of between three and five years, with their membership renewable and/or replaceable, depending on their successes.

The IMC should be mandated to submit monthly reports to the Prime Minister, of the state of finance of the City, the projects planned and stages of execution, the staff employed (a sub committee should be appointed to determine the number of persons employed in each department, their functions, responsibilities and remuneration, etc. and an evaluation of the needs of each department), the equipment and vehicles, their functionality, usefulness and expenditure required to have a fully functional fleet, especially to deal with the collection and disposal of garbage, garbage collection by private contractors, cleaning of rain water drains, repair to roads, efficient control of markets and the effective

expenditure of the revenues earned therefrom, etc.

Some may remember the appointment of a similar IMC, by Guyana’s great THINKER, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, in the 90’s, headed by Mr. Tony Xavier, which did a highly commendable job with limited resources, and sadly for the City to descend into gross mismanagement again, once the PNC was returned to superintend its affairs. The citizens of Georgetown and Guyana have a duty and responsibility to demand that the managers of the City’s affairs do the job they’ve been assigned in a way that would redound to their benefit and ultimately their satisfaction. They must demand that the City Council be replaced by an Interim Management Council so that Law, Order and Progress can replace what currently exists at City Hall.

I know that the Government is in the process of the massive rehabilitation of the iconic City Hall, neglected for decades by those in authority, and I can’t imagine the same clique, returning there to continue their mismanagement, plundering and pillaging the City, its citizens and the nation as a whole, after these works are completed.

Would my friend, mentioned at the beginning of this article, decide to return to the land of her birth? The jury is still out on that, but it would certainly be swayed in one direction if order and good governance is returned to Georgetown.



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**Editor's Note:**

*The following two articles were lectures delivered by Donald Ramotar and Hydar Ally at a panel discussion on the Russia/Ukraine war organized by the Guyana Peace Council on April 24th, 2022 at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.*

# Crisis in Ukraine



Today is exactly one month since Russia invaded Ukraine. The situation still remains fluid and there is no indication of any solution. If anything, the situation is getting worse in terms of casualties and destruction. Only today NATO convened an emergency Summit to strategize on ways to defeat Russia. US President who attended the meeting pledged more military support to Ukraine and even suggested that Russia be expelled from the G20 Summit.

Did Russia made a mistake in invading Ukraine, an independent and sovereign state with a population of 44 million? Is Russia seeking to re-define the boundaries of Russia and in the process create a new geo-political and geo-strategic reality? Could the war have been avoided? Did NATO in fact crossed the so-called 'red line' by its eastern military presence as claimed by Russia? And what are the options available to the parties involved to bring an end to the war without any loss of face. These are some questions I believe that we need to examine and discuss even though I cannot say I have the answers in this short presentation.

We are all familiar with the ravages of the First and more so the Second World War and no rational person wants to see a recurrence. Yet this current war, if not stopped, now could potentially lead us in that direction.

In trying to contribute to the discussions I am influenced

by my own philosophical outlook which is that wars are essentially 'evil' and should only be done in self-defense or if attacked. There have to be more enlightened and civilized ways of conflict resolution within the framework of international law, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Allow me Mr. Chairman to commend the Guyana Peace Council for hosting this discussion forum on the Russia-Ukraine crisis which poses a serious threat to world peace.

Ukraine has been in the news for nearly five weeks now, dominating all the major headlines. And not without reason. This is the first time in years that the world has seen the ravages of a war in real time; images of buildings being bombed including schools and hospitals; people dying on the streets including women and children and millions of people being forced to leave their homes and seek shelter in any place they consider safe from bombs. Millions have fled to neighboring countries, Poland in particular, giving rise to what is now regarded as the worst humanitarian crisis in living memory.

The scale and impact of this war is unprecedented since World War 2.

I propose in this presentation to examine some factors

that led to this unfortunate crisis. Let me state from the very beginning that I do not consider myself an expert on the subject; nor do I hold any brief for any side in the conflict. I recognize that the issue is perhaps much more complex than my limited research may have unearthed.

As I understand it, the crux of the matter has to do with a concern by Russia that it is under threat due to the buildup of NATO military forces on its eastern borders, despite an implied agreement reached between the then USSR and representatives of the United States and NATO that there will be no eastward movement of troops especially in eastern Germany following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. There are conflicting narratives as to whether there were any iron-clad guarantees given by NATO regarding any eastward movement of NATO as there appeared to be no such written guarantees. There is some evidence that during a meeting with then US Secretary of State Baker and Gorbachev a commitment was given that with a unified Germany there would not be 'an inch of eastward movement of NATO' but there appeared to be binding agreement. Shortly afterwards the USSR collapsed and several of the states that were formerly part of the USSR opted to become independent states. That, along with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact created a new geo-political and strategic reality especially as most of the former eastern European countries applied for and were granted membership to NATO including Poland and Romania which shared border with Russia.

Given such a situation, the security concerns of Russia is understandable especially against the background of the the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact which provided security cover for the USSR and its eastern allies. The situation was further compounded by the consolidation of NATO to include several of the newly formed countries to join NATO including Georgia and Ukraine which was put on hold after Russia raised serious objections. Ukraine in particular was seen as a greater security threat because of its strategic location and the close ties it enjoyed with NATO countries and the United States.

The current crisis situation began after the Russian Federation took a decision to invade Ukraine purportedly out of security concerns which it claimed resulted from the expansion of NATO eastwards in territories that were formerly part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It would be recalled that the Soviet Union disintegrated in the early 1990s following the introduction of Prestoika and Glastnost by then President Mikhael Gorbachov. Several states which had autonomous status broke away from the USSR and became independent states including Ukraine, Georgia and several others Baltic States which are now recognized by the United Nations as sovereign states. When Ukraine separated from Russia it took with it Russia's best black

sea ports which were important assets for Russia. In addition to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many countries which were part of the world socialist system opted to pursue a market-oriented path of economic development and as opposed to planned economies as practiced in the former USSR. The Warsaw Pact which was a military alliance of the socialist countries collapsed. This was seen as a counter to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which comprised several western European countries and the United States of America. A few of the eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary, Romania also applied for NATO membership and were admitted. Ukraine is currently not a member of NATO but has expressed an interest in joining. Russia contends that the eastward expansion of NATO which has already accepted over a dozen Central and Eastern European nations as members since the break up of the USSR poses an existential threat and poses serious security risks.

After initially denying any intention to invade Russia, Putin told the Russian people that the goal was 'to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine. The intention, he said, was not to occupy Ukrainian territory but to protect people who he claimed were subjected to eight years of 'bullying and genocide by the government of Ukraine'. The aim he said was not to overthrow the Ukraine government but to ensure a 'neutral' Ukraine which is currently more aligned to western Europe and the United States. That was not the first time Russia invaded Ukraine. In 2014 Russia annexed Crimea and took political control of the region even though it still legally remained part of Ukraine.

According to President Putin, 'Ukraine is not a real state but had been artificially created in the 20th century'. On 24 February Russian invasion started with the bombing of military facilities in several parts of the country.

The relevant question, in my view, is whether or to what extent the invasion of Ukraine can be justified and whether Russia's security interests is in any shape or form enhanced by its invasion of Ukraine. This is particularly so in light of a recent decision by NATO's main political decision making body's statement that it 'decided to take additional steps to further strengthen the alliance' and its warning that Russia will 'pay a very heavy economic and political price for its actions.' NATO does not have a legal obligation to defend Ukraine from an invasion but felt obliged to do so since the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and the current war. Article 4 of the NATO treaty makes provision for security consultations when the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened. Ukraine is not a member of NATO which explains the apparent reluctance of NATO to become directly involved in the war. There is no guarantee that such a position may not



change should there be a further escalation of the war, especially in light of allegations of the potential use of nuclear, cyber and chemical forms of warfare.

Already, a slew of sanctions have been imposed by a number of western nations including the United States, Canada and other western European countries. And as if those were not enough, the tide of international public opinion is not in favour of Russia as could be seen from the number of countries, 141 which voted in favour of a motion condemning the Russian invasion. Only five countries voted in favour of Russia including Russia itself, North Korea, Syria, Belarus and Eritrea. There were 35 abstentions which included China, India and interestingly, Cuba and Venezuela. The war has also been condemned by several world leaders including Pope Francis who denounced Russia's 'repugnant war against Ukraine as 'cruel and sacrilegious humanity and senseless massacre'. He rejected any concept of a 'just war' and stressed the importance of peace. US President Joe Biden had harsh words for Russian leader Vladimir Putin who he described as a 'war criminal'. Bernie Sanders while recalling that America had operated under the Monroe Doctrine for 200 years which gave it the right to intervene against any country that might threaten its alleged interests overthrew several governments and in 1962 came to the brink of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union in response to the placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba which the US saw as an unacceptable threat to US national security. He described the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a blatant violation of international law and of basic decency which apart from the killing of thousands and displacement of millions could plunge Europe into long-term economic and political instability.

'The United States and its allies must impose severe sanctions on Vladimir Putin and his fellow oligarchs. At a time when thousands may die as a result of his war, Putin, one of the richest people in the world should not be allowed to enjoy the billions he stole from the Russian, Sanders asserted.

Guyana, along with most Caribbean countries voted in favour of the UN resolution. CARICOM in a statement 'strongly condemns the military attacks and invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and calls for the immediate and complete withdrawal of the military presence and cessation of any further actions that may intensify the current perilous situation of that country. The recognition by the Russian Federation of the Regions of Donetsk and Luhansk represents a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.'

In similar language, Guyana said that it deplores the threat or use of force in the conduct of international relations and urges a peaceful resolution of the differences that currently exists in consonance with the rule of

international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 33 of the UN Charter states that 'parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their own choice.'

The question, in my opinion is whether or not a peaceful resolution to the security concerns of Russia had been fully exhausted and if so to an extent that could justify what is currently unfolding in what could arguably be described as one of the most catastrophic humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.

Article 51 of the United Nations do make provision for self-defence by any member state but only in the case of an armed attack until the Security Council take measures to maintain international peace and security.

Opinion is divided on the issue. There are those who argued that the eastward advances into the former territory of the USSR could be regarded as an act of provocation which could have severe and dangerous consequences as has in fact happened. There are others who are of the view that security concerns are not a good enough reason for violating the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. There are some who blame Ukraine for not understanding the geo-political realities playing out in the region and should have moderated its desire to becoming a member of NATO knowing that it would not sit well with Moscow. Ukraine has become in the view of some a pawn in big power politics involving the East and the West. Some blame NATO for provoking a situation and not doing enough to come to the rescue of Ukraine which is no match militarily for Russia. The Ukrainian leader Zelensky has repeatedly been calling for NATO to become directly involved in the fighting and establish a 'No fly zone over Ukraine but such calls have so far been ignored out of fear that it could possibly lead to another world war.

It is too early to predict how the war will end as the fighting still continues. One thing however is certain. In a situation of War there could be no winners. According to a study done by the Centre for Economic Recovery, the daily cost of the war is likely to exceed \$20B for Russia excluding fiscal pressures on the Russian economy as a result of sanctions. The same is true for Ukraine.

The impact of the war is felt beyond the boundaries of Russia and Ukraine and has already impacted on the cost of living of people throughout the world including Guyana. The price of fuel, fertilizers, bread among others have already gone up significantly.

In the final analysis, the true cost of War is not just simply the actual money spent on the war but what economists refer to as the opportunity cost, that is the numbers of schools, hospitals etc that could have been built to provide a better life for people.

It is time to bring an end to the war. I believe that China more than any other country can use its influence to bring about a peaceful resolution. So far, it has taken a position which is not offensive to none of the sides. And even though it has acknowledged the security interests of Russia and the harmful effects of sanctions on the overall health of the global economy, it also is in support of a peaceful end to the conflict.

### Conclusion

Every country has its own national interests to define and determine its own future. That is true for the Russian Federation as it is for Ukraine. The security interests of one state cannot be met at the cost of the security interest of another state. That is why there are laws governing the behaviour of all states within the framework of international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter which speaks to non-

interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states and full respect for territorial integrity. In that regard, the position taken by Guyana, Caricom and for that matter the majority of the nations that makes up the United Nations is consistent with that fundamental principle. No nation cannot be dictated on how it should conduct its foreign policy. It is like Venezuela dictating to Guyana which regional organization we can join or not join. That is totally unacceptable and a violation of our national dignity.

In closing I wish to state that the actions taken by the United States to impose its own values and regime change in several parts of the world including Guyana in the 1960's does not justify the actions of any other country to do likewise. There cannot be any 'moral' justification for war. The costs, both human and material are abominable and goes against the norms of enlightened and civilized behaviour. Might cannot be right in the settlement of disputes and wherever and whenever it raises it ugly head it must be condemned.



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# Europe in Flames Again: Need for Soberness to stop this



On February 24, 2022, Russia's military marched into Ukraine and began a military operation which is raging at the time of writing (8-4-2022). Reports emanating from Europe speak about hundreds that are being killed and the millions of refugees fleeing the war.

There are charges and counter charges as to which side is responsible for the attacks on various places. For instance the missile that hit a train station in the Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk on Friday April 8 is blamed on the Russians by Kiev and on Ukrainians by the Russians.

Of course the NATO states have their media working overtime to blame Moscow for every wrong. They have a field day since they have banned Russian news agencies reports on the war and removing everything Russian from social media. Almost nothing is reported from any Russian source and very little from sources outside of NATO's media control.

The old adage that the first causality of war is "the truth" is being proved once more.

Of course no one likes war. It is always brutal and causes great sufferings. Those that suffer the most are always the innocent working people. That is why it is important to organize support to put an end to this war and all other wars that are ravaging our world.

Wars usually occur when all other means, political and diplomatic, break down. It is often when it is the only means left to a country in resolving political/economic/security issues.

## Background

To understand the present war in Ukraine it is important and necessary that we make an excursion into the recent history of that region and the relations between Russia

and NATO countries.

This war has its roots in the period 1989/1991 when the Soviet Union and Eastern European Socialist countries collapsed.

In 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell the reunification of Germany was placed on the agenda. The then Soviet Union had to agree before that could have taken place. Obviously Soviet Union became worried and must have expressed fears for its own security.

To assuage those fears Gorbachev, then President of the Soviet Union, was given the assurance that the NATO forces would not move one inch from its 1989 borders should USSR agree to Germany being reunited. The documents show that that assurance was given by Helmut Kohl, then chancellor of West Germany, James Baker then Secretary of State of the United States and President George H. W. Bush. Gorbachev agreed. That brought an end to the "cold war".

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 fifteen new states were born. Among these was Ukraine, which became independent for the first time in history.

Russia, the largest of the Soviet States, was very weak; its economy had almost collapsed. This was a result of the Shock treatment that was applied to fix the dire economic problems. Russia had invited the US to assist it. The US sent hundreds of economists and others to help.

The new Russian State and their new American friends created the new capitalist Russia with all the oligarchs of which they speak so much about today. I make this point to correct the impression that the West is trying to create that it was President Putin who created the oligarchs. It was the US that did that.

One would have thought that with the collapse of socialism in Europe that a period of calm would have prevailed on the continent, after all the ideologically based conflict had ended. It was natural to assume that since communism was no longer a threat and the Warsaw pact had been disbanded that the military alliance headed by the US, i.e. NATO would have been dissolved. That did not happen.

The period of tranquility was very short lived. The United States very quickly forgot about its commitment. Instead the Clinton administration decided to take advantage of a weakened Russia to ensure that the US would never be challenged again in the future.

NATO's purpose now was not to stop the spread of communism, its role was changed. It became an instrument which the US uses to keep control of Europe in the first place and the world at large. After all having NATO in place allows the US access to huge resources that are possessed by its other members.

Had NATO been disbanded it is quite likely that many of the present day European member states would not have gone along with schemes to compromise Russia's security. It is only in the interest of the US that NATO continues as a military alliance and only within NATO that many countries in the alliance are forced to tow the line.

As early as 1992 the US was planning to take advantage of Russia's weakness. Paul Wolfowitz, National Security advisor to the Clinton Administration wrote since then that "our first objective is to prevent the emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere that poses a threat on the order of that posed by the former Soviet union.

"This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power." The whole idea was to have one super power in the world and that power was the United States.

This mentality explains the US present attitude to Russia and to China.

In 1997, the Clinton administration working on the Wolfowitz doctrine, approached the Senate to give approval for US to expand NATO eastwards. During that debate one of the most experienced United States diplomat was invited to discuss the issue with the US Senate Foreign relations Committee. He was Ambassador Jack Matlock. Mr. Matlock was one of the last ambassadors of the US to the Soviet Union; he was

last there from 1987 to 1991.

He warned the committee of the dangers of making such a move. This, in part, is what he said "...I consider the administration recommendation to take new members into NATO at this time misguided. If it should be approved by the United States Senate, it will go down in history as the most profound strategic blunder made since the end of the Cold War. Far from improving the security of the United States, its allies, and the nation's that wish to enter the alliance, it could well encourage a chain of events that could produce the most serious security threat to this nation since the Soviet Union collapsed."

Despite this stark warning the US could not resist the temptation to grind Russia into the ground. The decades of propaganda has created great prejudice against all Russians. The US ruling circles clearly took a decision to encircle Russia so that they would be in a position to threaten, blackmail, dictate and whenever they want to attack and destroy Russia.

They moved ahead with their plans. They relentlessly expanded NATO to the border of Russia. This is one of the greatest betrayal of trust and the total renegation of firm commitments given by great powers in recent history.

In 1999 NATO accepted Poland, The Czech Republic and Hungary in its fold. In 2004 another expansion took place this time, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (former Soviet States) Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia became members of NATO. In 2009 Albania and Croatia were invited to join and did. 2017 Montenegro and in 2020 North Macedonia joined the military alliance. The US, using NATO had well and truly taken over Europe. That great continent has been reduced to being little more than colonies of the United States.

Russia protested this move from the very beginning. In 1997 the then Russian President Boris Yeltsin at a press conference in Helsinki in the presence of US President Bill Clinton expressed his opposition to NATO's expansion. He was clearly of the view that such a move was not enhancing the security of the continent but exposing it to war.

When Vladimir Putin came into prominence first as Prime Minister of Russia and later its President, he made a proposal to the US that Russia too should join NATO. That suggestion was rejected out of hand.

So while Russian forces, then Soviet forces, withdrew from Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, NATO forces advanced and took most of Europe in its web all the time advancing on Russia. At the same time rejecting Russia's proposal to join the alliance,

this must have raised great suspicions in Moscow as to the real motive for NATO's expansion.

Mr. Jack Matlock again pointed out how unnecessary this was since none of those countries faced any threat from Russia. In an article he wrote, entitled "I Was There: NATO and the Origins of the Ukraine Crisis" he stated that, "...the division of Europe ended before there was any thought of taking new members into NATO. No one is threatening to re-divide Europe. It is therefore absurd to claim, as some have, that it is necessary to take new members into NATO to avoid future division of Europe..."

Of course the corporate media and the corporate controlled government of the US are churning out tons of falsehoods claiming that the Russian President wants to "recreate the Soviet Union" or to have a greater Russia. All of this is absolutely untrue. Mr. Matlock in the same article cited above said "...despite frequently voiced fears, Vladimir Putin has never threatened to reabsorb the Baltic countries or claim to any of their territories..."

Mr. Matlock is not the only one who disagreed with the US/NATO attitude to Russia. Henry Kissinger is on record as pointing out that expanding to Russian borders is a big mistake. Many academics, US/Russian specialist have also pointed to this folly.

Russia's security concerns were heightened by the growing aggressiveness of NATO and of the measures that the US was taking in Europe and in the world at large.

The George Bush government, which replaced the Clinton administration, moved to remove all constraints on the US military. It unilaterally withdrew from all the arms control and nuclear testing treaties it had with the Soviet Union.

Russia protested but it was weak and not able to muster enough support internationally to keep America in check.

Indeed, in passing, one of the other consequences of the fall of the Soviet Union was that many countries who had taken anti-imperialist positions in the past, many who were champions of peace had to retreat. Those countries were mainly organized in the Non-aligned movement. The powers of the US seem to be without limit. The situation is as such today that the US does not need to dictate to the Third World on what to do. Leaders in those countries try to anticipate what the US wants and bend over backwards to please it.

Added to this were its actions in various parts of the world. As we write Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan is fighting for survival because he dared to take

an independent stance in the NATO/Russia conflict. He was removed as Prime Minister by a No-Confidence vote. Imran has put the blame squarely on the United States.

The US once more began to use the UN for some of its aggression. This reminds us of how the very US used the UN to intervene in the Congo to help Belgium to murder Patrice Lumumba in the early 1960s. The results of that some sixty years ago is still being felt in that unhappy country.

The UN was used to attack Iraq while it covered itself by massive misinformation of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction. Just plain lies. The UN was used to attack Libya, the excuse was that it was going to protect civilians, that turned out to be the excuse for killing Gaddafi and destroying one of the most prosperous country in Africa.

In 1999 the US unleashed a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. For seventy eight days (78) straight, Belgrade was bombed. The result was the Balkanization of that Republic. All of these trying events must have created deep worry for Russia as NATO continues to march on its doorstep.

## **The Ukraine**

Inside Ukraine itself, there were many results that worried Russia. In 2014 the US supported anti-Ukraine government forces and overthrew the government that was sympathetic to Russia. Among the groups involved in that coup were fascist forces that survived since the Second World War.

The new government set-up by the US in 2014 not only took a hostile position to Russia but to the large Russian minority living in the Ukraine. They moved to ban people from using the Russian language.

That created a "Civil War" inside of Ukraine. The Russian/Ukraine people were a majority in several parts of the Ukraine, the Donbas and Luhansk having the largest concentration. The people there responded by breaking away from Ukraine and establishing two separate republics.

The Ukraine responded by massive military operation against the people of the breakaway states. More than fourteen thousand civilians were killed by Ukraine's army and the fascist groups in the country. Indeed the 1940s portrait of the Ukraine fascist leaders was put up in government offices in Ukraine.

The other majority Russian area was the Crimea; it was spared from the attacks because Russia moved to bring it back to Russia. It was a part of Russia up to 1954 when

the Khrushchev administration gifted in to Ukraine. Thus it was saved from Ukraine daily shellings.

Russia moved to retake Crimea because it is the home of its navy. However, it did not just seize it from Ukraine as the US did in Yugoslavia when it wrenched Kosovo from Serbia. The people of the area had a referendum in which they voted overwhelmingly to reunite with Russia.

Russia supported and promoted a diplomatic solution to the conflict within, Ukraine. It worked with Germany and France to get an acceptable agreement to stop the war between Kiev and the breakaway regions. An agreement was reached, known as the Minsk Accord. That accord gave some autonomy to the Donbas and Luhansk. It also allowed them to use their native Russian language.

However, it appears that the US was not pleased with it. Therefore Germany and France did not live up to their responsibility to ensure that the decisions were adhered to. Thus it was never implemented. Ukraine's President said openly that he was not going to implement it. Instead of that peaceful solution Ukraine chose war against its own Russian speaking people.

Clearly he was dissuaded from implementing the accords; he ignored the agreement. Attacks on the republic continued unchecked.

Instead he began to amass great quantities of weapons from US and other NATO states. He moved away from his stated policy and began to take strident anti-Russian positions. He continued to press for acceptance into NATO. He even called for having Nuclear weapons in Ukraine and said he would develop such weapons.

This crisis became very dangerous when in 2021 NATO announced that Ukraine and Georgia would be allowed to join NATO. This showed absolute disregard for Russia legitimate concerns. That decision was practically daring Russia to do something about it. It was throwing down the gauntlet to Russia.

Russia, even though still weak compared to the NATO forces, was forced to take a stand. It demanded guarantees from NATO that Ukraine would not be allowed to join. It recognized that while Ukraine has

the right to ask, NATO had the power to reject that application. Russia pointed out that putting NATO on its door is a threat to the Russian people and state.

Russia also insisted to Ukraine not to take that route but to adopt a neutral country status. Ukraine refused. No doubt it refused because it was armed to the teeth with modern weapons and assured of US/NATO support.

This placed Russia in a very difficult situation. The years of talks and proposals were producing nothing. Agreements reached were being ignored by the NATO alliance. Indeed it was clear that "dialogue" was being used by the US to buy time and to eventually accept Ukraine into NATO. Thereby giving Russia a fait accompli.

Russia then began to signal its seriousness but allowing opportunities for talks and compromise. That is why it amassed its troops on its border with Ukraine for months but did not move on the country.

It kept insisting that the west must live up to its commitments made since 1989 not to move on its border. No military operation would have happened if they had given that assurance. Its massive build up since 2021 was clearly a tactic to signal its seriousness while hoping for a reasonable response from US.

All of these efforts unfortunately failed forcing Russia to act when it did to protect its people and the state as a whole.

If it didn't move then it could not stop NATO from taking Ukraine. It obviously decided to confront Ukraine before it joined NATO to avoid having to fight NATO later which could lead to nuclear annihilation.

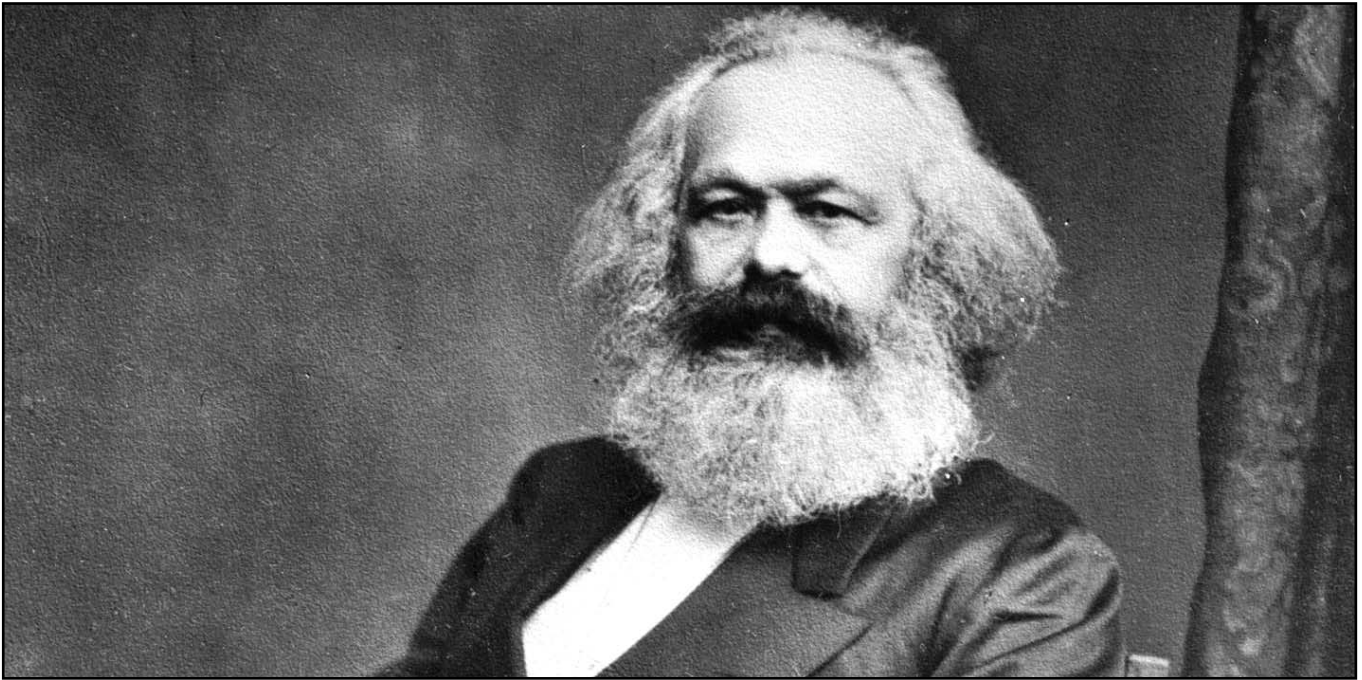
The February 24 2022 military invasion of Ukraine did not come out of the blue. It was because all of the Russian diplomatic efforts all of its compromises were rejected by NATO. Russia refused to accept subjugation by inaction.

Mr. Jack Matlock was prophetic when he said as far back as 1997 that NATO's expansion would pose the greatest threat to our security.



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# Relevance of Marxism in Contemporary Society



Over one hundred and seventy years ago, the German philosopher and revolutionary Karl Marx in his celebrated work 'The Communist Manifesto' wrote about a 'spectre' that was haunting Europe, "the spectre of Communism". What Marx did not envisage at the time was that the 'spectre' of communism would not only have haunted Europe, but the entire world, especially the capitalist world.

No region of the world has been spared the effects of the communist 'virus'. Here in Guyana and the Caribbean as a whole, there still remain strong communist influence. Guyana is one of the most radicalized country in the region in terms of left-wing politics due primarily to the work of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and later the People's Progressive Party (PPP). In fact, Guyana became the only country in the western hemisphere where a left-wing party attained political office through constitutional means when the left-wing PPP won a landslide victory in 1953, much to consternation of Britain and the United States. It was no secret that Britain, under pressure from the United States sought to strangle the new "leftist" baby at birth by suspending the constitution and removing the democratically elected PPP by force.

In a real sense, the PPP became the first victim of the Cold War in the hemisphere, one which pre-dated the Cuban Revolution in 1959. When the pro-United States Batista regime was overthrown by the group of revolutionaries headed by Castro. Today, Cuba continues to pose a threat to the United States which is doing everything possible to contain the communist virus in the western hemisphere but with limited success. The 'spectre' of communism continue to spread in several countries in the region including Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia among others.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the World Socialist system in the late 1980s, several leftist parties in Europe and elsewhere morphed into social democratic parties or moved in the direction of 'left of center' parties but the fundamental nature of a labor-oriented party along the lines envisaged by Marx continue to hold sway in several countries of the world.

The above notwithstanding, the world today has not changed structurally since the time of Marx. Capitalism still remained the dominant mode of production and the degree of exploitation remain high. The gap between the rich and the poor continue to get wider. The scourges

of conflicts and war still continue to be-devil humanity as the war industry rake in billions of dollars in profits at the expense of human suffering and destruction. The first and second world wars and the current war in Ukraine are examples of human beings being made sacrificial lambs to profits and expansionist policies of governments.

This is perhaps a good time to re-visit the ideas of Karl Marx especially in the context of the crisis of the capitalism. The main thesis of the Manifesto was that the class struggle, or the exploitation of one class by another is the driving force behind all historical developments. Class relationships are defined by the relations of productions in any given period, which over time became incompatible with the developing forces of production. At this point a revolution occurs and a new class emerges as the ruling class.

The Manifesto began by addressing the issue of class antagonisms. Marx famously wrote that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.' Throughout history, we see the oppressor and the oppressed in constant opposition to each other. This fight, according to Marx, is sometimes hidden and sometimes open. However, each time the fight ends in either a revolutionary reconstruction of society or in the classes common ruin.

As contained in the Manifesto, earlier stages saw society arranged into complicated class structure. For example, in medieval times there were feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeyman, apprentices and serfs. Modern bourgeois society sprouted from the ruins of feudal society. This society has class antagonisms as manifested in the emergence of two hostile and opposing camps, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat respectively.

The above is a broad generalization of the Marxist explanation of social changes and even though society may not have evolved exactly the way Marx had envisaged, there can be no doubt that modern society does have a fair measure of class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The class conflict, as postulated by Marx in the Manifesto, is very much in evidence especially in the developed capitalist world.

Of interest to note is that historically the bourgeoisie had played a revolutionary role. Whenever it has gained power, it has put an end to all feudal patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has eliminated the relationships that bound people to their superiors and now all remaining relationships between men are characterized by self-interest alone. 'Religious fervor, chivalry and sentimentalism have all been sacrificed. Personal worth is now measured by exchange value and the only freedom is that of Free Trade.'

In 1847, a group of working-class radicals called the "Communist League" met in London. They commissioned Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who had recently become members to write a manifesto on their behalf later known as the Communist Manifesto. The Manifesto was originally published in London in 1848 and became one of the most widely read and influential document. It is the systemic statement of the philosophy that has come to be known as Marxism.

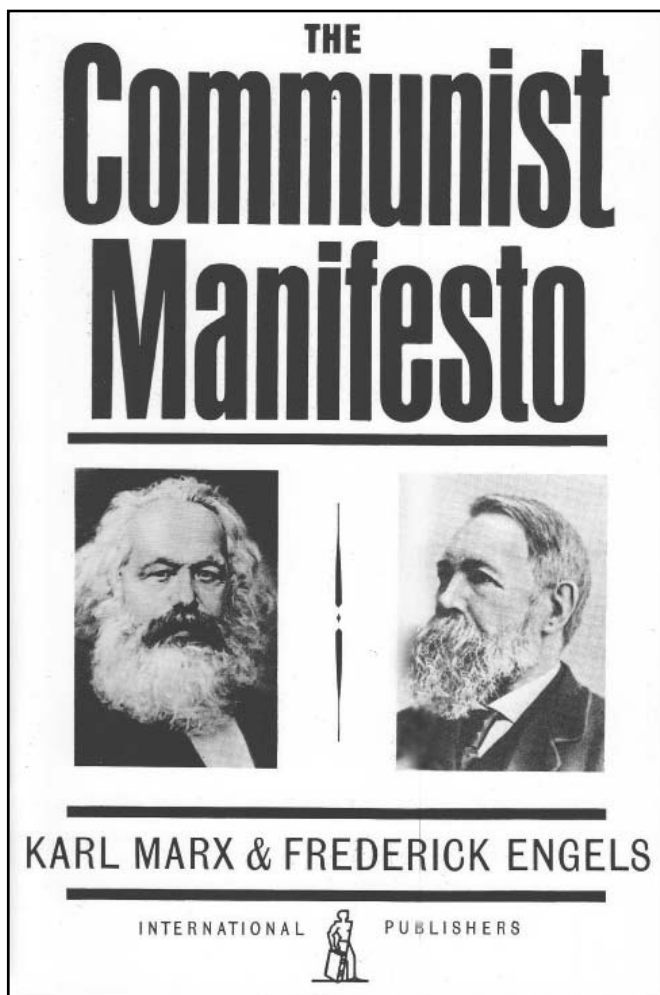
Marx (1818-1883) was a German philosopher, economist and sociologist as well as a political revolutionary. He met Engels (1820-1895) when he moved to Paris after 1843 and they worked together on several essays. One of Marx's primary intellectual influences was the work of GWF Hegel. Hegel's theory presents history as a process in which the world becomes conscious of itself as spirit, the material world causes him to feel increasingly alienated from himself. Escape from this alienation requires a revolution.

Marx remained one of the foremost revolutionary and thinker of all time. And even though he did not himself fought in any revolutionary battles to change society; his ideas have permeated the thinking of revolutionaries throughout the world which culminated in the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. For the first time in world history, the working class and peasantry seized power in one of the largest country in the world encompassing one-third of Europe and two-thirds of Asia. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was born which posed a challenge to western capitalist economic values until the early 1990's when the Soviet Union disintegrated and the world socialist system collapsed.

Philosophers, according to Marx, have so far only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it. No other person had achieved what Marx was able to do, not only to interpret the world but to also provide the intellectual tools to change the world. In this regard, Marx can be regarded as an intellectual giant; someone whose writings have influenced millions across the world that a better world is possible, one in which the exploitation of man by man can be replaced by a more humane society where the fruits of human labour will be distributed in a more just and equitable manner.

Did the collapse of the Soviet Union proved that the theoretical foundations of Marxism failed? Marx had predicted that the internal contradictions of the capitalist system based on the social nature of production and the private appropriation of the fruits of human labour will create the conditions for the collapse of capitalism and its replacement by a socialist system. And while the foundations of the capitalist system may not have





collapsed, there are a number of cyclical crisis that have put the system under stress and which has posed serious challenges to the efficacy of the capitalist system based on market forces and neo-liberal models of development.

May, 2018 marked 200 years since the birth of Karl Marx. The question is: Is Marx still relevant today. There are some who argue that Marxism as a model of development has failed and that Marx has outlived his relevance. They pointed to the collapse of the world socialist system and the disintegration of the Soviet Union as reasons to support their arguments.

Those who saw the collapse of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall as an indication of the end of communism are now confronted with a new reality: the rise of communist China as a global power second only to the United States in terms of economic strength. It is predicted that given growth trends, China is likely to overtake the United States by 2030.

The fact that China has been able to do so well economically at a time when most countries of the market-driven economies are experiencing sluggish growth levels is indicative that the economic

fundamentals of socialist planning are sound and if carefully and creatively applied can be both liberating and transformative. China has over the past few decades lifted more people out of poverty than the rest of the world combined.

Marxism, with its emphasis on the cultural and material upliftment of the broad masses of the people is much superior than capitalism with its emphasis on profits for the few.

This presentation represented a modest attempt to examine the issue of relevance of Marxism based on an examination of the current global situation especially as they relate to existing socio-economic models. I have sought, hopefully objectively, to examine the two contrasting economic models, namely the neo-liberal model based on free market and the invisible hand of demand and supply and the 'controlled' economy where the state play a dominant role in production and distribution.

After the 2008 economic crisis in the United States, Europe and the rest of the world, interest in Marxism as a theoretical tool of analysis once again took centre stage. Marx was literally 'resurrected' from the grave. In the United States, the leader of western values, Bernie Sanders was able to mobilize public interest on 'leftist' politics in a way few others succeeded in doing. The appeal mainly from young educated middle class whites is significant as it provides an alternative to the dominant neo-liberal values that to a large extent have permeated the thinking of the majority of the American people. The huge gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in the United States have given rise to several protest groups in the United States. In a real sense the class struggle in the USA is sharpening with two-thirds of Americans believing that there are conflicts between the rich and the poor according to a Pew Research Centre, thereby giving credence to the theory advanced by Marx that society is more and more splitting up into two hostile camps directly facing each other.

The vast majority of Americans see themselves as middle class. In his famous introduction to the Communist Manifesto Marx wrote that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. This is evident in all capitalist societies where there is always tension between the two contending classes, the capitalist class and the working class.

## Conclusion

Marx's ideas are very relevant both from an economic and from a sociological perspective. This is true for Guyana as it is for several other societies where the gap in living standards continue to get wider. Guyana, despite

its newly found oil riches continue to face the challenges of development. The unequal power equation between the oil companies operating in Guyana and the local authorities continue to be uneven resulting in skewed and loop-sided contracts which are highly skewed in favour of the big oil companies.

At the economic level, the exploitation of the riches of developing countries by multi-national corporations continue unabated. The income gap between the rich and the poor continue to increase, despite advances in science and technology and increases in labour productivity. The brain-drain continue to have a debilitating effect on developing countries especially with respect to key and critical skills such as doctors, nurses and other professionals. The pull to the North continue to have a disruptive impact on family structures leaving, as Marx said, 'the only nexus between man and man into a that of a cash nexus.'

Wherever there existed class societies, there will always be conflicts. The creation of a 'classless' society as

predicted by Marx may be a distant dream but it continues to haunt the imagination of progressive humanity as the only society in which there is an absence of exploitation of man by man, one in which principle of "from each according to his ability to each according to his need" become the guiding principle of human existence.



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# ‘The Red Scare’.

## Why Guyana Matters?



Janet and Cheddi Jagan, 1943 (just married)

This is the exciting story of two legendary freedom fighters, Janet and Cheddi. Their lives inspired, motivated and connected with many in the fight to be free.

Many often wonder whether it's a story of unconditional love or something else? Accused by their opponents and critics of being communists, Marxist-Leninists and even Maoists. Whatever they are they never compromised on their principles. So, who were they in real life?

Cheddi, the son of a plantation worker from Guiana returned to his homeland after graduating in the field of dentistry and armed with a degree in economics began making plans for returning home. Cheddi, it seems wanted to be more of a social 'doctor' to deal with the issue of poverty, disease and hunger, than a 'doctor of dentistry' working in isolation from the people.

Janet his young beautiful bride shortly joined him landing by seaplane in the Demerara River. A professional nurse who studied nursing in Chicago, USA she came to be with her husband in the fight for Independence and self-determination for the colony they both fell in love with.

It is generally believed that all people are born free. The right to life is a fundamental human right. But this depends on where you are born and bred to a large extent. Isn't this why many adapt or adopt and share the religious faith and belief of those before us?

Born in October 20, 1920 Janet like Cheddi were avowed Marxists. It is believed they were influenced by the progressive ideas in America at the time the Second World War ended. No doubt the Declaration of Independence of the United States had a profound influence on their thinking at the time:

“We hold these truths to be  
self-evident, that  
all men are created equal, that  
they are endowed by their  
creator with certain  
inalienable Rights that  
among these are Life, Liberty  
and the Pursuit of Happiness”.

But then they soon realized there are those with vested interests who seek to control and subjugate others under their control. It does not take long to find out, many things in life are not really free. They are those who profit from the misery and poverty of others. Some even call themselves prophets whose aim is to deceive the people making huge profits from the blood, sweat and tears of others.

Although Janet was from a middle-class Jewish family from Chicago, USA she was not 'religiously' Jewish. So, this was never a challenge for the young revolutionary fighter who both shared a scientific, internationalist world-view. They were one with the people in the fight for freedom from colonial domination and rule. Bonded with the people they were leaders who were different from the rest they were regarded as 'first among equals'.

Their dedication and commitment to the workers' cause for social change knew no bounds as their views were respected by all, even their most virulent opponents and persistent critics who never accepted or wanted to consider their Marxist views on the way society develops or how the workers were exploited by the ruling circles. They were bitterly opposed to Marxist and other progressive thinkers. So much so, that the British passed an Act deemed the 'undesirable publications Act' where progressive literature was banned and burned. This

was reminiscent of Hitler's Germany under fascist rule. Before Marxism, socialism was a mere dream, utopian socialism.

Their understanding of Marxism was never doctrinaire like so many others who proclaimed themselves Marxists. As Dr. Jagan declared at a meeting of the Guyanese diaspora at the 'Travel Lodge' in Canada just prior to his demise, 'we were very young at the time and we wanted to storm the heavens'.

Marxism for them was a guide to action, not easy for the uninitiated in the struggle for social change to understand, or even comprehend. Marxism not as a dogma but a guide to action is how it is to be understood and how, it seems, they understood it. This is what we were taught at the Party ideological college, Accabre, named after the famous slave rebel Accabre, one of the four slave rebels who led the 1763 Berbice Slave Revolt.

Karl Marx considered the 'father of scientific socialism' never invented socialism. The concept of socialism existed long before Marx came on the scene in the 19th century. This was the time the first 'Industrial Revolution' began in England. There was no blueprint for Marx, Engels or Lenin to follow. Marx uncovered the secret of exploitation of labor under capitalism in his monumental work 'Das Kapital' and the laws of historical development of societies. Central to Marxism is class struggle. As such revolutionaries are guided by the experiences of the revolutionary movement at specific historical periods under concrete historical conditions.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), is said to have declared, "One thing is for sure, I am not a Marxist". This he wrote in a letter about the peculiar 'Marxism' which arose in France 1882. This was Marx's way of disassociating himself from those who readily posed as 'Marxists/Socialists' in attempting to deceive or denigrate the philosophy that is about changing the world and making it a better place.

It was 1943 and the times were not particularly inviting, especially for those accustomed to the 'good life' America had to offer compared to that of a colony where the majority of the people were loyal subjects of the Queen of England, Queen Victoria. Guyanese were considered loyal subjects to monarchical rule in a plantation economy where the majority of the people lived in a state of perpetual poverty while on the other hand there was abundance and good living for those in the ruling circles.

As the colony of Great Britain, many would have found it difficult, if not challenging to adapt and adjust to their new way of life. But not so, Janet and Cheddi. Both avowed, self-proclaimed Marxists, sharing a common conviction and scientific world outlook, were eager to demand Independence and self-determination for the

people long subjugated by colonial rule. This was their calling.

The time had come for the end of colonial rule after the 'Red Army' together with the 'Allied Forces' defeated 'Hitler fascism'. Adolph Hitler had advanced three key considerations for world domination. The first was to make Germany 'Great Again'. Ever since Germany had suffered a humiliating defeat after World War 1 when Germany was forced to sign the 'Treaty of Versailles'. This treaty prohibited Germany from militarizing again as happened in World War 1. Once a country is well armed, with a standing army the next step is war to conquer and annex other territories to shore up their ailing capitalist economies. A key aspect of fascist rule was to blame the Jews for the ills of the Weimar Republic. The 'Weimar Republic' refers to modern day-Germany. The third aspect of the fascist rule in Germany was world domination.

In World War 1 the 'Soviets' sacrificed over 27 million lives to defeat the fascists. Germany as the most developed capitalist country at the time, was 'armed to the teeth', demanded 'lebensraum' in order to expand. This call for more land was to compensate Germany for not having colonies like Britain, Spain, Portugal and France. Germany it seemed wanted to expand its territories Eastwards through Belgium, France, Poland and the other countries of Eastern Europe.

With the defeat of fascism in 1945 it was not strange that every country after the war wanted to be Independent and free. The National Liberation struggles for Independence and the right to self-determination was on the rise. The right to own and control their own natural resources in the interest of the people was worth fighting for, many felt. This was only natural at the time. Expectations were high and the national liberation struggles were gaining momentum all along. The dream of freedom and self-determination was very much alive at this time. The colony of British Guiana proved to be no exception.

Janet and Cheddi's political activism began in 1946 one year after World War 11 ended. Teaming up with Ashton Chase, and HJM Hubbard, two other like-minded progressives they launched the first political organization of the working people, the Political Affairs Committee (PAC). Its first bulletin, created quite a stir in an otherwise conservative colony.

Janet is regarded as 'Thunder in Guyana'. The prestigious 'Times' magazine of the US referred to her as among the 16 most rebellious women of all times. Janet though regarded as a rebel was no ordinary rebel but a rebel with a cause she was committed to achieving-the liberation of the working people from bondage.

One year later after the formation of the PAC, in 1947 Cheddi won a seat in the Legislature. This marked a significant departure from the politics of the day. The legislature was now transformed from a 'talking shop' to a serious forum for discussing real peoples' issues. Cheddi referred to this period as 'getting into stride'. It soon became clear that for the people to win there was need for an enlightened party of the people.

The PAC became the forerunner of the first Peoples Party in Guyana. The Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) launched on January 1st 1950 took up the fight for workers rights providing a forum for the organized struggle of the workers. The trade union struggle for bread and justice was now elevated to its highest level, the political.

In 1948, the shooting to death of five protesting sugar workers at Plantation Enmore had a profound impact on the struggle of the workers in Guyana. Five were shot and killed at plantation Enmore by the Colonial police while protesting for better working conditions. This event impacted and influenced the struggle of the workers in a way never experienced before. Dr. Jagan wrote in his book chronicling the events at the time, that he took a silent pledge to commit his entire life to the workers struggle for freedom and justice. The PPP rallied the people and the people rallied around the PPP.

Two other events impacted and influenced the struggle at the time. It was 1947 that India won its Independence from India after a long, protracted and bloody struggle against the British 'Raj'. Britain lost its 'cash cow'. Some experts claim Great Britain had siphoned off some 45 trillion pounds sterling from India, among other things. There was even a story that the 'Kohinoor' claimed to be the world's largest diamond was discovered in Queen Victoria's crown.

Another major event of the time was the victorious communist revolution of China led by the indomitable Chairman Mao in 1949. It is not difficult to imagine the pride and honor felt when Janet Jagan as an emissary of the PPP Government first met Chairman Mao in China on a visit there in 1962.

### **Sharing a vision of the future?**

The need for an enlightened Party of the People soon became imminent. The PAC had a mission but no mandate. With the formation of the PPP on January 1st 1950 the people now had a mission and mandate.

It's people who make history, Marx declared and not the other way around as we were brought up or taught to believe. It is not the Kings, Emperors, Lords, Governors or Presidents that make history.

"Material force must be overthrown by material force.

But theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses." But, theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses."- Karl Marx.

This is why we need to change the narrative to reflect this fact. The events of the late forties, fifties and subsequent decades shaped and influenced the workers struggles for social change. China is now one if not the fastest growing economy in the world and will soon be the number one superpower replacing the US Empire which arose out of the Second World War.

The US empire had replaced the British Empire at the time. As Empires rise and fall, China has not invaded other countries unlike the US. Guyana, Grenada, Guatemala, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria like many others have suffered at the hands of the imperial USA and their Allies devastating their economies and bringing these countries to destruction of infrastructure and loss of civilian lives in senseless wars perpetrated by the US and its Western Allies.

It would have taken great courage and perseverance to stand up for Independence and self-rule at the time Janet and Cheddi did. But the PPP and its leaders persisted and persevered taking a proactive stand and approach on every major issue of the day with the Party playing the key role in every major battle ever since.

It was 1953 after the PPP swept the polls winning 18 out of the 24 seats that caused the British to react the way they did. Gunboats headed for the colony and soldiers disembarked at Port Georgetown looking for the 'communist insurgency, they were told to put down.

The people looked on many amused at the antics of those digging up the yards of residents and pulling down the 'red flags' of the religious Hindu Community. Many were asking, where is the war?

The PPP was however not amused. They led protests throughout the colony. Dr. Jagan was jailed for breaking the restriction orders imposed by the British and jailed. Ironically Janet was imprisoned for having in her possession a book by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on India's Independence Freedom Struggle. Janet chose to go to jail rather than pay the fine in solidarity with her comrades in the civil resistance struggle against the imperial forces and their lackeys. Incidentally Forbes Burnham, one of the leaders in the first PPP Administration was not touched. The stage was set for dividing the PPP into two factions.

The Robertson Constitution Commission was set up by the British to investigate. The report set the stage for what was to follow. Split the party to weaken the Party and thwart the resolve of the people in their support for the PPP by imposing a period of four years before the



next elections due in 1957. This has become known as the period of 'marking time'.

The CIA and M-I-5 worked feverishly to achieve these two objectives. In 1955 they achieved the first, split the Party into two factions but in 1957 failed to weaken the PPP sufficiently to cause it to lose the election in 1957.

The PPP won again. Again, the British postponed the granting of Independence to the colony. Betrayals and deception became the order of the day. The period of 'marking time' brought the country to a virtual standstill. Hoping the PPP would fade away the British were hopelessly wrong.

The British and their local cohorts decided they will not grant independence to the PPP. Britain at the time was under the leadership of arch anti-communist, Winston Churchill, later knighted by the Queen. Churchill, the British war hero, lost the National Elections following the end of World War 11 to Clement Atlee of the British Labor Party. This aptly express the British public rejection of war and war efforts.

The PPP became the chosen victim of the 'red scare'? Why? Both Parties, the PPP and the minority PNC claimed to be socialist parties. The PNC was deemed to be 'moderate and socialist' while the PPP was labelled as 'extremist and communist'. As such the PNC was deemed the 'lesser of the two evils.' The stage was set for implementing the 'divide and conquer' policy of the British. Britain won the battle in 1953 without firing a single shot. The arrival of troops ready for battle was viewed by many as 'gunboat diplomacy'. Was this an attempt to scare the natives into submission and abandon the PPP?

In retrospect the declassified documents revealed evidence to vindicate Dr. Jagan who began the campaign locally, regionally and internationally exposing and condemning the role of Imperialism in undermining democracy in Guyana. This is vividly portrayed in his book, 'The West on Trial-My Fight for Guyana's Freedom'.

The West is no longer on trial. The West is guilty. Dr. Jagan's writings are even more relevant with time.

Ashton Chase the only surviving member of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) further exposes the myth of the 'communist plot' in a factual and authoritative account of the PPP's first term of office. The title of his booklet, '133 Days Towards Freedom in Guiana' exposes the claim of the 'free West' as being committed to democracy.

These 133 days was followed by the suspension of the Constitution by the British, the jailing of the leaders of the PPP, the dismissal of the elected legislators and the imposition of emergency rule under the authority of the British Governor. The country came to a virtual standstill for the next four years until the next election due in 1957.

Dr. Jagan in an article under the caption, 'Straight Talk, The Way Backward' in his own inimitable style reveals the mystery behind the actions of the Imperialists. After the PPP won 18 out of the 24 seats in the Peoples' Assembly, Dr. Jagan wrote in the article titled above, 'The imperialists have come to the realization that at any new election, a united PPP cannot be defeated. Consequently, their recommendation of 'a period of marking time'.

This is revealed by the Commission in its report that stated, "we would hope that in the period (of marking time) plans for social and economic development would be energetically pursued and that the gradual improvement of social and economic conditions would help to bring about a change in the political outlook of the electorate".

This never happened as the people rallied with the PPP on all occasions national elections were held. The rest is history. The PPP won every election advancing the slogan, 'cheated not defeated' The PPP sought international support at every turn for the return of democracy rather than risking an open racial war as the society was racially/ethnically divided by the Imperialists and their lackeys.

Anglo-American Imperialism witnessed the puppet PNC regime rigging every election until 1992. The cold war which began after World War 11 ended in 1945 itself ended in 1991 after the Berlin Wall fell. The PNC now regarded as 'the greater of the two evils' was abandoned by its Western friends as the deal came to an end. The chief Aide to President Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger later apologized to Dr. Jagan alleging a great injustice was done to Dr. Jagan. This signaled a new day for the PPP/ Civic. The PPP again won the 1992 polls with the help of former US President Carter ensuring the PNC was stymied in the rigging process. With the 'cold war' ending in 1991 the veil of communism was lifted from it and the stage was set for its return to power after winning the 1992 polls and every other poll ever since.

This signaled the 'rebirth of democracy' in Guyana; after 28 long years in the wilderness Dr. Jagan was returned to the Presidency in 1992. This has been a red-letter day for all of Guyana ever since.

The attempt of the PNC led APNU Coalition to rig themselves back into power following the March 2nd 2020 elections proved to be a dismal failure. Based on the mysterious disappearance of the Statements of Polls (SOPs) and the appearance of a mysterious 'dossier' claiming the PPP is communist and must be isolated indicated their lack of vision of a rapidly changing world

in the 21st century with the balance of forces shifting in favor of Peace, Progress and Democracy.

This is the account of how Britain claiming like the US to be bastion of democracy undermined the very same democracy in their former colony in 1953 and subsequently with every election rigging by the PNC they chose to turn a 'Nelson eye' towards.

We can conclude, from the above that Guyana became a victim of the 'cold war' which began in 1949 following the end of the Second World War or what some call the European Civil War. The vile attack on Dr. Jagan and the PPP as being 'communist' is just a smokescreen to hide the real intention of imperialism.

The 'gold standard' of democracy is 'Government of the People, by the People and for the People'. It was former US President Abraham Lincoln who in a stirring address at the end of the 'Battle at Gettysburg' between the North and South in the US civil war made this pronouncement to honor those who sacrificed their lives for freedom.

This principle has since been violated not only in British Guiana in 1953 but all around the globe where US military bases are established many thousands of miles from the US and where numerous invasions were conducted by the Western Imperialist Powers.



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# Komal Chand: A Working Class Champion



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Mr. Komal Chand addressing workers

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It is already two years since Comrade Komal Chand died. He passed away on April 8, 2020 in Havana after a short illness.

His life was very eventful and spanned some of the most important periods in our country's history. He was a youth during the anti-colonial movement and began his political life in that period. He came into prominence during the anti-dictatorial struggle in the post colonial era, and during the flowering of democracy post 1992, he contributed to defending and promoting democracy in our long suffering land.

Komal's political consciousness developed as a high school student in the early 1960s. At that time the political struggle for independence was most intense. The People's Progressive Party (PPP), which led the struggle, came under great attacks from the British Colonial authorities, the US's CIA and their local collaborators, the Peoples National Congress (PNC), United Force (UF), Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the local media mainly.

He had to have witnessed many of the atrocities

committed by the forces opposed to independence and progress. This surely had an impact in molding his character and gave him a profound love of working on behalf of oppressed people.

He was influenced by his eldest brother, Dalchand, who was already well known as a PPP leader on the West Bank of Demerara and a man who had great knowledge in Local Government arena.

Another person who played an important part in molding Comrade Chand was Comrade Pariag Sukhai. Pariag was a party organizer on the West Demerara and visited the home of Komal and Dalchand quite a lot. They developed a very close relation that lasted until Pariag passed away in 2014.

Komal was actively involved, as a foot soldier, in the 1961 and 1964 General Elections in Guyana. It was here too that he came into regular contact with another giant of the PPP and of Guyana. He was Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye who was the PPP candidate for a constituency in the West Bank of Demerara and he was in charge of the



campaign in 1964. Komal, Pariag and Dalchand were some of his key helpers.

After finishing secondary school, Komal began helping in the family business. He became a very good motor mechanic and did quite a lot of work in that area. He repaired party vehicles on the West Bank and kept the fleet rolling despite their often bad condition.

By this time he had come to the notice of many of the leadership of the party. These included Comrade Cheddi Jagan, who was always on the lookout for bright and dedicated young people and the Party's chief organizer Comrade Earl Maxwell Gladstone Wilson.

So when the party began to reorganize the PYO in the latter half of the 1960, Komal Chand was recruited on the steering committee to accomplish that task. He worked closely with another giant of our struggle, a great organizer and a deep thinker, a Marxist theorist, Comrade Feroze Mohamed, who died days after Komal, on May 1, 2020.

He attended the Party's School, Accabre College and in 1971 he was one of the young cadres that were sent to do political studies in the Soviet Union.

Those studies helped to cement his convictions and strengthened his ideological outlook.

On his return home he worked for a short while at the Party's Head Office, at Freedom House. After that Komal went to help the Comrades in the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU). At that time the union was still fighting to be recognized as the sole bargaining agents of the field and factory workers in the Sugar Industry.

Komal, who grew up among sugar workers, had a very strong attachment to them. During the two huge strikes of 1975 Komal played a key role. His work distinguished him as a true working class champion and he began moving up the ranks of the union.

Those two strikes finally forced a poll in the sugar industry on December 31, 1975.

I recall that I spent that day with Komal getting out the votes and assisting in whatever ways needed. As is now known GAWU won more than 95% of the votes cast. It was a massive victory and shortly after in 1976 the union formally signed a recognition agreement with the sugar corporation. Komal's signature, among others, is in that historic document.

From this time Komal became a full time worker of the GAWU. He became the chief organizer of the union and was involved in many epic battles. Most notable was the

one hundred and seventy seven day strike in 1977. In that strike the union was not only defending the interests of the sugar workers, but industrial democracy in general and the principle of Collective Bargaining.

The other important strike was the anti-budget strike of 1989. This too was a bruising battle. That was a resistance that accelerated the people's victory which came on October 5, 1992. That strike began after the presentation of the national budget which measures hit working people the hardest. The Guyana dollar value fell like a stone overnight.

Of course Komal was a politician to his bone. He was a loyal member of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), a true disciple of Cheddi Jagan.

There are those who criticized him for being a Member of the National Assembly and being the President of the GAWU. However, Komal never saw any contradiction with serving both the Party and the Union. For him, as for me, there never was a contradiction, after all both organizations serve the interests of the working class. Both have always done so with distinction and Komal made a contribution to the workers in improving their immediate conditions and to their long term interests in making laws to promote their position in society. It must have been with great pride to him when the Labor Relations Bill was passed.

The union looks into the economic interest and the immediate interests of the working class. The Party while supporting those measures also take care of the longer term interests of working people, Labor Legislations among other things. Komal worked in both streams because the objectives are the same.

In the National Assembly his speeches can testify that he always took the side of the working class. He fought hard for democracy and to preserve the hard won gains of the masses.

Comrade Komal passed away at a crucial time in the life of the sugar workers. Among the last things he did was to organize demonstrations against the closure of estates which began with the PNC and is, unfortunately, continuing.

Komal is definitely missed at this time.

The other aspect of Komal activities I wish to highlight was his internationalism.

Throughout his political life he fought for world peace. He was a staunch advocate of nuclear and general disarmament. He traveled to many international conferences both representing the PPP and the GAWU and he always upheld solidarity of all working people. He believed in and advocated the principle of proletarian

internationalism.

He exerted much energies to try to promote greater understanding of other people struggles. He was the head of the Guyana/ Soviet friendship Society until the USSR collapsed. He was a friend of Cuba and China and all socialist countries.

He always saw Guyana's struggles as part of the bigger international struggle for a life of peace and prosperity.

While he would be greatly missed we can be comforted that he lived a life of service to the working and oppressed people the world over. He was loyal to the working people to the end.

His cause will be taken up by others and the torch he passed on April 8, 2020 will never be dimmed.

Farewell Comrade!



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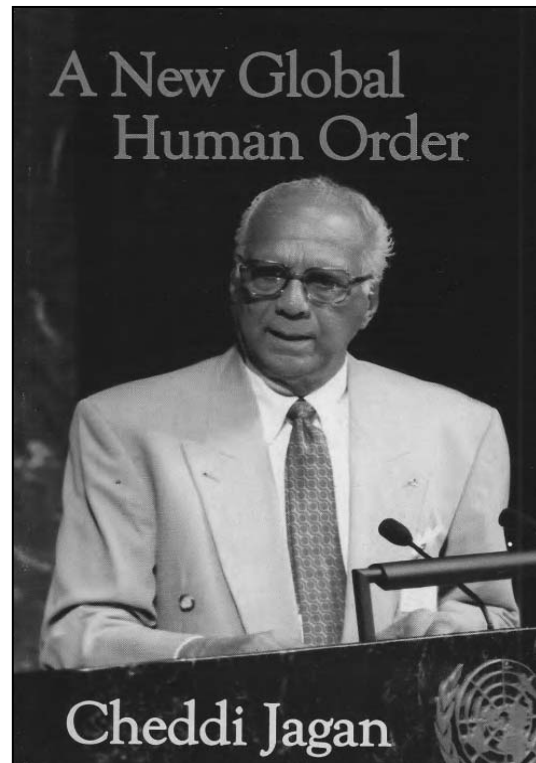
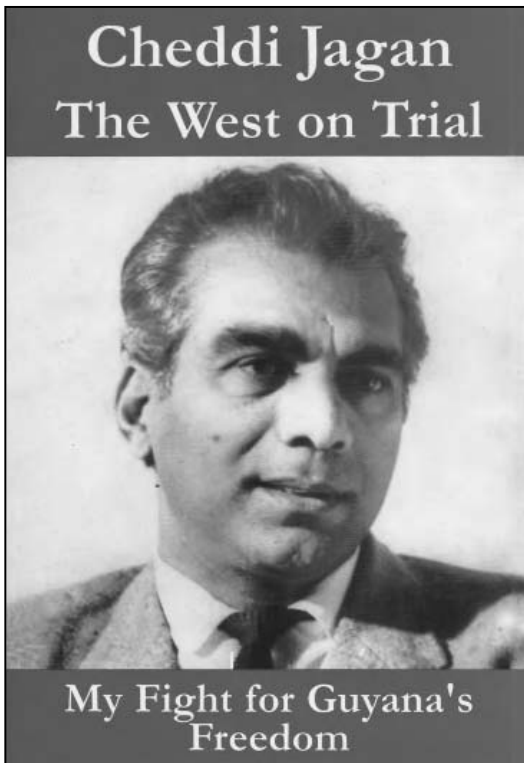
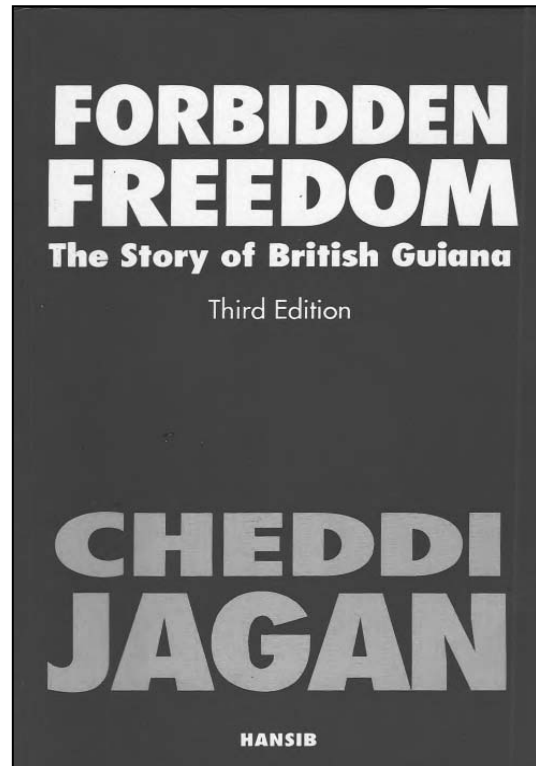
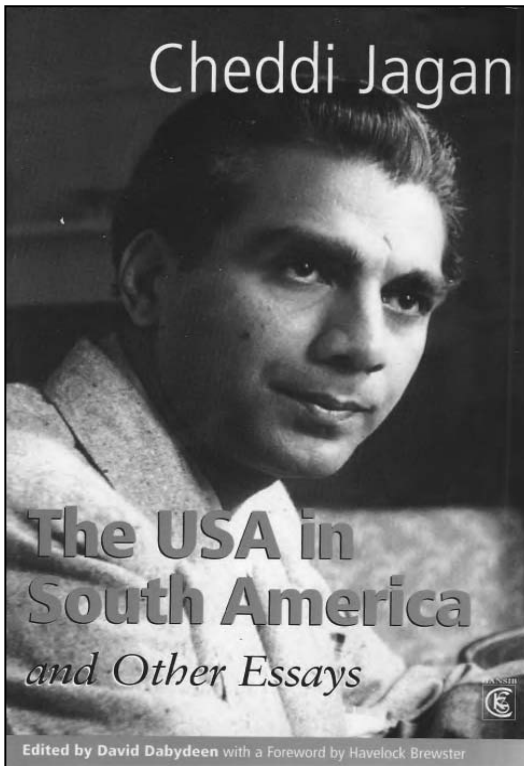
Komal Chand lays a wreath at the burial site for the Enmore Martyrs' at Le Repentir Cemetery.

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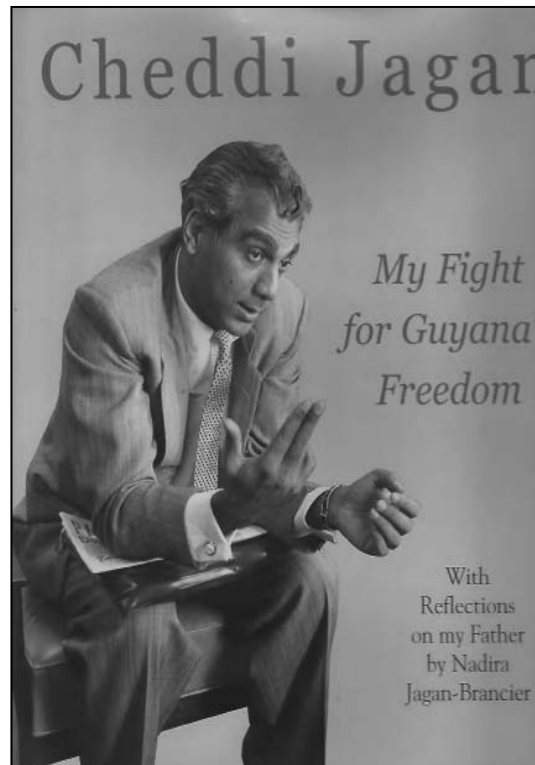
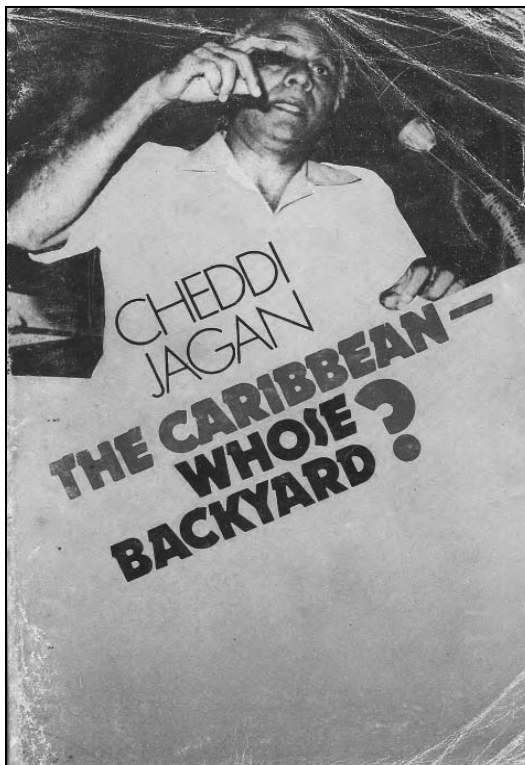
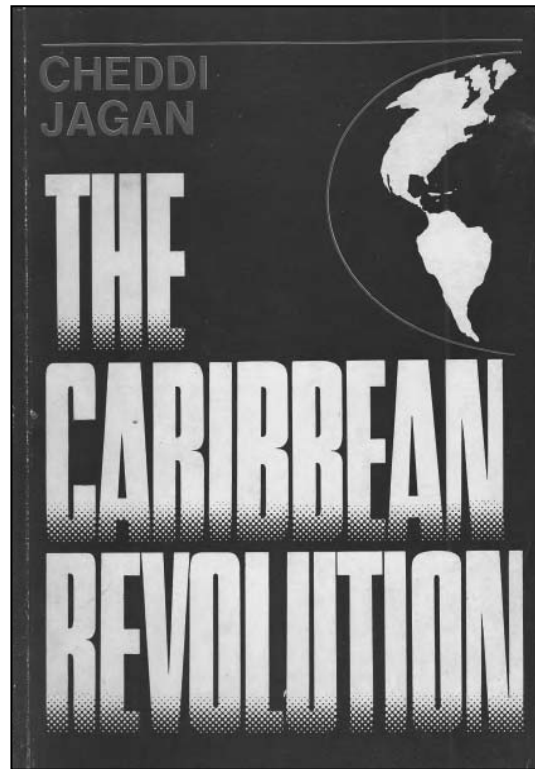
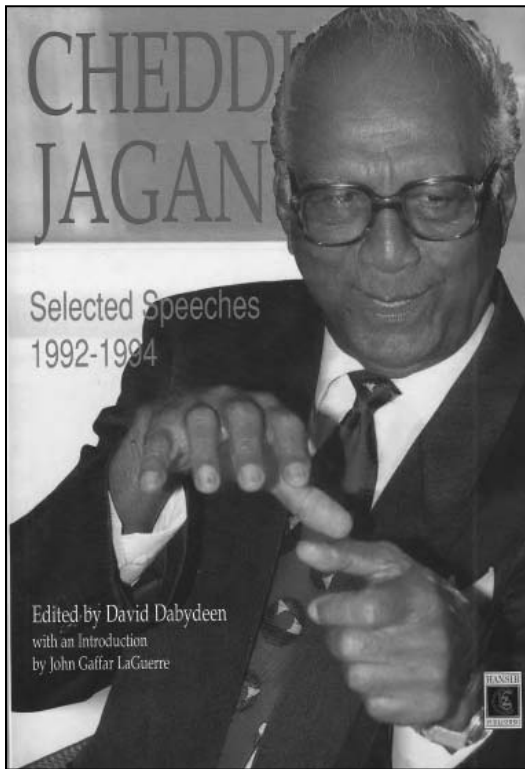


*Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper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

# Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



# Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



# 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*

### **Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (Red House)**

65-67 High Street, Kingston, Georgetown

Tel: (592) 223-7523/4

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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