

3025

ADDRESS BY DR. CHEDDI JAGAN, GENERAL SECRETARY
OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY IN GUYANA,
AT THE SEMINAR/CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
"PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND SOCIALISM" ON
"THE WORKING CLASS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
AND ITS ALLIES IN THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE"

Esteemed Comrades,

Permit me first of all to thank the sponsors of this Conference, the International Journal "Problems of Peace and Socialism", for inviting the People's Progressive Party (PPP) of Guyana to take part in the deliberations. Also our thanks go to the Communist Party of Cuba for hosting this Conference and making the organisational and other arrangements.

The post-World War II history of Guyana is marked by certain more or less distinct phases:

1. 133 days in 1953 and 1957-64 - anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist;
2. 1965-70 - pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist;
3. 1971-73 - vacillating with the balance in favour of imperialism;
4. 1974-76 - anti-imperialist;
5. 1977-80 - reversion to the 1971-73 period of vacillation, with pressures to move to the 1965-70 position.

For an understanding of these different positions, it is necessary to analyse the roles played by the classes and strata both in favour or against the revolutionary process.

Colonial British Guiana was an underdeveloped, dependent semi-capitalist and semi-feudal country, with a relatively small population of about $\frac{3}{4}$ million in an area of 83,000 square miles, about twice the size of Cuba. Sugar was "king" and formed the sheet anchor of the economy.

Like the United Fruit Company in Central America, one British monopoly, Booker, McConnell and Co. dominated the economy -- sugar, timber, balata, foreign and local trade, insurance, shipping.

The sugar plantocracy monopolised economic and political power. Policy was formulated to prevent the development of peasant agriculture because of the shortage of labour up to World War II due to the then high incidence of malaria.

As a result of demand for aluminum during the last war, bauxite production under North-American control greatly expanded. But as in the sugar industry, no attempt was made to establish an integrated system of production within the country. So imbalanced and dependent was the economy that the foreign capitalists owned and controlled sugar and bauxite industries earned more than 75 per cent of the export income.

At the top of the colonial social structure was a narrow group of the foreign monopolist plantation, mining and comprador bourgeoisie, operating through a handful of companies and monopolising the economy including the available coastal land. It concentrated on the production of raw materials (sugar, spirits, molasses, timber, bauxite) for export, and the importation of goods, mainly from Britain.

Closely allied to the foreign big bourgeoisie were the national (middle) bourgeoisie and the landlords. Together, they constituted the ruling class.

Because the foreign big monopolist bourgeoisie wielded unlimited political power and geared the economy towards the purchase of manufactured goods from overseas, industrial development was arrested. Thus, the national industrial bourgeoisie remained relatively immature.

Landlordism on an extensive scale did not develop in Guyana as in Latin America. Most of the land was held as state property in order to "contain" agricultural development outside the sugar plantations. However, because of periodic crises of sugar in the international market and also the necessity for enlarging the social base of their rule, the planters from time to time sold out the small sugar plantations ranging generally from 200 to 2,000 acres. The landlords combined landlordism with money-lending, shop-keeping and rice-milling. Thus along with colonial dependent capitalism, there was semi-feudalism in the countryside, particularly in one county, the Essequibo.

The mixed or coloured population constituted the upper level of the middle strata; the African and Indian, the middle and lower levels. Among the latter, two tendencies developed; firstly, opportunism - to enjoy the social privileges enjoyed by the "mixed"; and secondly, competition to compete for political power.

The first major assault for national liberation took place in the second half of the twentieth century when the People's Progressive Party (PPP) united the workers, farmers and radical middle strata and won a decisive victory of 18 out of 24 seats at the general election in 1953.

Unlike other nationalist, mass-based political parties in the English-speaking Caribbean, the PPP's leadership was dominated by Marxist-Leninists and revolutionary democrats. Because the "left-wing" was in control, it did not fall in line with the cold-war as did the others, in which the "right-wing" was in control.

As a result of the fact that the PPP established a revolutionary-democratic government, it became a victim of cold-war anti-communist hysteria -- in 1953, in the context of intense McCarthyite red witch-hunting and CIA offensives in Korea, Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954); in 1957-64, in the context of CIA intervention in, and US blockade of, Cuba.

The progressive Trades Union Congress was also illegally smashed in November 1953, brought under the control of the AFL-CIO, AIFLD and the CIA, and helped to overthrow the PPP government.

In December 1964, Anglo-American imperialism installed in power the present ruling People's National Congress (PNC) and the United Force (UF). The PNC, formed in 1957, was a coalition of the right-wing of the PPP, which split the Party in 1955, and the reactionary petty-bourgeois and bourgeois-led United Democratic Party. The United Force, formed in 1961, represented the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie.

Imperialism established a client-bourgeois state in 1964. On independence in 1966, colonial rule was replaced by neo-colonial rule and the colonial economic structure was maintained. The steps taken by the PPP government towards democratic transformations were sabotaged.

Anti-working class, and pro-imperialist domestic and foreign policies were instituted and bourgeois ideological control was established.

Despite its advocacy of "democratic socialism", the PNC, in keeping with the aims of imperialism, took the initiative in establishing in 1968 the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) as a vehicle for the penetration of US capital in a British-dominated area and for the exploitation of the resources and peoples of the Caribbean region; adopted the Puerto Rican model (industrialisation by invitation) as the basis of the \$300 million Development Programme (1966-72); purged the University of Guyana, established by the PPP government; and placed foreign and local reactionary technocrats in control of key institutions.

Changes in society are due chiefly to the development and resolution of the contradictions in it.

To the colonial ruling classes exercising political power was added in December 1964 to PNC petty-bourgeoisie, particularly the bureaucratic-technocratic stratum. This led to instability at the political superstructure: the PNC petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership had chafed at colonial-state restrictions which had hindered social and economic development, particularly its own advancement to the upper levels of the state apparatus, industry, commerce, insurance and banking.

The contradiction was resolved at the expense of the bureaucratic-bourgeois section of the United Force, the junior coalition partner. The bureaucratic-technocratic stratum of the PNC's petty-bourgeoisie, represented in the lower and middle levels of the state apparatus, was catapulted particularly after political independence in 1966, to the top levels filling the vacuum created by the departing British, and displacing the Creolese White, the Portuguese and Mixed.

While with this process the PNC corrected an historical injustice, it nevertheless aped its imperialist overlords by practising "divide and rule" politics and instituting political and racial (racialism in reverse) discrimination. This, coupled with political patronage, later led to mismanagement and inefficiency.

And as a result of the fact that the PNC petty bourgeoisie was only nominally represented in the industrial, commercial and exchange sectors of the economy and did not gain from the economic, fiscal and monetary measures of the coalition government, the PNC elitist leadership resorted to widespread corruption. In pursuit of this objective, it ejected from the coalition government in 1968 the United Force, which had held strategic positions in the ministries of finance and works and superintended the award of contracts and other financial transactions. It also failed to enact anti-corruption legislation and to establish institutional checks to curb corruption.

There is an interconnection and interaction between the economic base and the political and ideological superstructure. Pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist policies not only stagnated the economy but also caused a decline in living standards. As the national liberation and class struggle intensified, the contradictions between the exploiting and exploited sharpened, the regime moved in the direction of "national security" state. In 1966, it enacted the National Security Act, under which it detained, without trial and bail, PPP leaders and activists in the late 1960's; in the 1967-70 period, it attempted to enact into law an anti-strike measure, the Trades Disputes Bill, which provided for compulsory arbitration without the right to strike. Its crude anti-communism gave

way to ideological demagogy. There was talk of revolution, but it took the form of cultural nationalism and social reformism. In 1970, in a bid for social peace in a society rent by class conflicts, "democratic socialism" was replaced by the utopian "co-operative socialism"; and the reformist "meaningful participation in bauxite" was advocated.

The objective situation, together with the subjective aspirations of the PNC petty-bourgeoisie, forced the nationalist regime to pursue limited national tasks, and to make a progressive shift in domestic and foreign policies, at first in the 1971-73 period in an ambiguous vacillating manner with the balance in favour of imperialism; and later, in the 1974-76 period, to a firmer anti-imperialist position. The sugar and bauxite industries were nationalised, and in foreign policy anti-imperialist positions were taken.

However, incorrect economic planning strategy, lack of democracy, bureaucratic-administrative and police-military methods of rule, denial of human rights and civil liberties, militarisation of politics and industrial relations, refusal to establish democratic management and workers' control at state enterprises and to recognise truly democratic mass organisations, political and racial discrimination in the allocation of jobs, land, credit, houses and consumer goods at state outlets, political patronage, corruption and extravagance have together acted directly and indirectly as fetters on the productive forces.

Consequently, Guyana has been brought to a state of severe and mounting economic, financial, social and political crisis -- budget and balance of payments deficits; shortage of foreign exchange; cuts in imports; cuts in development expenditure; removal of subsidies; steep taxation; redeployment and dismissal of workers.

Since 1974, the PPP had stated that there would be no solution to the economic, financial and social crises without a solution to the political crisis. In August 1977, in anticipation of the PNC postponing or rigging the 1978 general elections, forging yet another alliance with imperialism and taking Guyana on a dangerous course, we called for a political solution based on the formation of a National Patriotic Front with a democratic, anti-imperialist and socialist-oriented programme, and a National Patriotic Front Government of all progressive, left and democratic parties and groups. It was intended that the PNC should be included based on its declarations from time to time that it is democratic, anti-imperialist and socialist.

The social basis of the National Patriotic Front will consist of the working class, the peasantry, the progressive petty-bourgeoisie, the radical intelligentsia and the patriotic sections of the national bourgeoisie.

The PNC rejected our proposal. It is opposed to a political solution and the formation of a National Patriotic Front and Government because of its class interests. That party is rooted in rightist opportunism. It does not want to surrender positions and privileges and a corrupt way of life. During the past 15 years, its leadership has been transformed; it is dominated by the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie, which has become entrenched, is using the state for private accumulation, and expanding and developing as a class with ambitions of becoming the big bourgeoisie. Nationalisation since 1971, though a progressive step, did not lead to revolutionary transformation. It became a "peculiar midwife to

capitalist relations". In the nationalised enterprises, as in the state machine, the PNC bureaucrats and technocrats were elevated to the top; simultaneously, transfers took place horizontally from the state-administrative sector to the newly-nationalised enterprises. This bureaucratic-technocratic elite replaced the Canadian, American and British elite with the same salaries, allowances and life-style.

Through political patronage and corruption, a new stratum from the PNC petty-bourgeoisie has emerged -- the neo-comprador, mediatory bourgeoisie. Commission agents, machinery (tractors, trucks, bulldozers) owners, construction companies posing as cooperatives, shipping companies, legal, architectural and accounting firms provide services to the state corporations. With lucrative contracts, they parasitically siphon off surplus value which should go to the workers and to the national treasury for financing development. At the same time, sections of the PNC leadership are emerging as a national (industrial and agricultural) bourgeoisie. In the countryside, because its agricultural policies are leading to the ruination of the small farmers, a capitalist form of agriculture is supplanting peasant agriculture; a rural bourgeoisie is developing.

An example of the inter-locking PNC bourgeoisie is W.G. Stoll. During the PPP term of office, he was Commissioner of Inland Revenue and Chairman of the Civil Service Association. He was instrumental in calling out the civil servants during the 80-day CIA-fomented and -financed strike of 1963. The PNC government appointed him as Chairman of the Public Service Commission and Police Service Commission. At the same time, he established an auditing firm: Stoll, Thomas and Dias (Thomas was the first PNC Economic Development Minister). This company does the auditing for all State Corporations. Stoll is also a Director of Guyana Refrigerators Limited, assembling refrigerators, and a director of Industrial, Domestic and Electrical Appliances Limited (IDEAL), which will soon be assembling stoves in Guyana. These companies are linked to Associated Industries, which itself is owned and controlled by Neal and Massey, a \$500 million company based in Trinidad. To the IDEAL Company, a loan was granted by the International Finance Corporation, closely associated with the World Bank. In this example, we see a link between the local bureaucratic, mediatory and industrial bourgeoisie tied to the Caribbean and North American bourgeoisie.

"Cooperative socialism" has become "cooperative capitalism", "state capitalism" and "bureaucratic capitalism". Cooperatives have become in reality private companies; the petty-bourgeois controlled and directed state has become an instrument not only for accumulation for the benefit of the petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, but also for the suppression and oppression of the masses.

Progressive changes at the economic base through nationalisation have not been accompanied by corresponding changes at the superstructural (political, institutional, ideological and cultural) levels.

The PNC has established a bourgeois state, but not a bourgeois-democratic form of rule. An authoritarian, semi-dictatorship has been imposed on the people.

There is grave curtailment of democracy at the political, social and economic levels. Democratic freedoms and human rights are violated.

In an attempt to extricate itself from the economic and social morass, the PNC regime made a deal with imperialism. On June 12, 1978, it signed a secret stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is making concessions to imperialism and putting more burdens on the people.

The swing to the right began in 1977, and is manifested in:-

1. the halting of further nationalisation of the foreign-owned banks and insurance companies;
2. a new "Investment Code" with an "open door" policy to foreign monopolies -- a reversal of the Sophia Declaration which restricted foreign capital;
3. grant of concessions to West German and French companies for extraction of uranium and to two North-American companies for mineral oil. Foreign investors are being sought for an aluminum smelter project, the basis of industrialisation in Guyana;
4. in foreign policy, the PNC regime took the US position in the Chinese aggression against Vietnam; in the Angolan crisis, it supported the MPLA, the Soviet Union and Cuba, but in a parallel situation in Afghanistan, it took a position against the Afghanistan revolution and the Soviet Union; relations with Brazil and China, which were strained during the 1975-76 period, are now being strengthened;
5. under the direction of the US State Department, large numbers of reactionary Loation refugees, who fought against the revolutionaries in Laos and later escaped to Thailand, are to be settled in Guyana and Cayenne (French Guiana) to establish a base for the counter-revolutionary forces.

The title "The Cooperative Republic of Guyana" has now been inserted in the 1980 Constitution. And the country is deemed to be "in transition from capitalism to socialism".

As a result of PNC demagogy and empty talk, socialism is being denigrated and given a bad name. The assertion that Guyana is in transition from capitalism to socialism is an absurdity. "Transition from capitalism to socialism" implies a "dictatorship of the proletariat". What exists in Guyana is a dictatorship of the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie. Actually, even the preconditions -- economic, social, cultural, technological, ideological and political -- to the transition have not been firmly laid.

And as we have repeatedly stated since 1970, the cooperative sector cannot be the dominant sector in a socialist Guyana. In actual fact, cooperative socialism has become cooperative capitalism, state capitalism and bureaucratic capitalism. Many companies associated with the PNC are masquerading as cooperatives; through political patronage, they secure lucrative contracts and facilities, and as cooperatives avoid the payment of income tax.

The Guyanese experience shows the weaknesses of petty-bourgeois nationalism, and the dual nature of the petty-bourgeoisie as a class. At one stage, its labour tendency is dominant, and it plays a progressive role, taking anti-imperialist positions and attempting to create an independent national economy. At a subsequent stage, its capitalist tendency can become dominant. In Guyana, the petty-bourgeois controlled and directed state has become an instrument not

only for accumulation for the benefit of the petty-bourgeois and the bourgeoisie, but also for the suppression and oppression of the masses of the working people.

Wages are frozen in the face of rampant inflation. Invariably, strikes called to defend living standards are deemed political, and strike-breaking scabs, thugs and the military and para-military forces are used against the workers. There is arbitrary dismissal of workers. And the administration of justice is tampered with.

There is growing working class, and what is equally important racial, unity. Unlike other developing countries, particularly in Africa, Guyana, because of the powerful role played in the pre-independence period by the large and powerful transnational sugar and bauxite corporations, has an industrial and agricultural proletariat representing more than half the entire workforce. Of the 235,400 employed out of a potential work force of 344,000 (108,600 unemployed), 29.9 per cent ^{represent the industrial proletariat and 29 per cent} the agricultural proletariat.

Historically, the most militant section has been the agricultural workers in the sugar plantations. During the past five years, there has been, in response to the lack of industrial democracy, rigged trade union elections and deteriorating conditions of life, a militant upsurge in the bauxite industry.

Because of the high incidence of unemployment and underemployment there is a large semi-proletariat. In addition, a growing lumpen proletariat is emerging made up of the declassed elements largely drawn from the unemployed, who become desperate with their situation, and are engaged in anti-social activities such as robbery, gangsterism, beggary, prostitution, drug and dope peddling, etc. This category is extremely unstable. Generally, it is used by the reactionaries as thugs, disruptors, paid-killers, informers, etc. However, in certain circumstances, they can be swept along by the revolutionary tide as in Trinidad in 1970.

The firmest and natural ally of the working class has been the peasantry. Since Guyana is largely an agricultural country, the farmers who cultivate the land constitute the bulk of the population.

The rich farmers, generally called the rural bourgeoisie account for about four per cent of the total number of farms, but occupy approximately 80 per cent of the total acreage. This section combines land cultivation with the renting of a portion of the land.

The poor farmers constitute the bulk of the rural population, but account for only about 5 per cent of the total acreage. They have an average of less than 10 acres of land. Because of the agricultural policies of the government, the poor farmers are being driven by rural poverty not only into debt, but also towards the city and overseas.

Unity of the progressive and revolutionary has led to a definite shift in the balance of forces against the regime. In the July 10, 1978 referendum aimed at the postponement of general elections, cooperation among four political parties, five unions and workers' organisations in key sectors of the economy, the principal bodies representing the three main religions in Guyana and practically all the professional groups, amply demonstrated that the forces of progress were numerically much stronger in 1978 than in 1973, and even in 1953, when our national liberation movement was united. The combined boycott was a great

success. The report of the Intelligence Unit of the ruling party disclosed a voter turnout of only 13.7 per cent.

The five weeks strike of the bauxite workers in July-August 1979, supported by the four influential progressive unions in the Guyana Trades Union Congress, the GAWU, CCWU, UGSA and NAACIE, brought about unity which we had been patiently and persistently working for -- unity not seen since the 1945-55 period which had led to the PPP victory of 18 out of 24 parliamentary seats in 1953.

At the same time, sixty-six prominent individuals drawn from the state bureaucracy, the Church, commerce, industry and the professions signed a document calling for the formation of a broad-based government "of national reconstruction in which all the recognised political parties and other legitimate interest groups such as the trade unions and business and professional interests would have representatives".

As the semi-dictatorial Burnham regime is becoming more and more isolated, it is looking to imperialism for economic, financial, political and military support. This support is forthcoming because the PNC petty-bourgeoisie and developing bourgeoisie and the foreign bourgeoisie have a common interest; that is, to take Guyana on a pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist path.

The Guyana reality must be viewed in a dialectic way. Some tend to over-emphasise anti-imperialism, while others look only at socialism. Some view the PNC government by its position in the 1974-76 period, but fail to observe the rightist turn since 1977. If one does not view the situation historically and dialectically, serious political mistakes can be made, and no scientific explanation can be given for "lapses" for anti-imperialist to pro-imperialist positions as in Guyana, Egypt and elsewhere.

Particularly in this period of aggravated world capitalist crisis, we do not see any mechanical separation in our concrete situation between democracy, anti-imperialism and socialist orientation. They are all interlinked in the dialectical revolutionary process. Experience in Guyana has shown that imperialist domination and control led to a denial of democracy and human rights; that, despite nationalisation and other anti-imperialist policies in the 1974-76 period, undemocratic practices and failure to carry out the political, economic, cultural and ideological pre-conditions for socialist orientation fettered the productive forces and undermined the economy, which in turn resulted in a new alliance between the PNC and imperialism.

The minority semi-dictatorial regime is once again planning to rig general elections due not later than January 1981. The people's struggle is assuming new heights; a revolutionary situation is rapidly developing. Your understanding of the process in Guyana, and your militant solidarity is vitally needed. As in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Grenada and Nicaragua, we too are optimistic about the future and are confident of victory.

/ / / / / / / / / /