

U.S. MILITARISATION OF CARIBBEAN AND

LONG-TERM STABILITY

I agree with the Director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs Lawrence Birns, that U.S. Militarisation of the Caribbean threatens long-term stability. He was quite right in expressing his concern that U.S. training of elite troops in the region "may cause coups d'etat in these countries".

When looked at in historical perspective, the rejoinder to Mr. Birns by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Langhorne A. Motley was very superficial, if not naive. He observed that there was no such fear in view of the democrats tradition in the Caribbean.

The democratic tradition in the Caribbean is an illusion. In Guyana, the Churchill-led conservative Government used British troops to destroy the popularly-elected PPP government in 1953, and ten years later Britain and the United States destabilised the third elected PPP government by CIA's covert actions -- strikes, strife and arson. In Grenada, Eric Gairy used his "mongoose" gang to bloody his political opponents and rig elections; and links were being developed with General Pinochet of Chile.

The fact is the United States has filled the power vacuum in the post-independence period in the English-speaking Caribbean; and under U.S. influence, the region is becoming Latin-Americanised.

What is taking place politico-militarily in the Caribbean in the 1980's is virtually a repetition of developments in Latin America in the late 1940's -- the Rio Pact and Mutual Defense in 1947, the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1948 and Mutual Defense Assistance agreements. Under the latter, Latin American military men, like General Pinochet, received in the United States not only technical military training, but also politico-ideological doctrination mainly anti-communism.

The end result has been the death of democracy. Several popular democratic governments were ousted. Before the plan was launched in 1947 at the Rio Conference, only 3 nations - Argentina, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic - were dictatorships. But by 1953 military men who had taken the anti-Communist pledge had been given and ousted the legal governments

and seized power in seven other republics. From 1948 to 1958, there were 14 major coups d'etat.

The militarisation under U.S. hegemony of the Caribbean must be halted. Every effort must be made to avoid the tragedy that befell Latin America.

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Cheddi Jagan Research Centre