

THE IDEOLOGICAL/POLITICAL STRUGGLE

by Observer

Race/ethnicity, class, religion and ideology influence Guyana's cultural development and determine its political behaviour.

The PNC has always exploited race and ideology. Once again, it is playing the race/ideology card. In its most recent outburst, it referred to Cheddi Jagan's "publicly declared adherence to outmoded Marxist/Leninist ideology and by his pursuit of a rabid policy of racism, political victimization and hostility to private investment, both foreign and local."

The PNC is bereft of proper analysis and understanding of philosophy and ideology, of theory and practice.

It has failed to understand that in the industrially-developed capitalist states, the major contradiction is between the capitalist class and the working class where attempts are being made to solve the deep and on-going socio-economic crisis at the expense of the working people. On the other hand, the major problem of the developing states is survival in this era of economic globalisation and liberalisation. Consequently, all classes and strata, all social partners, capital and labour must cooperate for national security, peace, social progress and sustainable human development.

It is this understanding which has firstly brought about a PPP/CIVIC alliance; and secondly, for the PPP/CIVIC administration to work for a capital/government/labour social contract, for the private sector to play the role as the engine of economic growth and, for labour to ensure growth with social justice and ecological preservation.

FABRICATIONS

The PNC has a Machiavellian political approach and an eclectic ideological position. When in the PPP in the 1950-54 period, L F S Burnham took a strong national liberation position and attacked those who raised the anti-communist red-herring. McCarthyism was then a strident force in the West.

The PPP Government was attacked in October 1953 for attempting to "establish a communist state". How that impossible task was to be done in a colonial environment at that time was not spelled out.

Note these observations about the fabricated charges. *The Times of India* stated: "In a laboriously prepared charge sheet the British Government has not been able to point to a single act of violence on the part of any member of the People's Progressive Party... The people of this country who remember how, not long ago, the leaders of the national movement were denounced by the British Government as Japanese agents, know what to make of these charges."

Ralph Champion, Daily Mirror correspondent, who was the first to arrive in British Guiana during the crisis, wrote on Wednesday, October 7, from Georgetown: "I was the first British newspaperman to arrive in this "crisis" colony and when I flew in yesterday, I was greeted with amazement. There seemed to be little idea that there was a crisis over alleged moves by the government's People's Progressive Party to convert the colony into a Red Republic."

Another British Newspaper, the *Daily Mail* on October 7, reported: "Mr Whittingham, the deputy police commissioner in British Guiana, sounded calm and unperturbed today as he spoke over the radio-telephone from the colony's capital, Georgetown, and said: 'There are no demonstrations, there is no general strike, there is nothing abnormal happening here whatsoever.'

I told him of reports that Communist workers were demonstrating around the Parliament buildings in Georgetown. Mr Whittingham said: 'There have been no demonstrations and no trouble whatsoever.'"

The Times of October 21 commented: "Thoughtful observers feel that unless the show of force is justified by the subsequent revelation of an imminent plot it might well alienate public opinion."

The Observer of October 11 attacked the British government for "serious blunders" and "serious mistakes". Faced with these criticisms the British government published a White Paper on the suspension of the Constitution. But even this did not provide any further evidence.

The Times of October 21 commented: "The 'Communist Plot' ... is not exposed in the White Paper with the clarity and completeness that many in the

country expected."

DIALECTICS

Later, after PPP victories in 1957 and 1961, it was charged that Guyana would become a second Cuba and that the PPP planned to establish a Marxist-Leninist state based on the Soviet/Chinese/Cuban model -- one party; concentration of economic power in the state with little if any role for the private sector.

What was not noted was that in those socialist states, political power had come from violent revolution, from "the barrel of a gun"; whereas, in the colony British Guiana the PPP contested in a multi-party system and won three consecutive elections in spite of vicious propaganda and harassment.

The different PPP practice in a totally-different cultural/constitutional environment was noted, in the context of the then American hysteria, by Tory MP and Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod, who had chaired the 1960 Constitutional Conference in London in 1960, which had rejected the proportional representation (PR) system of voting.

In a debate in the House of Commons in June 1964, Macleod said: "There is an irony we all recognise in the fact of America urging us all over the world towards colonial freedom except where it approaches their own doorstep. When I was last in America ... I discussed with many people, including President Kennedy, this particular question which weighs anxiously on their minds, I myself think their fears (about Dr Jagan) are exaggerated. The American attitude seems dangerous because in my experience if you put off independence because you fear you may get a left-wing government, the most likely thing to happen is that you will get a government even further to the left."

as the Soviet Union, China and Cuba,

Although sharing the same theoretical/ideological principles, the PPP's practice was different, not only at the political, but also at the economic, level.

For example, after the return from India of Cheddi-Jagan and L F S Burnham in 1954, they said that the PPP would follow the Gandhian policy of non-violence and civil disobedience. This was denounced by a sector of the Far Left as being non-revolutionary. The same was done in 1956 after Cheddi Jagan had proposed an alliance with the local patriotic capitalists in his speech to the PPP Congress in 1956 in New Amsterdam.

This policy had been implemented by the previous PPP government. It had established the Industrial Estate at Ruimveldt for the benefit of the private sector, and gave incentives and protection to private enterprise in agriculture and industry.

It is ironic that today China and Cuba have opted for the very model of economic development which the PPP had embraced -- a definite role for the private sector. The PPP/CIVIC government is now building additional industrial estates to facilitate private sector investment.

"After many years of dormancy," Yesu Persaud, former Chairman of the Private Sector Commission of Guyana and the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC), in 1994 noted that "the local manufacturing sector is beginning to show signs of revival".

Recently, the Private Sector Commission (PSC) has reported that over US\$131 million had been invested by local companies in 1995. And it works closely with the Government on a regular consultative basis. So do its constituents.

As regards support to the Private Sector, the message of the Minister of Finance published in the PSC's Annual Report (1995) stated: "I believe that this positive response is mainly due to the wide ranging policy measures implemented by the Government, including, several amendments to the consumption tax schedule, lowering of the tariffs under the Common External Tariff, repeal of the Capital Issues Control Act, the opening of channels for the private sector to access critically-needed international financing, and the privatization programme. GO-INVEST is now providing assistance to overseas and local investors who would like to take advantage of the liberalised environment. Complementing these reforms have been benefits derived from the sound management of the economy, including successive years of real growth, stability of the exchange rate and the lowering of the inflation and interest rates."

L.F.S. Burnham's ideological eclecticism and opportunism became more pronounced after his defeat at the 1957 and 1961 elections. He then somersaulted and became an anti-Cuban, anti-communist witch-hunter.

Then again he turned, in the mid-1970s, and said that the PNC's ideas were based on Marx, Engels and Lenin. Burnham postulated after the break of the PNC/PPP talks in 1976 that the PNC were the "Bolsheviks" (genuine revolutionaries) and the PPP were the "Mensheviks" (opportunists/revisionists).

During all that time Desmond Hoyte held important positions in the PNC party and government, and was credited with drafting the 1980 Constitution. Now, he is peddling once again anti-communist propaganda.

The PNC ideological eclecticism has prevented them from viewing reality scientifically and dialectically and to take a firm and principled political position. Opportunism is its hallmark.

To its credit, ^{the PPP} it has not made any serious mistakes in its political practice, its strategy and tactics. This is why it had won the confidence of the Guyanese people and maintains it.

Copyright © Nadira Jagan-Brancier 2000