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2nd July, 1981

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Editor
Guyana Chronicle
Bel Air
Georgetown.

Dear Editor, ... Did ... 70 per ...

In your issue of June 18, columnist "Dargen" charged that I was inconsistent for criticising the establishment of a large standing army and simultaneously calling for a genuine people's militia. To substantiate his charge he went on to say that I am "recommending that 20 times more be spent on arming 'all the people'."

I am proposing no such thing. I was making the point in Parliament and at a public meeting that the police, military and para-military forces have become too costly, from \$15 million in 1970 (11 per cent of current revenue) to \$139 million in 1981 (28 per cent and 22 per cent of current revenue in the original and revised 1981 Budgets respectively).

This huge cost, along with the top-heavy bureaucracy and onerous debt and compensation payments, is responsible, for the most part, for the chronic huge budget deficits every year -- deficits which have to be met by lowering standards of social services, high taxes and mark-ups, wages freeze or restraint, removal of subsidies and dismissal of workers. In turn, this leads to frustration and discontent, which are not conducive to patriotic fervour in defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The fact is, with a small, disciplined, efficiently-managed and contented army and a large people's militia (as the militia and Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in socialist Cuba) Guyana would have been able to get a better defence force at far less cost.

Actually, in 1976 the government had agreed to establish a people's militia which "will have members in all districts right down to the smallest communities" (Sunday Chronicle, 10/10.76), and up to quite recently the posters all over the country boasted "EVERY CITIZEN A SOLDIER!" but it failed to do so. This is because the PNC puts its own interest before the national interest.

The correlation between popular support or rather lack of it for the ruling party and the growth of the army is seen from the following facts and figures.

In 1973, the expenditure for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) was only \$10.3 million; in 1974, it jumped to \$24.7 million, an increase of nearly 150 per cent. In the calculation of the PNC, this became a

necessity after the army intervention in the 1973 elections due to the drop in voter turn-out in Georgetown, allegedly a traditional PNC stronghold, from 90-95 per cent in 1964 to 60-65 per cent in 1973. Similarly, after the 1978 referendum and 1980 elections, the expenditure for the GDF jumped from \$54 million in 1978 to \$109.5 million in 1981 (\$139 million for the military, para-military and police).

"Dargan" says: "that the socialist revolution in Guyana has enemies who would like it to fail. . . Giving arms to the enemies of the revolution inside while being menaced by an armed aggressor externally would mean that Guyana would be caught in a pincer movement between reactionaries at home and aggressors abroad".

Why should the PNC worry about training and arming the people? Did they not claim in the 1981 (s)elections that they had obtained 76 per cent of the vote? Do they not now still claim that they have the support of the vast majority of the people? Why should they be fearful?

The dilemma facing the PNC is real. It does not dare to create a real people's militia because of its awareness that about 85 per cent of the population is opposed to the party and government. So it relies on a large standing army. But this army is inadequate for genuine defense of the country, and at the same time too costly for our limited financial resources.

This dilemma could only have been resolved by a democratic, anti-imperialist and socialist-oriented National-Patriotic Front which the PNC rejected in 1976-77.

Yours truly,

Cheddi Jagan

Cheddi Jagan.

The fact is, with a small, disciplined, efficiently-managed and well-trained army and a large people's militia (as the militia and Committee for the Defense of the Revolution in socialist Cuba) Guyana could have been able to get a better defence system at far less cost.

Actually, in 1978 the government had agreed to establish a people's militia which "will have members in all districts right down to the smallest communities" (Sunday Chronicle, 10/18/78), and so to quote succinctly the posture all over the country heaped "UPON US WITH A MOUNTAIN" but it failed to do so. This is because the PNC puts its own interest before the national interest.

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