

# THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STATE

by  
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The expectation at the end of the cold war ideological/political confrontation was an era of peace and tranquility. Indeed, after the Gulf war, a New World Order was proclaimed by President George Bush. But regrettably, instead of order there is now grave disorder worldwide, because of the paradox of the continued development of the forces of production on the one hand and the increasing deterioration of the quality of life on the other - growing poverty and increasing inequality. The Iron Curtain has been replaced by the Poverty Curtain.

*Ita Cide*

East/West confrontation, based on ideology, has given way to conflicts rooted in racial/ethnic, religious and cultural/historical differences both between, and especially within, states.

Coupled with population growth and mass migration, poverty and insecurity are posing the dangers of an equally-terrifying political explosion, as seen in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and elsewhere.

As a result of global poverty, convulsions and conflicts, more than 100 million migrants are living outside their countries of origin. Some 19 to 23 million of these are refugees or in refugee-like situations - up from 3.5 million in 1985. In addition, about 26 million people are internally displaced within their own countries. These figures show no sign of abating but rather are growing!

The United Nations peace-keeping expenditure increased seven-fold between 1991 and 1992, whilst UN agencies' aid programmes declined by ten per cent between 1992 and 1993.

In the industrialised countries, drugs and crime have become serious problems. Today, roughly half of US households possess arms, and every year about 38,000 persons die of gun shots.

Jingoism and xenophobia are raising their ugly heads. Across the globe, the neo-fascists, the conservative far right and the religious far right are gaining ground politically.

The Commonwealth Caribbean, long recognised for its democratic traditions, is stagnating and facing a crisis not known since the late 1970's when the Caribbean Basin was deemed as one of the "circles of crisis". In a report to the CARICOM Summit in Barbados in July 1994, the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC) referred to the growing jobless figures and declining levels of foreign aid and investment. On unemployment and under-employment, the CAIC said these levels remained far too high:

"(They) do not begin to tell, in their cold statistical reciting, either the tragedy of broken lives and wasted human potential in our region, but also speak of a problem which, if not solved or at least significantly ameliorated, will ultimately destroy, through industrial and societal disruption, all other well-meaning efforts at economic development."

#### PALLIATIVES

The top leaders of the developed capitalist countries cannot present any prescriptions for curing the problems of the world economy. Symptoms, not the root causes, are treated. And the treatment is a palliative, a band-aid, like an aspirin to relieve the pain but not to cure it.

After the G7 "Jobs Summit" in Japan, a Conference was held in Washington D.C. on poverty, and later another on unemployment in Detroit. The Development Committee of the World Bank and the IMF for the first time sponsored a meeting on "Population and Migration". But nothing tangible resulted.

"Jobs and Growth" was one of the most important themes of the G7 Naples Summit meeting. Its Economic Declaration noted: "Unemployment remains far too high, with over 24 million unemployed in our countries alone. This is an unacceptable waste."

Modernised monopoly capitalism is unable to deal with recession, unemployment, financial deficit, trade frictions, the global environmental question, and the <sup>widening gap</sup> ~~differences~~ between the rich and the poor, the "included" and the "excluded", in both the developed countries and the developing countries, as well as between them.

The "trickle-down" economy does not work, even in the most politically and militarily powerful and the economically-richest country, the United States of America.

The famous US economist, Professor J.K. Galbraith, referred to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the increase in numbers of the American people below the poverty line. He noted that in 1980, "the chief executive officers of the three hundred largest American companies had incomes twenty-nine times that of the average manufacturing worker. Ten years later, the income of the top executive were ninety-three times greater... The number of Americans living below the poverty line increased by 30.6 percent in just ten years, from 24.5 million in 1978 to 32 million in 1988."

And according to the US Census Bureau, the number of Americans living in poverty in 1993 rose past 39 million or 15 percent of the population, the highest since 1961, and more than one million above the 1992 levels.

The average worker's wage, adjusted to inflation, was 2.3 per cent less in September 1995 than a year before. In contrast, the profits of Corporations were/are soaring, and chief executives of corporations were earning average increases of 12 percent per year!

This general trend accounts for the cynicism and the loss of faith by the electorate in elections and governments. It also

accounts for the defeat of incumbent political leaders and parties around the globe.

The prevailing economic and social disparity provides a breeding ground for hunger, disease and poverty, and ultimately constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

### OUR OWN AGENDA

The roots of conflict are embedded in a history of complicated political, economic, social and cultural factors.

Economic tinkering with interest rates and structural adjustment are not enough. We need a correct theoretical perception of events, not only of the development of productive forces, but also of the relations of production and their contradictions. Piecemeal management is not enough. Nor can everything be left to be regulated only by the market. Both the market and the state have irreplaceable, complimentary roles.

We need our own agenda - a new agenda of sustainable development. Past "models" of development have proven to be wanting.

The net outflow of capital from Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1981-85 period was US\$36 billion yearly in the form of profits, dividends and debt payments.

Developing countries lose US\$500 billion annually through unequal international trade, equivalent to 10 times the aid they receive from the developed countries.

Third world debtor countries paid more than US\$1.3 trillion between 1982 and 1990, yet, in 1990, they were 61 per cent more in debt than they were in 1982.

Sub-Saharan Africa's debt had spiralled from 8.4 billion US dollars in 1980 to just under 200 billion dollars. Since the early 1980s, the Latin American and Caribbean countries have honoured their debt obligations at tremendous suffering of the masses of the people. Yet, the debt continues to grow. According to the 1992 UNICEF publication "Children of the Americas". 'Between 1981 and 1990 Latin America spent US\$503 billion on foreign debt payments (US\$313 billion in interest). At the same time, the region's consolidated external debt rose from US\$297 billion in 1981 to US\$428 billion in 1990. This mechanism whereby "the more you pay the more you owe" is perverse and must be stopped'.

The \$10 billion (US) debt of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries imposes a crushing burden and inhibits sustainable development.

What is needed is a new socio-economic order, which can resolve the contradictions of the existing modernised methods of production. However, a new social order cannot be built by wishful thinking. Nor by copying foreign models. In actual fact, there should be no models; there should be only principles. And these have to be adapted in keeping with the local concrete situation - history, politics, social-psychology, culture.

We must elaborate a rational approach to development, not simply for economic growth, but also for human development. We need growth with social justice and eco-justice. There will be no solution to environmental questions, for instance, if the boundaries of poverty continue to expand. The Caribbean Council of Churches, alluding to the widening gap between "the haves" and the "have-nots", stated that more distressing to the penthouse than the slum, but no less powerful an incentive to seek a solution, is captured in the UNDP Human Development Report of 1993: "There is a real threat that global poverty will begin to travel without a passport in many unpleasant forms: drugs, disease, tourism, migration. Poverty everywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere."

## RECONSTRUCTION

With a multi-polar global economic situation, but only a single superpower with capitalist ideological and cultural dominance, it is not feasible immediately to embark on a revolutionary programme. The world balance of forces and the objective global reality today do not favour a socialist programme. A feasible programme therefore must be based on radical reforms -- reforms, not as an end in themselves, but as a means towards a revolutionary goal of socialism. Such a programme in this era of globalisation and modernisation must be based on interdependence and genuine North/South partnership and cooperation.

For reconstruction and meaningful change, it is an imperative for developing countries to establish a state of national democracy. It is neither a capitalist state propagating capitalism, nor a workers' state practising socialism.

It must embark on an integrated programme of development for Guyana, based on:

- \* Good Governance - a clean and lean government - with equity;
- \* democracy in all its aspects - political, economic, industrial, social, cultural - and the empowerment of the people at all levels;
- \* the fullest exercise of human rights - civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural, in keeping with the UN Covenants on Human Rights;
- \* a mixed economy;
- \* economic growth with social justice and ecological justice;
- \* balanced agricultural/industrial and rural/urban development;
- \* integrated programme of human resource development;
- \* multiculturalism - unity in diversity.

By national-democracy is meant a state which -

- \* constantly upholds its political, ~~and~~ economic *and* cultural independence;
- \* fights against militarism and military bases on its soil;
- \* resists new forms of colonialism and foreign domination, as in the colonial period when British Guiana was "Booker's Guiana";
- \* rejects dictatorial anti-popular forms of government;
- \* ensures the people's broad democratic rights, and enables their participation in shaping Government policy;
- \* embarks on radical socio-economic changes including the promotion of co-operation in the country side and the development of the public sector, together with the provision of social services such as education and health.

The tasks of a national democratic character comprise:

- to consolidate national independence;
- to carry out agrarian reforms and eliminate survivals of feudalism and exploitation;
- to restrict the development of foreign monopolies (two PPP governments had been destabilised with the help and in the interest of foreign monopolies);
- to secure substantial improvement in living standards for all the people;
- to democratise social life;
- to pursue an independent and peaceful foreign policy;
- to promote a national industry and enterprises belonging to its citizens.

An enduring foundation for economic growth and human development is democracy: democracy in all aspects ~~political, economic, social and cultural~~, representative, consultative and participatory. It is not simply about voting and electing

representatives, and the minority obeying the dictates of the majority. *Belise*

Representative democracy must be linked with consultation, participation and accountability. The many varied parts and levels of society must be in an ongoing, dynamic and working relationship with each other.

Democracy and development are inter-related and is a key for the attainment of our goals of social and ecological justice.

Democracy is essential for economic growth and human development. Equally, human development is necessary for the sustenance of democracy. *Belise*

Party paramountcy, as under the PNC administration, must be abolished and the supremacy of Parliament must be restored.

A democratic culture must be firmly established. As it was so pointed out by Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide, it is the second election which is the more important in the restoration of democracy.

Democracy entails the right of persons and communities to political self-determination. It is the best form for the political development of society, and is ultimately about expanding human freedom and potential, as enunciated in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *Belise*

The previous administration ratified the United Nations (UN) Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but honoured them in the breach. It had a dismal record of reporting to the United Nations on the fulfillment of these rights, and it refused to sign the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.